

Resettling the Unsettled: The Refugee Journey of Arab
Muslims to New Zealand

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Attestation of Authorship

“I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgments), or material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.”

“In The Name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful”

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Abstract

Since the 1980s, nearly 5000 Arab and Muslim refugees have been resettled in New Zealand (RefNZ, 2007) as a result of political instability and wars that have riddled the Arabic-speaking region. Upon arrival in a resettlement country, refugees face many challenges in adjusting to their new environment (Simich et al., 2006; Valtonen, 1998). Arab Muslim refugees have specific concerns that are different to other refugee groups due to the major role Islam plays in the way Muslim people go about their lives, and due to the controversial image of Muslims in Western countries since the September 11th (USA) and July 7th (London) bombings. To date, relatively little attention has been paid to the various ongoing resettlement issues that these refugees deal with. This research attempts to fill in some of these gaps by addressing the resettlement experiences of Arab Muslim refugees in New Zealand.

It is expected that this research will assist the policy making and migrant services sector (a) to understand the refugees' lived realities; (b) to confront the stereotypes associated with refugees in general, and the stereotypes associated with Arab Muslim refugees in particular; and (c) to address the issues and challenges faced by Arab Muslim refugees. The significance of this research is located in its potential to influence policy and practice in the fields of refugee resettlement, immigration, and counselling.

In addition, this study will contribute to knowledge about Arab Muslim refugees, especially those living in New Zealand. Recently, studies in the fields of sociology, anthropology, and psychology on refugees and refugee resettlement have found that non-Western refugees experience a variety of resettlement and adjustment challenges when settling in Western societies. However, intensive research is needed on refugees' perspectives on their refugee journey, their resilience during resettlement, and the experiences that accompany the refugee journey. A deepened understanding of the phenomenon of the refugee journey may contribute to the development of appropriate support for refugees and foster welcoming host societies. It is therefore anticipated that this study of the refugee experiences of Arab Muslims will add to existing research on refugee resettlement and in particular Arab Muslim refugees in Western societies.

Semi-structured, face to face interviews were conducted with 31 male and female Arabic-speaking Muslim refugees from Iraq, Sudan, Somalia, Kuwait, and Tunisia. The participants had been "resettled" in New Zealand for at least six months and up to eleven years. Most of the interviews were conducted in Arabic and then translated to

English. The interviews were analysed using an eclectic approach including thematic analysis with elements of life story narratives.

The findings that emerged from this research suggest that whatever the national and ethnic background of the refugee, there are common key issues and themes relating to the refugee journey and the challenges experienced by refugees during their resettlement. The interviews revealed participants' experiences of their lives as refugees, which were described in three separate stages that I have termed the "three legs of the refugee journey." The first leg of the refugee journey included the refugees' pre-migration experience: reasons for fleeing their homelands, becoming a refugee, and the impact of the refugee label on their lives in their resettlement country. The second leg of the refugee journey involved their experiences in adjusting to their 'new' lives after leaving Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre (MRRC): their experiences with several resettlement agencies in NZ, their unforeseen resettlement challenges such as language barriers, unemployment, and their concern over raising their children in a non-Muslim society. The third leg uncovered the experiences participants went through after one year of their initial resettlement, and also explored methods of coping and resilience that participants used to overcome their ongoing resettlement challenges and mental health concerns, and their perspective on New Zealand as a resettlement country. This leg also included the participants' future aspirations and their long-term resettlement plans.

Overall, participants were unprepared for the situation that faced them when they arrived in New Zealand. Their experience in the six weeks at the resettlement centre was disappointing for all of them and traumatic for some. Participants did not feel that they were equipped with "survival skills" for dealing with life outside the centre. All participants expressed that they had difficulties adjusting to their new life in New Zealand. In general, women found adjustment more difficult than men. Some participants expressed gratitude to New Zealand for accepting them as refugees. A minority were happy to remain in New Zealand, the majority were reluctant about staying, and a small number intended to return to their homeland or other Arab Muslim countries as soon as they could.

It is significant that for the participants in this study, their identity as a refugee had an overwhelming impact on the way they talked about their lives. Participants had the perception that being labelled as refugees was a factor that alienated them from New Zealand society. Also, being Arab and Muslim as well as a refugee was seen as an

additional disadvantage for resettlement opportunities in New Zealand and other Western countries.

While Arab Muslim refugees share many of the concerns of other refugees, there are particular issues, including the challenge of maintaining their religious and cultural traditions, which they experienced as being in conflict with resettling in a Western country. Despite the fact that New Zealand has a long history in assisting in the resettlement of refugees, this research reinforces previous research in New Zealand which points to the inadequacies of the resettlement experience for refugees during all three legs of the refugee journey. The thesis therefore concludes with recommendations for improving refugee policies and services.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AI	Amnesty International
ARA	Australian Refugee Association
CCR	Canadian Council for Refugees
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FIANZ	Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand
HNZC	Housing New Zealand Corporation
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICAR	Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
MRRC	Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre
MSD	Ministry of Social Development
NGO	Non-governmental organisations
NZ	New Zealand
ORR	Office of Refugee Resettlement
RAS	Refugees As Survivors
RI	Refugees International
RMS	Refugee Migrant Services
TOPs	Training Opportunities Programmes
TPV	Temporary Protection Visa
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA	United Nations Relief Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees
USA/US	United States of America
WINZ	Work and Income New Zealand

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“No one except a refugee would understand the experiences we had to go through, especially the experiences of us Muslim refugees.” (Hashim - Male)

The Refugee Crisis

The refugee experience is one of uprooting, displacement, and search for stability and a safe haven. Refugees experience a considerable amount of uncertainty and stress before and after resettlement in a host society (Miller, Muzurovic, Worthington, Tipping & Goldman, 2002). Years spent in camps with few facilities to meet basic or minimal human needs, the uncertain yet lengthy time spent waiting to be accepted by a foreign country, being smuggled on cramped boats, lack of language and cultural knowledge, difficulty accrediting qualifications, and the loss of family members are some of the conditions which make a refugee a vulnerable human being (Fangen, 2006; Simich, Hamilton & Baya, 2006). Refugees experience multiple losses once they flee their country, in particular losses to social and economical structures that under normal circumstances play a role in preserving their identities (Moussa, 1992).

There are currently 13.9 million people worldwide who have fled their countries and have been uprooted and displaced (US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, 2007).¹ This includes 8.4 million refugees and 773,500 asylum seekers. The top four countries that provided the bulk of these displaced people include Afghanistan (2.1 Million), Iraq (1.5 Million), Sudan (686,000), and Somalia (460,000). Millions more continue to live in severe conditions within the border territories of their own countries, as illegal immigrants, or in refugee camps in various countries of asylum organised by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

A considerable number of refugees are settled annually in 18 “host resettlement” countries² that are approved by the UNHCR and that have a formal refugee resettlement programme (UNHCR, 2008a). The 2007 UNHCR Survey ranked the main countries of

¹ These numbers do not include the 2.5 million Palestinian refugees who are under the care of the United Nations Relief Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA).

² The 10 countries that currently accept the resettlement of refugees through the UNHCR are: Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the U.S.A. Other countries undertaking the establishment of resettlement programmes include Benin, Brazil, the U.K., Burkina Faso, Chile, Iceland, Ireland, and Spain (UNHCR, 2008a).

refugee resettlement by refugee intake as follows: USA (41,300), Australia (13,400), Canada (10,700), Sweden (2,400), Norway (1,000), and New Zealand (750) (UNHCR, 2007a).

Parsons (2002) mentions that compared to other resettlement countries, New Zealand accepts what might seem to be a small number of quota refugees. The fact is, however, that similar to other resettlement countries New Zealand resettles its allocated refugee quota, which equals approximately 0.02 percent of its entire population of four million people.

As part of its humanitarian obligation to the global community, New Zealand has had a long history of resettling refugees, including the resettlement of 800 Polish boat migrants in 1944. In 1999, the Refugee Council of New Zealand (RCNZ) conducted research investigating issues concerned with early intervention for asylum seekers and refugees in New Zealand in terms of providing them with English language support and employment assistance. At the time of their study there were more than 25,000 refugees residing in New Zealand (Uprety, Basnwt & Rimal, 1999). Current estimates indicate that since 1976 the country has had more than 40,000 refugees who have resettled and rebuilt their lives in their new country (Refugee Migrant Services, 2005). Recent accounts of the resettlement of refugees in New Zealand indicate that the top five countries that these refugees come from are Eretria, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, and Somalia, with the latter four countries having a predominately Muslim population.

New Zealand undertakes to accept up to 750 quota refugees nominated by the UNHCR. People who claim asylum in New Zealand and who are found to have a justified fear of persecution in their homeland may be granted residence. These are categorised as convention refugees and are people who arrive at New Zealand airports and request to apply for refugee status or asylum through airport officials. New Zealand receives 200 to 500 convention refugees per annum (Dunstan, Dibley, & Shorland, 2004). Between 2000 and 2008, a total of 1,093 individuals arrived in New Zealand indicating a wish to apply for refugee status (spontaneous refugees) (NZIS, 2008b).

The country may also accept refugees based on an emergency situation, such as refugees who are facing immediate risk to their security and are therefore considered under the UNHCR Protection Priority (UNHCR, 1991). For example, the resettlement of 410 refugees from Kosova in 1999 (Refugee Migrant Services, 2005) and 208 Tampa boat asylum seekers in 2001 occurred under this protection priority category.

Arab Refugees

Refugees flee hardship, war and conflict, and for decades Arab and Islamic regions have experienced both internal and external conflicts. Some of these conflicts and wars from the earliest to the most recent are as follows:

- Palestinian conflict: 1920 – present.
- Lebanese Civil War: 1975 – 1990.
- Iraq – Iran War: 1980 - 1988.
- Sudanese Civil War: 1983 – 2005 (political instability exists to this date).
- Somali Civil War: 1988 – (political instability exists to this date).
- UN Coalition First Gulf War in Iraq: 1990 – 1991.
- Economic sanctions on Iraq: 1990 – 2003.
- Algerian Civil War: 1991 – 2002.
- Afghanistan conflict: 2001 – present.
- UN Coalition Invasion and Second Gulf War in Iraq: 2003 – present.
- Darfur conflict: 2003 – present.
- Lebanon “July” War: July 2006 – August 2006.

In New Zealand and by 2007, there were an estimated 1,262 refugees from Afghanistan, who all identified themselves as being of the Muslim faith, and 1,985 refugees from Somalia and Sudan combined, many of whom were Muslim people. At the time of New Zealand’s 2006 census there were 6,024 migrants born in Iraq (Veitch & Tenwai, 2007). According to statistics from New Zealand’s Refugee Migrant Services (RMS), between 1984 and 2007 the number of refugees from Arabic-speaking countries increased to 2,754 refugees, of which 2,586 were Iraqi. The reason for this increase may be a result of political instability and wars that have riddled the country since 1980; specifically, the Iran-Iraq War, which ended in 1988, and then the First Gulf War in 1990, which resulted in the economic embargo on Iraq from 1990 to 2003. This was followed by the political and religious instability in the country as a result of the Second Gulf War and the USA Invasion from 2003 to this date.

Waves of Arabic-speaking refugees have been arriving in New Zealand for some time. According to Veitch and Tinawi (2007) the 1881 New Zealand census had one Arab

person registered who arrived from “Arabia.” Refugee statistics have shown that Arab refugees of various nationalities have continued to resettle in New Zealand. According to RefNZ, these nationalities include Arab and Muslim refugees from Iraq (2,605), Somalia (1,743), Sudan (336), Palestine (60), Syria (51), Kuwait (20), Saudi Arabia (9), Tunisia (9), Libya (8), and Yemen (8) who were accepted for New Zealand resettlement as UN quota refugees between 1980 and 2008 (RefNZ, 2007). It is of no surprise that the number of Arab and Muslim refugees in New Zealand is on the increase as a result of the continued hardship and instability in the Arab region (e.g., the political and religious conflicts in Iraq, Darfur conflict in Sudan, civil war and clan conflicts in Somalia).

Once refugees arrive in the country, they undergo considerable resettlement challenges. Resettlement refers to the process experienced by refugees arriving in a new country as they try to rebuild their lives in the receiving country. Resettlement occurs with the assistance of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the services they provide, which are accessible to these people. In New Zealand, it includes a six-week stay at Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre (MRRC) in South Auckland, as well as access to various public services such as schools, public health institutions, community organisations, assistance with public housing through Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC), and employment and social welfare benefits from Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ). Some of these agencies and services are established to provide the support and assistance refugees need to re-establish their lives in a new country and become accustomed to the new society, its values and beliefs. Services that cater for the needs of refugees have only been established since 1995 in Auckland and 1997 in Wellington (Altinkaya & Omundsen, 1999), while other agencies and services are not specifically for refugees alone.

Refugees are undoubtedly a special kind of migrant that requires adequate and appropriate resettlement attention that meets their cultural and religious requirements while also addressing their social, mental and financial needs. Upon arrival, refugees face many challenges in adjusting to their new environment (Simich et al., 2006; Valtonen, 1998). These challenges may include social isolation, cultural differences and barriers, religious differences, shifts in gender and family roles, and most importantly employment issues (Nghe, Mahalik, & Lowe, 2003). Other resettlement challenges may include refugees having limited access to education services, experiencing mental health problems, and concerns over being reunited with other family members.

Once their needs are understood and met, refugees may be able to successfully rebuild their lives in their new homeland. They may form a loyal bond towards the country that has lifted them from the hardship and chaos they were living through, by being able to become productive citizens who are able to give back to the society. Conversely, if inadequate attention has been given to refugees in their host countries, this may hinder their resettlement and negatively impact on their feelings of stability and their overall mental well-being (Simich et al., 2006).

All refugees have specific resettlement needs, and Arab Muslim refugees are no different. Muslim refugees may have specific needs that are different to other refugee groups due to the major role Islam plays in the way Muslim people go about their lives, from dressing, drinking, eating, and socialising to other matters such as employment, or accepting loans. All of these daily activities may be jeopardised once they are resettled in countries that are predominately non-Muslim and ‘Westernised’ in their behaviours and values.

This chapter introduces the research study in five sections. It begins by outlining the aims of the project, and brief definitions of various terms used throughout this research. The next section discusses the rationale of the study, while the third details the significance of the study in terms of research and literature. The fourth section addresses the restrictions on scope, and the fifth section concludes with a brief summary and presents the overall structure of the thesis.

Research Aims

There has been substantial research on migration issues and challenges facing the resettlement of refugees. Most of this research has been done in countries that receive an annual quota of refugees such as Canada, Australia, the United States, Norway, the Netherlands, and New Zealand. However, there are also gaps within this research. Relatively little attention has been paid to the various ongoing resettlement difficulties that refugees deal with, such as the impact of the refugee label and experiences at different stages in the resettlement process, in addition to the challenge of raising children in host societies that differ culturally and religiously to their own and how that in turn impacts on the family’s resettlement. This research attempts to fill in some of these gaps by addressing the resettlement challenges that face male and female Arab Muslim refugees in New Zealand.

The purpose of this study is to explore the journey of male and female Arabic-speaking Muslim refugees in two main New Zealand cities, Auckland and Wellington. This research attempts to unravel their experiences, their challenges and concerns, their future aspirations in the country, their becoming refugees, displacement, resettlement, and access to services in New Zealand. According to Fischer (2006), experiences are psychological concepts that refer to the “accumulation of events, as we can recall and convey them” (p.333). These experiences or events are described in terms of our feelings, thoughts and reflections, and in turn, these descriptions are used as data, and called narratives or memories (Fischer, 2006). Therefore, the refugee experience may be described in terms of feelings of despair, fear, isolation, disappointment, and thoughts on the process of becoming a refugee, along with its initial and ongoing resettlement challenges. Where appropriate gender related differences are also addressed. Moreover, this research may allow participants to reflect on their journey, and it may empower them through sharing and acknowledging their strengths and weakness throughout their experiences.

During the research, participants were encouraged to talk about their experiences of becoming refugees and the impact that the refugee label has had on their lives. They were invited to share their prior knowledge and expectations of New Zealand as a resettlement country, their experiences of the refugee and resettlement services provided for them in New Zealand, the resettlement challenges that they have encountered, and finally, their future aspirations.

The Western media is full of images of refugees who are poor, illiterate, and powerless. Such images become imprinted in our minds, and may be conceived as an impression of how we believe ‘a refugee’ should be (Fangen, 2006). However, although refugees are vulnerable individuals who flee from wars and traumatic experiences, they are not all illiterate, powerless and weak. Simich et al. (2006) mention that resilience and strength are some attributes which refugees may have in order to survive through their hardships and traumatic experiences. What we as a society need to recognise is that these individuals did not choose to become refugees, but had to utilise the label ‘refugee’ in order to gain access to a better life in a peaceful country. Once they arrive in their host country, these individuals choose to shed the refugee label, as it is merely a humanitarian label and not a part of their ethnicity or identity. Rather, they envisage themselves new citizens of New Zealand.

In addition, this humanitarian label can have a considerable impact on the resettlement experience of these newcomers, and their perception of their host society. While they want to shed their refugee label, the host society can act as a constant reminder of that label, and make it difficult for the newcomers to easily let go of it.

Research Question

Do (resettled) refugees really resettle?

The research question stems from the desire to understand the influence of past experiences throughout the refugee journey on overall resettlement satisfaction of refugees in New Zealand, and if referring to them as ‘resettled’ refugees is in fact a truthful indication of their current situation in the country.

Rationale of the Study

To a certain degree, this research extends beyond the borders of countries that have large numbers of refugees and immigrants, such as the United States and the United Kingdom. According to RefNZ, between 1980 and 2008 more than 20,000 refugees and displaced persons resettled in the country under the Refugee Quota Programme (RefNZ, 2007). The nationalities of these refugee groups have changed according to global and humanitarian circumstances. Therefore, there is a need for research in New Zealand to explore and approach issues of refugee resettlement pertaining to the various ethnic groups that have arrived in the country. In the light of the growing number of Arab Muslim refugees in New Zealand and the lack of information on them, there is a definite need for research on this group.

No study on the refugee journey of Arab Muslims has been conducted in New Zealand, and there has been a growing concern expressed by various refugee and immigration services, in addition to ethnic communities, over the resettlement satisfaction levels of New Zealand refugees and the services provided to assist in their adaptation. In addition, Muslims in New Zealand were an invisible group merely categorised as “other” in formal governmental documentations until the 2001 September 11th terrorist attacks in the United States. When Muslims and Arabs generally occupied parts of Asia, Middle East and North Africa, they were of little concern to others in Western countries, but now times have changed. With the world becoming a global village, and political chaos erupting in various segments of the world, especially in the Middle East and

Africa, Western countries have received migrants from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, and in particular a great number of Arab and Muslim migrants. Events occurring back in their native homeland may affect Arab Muslims living in their new homeland, and may have flow-on effects within mainstream society.

Because of the increasing conflict, war and ethnic violence in various parts of the Middle East and Africa, people are forced to leave their countries in search of a better future for themselves and their families, in order to live in a safe and peaceful society. In New Zealand, the problematic nature of accepting Arab Muslim migrants may have emerged as a reflection of how other Western societies, such as Australia and the United States, view or deal with Muslims.

From my own perspective, as an Arab Muslim migrant and a New Zealander, the citizens of a growing migrant nation need to better understand the Arab Muslim 'other.' This should not only allow New Zealanders to feel comfortable having this group of people as neighbours, colleagues, and friends, but should also improve the refugee, immigration, and resettlement services and policies of the New Zealand government. It is my opinion that the growing numbers of Arabic-speaking Muslims in the population justify such a study, since it would assist us in providing adequate services to this particular community. Also, it is necessary to understand their similarities and differences compared to other groups, such as non-Arab Muslims or non-Muslim Arabs, and other refugee communities in New Zealand. Furthermore, this research has been welcomed by New Zealand's Refugee Migrant Services (RMS) (J. Conway, personal communication, January 16, 2005) and governmental agencies such as the New Zealand Immigration Services (NZIS) and the Department of Ethnic Affairs (F. Raza, personal communication, March 3, 2005).

The goal is to ultimately assist refugees in becoming successfully 'resettled' and productive citizens of the country. This study focuses on exploring and understanding the refugee journey and resettlement experiences of Arab Muslim refugees in New Zealand.

Significance of the Study

It is my hope that this study may provide a better understanding of the lived experience of a particular group of refugees. It may contribute meaningful information to the knowledge base needed by political leaders and refugee resettlement professionals interested in creating policy and implementing practices that facilitate the successful cultural adjustment of refugees in New Zealand society. The data from this study may help break down stereotypes about Muslims in general and Arab Muslims in particular, by facilitating an understanding of the way these people have constructed their world and their experience.

This research will make enquiries into a population of male and female Arab Muslims who have been largely neglected in social research, especially in New Zealand, in addition to addressing the gender related difference. This study may also contribute to a growing body of knowledge regarding the lives of minority groups living within New Zealand. Furthermore, this research may also help to expand the established knowledge base in minority studies (Māori, Indian, and Asian studies) to include Arab Muslim groups.

From my experience of working with refugees and immigrants, I have observed that establishing better and clearer communication between the Muslim community and mainstream society is an important step to be accomplished so that unfamiliar ethnic groups do not become invisible or stigmatised. Being part of a group that fears discrimination and misunderstanding heightens the challenges of resettlement, and life in New Zealand becomes a stressful, if not miserable experience. It is, therefore, necessary and valuable to comprehend the difficulties faced by this migrant group when experiencing cultural adjustment and identity preservation. My interest in the topic is derived from my consideration of the obstacles faced daily by Arab Muslims in New Zealand because of their refugee status, religion, beliefs, and values.

It is expected that this research will assist the policy making and migrant services sector (a) to understand the refugees' lived realities; (b) to confront the stereotypes associated with refugees in general, and the stereotypes associated with Arab Muslim refugees in particular; and (c) to address the issues and challenges faced by Arab Muslim refugees. The significance of this research is located in its potential to influence policy and practice in the fields of refugee resettlement, immigration, and counselling. It is only

through a more complete understanding of Muslim refugees, and from this study, Arab Muslim refugees, that professionals can improve practices.

In addition, this study will contribute to knowledge about Arab Muslim refugees, especially those living in New Zealand. Recently, studies in the fields of sociology, anthropology, and psychology on refugees and refugee resettlement have produced findings which demonstrate that non-Western refugees experience a variety of resettlement and adjustment challenges when settling in Western societies. However, intensive research is needed on refugees' perspectives on their refugee journey, their resilience during resettlement, and the experiences that accompany the refugee journey. A deepened understanding of the phenomenon of the refugee journey may contribute to the development of appropriate support for refugees and foster welcoming host societies. It is therefore anticipated that this study of the refugee experiences of Arab Muslims will add to existing research on refugee resettlement and in particular Arab Muslim refugees in Western societies.

Restrictions on Scope

This study focuses on the refugee and resettlement journey of Arabic-speaking Muslim refugees in New Zealand who have been resettled in Auckland and Wellington. There are several reasons for restricting this study to these two cities in New Zealand. First, Auckland and Wellington are considered the two major cities in the country (with Wellington being the capital), and according to statistics obtained from RMS, between 2004 and 2007 approximately 1,191 refugees were resettled in these two cities (with more than 1,000 refugees resettled in Auckland). Second, the initial aim of the research was to interview potential participants in another city, Hamilton, which also has a considerable number of resettled refugees.³ However, despite a successful trip to Hamilton, which involved meeting several potential participants, I had subsequent difficulties in contacting the community leader who had initially assisted me in meeting these participants and, concerned that I was losing precious time, I was successful in obtaining potential participants in Wellington. Finally, several participants I had interviewed in Auckland had mentioned that when they were informed that they were being sent by MRRC to Wellington for resettlement, they were reluctant and more than three families actually refused to move to the city. Therefore, I was interested in

³ According to the same RMS statistics, 212 refugees were resettled in Hamilton between 2004 and 2007.

meeting participants who had remained in Wellington to see if there were differences in their experiences as opposed to those living in Auckland.

The details of the participants' experiences before resettling in New Zealand are valuable, yet only discussed briefly in light of their expectations of life in New Zealand. The rationale for choosing to research this target population was due to the increase in Muslim refugees arriving in New Zealand, the negative images of Muslims portrayed in international media, and the cultural, religious and linguistic differences of this group in comparison to the host society. The findings can only be applicable to Arabic-speaking Muslim refugees, with their distinctive backgrounds, circumstances, and limitations.

To ensure that the cultural, religious and linguistic needs of this group are directly addressed, this study was conducted by a researcher who is of Arab and Muslim background. Therefore, not only does the researcher share a common language, but also shares a common cultural and religious understanding of Islamic and cultural values and beliefs. Although it may be impossible to separate any bias made by the researcher, the utmost care has been applied to ensure that the accounts of the participants in this study have been carefully and adequately displayed in the findings of this research.

Overall Structure

The first chapter has provided an introduction to the study. It has focused on the overall context of the study, the aims of the research, the research questions and the significance of the study. The remaining chapters of this research are organised as follows:

Chapter Two provides a review of relevant literature in various disciplines including sociology, psychology, education, refugee studies (including refugee policies and law), anthropology, political science, and to some extent economics, and provides a contextual overview of the resettlement of refugees, cultural adaptation, ethnic identity, and a historical overview of Arabism and Islam.

Chapter Three explains the methodology or the design and approach of the research, the selection of participants, the analysis of the data, ethical considerations and the rationale for selecting a qualitative approach.

Chapter Four serves as the findings section. It maps out the refugee journey into three legs: the first leg of the refugee journey addresses the participants' realisation of

becoming refugees, their knowledge and expectations of New Zealand, and their journey and arrival to the country; the second leg of the refugee journey explores the challenges of ‘establishing’ a new life in New Zealand, overcoming obstacles and challenges of resettlement, and sources of strength and resilience; and the third leg of the refugee journey addresses the participants’ lives in New Zealand after more than a year as ‘settled refugees,’ New Zealand as a resettlement country, the ongoing challenges they are experiencing, and the future aspirations of the Arab Muslim refugees of New Zealand.

Chapter Five is the discussion section; it relates the findings to previous research and explores implications of the findings. The discussion also explores implications of the findings that are relevant to both policy and practice in Western societies, and New Zealand in particular.

Finally, Chapter Six will summarise and conclude the research and address future recommendations and implications for policy and practice, and future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature informing this study is multidisciplinary, drawing from research in the fields of psychology, education, sociology and refugee studies, using an English language database search on refugee resettlement and resettlement challenges. The literature which looks specifically at methodological issues related to refugee studies will be briefly addressed in this chapter; however a detailed review will be presented in chapter three.

No discussion on issues relating to refugees is complete without an understanding of the particulars related to that experience. Hence some of the literature that deals with this domain is discussed in order to provide a framework within which the refugee experience can be understood. This chapter outlines definitions, concepts, and contexts for the study in four sections.

The first section provides a review of the terminology applied to refugees and migrants. This includes definitions of refugees, refugee streams, and some emergency refugee cases.

The second section discusses resettlement as one of the classic durable solutions to deal with the refugee problem, and provides a brief outline of models of refugee resettlement in some comparable Western countries, including the USA, Canada, and Australia. New Zealand as a refugee resettlement country and its refugee services are also discussed, highlighting the differences from these other countries.

The third section also provides a review of resettlement needs and challenges. Refugee studies literature that identifies practical needs including housing, health care, mental health, employment, financial assistance and English language proficiency. The literature also addresses the resettlement challenges of identity, cultural challenges, ethnic identity, identity as a refugee and the labelling of refugees. This section also includes a review of the literature in areas of Arab culture and Islamic identity, and provides some information on Arabs and Muslims in New Zealand, the structure of the Arab family, and Arab gender differences. The literature relating to prejudice and Islamophobia will complete this section.

The final section of this chapter will deal with the literature which refers to refugee strengths and ways in which they gain support and include coping strategies and resilience, and the role of the ethnic community associations and family reunification.

Definitions of Migrants and Refugees

Political, religious, economic, and social factors combine to force people out of their countries and to resettle in different societies. The result is forced, reactive migration, which is in addition to proactive flows of migrants who choose to relocate essentially due to economic motives or political instability.

There are two main types of migrants: immigrants and refugees (including asylum seekers). These migrant groups share some similarities, though they are also distinctive.

The New Zealand Immigration Services (NZIS) defines a migrant as a person “who leaves his or her country of origin to seek residence in another country” (NZIS, 2000). This definition includes both voluntary and forced migrants. Forced migrants are also referred to as refugees and asylum seekers, whereas voluntary migrants are usually just referred to as migrants or immigrants. Both migrant groups share the common feature of leaving their original country and relocating to a different one, but it is necessary for us to understand that what differentiates them is the reason why they left the country, and whether it was voluntarily, or by force.

Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001) noted that immigrants seek to leave their country of origin by choice in order to pursue personal, financial, and familial opportunities. Most immigrants heading to New Zealand have to apply through a Skilled Migrant scheme. The Skilled Migrant Category (formerly called General Skills) has been designed to attract highly-skilled migrants to New Zealand, particularly in those industries and regions of New Zealand experiencing growth and skills shortages. The Skilled Migrant Category is a point-based system focused on factors such as qualification, age and work experience (NZIS, 2008a).

According to Ward et al. (2001), immigrants, sometimes referred to as “economic migrants,” can be contrasted with refugees, or “political migrants,” in the sense that one is voluntary or chosen, while the other is involuntary or forced. They point out that this distinction is important because voluntary migrants may have thought hard and well about leaving their country, they may have carefully collected information and selected their destination by comparing it with other potential countries. Immigrants may also be mentally prepared for the challenges that may lie ahead of them in their chosen country (Ward et al., 2001).

Richmond (2002) referred to immigrants as “proactive” migrants. This group of people leave their country willingly, mainly due to economic or educational motives. The implications of being forced to leave or leaving willingly impact on the well-being of these migrants, in addition to affecting their personal experiences and perceptions of the new society they live in.

This element of choice exercised by immigrants is a contrast to the forceful, often abrupt nature of fleeing that refugees have to encounter. Refugees’ movement is usually at short notice, and they are forced out in desperation because of war and instability in their country (Colic-Peisker, 2005). Their immediate concern is survival rather than the luxury of researching a selection of destinations, and they exercise little or no control over their settlement destination.

Ward et al. (2001) suggested that refugees are the most disadvantaged of the relocating groups, despite the fact that all groups face difficulties in the transition process. Reasons behind the disadvantages faced by refugees, according to Ward et al., are as follows:

1. Refugees may have been exposed to traumatic experiences in their country of origin (e.g., persecution, rape, killing of family members etc.).
2. Their migration is more involuntary than voluntary, which may have a large impact on their psychological and social adjustment.
3. Their displacement is usually permanent. Unlike immigrants, who may go back to their country of origin, refugees are less likely to be able to return.
4. They often have had no previous contact or information regarding the host society, and therefore are poorly prepared for the cross-cultural transition.
5. They are likely to originate from cultural backgrounds that differ considerably from the host society.

Refugees may have been prominent and successful persons before they were forced to leave for fear of persecution (Field, 2006). In addition, refugees, unlike immigrants, do not have much choice regarding their future. Thus, the experiences of migrants who have had freedom of choice whether, when, and where to move, and those who were forced to move due to certain circumstances beyond their control, are likely to have a significant impact on their resettlement opportunities.

Immigrants are better at adapting to the new society than refugees. Refugees will have faced or have a well-founded fear of persecution in the countries that they leave. This is a critical distinction from an immigrant who does not face persecution in his/her country, but rather chooses to relocate for better employment opportunities or other economical or educational reasons. Immigrants are usually psychologically healthier, due to the fact that refugees go through many traumatic experiences compared to immigrants (Ward et al., 2001).

Refugees differ psychosocially from other migrant groups in terms of the circumstances in which they fled their country of origin. Refugee groups may resettle in a host society about which they have no previous knowledge or information. They have to adapt to the host society's culture, find work, learn a new language and adjust to environmental and cultural changes (Pernice & Brook, 1994).

Researchers have found evidence that both immigrants and refugees seek to maintain and preserve their cultural traditions and beliefs while living in a host society that may differ considerably from their own (Ghaffarian, 1998, 2001; Ghuman, 2000; Joudi, 2002; Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001; Moghissi, 1999). But refugees will have much less opportunity to return to their home country than other migrants.

Many refugees experience cultural bereavement associated with a sense of loss of homeland and separation from extended family, and the awareness that they may never return to their native country again. Challenges of adjustment and overcoming displacement do not come to an end during eventual settlement as refugees are received in countries of resettlement with varying degrees of hospitality and some refugees may experience various levels of prejudice and racism (Ager, 1999; Ager, Ager, & Long, 1995). According to Espin (1995), even when well integrated into their societies, refugees are often faced with a continual, low-grade sense of not belonging completely. Familiar smells, tastes, and people will be forever gone for many refugees, thus leading to a lifelong process of grieving over their loss.

Furthermore, refugees who are resettled face numerous challenges inherent in the process. Individuals who have less education, weaker language skills, and a shorter period of residence in their resettlement country find it hard to adjust to their new surroundings (Ager, 1999). Refugees may also find difficulty in obtaining employment and thus have to face the challenges inherent in having unmet economic needs (Ager et al., 1995; Espin, 1995).

Refugee Streams

New Zealand classifies forced migrants into three streams according to the route taken to refugee status. The first stream consists of quota refugees, who are those who have reached a UN refugee camp, and who have been approved by UNHCR under the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees 1951 for resettlement in New Zealand. The second category is referred to as convention refugees, the term for former asylum seekers or 'spontaneous refugees' who have arrived in New Zealand and have been approved by New Zealand authorities as having refugee status. The third stream comprises family reunion refugees, who are eligible to come to New Zealand as they have family members who are refugees already living in New Zealand, who are prepared and able to sponsor them. In addition, there are some other categories such as the Humanitarian category which was established in 2001 and is an emergency case subcategory (NZI, 2004).

A research study on refugee resettlement conducted by Dibley and Dunstan (2002) for the New Zealand Department of Labour has outlined in a summary report the distinctive natures of these streams. Below is a brief overview that clarifies the differences between the three refugee streams.

Quota Refugees

This refugee group is mandated by the UNHCR. New Zealand has agreed to an annual intake of 750 refugees nominated by the UNHCR. Some of the major countries that have been sources of quota refugee contribution to the country are Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Burma/Myanmar (NZIS, 2008b). According to the New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS, 2008b), individuals can be accepted as part of the refugee quota if they fall under one of the following categories underlined below:

- Protection (600 places): these are the refugee cases that are considered to be high priority by UNHCR and includes up to 300 places for family reunification.
- Medical/disabled (75 places): these are the refugees that are in need of medical attention due to their condition and disability, who cannot be treated in their own country of origin, and can receive medical assistance available in New Zealand.
- Women at risk (75 places): New Zealand accepts women and children who are considered by UNHCR as being particularly vulnerable and under threat in their current country or situation.

Refugees come from war-torn countries and have often had to experience severe trauma, such as torture, rape, and hardship on their journey to their final destinations. These refugees may have also had to spend long agonising times in refugee camps that often lack the crucial services to attend to the needs of these people. Some of them have had limited access to education and health care (Casimiro, Hancock, & Northcote, 2007).

Once arriving in the country, quota refugees have access to a wide range of services, and are granted permanent residency upon arrival in New Zealand. This status gives them the right to access all services just as any other New Zealand citizen. More importantly, unlike other countries that accept refugees, New Zealand does not medically screen the quota refugees until they arrive in the country. Only once refugees arrive at Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre (MRRC) do they go through an extensive and comprehensive health screening in order to identify health problems that need treatment. Generally, quota refugees are less educated and lack knowledge of Basic English; however, they have more access to services such as housing services and pay less rent than the other refugee streams. Also, compared to the other refugee groups, quota refugees seem to be the most settled in New Zealand (Dibley & Dunstan, 2002).

Convention Refugees

These refugees are considered the asylum seeking refugees or ex-asylum-seekers. The individuals of this group may have some information about the country where they are heading to seek asylum. Asylum seekers enter the country's shores either through legal or illegal means and then apply for refugee status. Many of these refugees have few or no legal documents with them. They flee their country because of fear of persecution, religious or political instability. Currently, the main source countries for convention refugees are Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Sri Lanka (NZIS, 2008b).

The Refugee Status Branch (RSB) of NZIS assesses the refugees' applications and determines whether to approve their claim or not. If their application is declined, they have the right to appeal to the Refugee Status Appeals Authority. This process used to take two to three years to be resolved. Recently, the period of refugee status determination has been greatly shortened to a period of three months (Dibley & Dunstan, 2002).

According to Dibley and Dunstan (2002), New Zealand convention refugees seem to have more educational qualifications and a better grasp of basic English than the quota

and family reunification refugees. Nevertheless, convention refugees generally receive less support, relying more on government agencies and their friends. Furthermore, Dibley and Dunstan (2002) mention that New Zealand convention refugees have a higher rate of employment than other groups of refugees, which may be partly attributable to their having been in New Zealand for longer than the other groups (while waiting for their refugee claim to be determined), but also to their better ability with the English language.

Family Reunion Refugees

Refugees, who flee their native country to seek refuge somewhere else, almost always leave without personal belongings, and at times without family members. There is no doubt that for the refugee's mental and emotional well-being, family support needs to be provided. Many of the refugees depend on their close knit family network. Refugees may also experience a sense of guilt in being the only member of their family to be able to enjoy a peaceful life far away from the conflict. This 'survival guilt' can cause many psychological problems for refugees who are trying to resettle and re-establish themselves in New Zealand. Thus, preventing refugees from reuniting with their families may have severe consequences on the resettlement and emotional adjustment of these already traumatised people. The New Zealand government attempts to reunite the families of previous refugees to New Zealand. However, the reunification issue is not clear cut. Immigration policies play an important role in this matter. Refugees who are already established in New Zealand and who have been residence in New Zealand for at least three years can seek to sponsor their family. The application success and failure rate depends on whether the family meets the criteria, and on the availability of certain documents (as a result of the applicant's inability to provide certain documents, applications may be declined due to their incompleteness). Currently, New Zealand immigration policy allows for 32 percent of total approvals to be in the family and humanitarian categories (Dunstan et al., 2004).

The objective of the Refugee Family Quota Category is to assist the successful resettlement of refugees already living in New Zealand, by allowing them to sponsor a family member who does not qualify under any other category. Family reunification refugees sponsored to New Zealand by a family member therefore already have support networks in the country. As a result, family reunification refugees may be considered as being in a relatively better position than the other refugee streams in terms of background knowledge and information regarding New Zealand (Dibley & Dunstan,

2002). Their family member in New Zealand would have provided them with information regarding the lifestyle, culture and behaviour of New Zealanders, thus when arriving in New Zealand, these refugees are better equipped with what to expect. These refugees often come from similar backgrounds to the other refugee groups (Dunstan et al., 2004). Their English language ability is better than quota refugees, but not as good as convention refugees. In terms of educational qualifications, they also fall between convention and quota refugees (Dibley & Dunstan, 2002; Dunstan et al., 2004).

Emergency Refugee Cases

Over the years, New Zealand has accepted refugee groups that are considered refugee emergency cases. These are refugees who face immediate risk to their security (UNHCR, 1991), and are considered under the UNHCR Protection Priority. The New Zealand government allows for 50 emergency resettlement cases each year. These cases are drawn from different international locations depending on priority. In 1999, New Zealand assisted in the resettlement of 410 refugees from Kosova, and in 2001, the country allowed 208 refugees from the Norwegian Tampa boat to arrive and resettle in the country (RMS, 2005; UNHCR, 2005a). As part of an agreement with the UN, the New Zealand government took upon itself to reunite this group of refugees with their families over the next three years. The family members were accepted as part of the New Zealand annual refugee quota (UNHCR, 2005a).

The Resettlement Solution

When seeking to assist refugees, the UNHCR aims to achieve durable solutions to help refugees overcome the hardships they experience. A durable solution means helping the refugees to become self-sufficient, enabling them to integrate and participate fully in the social and economic life of their new country, or their homeland if they repatriate. It means more than the relief and limbo of a refugee camp, which Stein (1986) refers to as the classic non-solution.

Research examining the initial resettlement needs and challenges of refugees has been somewhat underdeveloped (Michalski, 2001). In particular, relatively few studies have examined the plight of Arab and/or Muslim refugees relocating in Western countries (Michalski, 2001; Valtonen, 1998; Waxman, 2001).

Quantitative research by Waxman (2001) used questionnaire results to explore the impact of pre-migration and post-arrival experiences on the economic adjustment of

recently arrived Bosnian, Afghan and Iraqi refugees in Sydney, Australia. His findings provide a wealth of information regarding resettlement and adjustment of refugees, such as employment, social support, the effect of residential location on seeking or finding employment, and the length of the refugees' residence in their country of resettlement. These findings suggest that refugees, and particularly those who have a professional background, find it more difficult than others to come across suitable employment due to the difficulty of accepting a lower occupational position than they had held back in their homeland. Also, Waxman (2001) suggests that refugees may 'refuse' to seek employment, especially if they have big families and their government social benefit is more than what a job may pay them. Employment would result in social benefits being cut, which may be another reason why refugees do not actively seek work during the first few years of resettlement. Waxman's study also states that as a result of most refugees residing in low-rental, low-income areas that are mainly within close proximity of friends or family who also live around these areas, employment opportunities, as well as medical and educational facilities, are marginal or inadequate. In summary, Waxman's study states that refugees face high unemployment in their resettlement country due to many factors that include lack of or poor English language skills, the length of their residence in the resettlement country, their residential location, and the availability of social support networks.

Refugee adjustment is also noted in a qualitative study by Michalski (2001) which examines the resettlement challenges of Iraqi refugees in Canada. The findings of this research suggest that refugees adjusted successfully due to informal support in the shape of resettlement assistance from family and friends rather than formal community services. Michalski (2001) also states that for refugees, adjustment becomes challenging when the person is forced to resettle in a foreign country beyond their control, and the refugees' cultural background (religion and ethnicity) is different from that of the host society.

There are three classic durable solutions to refugee problems: settlement in a country of first asylum, voluntary repatriation, and resettlement in a third country. Resettlement is certainly not the most common practice used by the UNHCR when seeking to assist refugees (Stein, 1986). Stein (1986) suggested that resettlement stands out, not as one of three practical solutions, but as an exceptional measure to be pursued only for compelling humanitarian reasons or where the alternatives of voluntary repatriation and local integration do not exist. Out of the millions of people in need of resettlement, only

a modest number are actually resettled in host resettlement countries. UNHCR and the international community rely upon voluntary repatriation and local integration in most refugee situations (Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees, 2005). Various refugee agencies, with the assistance of the UNHCR, aim to find a durable solution when helping refugees.

When abruptly and forcefully having to flee their homelands, people first seek safety in other countries that have political borders with their own country; these countries are termed as “countries of first asylum” (Stein, 1986). Local integration, which is the settlement of refugees in their country of first asylum, is a solution utilised by the UNHCR and the international community. It occurs when refugees stay permanently in their country of first asylum and are integrated into the host country's life (UNHCR, 2005b). In the large majority of refugee situations, this is the solution utilised by UNHCR and the international community.

It has been argued that local integration opportunities should always be explored within the region of first asylum to enable the refugee to remain near to his/her country of origin, to facilitate a return to the country of origin when circumstances permit (Zetter, 1988). Furthermore, if the refugee's culture and customs are compatible with those of the regional host country, integration, if permitted, may occur more readily.

Voluntary repatriation is one of the “other solutions to the refugee crisis” (Field, 2006; Ray, 2000). Voluntary repatriation pertains to the voluntary and safe return and reintegration of refugees into their country of origin, and is considered the ‘best’ solution for refugees who come from non-European countries (Ray, 2000). Repatriation means that the refugees return home; it is often referred to as the ‘preferred’ solution. Repatriation should be voluntary, and the conditions at home that initially caused flight from fear of persecution should have been remedied (Field, 2006). While a frequently used, durable solution, repatriation does not always occur under optimum conditions.

However, it is resettlement in a third country which is the focus of this thesis. A considerable number of refugees are settled annually in host resettlement countries⁴ that are not necessarily in the local region, but are approved by the UNHCR and that have a

⁴ The nine countries that resettle the bulk of refugees are Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, and the U.S.A. The UNHCR is considering it a priority to encourage and strengthen programmes in other countries such as Benin, Brazil, the U.K., Burkina Faso, Chile, Iceland, Ireland, and Spain (UNHCR, 2008).

formal refugee resettlement programme. The UNHCR Handbook of Resettlement (2007c) defines resettlement as:

The selection and transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State which has agreed to admit them – as refugees - with permanent residence status. The status provided should ensure protection against refoulement⁵ and provide a resettled refugee and his/her family or dependants with access to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals. It should also carry with it the opportunity to eventually become a naturalized citizen of the resettlement country. (p.2)

The definition of resettlement has been interpreted and defined in various ways by researchers in the refugee field and by refugee services that have studied the resettlement of refugees (Gray & Elliot, 2001). In their *Refugee Voices* research, Gray and Elliot (2001) stated that the definition of resettlement in itself carries broad interpretations that vary from being approved for resettlement in a host country, to taking part as productive citizens in the host country.

The Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees in the UK (ICAR) outlines the important role that resettlement plays in the life of a refugee. ICAR (2005) states that resettlement fulfils three functions: it protects refugees who are at immediate risk; it provides refugees a chance to rebuild their lives in a host country, when returning to their own country or settling in the country of asylum is not a durable option; and in providing resettlement as an option for refugees, the world shares the responsibility of ensuring that the safety and well-being of people is maintained and respected.

Newland (2002) agrees:

Resettlement is a powerful tool of protection for individual refugees, a means to secure other rights, a durable solution for those who cannot go home or integrate in the country of first asylum, and a means by which states can share the responsibility for refugees with overburdened host countries and by doing so bolster their commitment to providing first asylum. (p.2)

Tomlinson and Egan (2002) assert that resettlement is a process of transition from relative helplessness and neediness towards a greater self-sufficiency and self-confidence. ICAR suggested that resettlement is a process involving the organised movement of selected refugees from their country of first asylum to a third country for permanent settlement and integration (ICAR, 2005); therefore, resettlement is the ‘decisional’ process that refugees experience when applying and being approved for

⁵ Refoulement means the expulsion of persons who have the right to be recognised as refugees (<http://www.unesco.org>)

resettlement in a host country.

According to Gray and Elliot (2001), resettlement is considered a two-way process, which involves the refugee group and the host country/society. On arrival, the host society is expected to accommodate the refugees and make them feel welcomed. In addition, other elements that underpin successful refugee settlement programmes include the involvement of governmental funding for research in the area of refugee resettlement, in addition to funding communities and groups that support refugee resettlement (Dibley & Dunstan, 2002). Resettlement occurs with the assistance of governmental and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the services they provide, which are expected to be accessible to these people (ICAR, 2005). This includes access to various public services such as schools, public health institutions, community organisations, and assistance with public housing, employment and other public facilities. These agencies and services provide the support and assistance refugees need to re-establish their lives in a new country and become accustomed to the new society, its values and beliefs.

The Office of Refugee Resettlement in the USA (ORR) defined resettlement in a way which pertains to the cultural adjustment and establishment of refugee lives in the host country, and stated that resettlement is a method of providing people in need with critical resources to assist them in becoming integrated members of American society (ORR, 2007).

The resettlement system and its services are different from one host country to another, depending on the population size, funding, services, and resettlement policies. Not only would agreeing on the actual definition of resettlement assist in clarifying the confusion faced by some governmental and non-governmental services and support agencies that are required to assist refugees in their resettlement, but it may also assist in addressing the issue of the length of time in which refugees are expected to be 'successfully resettled' and no longer in need of resettlement services. For the purpose of this study, and from the information gathered from the literature (e.g., ICAR, 2005; Neuwirth, 1988; Parsons, 2005; Singer & Wilson, 2006; Stein, 1986), resettlement is used to refer to the process of re-establishing and re-building the lives of the refugees in the receiving country by successfully adjusting to the society, overcoming their concern and anxiety, learning the language, and finding employment.

Refugees requiring this solution may be facing serious protection problems in their

country of first asylum and a safe third country would therefore be the only solution. There has been some concern over the decline of refugee resettlement numbers in host or industrialised countries (UNHCR, 2005b). Countries of resettlement seem to select their annual refugee quota based on domestic or foreign policy, and political considerations. Refugees from certain ethnic backgrounds such as Muslim or Arab and especially those in dire needs of resettlement, such as single women, children, and the mentally and physically challenged - continue to be ignored (Gray & Elliot, 2001; Neuwirth, 1988). It is suggested that New Zealand is one of very few resettlement countries (Canada is another example), which ensures that its acceptance of refugees is not solely based on their resettlement abilities or potential. Rather, it has reserved slots for 'disadvantaged' refugees such as women at risk, children and the mentally challenged (Ministry of Health, 2005).

Resettlement may also be sought for family reunification or for those refugees deemed vulnerable within the UNHCR's criteria. This group may include refugees with medical problems or women at risk. To some, resettlement may be considered a form of uprooting refugees from a dangerous, yet familiar environment, where they may have friends or family, yet struggle to cope with the demands of life and struggle with their unstable situation. Uprooting refugees may not always be in their best interest. It is, therefore, important to study what the needs of these refugees are, whether their needs can be met in a local or regional context, how they can be assisted, and if resettlement in host countries is the best solution.

While the number of refugees resettled by the UNHCR since the late 1980s has declined dramatically, resettlement still remains an important instrument of international protection and a durable solution for refugees when no other option is available (Neuwirth, 1988). Conversely, according to Newland (2002):

The number of refugees seeking resettlement hugely exceeds the number of places available. Paradoxically, and despite this overwhelming imbalance, more than 10,000 agreed resettlement slots expire unfilled in an average year. (p.3)

Lester (1997) argues that resettlement is an inaccessible solution for the majority of the refugee populations. In 1997, only 0.5% of the 26 million refugees globally had access to resettlement, which meant that more than 25 million refugees had to use other refugee aid alternatives, such as voluntarily repatriating to their home countries or integrating locally within their country of first asylum. ICAR mentioned that by 2001 this resettlement percentage had not changed majorly, with less than one per cent of the

world's 10.4 million refugees in 2001 being given the opportunity to resettle (ICAR, 2005).

When the resettlement solution is used, it can play a crucial role in lifting refugees from the hardships they experience and allowing them to re-establish a new life in a safe and secure country that is equipped with resettlement services to assist them in adjusting to a new society. Stein (1986) suggests that resettlement is considered a form of rescue for refugees who may differ religiously, ethnically, or politically from the country of first asylum's overall population, and it allows them a way out from an unstable and difficult situation in their country of first asylum.

On the one hand, resettlement suggests that in order for refugees to adapt to their new environment, they are expected to learn the language of the host country and adjust to its values and beliefs (Fanjoy, Ingraham, Khoury, & Osman, 2005). On the other hand, Dibley and Dunstan (2002) argue that the term resettlement is not clear-cut and therefore open to various interpretations. They outline various alternative terms that are used and which may also refer to resettlement, such as acculturation, multiculturalism, assimilation, and integration (Dibley & Dunstan, 2002). There is a debate in the literature about whether integration or assimilation is the preferred resettlement result.

Integration refers to the "longer-term, non-linear process through which newcomers become full and equal participants in all dimensions of society" (Dibley & Dunstan, 2002, p. 126). According to Berry (2001), integration means that the migrant is able to maintain his/her ethnic identity and engage or interact with the host society. Berry (2001) also comments that for the migrant, integration is generally associated with higher levels of overall well-being and general life satisfaction. Conversely, assimilation can be perceived as the process of relinquishing cultural identity and melting into the larger society (Dibley & Dunstan, 2002; Stein, 1986). Berry (2001) suggests that when immigrants are not encouraged or allowed to retain their own culture while integrating into the new society, some are likely to feel forced to assimilate.

Other research in the migration field points to the importance of distinguishing between integration and assimilation as a mean of resettling refugees in host societies, as they have differing impact on refugees (Hieronymi & Hasan, 2005). Hieronymi (2005) notes that assimilation has both a negative and positive connotation to its meaning. The positive is that it suggests that migrants or refugees are welcomed as being part of the mainstream or host society, and in turn:

Their foreign origin will fade – it may remain a fond or dark memory – and will not affect their place in the community that will turn from ‘host community’ to their ‘own community.’ (Hieronymi, 2005, p. 137)

However, the disadvantage of assimilation is that refugee groups are absorbed into the host society, lose their sense of ethnic identity, shed their values and beliefs, and replace them with those of the mainstream society, which may have negative consequences in the future. Ethnic group assimilation may be perceived as a method used by refugee ethnic groups to fit in and feel that they belong to their host country, or to avoid discrimination.

Encouraging integration, rather than assimilation, of resettled refugees is an issue that was addressed by the UNHCR in the Refugee Resettlement Handbook (2007c). Assimilation may only add to the stress of resettlement. In order for refugees to successfully adjust in their resettlement country, allowing them to maintain their ethnic identity is necessary for their successful adaptation (Gray & Elliot, 2001). With that being said, Hieronymi and Hasan (2005) suggested that there can be no effective integration without at least some assimilation, and there can be no effective assimilation without integration. This thesis will assess resettlement as integration and/or assimilation by exploring if and how the participants in this study have successfully and economically established themselves, adjusted to the cultural values and behaviours of their host society, are comfortable conversing in Basic English, and have overcome the anxiety of resettlement.

Different Models of Refugee Resettlement

Since the 1970s, several countries have made a commitment towards refugee resettlement through the support and assistance of the UNHCR. These countries are Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States. These countries have set annual quotas for a certain number of resettlement slots. Since 1998, several other countries such as Belgium, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom have started to cooperate with the UNHCR in providing resettlement places (Newland, 2002).

In order to put New Zealand refugee resettlement in context with other resettlement countries, the following section sheds light into the resettlement procedures in some of these countries. For the sake of this research and because of the number of refugees they resettle, only the first three countries are outlined briefly in this section. These countries

are the USA (53,813 refugees resettled in 2005), Canada (10,400), and Australia (11,654) (UNHCR, 2006).

USA Refugee Resettlement

The USA has the largest migrant population in the world (Chung & Bemak, 2002). According to researchers, American society is one of the world's largest multiethnic societies (Chung & Bemak, 2002; Erickson & Al-Timimi, 2001). Arabs and Muslims are part of the migrant population in the USA, coming from different Arab countries including Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, Sudan, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Mauritania (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000; Erickson & Al-Timimi, 2001; Shoeb, Weinstein & Halpern, 2007). According to the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR, 2007), more than 1.8 million refugees have arrived in the United States since the Refugee Act of 1980, driven from their homelands by war, political change, and social, religious, and ethnic oppression.

Similar to other resettlement countries, refugees who are resettling in the USA have access to considerable federal, state, and local support to help them succeed economically and socially. Affordable housing, health care access, job training and placement, and language learning dominate the local service needs. Ultimately though, metropolitan areas are the critical context for refugees as they settle into communities and become active members of their neighbourhoods, schools, and workplaces (Chung & Bemak, 2002; ORR, 2007; Shoeb et al., 2007).

During the 1980s and 1990s, the United States accepted an average of 100,000 refugees for resettlement annually. After the September 11th terrorist attacks, and despite the USA accepting the bulk of refugees for resettlement, security concerns slowed the USA resettlement programme to the point where no more than 25,000 to 30,000 refugees were likely to enter through this channel, against a ceiling of 70,000 (Newland, 2002).

The process taken by the USA resettlement agencies is to screen potential refugees outside of the United States to ensure they are not considered potential threats to the security of the USA. This must be determined by an officer of the Department of Homeland Security or by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and is considered as meeting official refugee criteria (ORR, 2007).

Once refugees are approved for USA resettlement, and prior to their departure from their country of first asylum, refugees receive cultural orientation through a US funded agency called the Cultural Orientation Resource Centre (CORC) to help them prepare for their new lives in America (CORC, 2008). It is through this agency that all refugees above the age of 15 years old who have been approved for USA resettlement receive information about the role of refugee agencies, housing, employment, health, education, and money management. The benefit of this information, according to CORC, is to assist refugees to develop realistic expectations about life in the United States. Also, orientation regarding life in the USA does not end at the overseas posts, rather it continues upon the refugee's arrival. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) generally arranges transportation to the United States. Similar to Canada, refugees are expected to repay the cost of their transportation once they are established in the United States. ORR mentions that refugees or their relatives may, of course, pay their own transportation costs in advance.

When refugees arrive in the USA, reception and placement (R&P) services are offered to refugees for their first 30 days in the country. Depending on the resettlement destination of the refugee, there are resettlement agencies that, with the support of the Department of Health and Human Services, provide funds to participating states and community resettlement agencies for assistance with housing, employment, language learning, and other services for four to eight months after arrival. Longer term assistance is available through state social service programmes as well as private, non-profit refugee organizations (Singer & Wilson, 2006).

Refugees resettling in the USA are eligible to apply for permanent residency within one year of their USA arrival, and American citizenship within five years. A Seattle based Refugee Resettlement Office (RRO) states that newly arrived refugees in the USA are provided with the following services through RRO:

- Airport reception
- Cultural orientation
- Furnishing the apartment
- Food and clothing
- Medical screening
- School enrolment

- English classes
- Employment search assistance

Therefore, similar to provision in other countries, refugees who arrive in the USA are provided with short-term, basic resettlement assistance. However, for refugees in the USA, this assistance depends on the resources and capabilities of their agency and can range from between 90 days after their arrival and up to one year (RRO, 2008). Cash assistance is also provided to refugees up to a maximum of eight months after their arrival, in order to assist the refugees to financially adjust and become self-sufficient in the USA. Other services include health care and housing assistance.

CORC also states that one advantage for refugees resettling in the USA is that the country is made up of numerous established ethnic communities, which may also provide other services that are culturally specific to the needs of refugees, such as job training and placement assistance, and mental health services (CORC, 2008). Also, according to ORR (2008), a refugee with close relatives already in the United States will probably be resettled near to where the relatives live. Otherwise, a resettlement agency will decide the best placement site based on the availability of jobs, housing, and social services.

Canadian Refugee Resettlement

Canada has had a long history of settling refugees from overseas as part of its humanitarian obligation to the international community (Simich, Beiser, & Mawani, 2003). During the 1980s and 1990s, an average of 30,000 refugees were admitted to Canada annually, and in 2006, Canada resettled more than 10,000 refugees who come from a variety of countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Croatia, Ethiopia, Iran, Somalia and Sudan. Since the end of World War II, Canada has resettled more than 700,000 refugees (Parsons, 2005).⁶ In addition, just like New Zealand, Canada not only accepts the resettlement of quota refugees (approved by the UN), but also medical needs refugees with illnesses that pose a threat to their lives and require immediate medical attention not available in their home country, women at risk who have experienced high levels of trauma, and vulnerable, unaccompanied minors (children under the age of 18 years old) who have lost both parents or adult family members. However, unlike New Zealand, Canadian resettlement policies in 1979 introduced a new refugee category,

⁶ Parsons (2005) also makes a comparison to New Zealand, which as a resettlement country has settled more than 40,000 refugees since 1976.

which is privately sponsored refugees. Canada accepts up to 4,000 privately sponsored refugees annually into the country. Sponsored refugees are individuals who are sponsored by organisations or groups in Canada who are pre-approved by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, and agree to personally provide the support needed for resettlement (Parsons, 2005).

The journey of Canadian refugees begins in Canadian government designated visa posts overseas, contacted by the UNHCR regarding displaced individuals (Simich et al., 2003). Once these individuals meet the criteria for refugee status, the Canadian officials at these visa posts choose a Canadian city to which refugees are sent. However, unlike New Zealand refugees, the Canadian approved refugees are given travel loans to travel to Canada that they are expected to repay within six months of their arrival (Simich et al., 2003; Simich, Hamilton, & Baya, 2006). On the other hand, and again unlike New Zealand refugees, Canadian refugees are provided with pre-orientation programmes before their departure to Canada through embassies, the International Organisation for Migration, or informal channels such as friends or relatives who already live in Canada. Providing pre-arrival information about the country of resettlement reduces stress and anxiety associated with relocating to a different country and environment (Simich et al., 2003; Simich et al., 2006). However, although some information is provided to Canadian refugees, it may sometimes be inappropriate or incorrect (Simich et al., 2003).

Once refugees arrive in Canada, they are met at the airport by interpreters from NGO resettlement services or agencies (Simich et al., 2003). According to Simich et al. (2003), refugees are often told where they will be sent to in Canada on the day of their departure, which gives them no time to prepare themselves mentally or to contact friends and relatives in Canada about their location, as it may often be a different city to that of their friends or relatives. As a result, after having their landing papers and visa checked by Canadian Immigration officials at the airport, some refugees who arrive in Canada do not get onto their connecting flights or buses to their arranged destination, but remain in the first city they would have landed in (in most cases that would be Toronto). Simich et al. (2003) clarified that if refugees chose not to continue their journey to their arranged destination, they are within their legal rights.

However, those who do head to their arranged destination for resettlement are given two to three weeks temporary accommodation in resettlement centres, are expected to seek employment and attend language proficiency classes, and receive substantial assistance for food and rent for up to one year (Simich et al., 2006). The refugees are also assisted

in applying for health cards, opening bank accounts, and enrolling their children in schools (Simich et al., 2003). Despite Canada excelling in refugee resettlement, existing services and agencies remain unable to meet the needs of refugees, especially in terms of providing skills training for employment and medical attention (Simich et al., 2006).

Australian Refugee Resettlement

Although Australia receives an annual quota of 12,000 refugees, to some humanitarian agencies and researchers on refugees in Australia, this is by no means considered a generous number (Mansouri & Bagdas, 2002), as the country has the ability and resources to assist refugees, and allow them a permanent resettlement. Nonetheless, over the past 50 years, more than half a million refugees from war-torn countries such as Vietnam, Cambodia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, and Myanmar have been resettled in Australia (Casimiro et al., 2007; Ingamells & Westoby, 2008). Additionally, between 1998 and 2003, more than 35% of total humanitarian arrivals who had settled in Australia as part of either off-shore or on-shore humanitarian programmes came from Afghan, Iraqi, and Iranian backgrounds (Neale, Abu-Duhou, Black, & Biggs, 2007).

The Australian refugee policy works with complex categories. Refugee protection is categorised as either off-shore or on-shore. Off-shore refers to those who were offered the protection of resettlement before arriving in Australia, while on-shore protection was given to those who already were in Australia, who applied for protection, and met the UN definition of convention refugees (Ingamells & Westoby, 2008). Once again, those who were on-shore arrivals and had genuine and legal documents to support their refugee application were given permanent protection, while those who arrived in Australia illegally (e.g., boat smuggling) were given temporary protection in the form of a Temporary Protection Visa (TPV)⁷.

Furthermore, the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) pointed out that in 2001, an additional kind of temporary visa named the Temporary Humanitarian Visa (THV) was introduced for those who had left their country of asylum and were in detention camps in Nauru and Manus Island (RCOA, n.d.). Holders of TPVs and THVs had restricted access to the basic needs of resettlement and to family reunion.

⁷ On 9 August 2008, temporary protection visas (TPVs) were abolished. This means that all initial applicants for a protection visa who are found to engage Australia's protection obligations now receive a permanent protection visa (Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2008).

Australia and, more recently, Denmark were the *only* countries to grant temporary status to refugees who had been assessed and approved as genuine refugees (Human Rights Watch, 2002; Leach & Mansouri, 2003). According to Mansouri and Bagdas (2002), TPV holders were persons who arrived in Australia unlawfully by air or by sea, applied for protection visas after 20 October 1999 and had been recognised by Australia as refugees in accordance with the United Nations 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. (p.82)

Thus, according to the above definition, although individuals may have been assessed as genuine refugees who fear persecution, they were not given a permanent visa to live in Australia (prior to 2008). Australia's TPV came into force on 20 October 1999 to provide a temporary safe haven to refugees. According to the Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship, the TPV “provides temporary residence and access to settlement support arrangements provided to refugees resettled from overseas” (2007). As of 2002, there were 7957 refugees in the Australian community who held TPVs (Leach & Mansouri, 2003). Furthermore, the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA, n.d.) mentioned that TPVs were granted to people who had been determined to be convention refugees, but either sought refugee status after arrival in Australia or was accepted for resettlement to Australia after having left a country of first asylum.

Mansouri and Bagdas (2002) stated that TPVs were introduced to ensure that the lives of those who are in dire need of settlement and had been assessed and approved as genuine refugees by the United Nations were protected temporarily, but rejected permanently. TPV holders were provided with access to ‘limited’ services, were expected to assume responsibility for themselves, and also had no access to family reunion.

Despite the idea that the TPV policy aimed to deter potential asylum seekers from coming to Australia, Mansouri and Bagdas (2002) suggested that since introducing this policy in 1999, the number of asylum seekers to Australia had in fact increased. This, they suggested, is hardly a positive reflection on the effectiveness or success of this approach.

The UNHCR had also raised its concern over the limitations that a TPV provided for refugees. In addition to a refugee having no entitlement to family reunion, they were also given no convention travel documents, and were therefore not allowed to reunite with family members nor visit family members who lived outside Australia.

Furthermore, Mansouri and Cauchi (2007) outlined that TPV holders had limited access to English language classes, and were ineligible for most settlement support services:

Although they have the right to work their ability to do so is limited by the temporary nature of their visa, poor English language skills, and limited access to employment services. (p. 124)

Mansouri and Cauchi (2007) had also considered the relation between mental health issues and TPV, whereby the extended detention and lack of certainty about TPVs prolong and have a negative influence on the individual's mental well-being and overall health.

Originally, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW), the TPV alternative provided a three year protection visa to refugees, then their refugee "status" was withdrawn and they were forced to return to their country regardless of the conflict that occurred there (HRW, 2002). This was of real concern to HRW, who advocates that refugee status should only cease to apply to individuals once they are able to live safely and are protected in their new home country (HRW, 2002).

On 13 July 2004, the Australian government announced that all TPV holders will have the opportunity to apply for permanent visas. Closer examination of the details tempered the initial elation surrounding this announcement. TPV holders did not automatically qualify for permanent visas (Mansouri & Cauchi, 2007). The requirement to go through the visa application process all over again may indeed prolong the uncertainty and distress felt by TPV holders. Refugees who were refused permanent resettlement and forced to go back to their native lands may also be put at risk of life-threatening and dangerous situations. Leach and Mansouri (2003) argued that under the TPV policy, hundreds of refugees in Australia lived with the ongoing fear of being refused a visa extension after their three year TPV expires. This issue not only left them in despair, but it also added to their other concerns such as being ineligible for English classes, affordable housing, employment, family reunion, or travel documents. Potential employers did not wish to give jobs to refugees holding TPVs because of their unsettled and unknown situation (Leach & Mansouri, 2003; Mansouri & Bagdas, 2002).

Moreover, Neal et al. (2007) suggested that for the refugees and asylum seekers in Australia, there are ongoing challenges of having little or insufficient access to services, including language, employment and healthcare, which may assist them to establish safety, a secure future, and well-being. Depriving refugees of these services only adds to

their feelings of social isolation, disempowerment, loss of social network and support, feelings of anxiety, and deterioration of their mental health.

In addition, there continued to be several functioning detention centres in Australia. One is the Christmas Island Immigration Reception and Processing Centre.⁸ Australian government policy works on the basis of a mandatory detention system in which all persons entering or remaining in the country without a valid visa are compulsorily detained and may be subject to deportation. In addition to detention centres, there are also community-based detention arrangements which occur in Residential Housing Projects⁹ (RHPs), where women and children could live while remaining in detention. RCOA (n.d.) points out that while the RHPs are aimed at providing a more humane living environment, they continue to come under strong criticism because there is little freedom of movement, 24-hour surveillance and husbands/fathers are not permitted to live at the RHPs.

Colic-Peisker (2005) explained that refugees became associated with terrorism by some Australian officials after the September 11th terrorist attacks on the USA, and refugee admission into the country then became a prolonged and difficult process.

New Zealand as a Refugee Resettlement Country

The country's first refugee resettlement involvement was initiated in 1944 when an American ship arrived on its shores carrying 733 Polish children and 108 adults from Europe. According to New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS), between 1980 and 2002, more than 16,000 refugees and displaced persons had been resettled in the country under the Refugee Quota Programme. The nationalities of these refugee groups have changed over the years according to global and humanitarian circumstances.

In 2002, there were more than 7 million Muslim refugees worldwide (UNHCR, 2002). By 2006 the main group of refugees under UNHCR's mandate continued to be Afghans (2.1 million), followed by Iraqis (1.5 million), Sudanese (686,000), and Somalis (460,000) (UNHCR, 2007a). In the New Zealand context, the country has resettled 1,743 Somali, 2,605 Iraqi, 336 Sudanese, 60 Palestinian, 51 Syrian, 20 Kuwaiti, 9

⁸ Christmas Island is a small territory of Australia located in the Indian Ocean, 2600 kilometres northwest of Perth in Western Australia and 500 kilometres south of Jakarta, Indonesia (Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2007).

⁹ As of August 2007, the Villawood, Sydney and Perth Residential Housing Projects remain open (RCOA, 2007).

Tunisian, 9 Saudi Arabian, and 8 Libyan refugees between 1980 and 2007 (RefNZ, 2007).

Gray and Elliot (2001) mention that New Zealand research on refugee resettlement tends to be small-scale and localised. Also, the ethnic groups that they have cited in their report include African, Bosnian, Cambodian, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Kosovar, Lao, Somali, Southeast Asian, Sri Lankan, and Vietnamese, whereas Dibley and Dunstan's (2002) report includes Afghani, Burmese, Ethiopian, Iranian, Iraqi, Somali, Sri Lankan participants. But neither report provides much insight or background on the specific resettlement experiences of each ethnic group, as if all ethnic refugees face the same resettlement challenges.

Uprety et al. (1999) conducted research investigating issues concerned with early intervention for asylum seekers and refugees in New Zealand. Their report indicated that at the time of this study there were more than 25,000 refugees residing in New Zealand. Evidently, this number has increased, and the recent estimate is that there are around 40,000 refugees living in the country.

There is no pre-orientation process for refugees in New Zealand (RMS, personal communication, September 13, 2004). Most of the refugees who arrive in New Zealand have no or little information or prior knowledge about the country or Western society. Family reunification refugees are possibly considered the most knowledgeable about their destination prior to arriving in New Zealand, because their family member who already resides here would have informed them.

However, even with the little knowledge that these refugees are equipped with, they still are not completely ready to face the expectations of life in New Zealand. Some may even have preconceived ideas about how it is to live in Western society or those societies that differ considerably from theirs. Generally, refugees want to arrive in a country which is considered safe and peaceful. There are few organisations in the country that provide refugees with services and humanitarian programmes; among them are the following.

Mangere Resettlement Reception Centre (MRRC)

New Zealand policies do not approve of the detention centre strategy, and thus upon arriving in New Zealand, refugees are sent to an Auckland based reception centre or refugee resettlement centre in the town of Mangere, in the south of Auckland. The

country receives its annual quota of 750 people per year; they arrive at MRRC in six intakes which may vary in size, though they are normally spread evenly over the six intakes. Often MRRC reaches full room capacity, other times not. There is generally some room for asylum seekers depending on the timing of their arrival.

According to Field (2006), the approach to collective accommodation in New Zealand and directed residence at MRRC not only houses quota refugees but it also holds asylum seekers under orders of detention. Field (2006), states:

The environment of the centre, where specialised staff treats detainees and refugees alike with dignity and respect, is cited as a factor in its successful record, in part, this must also be attributed to New Zealand's relatively high recognition rates. (p. 34)

During their six-week stay at MRRC, refugees experience a welcoming orientation to New Zealand, and are also provided with free English lessons. The English lessons are offered through Auckland University of Technology (AUT) and they are designed to suit the different ages of the refugees.

Specifically, refugees attend an English language programme and a Bilingual orientation programme. The Bilingual orientation programme provides the refugees with information about the various governmental systems in New Zealand, such as:

- Information about New Zealand, and its people.
- Information about accommodation.
- The New Zealand health and education systems.
- Information regarding banking, money and finance.

Also, during their stay at MRRC, refugees attend an English language programme that assists the refugees in various aspects of their new lives in New Zealand, such as applying for work, interview skills, filling in application forms, and understanding bills (RMS, 2005).

At MRRC, refugees are also entitled to various health services such as the Auckland Refugees as Survivors centre (RAS). RAS is a charitable trust and is located at MRRC. It provides mental health services to refugees who require the assistance of professional counsellors and social workers. RAS also organises physiotherapy, exercise, and relaxation sessions for the refugee men and women, in addition to youth and children programmes (RAS, n.d.).

The Mangere Centre was once an army barrack in the early 20th century and is considered an ‘open-detention centre.’¹⁰ Refugees who arrive at the centre are issued with an access card (one card per family), which allows the refugees to leave the centre during specified hours of the day (MoH, 2005). After gaining permission of an authorised staff member, refugees at Mangere are allowed to visit family or friends who reside outside the centre. This is in addition to refugees being able to receive visitors during most times of the day. For the refugees, Mangere serves as a reception centre. On the other hand, Mangere has been detaining asylum seekers since September 2001. Depending on a risk assessment, asylum seekers are allowed to leave the centre during day time and issued an access card, or not. Some are restricted to remaining in the ‘centre’ and are not allowed to leave; visitors have to gain permission in order to see them. For the asylum seekers, Mangere serves as a detention centre.

However, in comparison to the refugees at Australian detention centres, those at MRRC enjoy a relatively comfortable stay. Refugees are entitled to various health and educational services that the centre provides for them (Dibley & Dunstan, 2002; Dunstan et al., 2004; Gray & Elliot, 2001).

Refugee and Migrant Services (RMS)¹¹

Although the name implies services to other migrants, RMS is exclusively dedicated to assisting refugees who arrive in New Zealand. RMS is the only NGO that works with refugees in New Zealand. This NGO has been providing assistance to refugees since its establishment in 1976, and the role it plays in the lives of refugees in New Zealand is indispensable.

One of the main services that RMS provides for refugees is volunteer support workers who help the refugee family in resettling and re-establishing themselves in New Zealand (Gray & Elliot, 2001; Parsons, 2005). People of the community volunteer to assist refugees in their resettlement in New Zealand and are contracted for a six-month placement with a refugee family. RMS finds the assistance of these volunteers essential (J. Conway, personal communication, February 21, 2006). RMS runs training courses for the volunteers to provide them with information regarding refugee issues, experiences, health and well-being (RMS, 2005). Other services that RMS provides for refugees include:

¹⁰ J. Conway, personal communication, April 11, 2007.

¹¹ As of 2008, the organisation has renamed itself “Refugee Services” but I will refer to it as RMS throughout this thesis.

- Counselling and social work
- Assisting in family reunification
- Advice on budgets
- Adult life skills programmes
- Children activity programmes
- Health programmes
- Information regarding housing (through the assistance of HNZC)
- Information regarding free or affordable English lessons
- Information regarding free or affordable employment and computer training lessons.

Several weeks prior to the refugees ending their six-week¹² stay at the Mangere centre, volunteers are allocated to each refugee family. The RMS volunteers meet with their allocated family in order to gain familiarity and to bond (RMS, 2005). After their initial allocation meeting, the volunteers are then free to visit their allocated family at MRRC. On the day that the refugee family leaves MRRC, RMS volunteers accompany the refugee family to their new HNZC home. HNZC assists RMS in finding suitable homes for the refugees around New Zealand; however, the majority of refugees are resettled in Auckland (Dunstan et al., 2004; Gray & Elliot, 2001).

National Association of ESOL¹³ Home Tutor Scheme

The Home Tutor Scheme was established in the 1970s when a large number of non-English speaking people from the Pacific Islands and Southeast Asia arrived to New Zealand (ESOL, 2007). The Home Tutor Scheme provides English language tuition for migrants and refugees who cannot afford to pay for their own tuition or who are unable to attend English language classes due to family commitments such as having young children. Currently, the Home Tutor Scheme is New Zealand's largest home-tutoring agency operating in 23 locations throughout the country and providing 2 to 6 hours of tuition a week to adult refugees (Altinkaya & Omundsen, 1999; ESOL, 2007). According to statistics on their website, the Home Tutor Scheme states that in 2006 it had provided English language home-tutoring for 5,744 adult migrants and refugees, with more than 70% of these adults being female migrants or refugees (ESOL, 2007). It

¹² As of 2008, the current orientation programme at Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre has been reduced to five weeks.

¹³ ESOL stands for 'English for Speakers of Other Languages'.

is also suggested that the second largest ethnic group who access ESOL are those from Middle Eastern backgrounds (ESOL, 2007)¹⁴.

Refugee Resettlement Needs and Challenges

Globally, as a result of economic, social and political disruption, migration in the last century has been more extensive than ever before. Rissel (1997) suggested that in the 1990s, there were an estimated 100 million people living outside their country of origin. A recent statistic by the UN stated that there was an estimate of 214 million migrants in the world (UN, 2008)¹⁵.

The resettlement process introduces unique and challenging experiences for migrants, especially in cases where the host society has a different set of values, customs and traditions from those of the migrants' own cultures (Hattar-Pollara & Meleis, 1995). Migrants may face challenges while adjusting in a new society, which include gender related differences, housing, health, education, and language acquisition, whereas refugees also face loss of social identity, negative stereotypes of refugees, refugee acculturation and identity (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003). Another challenge that refugees may have to deal with is to overcome the difficulty of accrediting their education and qualifications that they obtained from their homeland (Abu Baker, 1999). This becomes a frustrating difficulty, especially for those who come from societies that differ linguistically, where their education may have not been completed in English, or those who have expertise in areas that are not acknowledged in Western society such as artistic Arabic or Islamic calligraphy writing.

In order for host countries to assist refugees to adjust and rebuild their lives in the new country, it may be useful to initially understand how the various experiences that the refugees may have come across before and after arriving in a host country impact on their resettlement. This issue is addressed in a study by Hyndman and McLean (2006) on the resettlement experiences of refugees from the Aceh region in Indonesia who had settled in Vancouver, Canada. In their research, Hyndman and McLean (2006) look at three key moments in the lives of these refugees: detention, Canadian arrival, and one year after resettlement. The study also examines why and how these refugees came to Canada, and their experiences with the resettlement services that are provided to refugees. The findings of their study suggest that even after a year of resettlement

¹⁴ Asians are the largest ethnic group represented among ESOL learners (ESOL, 2007).

¹⁵ United Nations' Trends in Total Migrant Stock: The 2008 Revision, <http://esa.un.org/migration>

services, the Aceh refugees continued to experience settlement difficulties in terms of employment and English language proficiency. Hyndman and McLean's (2006) study also recommends that there is a need to further support employment and language programmes, which in turn play a part in developing a smoother and speedier resettlement process for refugees.

It is important that when accepting refugees for resettlement, host countries have adequate services in order to assist in their successful resettlement. Beiser (1999) suggested that a good "investment" in the future of refugees is to provide services that are culturally or religiously specific to their needs which in turn help them to adjust in their host country and become productive and contributing people in the society.

Other resettlement challenges, which Gray and Elliot (2001) refer to as 'practical needs' that play an equally important role in the successful resettlement of refugees, include:

- Housing
- Access to healthcare
- Mental health
- Financial assistance
- Employment and accreditation of qualifications
- Language

Practical Needs

Housing

A report by Beer (2005) stated that adequate and appropriate housing is one of the biggest challenges that refugees have to deal with when arriving in their resettlement country. Refugees may request that their specific needs be met when it comes to their accommodation, such as its location (nearby friends, family, religious centre, not on a busy road); its size, depending on the number of family members and whether or not extended members that have arrived with the refugee family, such as grandparents, uncles and aunts, desire to live with them in one house; and affordability. Failure to meet such needs raises concerns of overcrowding, family conflicts, and health risks (Beer, 2005; Dunstan et al., 2004; RCOA, 2007).

Other challenges relating to housing that refugees come across involve being discriminated against by their landlords or housing agents because of their race, lack of knowledge of host language, income and family size (Beer, 2005; Dunstan et al., 2004;

Gray & Elliot, 2001; RCOA, 2007). In addition, lack of knowledge of the language may become a barrier for refugees when filling in forms to sign tenancy agreements and trying to understand their rights as tenants. Lack of ability to communicate in the language may hinder the refugee's ability to complain if there is a problem in the house that requires the landlord's attention. From a local perspective, HNZA is the main housing agent that provides appropriate accommodation for refugees immediately after their six-week orientation at MRRC is over. It is assumed that the houses provided by HNZA are affordable and meet the needs of refugees, and they are not inspected or seen by the refugees until their MRRC departure. Finding adequate accommodation for New Zealand refugees is not an easy task; as Gray and Elliot (2001) suggested, New Zealand housing services confront various issues when seeking appropriate refugee housing, such as housing shortages, being discriminated against by the neighbourhood or landlord, and housing allocated far away from facilities such as schools or child care. Another issue that refugees may encounter is that some landlords may want proof that the family has a steady income to pay for rent, yet many refugees may be unemployed for quite a while, especially during their initial arrival in the country (Gray and Elliot, 2001).

The housing challenge is not an experience only for refugee families. Wahlbeck (1998) states that accommodation difficulties are even greater for single refugees, who not only arrive in a host country with no family members to support them or live with them, but finding a home for one person may be more challenging than finding a suitable home for a family. In their refugee resettlement research, Dunstan et al. (2004) mentioned that cultural appropriateness was one of the key concerns for refugees assessing the suitability of housing, however it is not clear what the basis of these cultural matters were, nor how they could be resolved.

Access to Healthcare

Displacement and traumatic experience, living in poverty, and the lack to access of adequate health care needs back in their homeland makes access to healthcare in their resettlement country an important concern for refugees (Dunstan et al., 2004). When arriving in New Zealand, refugees residing at MRRC have access to various health care and counselling services to address their physical and mental health needs. The healthcare needs of refugees may be associated with traumatic experiences prior to arriving in their host society, in addition to untreated conditions that are a result of war wounds or untreated disabilities. Gray and Elliot (2001) point out that refugees' mental

health needs have been widely cited as an important healthcare concern that needs to be addressed.

In New Zealand refugees are eligible to obtain a Community Services Card in order to be able to access affordable health care, by paying lower doctor and prescription fees. Refugees who arrive in their resettlement country may never have had access to appropriate health care, and identifying their health needs is an important matter, such as the unaddressed dental health needs of the Bosnian refugees who arrived in New Zealand (Madjar & Humpage, as cited in Gray & Elliot, 2001).

Some barriers associated with access to health care include refugees being unfamiliar with the process of calling and making an appointment to see their doctors, dissatisfaction with the health treatment or prescription, length of waiting lists for treatment or to see their doctor (Dunstan et al., 2004; RCOA, 2007), and the language barrier, which according to the findings by Dunstan et al. (2004), is exacerbated due to refugees being unaware that there are interpreters at hospitals to assist them with communication.

Mental Health of Refugees

Refugees are forced to leave their life, friends and family members behind and seek the security of foreign or host countries. As a result, they may come to their resettlement country with mixed feelings. On the one hand, they are grateful to be given an opportunity to live with their families in a safe environment, and on the other hand, they are at times unprepared for the resettlement challenges that they come across in a land that has differing cultural and religious values to their own. Refugees may encounter feelings of loss: loss of familiarity, loss of family, loss of control. Tilbury (2007) states that refugees from different cultures talk about mental distress differently than do those from some Western societies, and that it is up to the refugee services to pick up on these different notions in order to identify those individuals in need of assistance. Their concern over the unknown that lies ahead of them in their new host country may be displayed in various mental and physical illnesses. In their report, Dibley and Dunstan (2002) found that most refugees indicated that they felt their health had improved since arriving in New Zealand. However, they also found that gender-wise there is a difference in health, with more female than male refugees reporting that their health has become worse since arriving in New Zealand. Reasons for health deterioration varied

from stress caused from living in a new country, being far from extended family, and issues associated with raising their children (Dibley & Dunstan, 2002).

According to De Voe (2002), refugees express their feelings of anxiety and loss in the form of depression, violence towards other family members, or somatic illnesses, and providing ethnically appropriate services is important in order to assist these individuals to overcome feelings of despair in their new homeland. When comparing the mental health of Somali and Iraqi refugees in Norway, Fangen (2006) suggested that although overall the mental health of Somali refugees in Norway situates them in a worse health position; it is the Iraqi refugees who frequently report feelings of loneliness or nervous symptoms than do Somalis.

Researchers have suggested that refugees experience more health and mental problems in comparison to immigrants (e.g., Ward et al., 2001; Whittaker, Hardy, Lewis & Buchan, 2005). Such health problems may include Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), psychological stress associated with displacement and resettlement in a new society, depression, schizophrenia, and other mental health issues that may have been unidentified or untreated in the refugees' native country. These studies also propose that the mental health of migrants is predominately determined by their migrant status, in other words, whether or not their migration was forced or voluntary. Gray and Elliot (2001) also point out that for refugees, displacement and social isolation is a common factor in causing worry, frustration, disappointment and concern over their future.

Financial Assistance

Refugees arriving in their host country usually arrive with little or no financial resources. In some resettlement countries, such as Canada and Australia, refugees are given temporary and somewhat limited access to financial aid. Refugees who have been approved for resettlement in Canada are given a loan to assist them in paying for their travel and transportation to Canada, and their medical exams abroad, which they are expected to pay back to the government after six months of resettlement, and interest is added to these loans (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2005; Simich, 2003). Refugees in Canada are also given financial assistance, such as income support for up to one year or until the refugee becomes self sufficient, whichever comes first (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2005).

Refugees approved for resettlement in Australia under the Special Humanitarian Programmes (SPH) are required to pay for their own travel expenses to Australia.

According to the Australian Refugee Association (ARA), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) provides interest free funds for refugees to pay for 50% of the total travel costs (ARA, n.d.), with the refugees being responsible for paying the remainder of the expenses, and they must abide by certain restrictions, such as having to pay the loan back within 15 months of their resettlement arrival (RCOA, 2007).

In New Zealand, the government is responsible for paying for the travel expenses of approved quota refugees, which they are not expected to repay. Once quota refugees arrive at MRRC they are registered with WINZ, which provides them with a substantial allowance during their six-week stay at the centre, and once departing from MRRC they are eligible for an income support benefit and a resettlement fund of up to one thousand dollars to assist them in purchasing household items, which they are not required to pay back.

Employment and Accreditation of Qualifications

Colic-Peisker (2002) referred to employment as a key resettlement concern for refugees, and gaining access to employment is vital in assisting the successful resettlement of migrants, providing them with the opportunity to become independent and productive citizens in their new country. Thus, employment both empowers refugees and plays a role in supporting the integration of migrants (Dunstan et al., 2004). Studies in Australia have suggested that refugees are more likely than immigrants to be unemployed (Iredale & D'Arcy, 1992, cited in Gray & Elliot, 2001, p. 31). According to Gray and Elliot (2001), reasons for refugee unemployment may relate to the effects of displacement and traumatic experiences they endured, which may have an effect on their desire to continue their education or continue working in their field of expertise. Dunstan et al. (2004) suggested that refugees may be disadvantaged educationally when arriving in their resettlement country and lack of experience and education may hinder refugees' employment opportunities and impact on their social status.

During their first few weeks or months in their host country, refugees are often provided with substantial government income support for as long as they remain unemployed or incapable of seeking employment, for example due to sickness. This matter sets refugees in what Colic-Peisker (2002) referred to as the 'honeymoon stage,' in which refugees do not need to worry about their financial or unemployment status. However, once the refugee adjusts to the new society or their income support is terminated and there is an expectation that the refugee should seek employment, the honeymoon stage

is over and the refugee steps into the competitive world of the labour market. Other challenges indicated by Dunstan et al.'s (2004) study pertain to issues of discrimination and the lack of cultural understanding by potential employers. Colic-Peisker (2002) also stated that when refugees seeking employment are faced with issues of discrimination, it may trigger their feelings of 'otherness' and isolation. This also contributes to mental health concerns.

Other challenges that pertained to seeking adequate employment included finding a job that matched the refugees' expertise and experience, and accrediting their qualifications. Gray and Elliot (2001) mentioned that for refugees, finding appropriate employment is often difficult, especially if their local qualifications or degrees are not easily accredited or acknowledged. Valtonen (1998) suggested that the longer it takes for the accrediting process to be completed, the more it deters refugees from integrating. In some societies, refugees and immigrants are encouraged to enrol in educational programmes or to attend additional courses in order to accredit their local degrees. For some, age, location of the educational institute, lack of finances and family situation prevented them from taking on board this suggestion (Valtonen, 1998).

For some refugees, working is important in order to feel they are not a liability or burden on society. However, if they arrive with little or no education and are rejected by the labour market for this, then some ethnic groups resort to creating what Gray and Elliot (2001) called "ethnic entrepreneurship," in which ethnic people settling in a new country start up their own ethnic businesses to meet the identified demands and needs of their own ethnic group, such as clothing and food businesses. According to Gray and Elliot (2001), "refugees have special needs, tastes and preferences that cannot be met by the non-ethnic sector, so business develops to fill an ethnic niche" (p. 32).

In a study on refugee employment in the UK, Tomlinson and Egan (2002) asserted that refugees come from various backgrounds and experiences, and it would be unjust to assume they are all illiterate or uneducated. Tomlinson and Egan (2002) maintain that refugees may have been successful professionals in their own countries and are highly motivated to work, and therefore become dissatisfied with their unemployment situation once they arrive in their resettlement country. Despite their qualifications, experience and motivation, refugee unemployment is reported to be very high in the UK (Tomlinson & Egan, 2002). In New Zealand, Gray and Elliot (2001) mention that despite the emphasis on the importance of employment in supporting the resettlement and integration of refugees, limited English proficiency, lack of New Zealand work

experience, low levels of education, and the non-recognition of foreign (overseas) qualifications may be reasons for high refugee unemployment rates. Similarly, Dunstan et al. (2004) note that most refugees they interviewed were unemployed, and those who were employed were working in a variety of fields, mainly not in their area of expertise. Dunstan et al. (2004) also noted that on a gender related level, men were more likely than women to be employed, as women were at home taking care of their family.

Language

In order for refugees to successfully integrate and rebuild their lives, it is necessary for them to acquire the language of their resettlement country. Refugees who arrive in New Zealand are given free access to English language classes during their stay at MRRC; they are also enrolled, and, usually, put on waiting lists for additional English acquisition classes once they leave the resettlement centre. Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ) provides some English courses that are funded by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) and are free of charge; however, these places are quite limited (Altinkaya & Omundsen, 1999), and refugees who wish to access free English lessons have a long wait or need pay their own course fees.

The benefits of learning English are apparent to refugees and the public sector. In their research, Dunstan et al. (2004) found that refugee participants cited improvement in their English due to contact with other English speakers, such as their neighbours, in addition to the benefits of watching English TV. Their study also suggested that women, more than men, were likely to cite difficulty in accessing English language courses, due to their family commitments or lack of transport (Dunstan et al., 2004).

A study by Rida and Milton (2001) also suggested female refugees are more disadvantaged than men when it comes to learning English in their host society. Rida and Milton (2001) argue that while refugee women may express the desire and realise the need to learn English, a variety of internal and external factors, such as lack of information, taking care of children or elderly family members, unsupportive spouses and transport issues, prevented them from attending English classes.

Gray and Elliot (2001) argue that ethnic communities may hinder the prospect of refugees learning English. Gray and Elliot cite a study on language acquisition of a Lao community in Wellington, which found that people who had weak ethnic network ties reported a strong English ability, whereas people who had strong ethnic ties and were

well-integrated within their ethnic community reported having a weak grasp of English. According to Gray and Elliot (2001), this study suggested that ethnic people who have strong ties within their community feel that they do not need to learn English, as their daily contact is with people from their own ethnicity. However, Gray and Elliot (2001) conclude by stating that ethnic refugees need to learn English regardless of their ability, as they are bound to make contact with people from the host society at some level.

Maydell-Stevens, Masgoret and Ward (2007) conducted a qualitative study using grounded theory to analyse interviews conducted with Russian-speaking immigrants in New Zealand. Although their study did not include refugees, some of their participants were unemployed, receiving social benefits and lived in houses provided by HNZC for low-income families. The purpose of their study was to investigate problems in adaptation as a result of migration and resettlement. These factors can be taken into perspective and the findings may be applied to research on refugees as they too share adaptation and resettlement challenges. In their study, Maydell-Stevens et al. (2007) found that when migrants chose to integrate into the society they were more successful and satisfied with their lives in the country than those who chose to separate themselves from the New Zealand society. According to their study, some factors that may play a role in the success of migrant adaptation include reasons for migration, the gains and losses of living in New Zealand, coping strategies that were available (or not) for the migrants and their plans for the future. It is without doubt that this research unravels some concerns and challenges of Russian-speaking migrants, however, Russians have a benefit over 'other' migrants and refugees as they look more 'European' than, for example, Arabs or Indians, and thus they may not experience adaptation challenges in the same way, or as intensely, as Arabs or other migrants or refugees who are racially different.

Challenges of Identity, Culture and Religion

According to Rex (1991), the emergence of the problem of identity raises both political and psychological questions. Political scientists tend to talk about rights, duties and citizenship, whereas social psychologists look at what is meant by 'belonging' and the effect that this has on mental health (p.4). The concept of group belonging and group identity then becomes a sociological as well as a psychological question (p.7). For Arab Muslim refugees, their identity is formed from the interaction between cultural, ethnic, religious and status perspectives and experiences. In this thesis, I will be focussing on

the sociological and psychological aspects of identity, the experiences, feelings and sense of belonging or being included as well as being able to choose to differ or stay apart from the host community. The political science emphasis on the specific rights and duties of citizenship is not the focus of this thesis.

Major challenges to refugees and migrants arise from issues of identity, ethnic identity and religion. However, refugees have to deal with the identity of becoming 'refugees' as well. Here, I will discuss this issue and that of identity related to: Ethnic identity; Refugee identity and the refugee label; Arab and Islamic identity; Arab Identity; Arabs in New Zealand; Islam; Muslims in New Zealand; Gender issues, and; Prejudice and Islamaphobia.

Ethnic Identity

Culture, religion and language are what differentiate every nation; these aspects are vital and important to the identity, self-existence and self-worth of ethnic groups. According to Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind and Vedder (2001), "ethnic identity refers to an individual's sense of self in terms of membership in a particular ethnic group" (p. 495). Marcia (1980) claimed that everyone has something to say about ethnic identity, and to a certain point, this claim is true. There have been various definitions of ethnic identity proposed in the literature. Tzuriel and Klein (1977) defined ethnic identity as a sense of belonging and commitment to one's ethnic group. Parham and Helms (1981) suggested that ethnic identity refers to holding positive attitudes towards one's group. Furthermore, White and Burke (1987) suggested that ethnic identity is all about having components that include shared values, beliefs, and attitudes. In addition, Phinney (1990) stated that ethnic identity is the degree to which individuals identify with and derive aspects of their self-concept from knowledge about, participation with, and attachment to their ethnic group. Phinney (1989) also suggested that ethnic identity is about being involved with cultural activities.

The meaning of ethnic identity begins with the culture, traditions and practices that are carried forward and maintained by individuals from their homeland (Ajrouch, 2000). However, ethnic identity of members of ethnic groups is also influenced by the surrounding cultures (Cohen, 2004). In other words, immigrants and refugees form their ethnic identity not only according to how their cultural beliefs and heritage portray them as an ethnic group, but also according to how the host society perceives them (Umana-Taylor, Yazedijan, & Bamaca-Gomez, 2004). To be a member of an ethnic group means

knowing certain things about how the world works and about how to behave (including how to talk) in the various situations encountered in everyday life, as well as making inferences on the basis of others' behaviour; this, according to Phinney et al. (2001), is the basis of ethnic identity. Identity, then, is a social construct, grounded in social interaction in the activities and situations that arise as a product of the relationship of a social group to its social and physical environment. If the identity of a person's social group is known, then a great deal can be assumed about what he or she is likely to believe and about how he or she is likely to behave (Phinney & Flores, 2002). Additionally, Phinney et al. (2001) mention that a strong sense of ethnic identity is associated with positive self-esteem regarding one's ethnic membership, self-efficacy, and positive coping styles, all of which are important, especially during periods of resettlement.

According to Berry (2001), the notion of ethnic identity becomes significant when people are living amongst groups of people who are from different cultures, as against what might have been their previous experience in a monocultural society. In addition, ethnic identity is likely to be strong when immigrants have a strong desire to maintain their own cultural identity (Bruinessen, 1998). Refugees may feel vulnerable and isolated within the host society, which in turn gives rise to the emergence of a self awareness of ethnic identity (Casimiro et al., 2007). Phinney et al. (2001) also point out that the term ethnic identity is relatively nonexistent for refugees and immigrants prior to leaving their native countries. Many migrants, including refugees, may develop a new appreciation for their ethnic identity in a culturally different host society. Furthermore, Umana-Taylor et al. (2004) posit that when we belong to a group, we are likely to derive our sense of identity, at least in part, from that group. We also enhance the sense of identity by making comparisons with out-groups. According to Phinney et al. (2001), this perspective also means that we derive our self-esteem from our identity, so when the ethnic group of the individual is favoured and viewed in a positive way, then the individual may exhibit positive self-esteem. Conversely, when the ethnic group is not favoured, and the individual may sense discrimination or prejudice, then the individual exhibits a sense of negative or low self-esteem.

In other words, Phinney (1989) argues that when arriving in a host country, migrants become increasingly involved in preserving their cultural and religious values and ensuring that their children learn their culture and heritage. The benefits of this process involve the affirmation of values and customs, in addition to increased feelings of

belongingness and cultural pride. However, Brown (2000) mentions that the detrimental effects can involve feelings of confusion, insecurity or resentment in relation to the treatment of their group by the host country. Phinney et al. (2001) state that between maintaining ethnic values and trying to fit in with the host society, the younger generation may become frustrated and confused as to where their loyalty lies, and this tug of war can have an unconstructive impact on the migrant family.

Thus, ethnic identity can be conceptualised as the ethnic component of social identity; that is, “the part of the individual’s self-concept that derives from his or her knowledge of membership in a social group in addition to the emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1981, p. 255). According to Phinney et al. (2001), ethnic identity is a process that the individual goes through when trying to answer the question “Who am I?” in relation to their ethnic group. Ethnic identity emerges when individuals are in contact with a culture or society that is different to their own. Here, the individual feels the need to label themselves according to their ethnic group or people they identify with, in order to satisfy human needs such as sense of belongingness, self-esteem and self-image. Researchers have emphasised that a strong sense of ethnic identity is associated with positive self-concept, self-efficacy and positive coping styles that all relate to the mental well-being of the individual (e.g., Al-Krenawi, 2005; Berry, 2001; Hyndman & McLean, 2006; Phinney et al., 2001).

The previous literature suggests that the issue of ethnic identity has become important, especially now that the world has become more like a global village, with people from various cultures having to coexist with other ethnic groups. Ethnic identity is important to all groups; however, Aboud and Doyle (1996) also point out that the maintenance of ethnic identity is especially important to minority groups, who may be less powerful than the majority group, but not necessarily less numerous. Aboud and Doyle (1996) state that minorities do not want to be assimilated or put in the melting pot with other groups because that would mean that their ethnic uniqueness is disregarded, and they may feel as if a significant part of them has been denied.

When conducting studies on ethnic identity from a sample of individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds in America, researchers established that the minority group members regard ethnic identity as highly important in comparison to the majority group members. In a study conducted by Phinney and Alipuria (1990), 196 American-born high school students from different ethnic backgrounds - Asian American, African, Hispanic, and white - were asked questions relating to the importance of ethnicity as an

identity area. According to this study, the minority students regarded ethnicity as equally important to religion, compared to the white students to whom ethnicity was not a meaningful concept (with the exception of a few who mentioned their ethnicity; e.g., Polish American, German American).

For Arab Muslim migrants, their religion, cultural background, family or tribal name, social status and education all inform their identity, or who they are as individuals or as a family. When migrating to a new country, the Arab Muslim's identity is challenged. Ajrouch (2000) states that when migrants realise that their education and qualifications are not recognised in their country of resettlement, and their social status, which may have been respected and high in their homeland, may not be acknowledged in their new society, this may lead to a variety of challenges and stressors for the migrant, such as feelings of powerlessness, disappointment, and frustration.

Conversely, Verkuyten and Yildiz (2007) argue that when ethnic refugees, especially Muslims, are described by media and politicians as “backward” or a threat to Western societies, a strong ethnic identification is more likely to occur rather than an integrated identity. Though the risk to ethnic identity is not always inevitable, it occurs when individuals move from their ethnic social context into one which differs considerably from their own, thus threatening self-efficacy, self-esteem and distinctiveness (Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000).

Moreover, for Muslims, the religion of Islam plays a key role in forming their identity. Verkuyten and Yildiz (2007) state that ethnicity and religion are among the main markers of group identity and as ethnic groups feel threatened or discriminated against, they increasingly turn towards their minority in-group, distancing themselves from the host society. According to Verkuyten and Yildiz, “religion is an important meaning system for making sense of existence and for buffering against existential anxiety” (2007, p. 1449).

Refugee Identity and the Refugee Label

There is insufficient research on an international level in general, and in the New Zealand context in particular, which explores the influence the refugee label has on the well-being of refugees and on their resettlement. Zetter (1991) argues that as long as there are global humanitarian concerns, the refugee label is to be considered a powerful, widely used term, acquired by millions of people who also have to deal with the

stereotypes that accompany this humanitarian label. The refugee label becomes an identity, though not a self chosen identity, but one which is forced upon individuals.

However, what needs to be acknowledged is that before the formation of any label, refugees are human beings. The formation of the refugee identity was created by the refugee's own culture and experiences, in addition to external forces, such as political instability in their native country, humanitarian agencies, and international law (Rowe, 2006). According to Rowe (2006, p.4), when looking at the construction of the refugee identity (or label), one must understand the stages of "becoming, accepting, rejecting and presenting (or not) oneself as a refugee."

Refugees may take advantage of or utilise this label when they perceive it as an advantageous term, and avoid the label when it is perceived as a negative identity. In order to utilise the refugee label, the individual must construct him/herself as a needy, dependent and vulnerable person; though this may be disadvantageous, it opens the door to entitlements and access to services and programmes (Ingamells & Westoby, 2008). One aspect of the refugee label that may be considered disadvantageous is when it is constructed as a problem and a burden. In his research on refugee labelling, Waldrom (1987) argues that when countries of asylum or settlement that are already struggling economically and have scarce resources, have to provide aid, such as shelter, food, financial assistance and employment to refugees, that is when the refugee is more likely to be perceived and constructed as a burden. Generally, the refugee label conveys that the person is, and will continue to be, a refugee first and foremost. Moussa (1992) states that the term refugee surpasses differences such as education, ethnicity and class, as it is believed that since most refugees arrive searching for a safe haven, then they are all equally perceived as dependent and helpless individuals. Flores-Borquez (1995, p.95) suggests that "in order to survive as a refugee, one has to acquire an identity that is alien to the self that made one become a refugee."

When discussing her own experience in being identified as a refugee and losing her own identity, Flores-Borquez (1995) maintained that there are two distinctive periods of refugee identity. The first period pertains to losing the original identity and replacing it with an identity that is derived from the refugee experience, which includes reflections, displacement, and mourning over loss of identity, and isolation in the host society. The second period is the emergence of a relatively different identity as a result of the loss of the original identity. Also, this new identity may be a product of the individual trying to make sense of how his/her ethnic identity and refugee identity make sense together (if at

all). Flores-Borquez (1995) states that this ‘new’ identity may include awareness and insight, which develops as a result of the refugee experience, and can assist toward the well-being of other refugees and asylum seekers.

Conversely, a study by Tomlinson and Egan (2002) on the employment and disempowerment of refugees in the UK suggested that reports in the media and political speeches largely label refugees as “persons of dubious status, dependent and demanding,” and as a result, refugees are constructed as a problem for British society. Tomlinson and Egan (2002) suggest that once refugees are equipped with empowerment tools such as language and employment, the margin of difference between the refugees and the host society lessen, and refugees may talk about their refugee identity in the past tense. According to their study, being a refugee may be regarded as a temporary state that ceases once the individual is settled and economically independent, and becomes a productive citizen and part of the majority society.

Furthermore, Rowe (2006) elaborates that the refugee label (or identity) develops as individuals become file numbers whose lives and destiny are controlled by others who define their needs and accessibility to services. According to Rowe (2006), the refugee label needs to be considered as one facet of the individual’s identity rather than considering it ‘the’ identity of the refugee.

Zetter (1991) discusses the reasons behind labelling people as refugees in the context of policy making, and states that predominantly the refugee label is political and dynamic. Using the term ‘label’ is revealing; the ‘refugeeness’¹⁶ of individuals then becomes a process of identification and a facet of the individual’s identity, but it can also be considered as something that can be chosen and amended (Zetter, 2007).

Zetter (2007) also stated that labels have powerful political meanings, and creating labels is important in order to form policies that serve various political agendas and interests. Wood (as cited in Zetter, 1991) stipulated that labelling:

is a way of referring to the process by which policy agendas are established and more particularly the way in which people, conceived as objects of policy are defined in convenient images (p. 44).

Under the labelling of refugees other meanings come to light, such as inclusion, exclusion, differentiation and stereotypes, and through the refugee label the relationship

¹⁶ Lacroix defines “refugeeness” as the experience of being a refugee (2004, p.148).

between power and powerlessness is established. The ‘power’ that is embodied in the refugee label, which Zetter (1991) refers to, pertains to the power relationship between the refugee who is the bearer of the label and the giver, which refers to government and NGO agencies and services. According to Zetter (2007), the refugee label has become entangled with other ‘humanitarian categories’ such as asylum seekers and temporary protection, and thus its true meaning has been blurred. However, Zetter (2007) also argues that “of all the ‘inferior statuses’ claiming the label refugee has become a highly prized label” (p. 189). Zetter (2007) suggests that the refugee label may become a ‘status’ that opens various doors to the refugee, such as the hope of resettling in a better country or society, and gaining access to better education and employment opportunities; thus the refugee label becomes not one of burden only, but also a label of opportunities.

On the other hand, to provide refugees a way out of the prejudices and differentiation that the label creates, Tomlinson and Egan (2002) suggest that refugees need to be empowered to feel that they are capable of being independent and productive people in their host society. Tomlinson and Egan (2002) mention that the negative connotation that the refugee label conveys, dependent and helpless, masks the reality of the unrecognised contribution that refugees have to offer to the economic and social life of their host countries. According to Tomlinson and Egan (2002), empowerment occurs through encouraging refugee participation, through self-help and the involvement of refugee community organisations.

An in-depth qualitative interview study by Lacroix (2004) examined the social and policy construction of refugees in the Canadian context. In her research, Lacroix (2004) refers to the “experience of being a refugee” as “refugeeness”, suggesting it as a discourse that captures a time of crisis in a person’s life. Lacroix (2004,) believes:

The refugee experience transcends national origins and boundaries, though individual experiences may differ, the experience of being a refugee is defined as being universal to those who experience it. (p.148)

Lacroix (2004) emphasizes that before refugees acquired this label, they were individuals who had an identity, cultural heritage, history and dreams of a future. However, refugees are forced to flee their country in fear of persecution and seek asylum in countries that are, at times, far away from home. Lacroix (2004, p. 147) states that the experiences refugees come across during displacement and resettlement impact

on “who they were, who they are, and who they will become.” Lacroix (2004) also mentions that the refugee label becomes a main part of the refugee individual’s identity, and as a result of the various refugee experiences, Lacroix (2004) suggests that the refugee label produces several discourses and themes. According to Lacroix (2004), these themes include lack of choice, where the participants described being forced out of their country and thus becoming a refugee was outside the individuals’ control; needing direction to rebuild their lives and establish themselves in a new country; being the ‘other’ in a host society; unemployment and barriers to finding adequate employment; and separation from family support. The starting point of becoming a refugee, according to Lacroix (2004) is constructed once the refugee claim is processed. Although the reasons why refugees flee their countries differ, taking on the refugee label and ‘becoming a refugee’ begins in a similar way for all refugees, which is by being forced to flee their country. The participants in Lacroix’s (2004) study confirmed that once they left their country, they experienced extreme feelings of loss and sadness, and having to accept their current situation, as they realised that becoming a refugee was a matter that was not in their hands. Lacroix (2004) states that choice was a recurring theme that participants kept on affirming; they had been forced into this situation and it was something that they had not chosen.

Lacroix’s (2004) findings suggest that individuals consider themselves refugees once they flee their countries, someone ‘other’ than who they previously were. Once arriving in their host resettlement country, refugees experience contradiction, between the country that was welcoming to refugees, and the practices and policies that prevented refugees from becoming independent productive citizens in their new society.

In a comparative study regarding the negative stereotypes associated with being a refugee in Australia, Kampmark (2006) compared the case of Jewish refugees who migrated to Australia during the Second World War, to that of the influx of Arab and Muslim refugees during the years 2001 and 2003. When comparing the stereotypes of Jewish refugees to Arab Muslim refugees, Kampmark (2006) talked about security dilemmas associated with both refugee groups. He suggested that the reaction triggered by the arrival of Arab Muslims to Australia was similar to the reaction that greeted Jewish refugees during 1936 – 1939. Just as the Australians were suspicious of the Jews as they were regarded as undesirable in Germany, Arabs and Muslims, especially from Iraq, were considered untrustworthy because Saddam Hussein’s secret intelligence services had also considered them undesirable. Kampmark (2006) stated that the

Australian public were doubtful that the new refugees would abide by Australian law, and might engage in behaviours that were foreign to the general Australian public. Australian society had fears about the creation of separate communities on the Australian continent, which would lead to chaos and disruption within society. In 2001, during the Tampa cargo incident, the Australian Immigration Minister Phillip Ruddock likened the rescued passengers on the Tampa to terrorists and hijackers. Australian researchers such as Colic-Peisker (2005) and Kampmark (2006) argue that after the September 11th terrorist attacks, the effect of labelling Muslim or Arab refugees as terrorists drew a firm and clear stereotypical image of people who should be refused settlement in Australia. This discourse of refugees as terrorists is exemplified in the implicit assumptions in the media that the mainly Muslim refugees represented a security threat. Such assumptions were readily accepted by Australians, as they had seen pictures of refugees rioting and trashing detention centres within Australia (Kampmark, 2006). The negative connotations of being an Arab Muslim refugee reached an extreme when radio hosts in Sydney described refugee boat arrivals as “terrorist sleepers” and potential “Bin Laden appointees” (as cited in Kampmark, 2006). Jewish and Arab Muslim refugees’ cultural incompatibility with the Australian way of living was stressed as a critique that ‘refugee selection’ should be aware of.

In her work on the experiences of humiliation and vulnerability of Somali refugees in Norway, Fangen (2006) states that refugees are placed in the bottom tier of the host society hierarchy due to the lack of cultural knowledge and understanding of refugees arriving in a foreign host society. Generally, the refugee individual’s skills and capabilities are not acknowledged by the host society and thus they are instead reduced to being only this, a refugee. The refugee label brings with it various stereotypes and misconceptions, so that it becomes a humiliating term which brings with it discrimination, exclusion, derision, and stigmatisation (Fangen, 2006). On the other hand, Fangen (2006) states that refugees who are financially better off, better educated or have family members in Western countries such as Sweden, Holland, Denmark, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand are fortunate enough to be sheltered at UN camps and then sent to Western countries, or can finance being smuggled into Western countries.

It is not uncommon for refugees to try and avoid allowing the label of refugee to become part of their lives. To some, the stigma of being a refugee is degrading, insulting, and may trigger prejudiced behaviour from the host community. Colic-Peisker

and Walker (2003) stated that although the status of refugee gives them access to social welfare and various services, the title itself seems as if it is trying to ‘re-attach’ the refugee’s social identity, nationality, occupation, and marital status, which the refugee may have temporarily lost as a result of sudden migration. However, to this migrant group the term itself is undesirable, and may cause the receiving community to have suspicions or negative views towards refugees (Colic-Peisker, 2005; Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003). Refugees may not be aware of this negative depiction until after they arrive in the host society. Once arriving in the country, refugees may feel that the services and help offered to them may result in them feeling patronised and declassified (Harell-Bond, 1999). Furthermore, the Queensland Health Department (2002) suggests that the label of refugee can be psychologically distressing for some and it can also destroy the refugee’s sense of belonging or ability to integrate in the host society. Furthermore, Karadawi (1983) points out that as a result of displacement, hardship, the creation of the ‘changed’ identity of refugee, and the effect of having others (government and non-governmental agencies) control the lives of refugees, a dependency characteristic is created, which is why the refugees may become over reliant on agencies and services during their resettlement period and, at times, for years after their initial settlement, if they are not assisted in becoming self-sufficient.

Arab and Islamic Identity

While the majority of Arabs are Muslim, the majority of Muslims are not Arab. Therefore there is a need to distinguish between Arabs and Muslims.

Arab Identity

“Arab” is a cultural and linguistic term. It refers to those who speak Arabic as their first language and/or come from an Arab country, and who identify themselves by ethnicity: Arab (Tamari, n.d.), and not by their religion. Regardless of their different national backgrounds, Arabs are constantly aware of their Arab identity, and they share immense pride in an identity which has been formed according to their cultural beliefs, values, and traditions. Patai (1983) mentions that when an Arab is asked, “Who is an Arab?” the reply would be, “Anyone who speaks Arabic as his own language and consequently feels as an Arab.” Arabic is the native and official language of all the Arab countries (Nobles & Sciarra, 2000). The Qu’ran is written in Arabic, which is considered the official language of “Islam.” Nobles and Sciarra (2000) also note that Arabic became

the fourth official language in the United Nations in 1972 and is spoken by approximately 130 million people.

The Arab world is understood to extend from the Persian Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean, stretching across 5.25 million square miles (Barakat, 1993; Hill, Loch, Straub & El-Sheshai, 1998). This region includes the lands between Iraq and the Gulf states in the east, to Morocco's Atlantic coast in the west; and extends from Syria in the north to Sudan in the south.

There is some confusion regarding the actual number of "Arab" countries, due to the diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds that this term covers. Tamari (n.d.) suggests that there are 17 "independent Arab countries,"¹⁷ including Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Sudan, Yemen, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq. Hill et al. (1998) report that there are 21 Arab countries, yet fail to identify them. Barakat (1993) states that there are 22 Arab countries in the Middle East and North Africa: Algeria, Bahrain, the Comoros Islands, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. Hill et al. (1998) also state that there are over 200 million Arabs, while others estimate it to be over 300 million, 90% of whom are Muslim. However, being of the Islamic religion should not be equated with being an Arab, as approximately 9% of Arabs are of the Christian faith (Zahr & Hattar-Pollara, 1998). Due to the large area that the Arab world covers, and despite the rich diversity in ethnicity, language, and religions, it is of utmost importance to acknowledge that excessive generalisation should be avoided. With that being said, Arabs and Arab society share more commonalities than differences, especially when it comes to the importance of family as a social and economic support unit, preservation of ethnic identity, gender roles and expectations, and the division of labour (Hill, et al., 1998).

Arabs in New Zealand

New Zealand is a multicultural migrant society that has had its fair share of Arab migration throughout the years. The 1996 census suggested there were more than 4,500 migrants in New Zealand who stated they have Arab or Middle Eastern background. Several years later, the 2001 census estimated that the number of Arabs in New Zealand

¹⁷ Tamari (n.d.) does not include countries in the Arab World that have not achieved full independence, such as Palestine.

was approximately 11,000, and the latest 2006 census suggests that 17,514 people in New Zealand identify themselves as Arab or Middle Eastern (Statistics New Zealand, 2006)¹⁸. This sudden increase in Arab migrants is a result of the continuous political, economic and social conflicts in the Arab and Middle Eastern region. Arabs who migrate to Western societies tend to do so foreseeing a better future for themselves and their children, far away from wars and economic struggle. Arabs have been flowing to countries that accept them, provide them with social and economic support, and peaceful harmonious living far away from any damaging conflict. New Zealand gained its popularity among Arab migrants as a country that meets those criteria.

From my own observation, the Arab community in New Zealand is largely a community of extended families. The vast majority of Arabs in New Zealand who migrated with their families in the mid-1990s applied for family reunification with other members of their extended family who remained in their homeland (Dibley & Dunstan, 2002).

Generally, Arab Muslim migrants tend to live fairly closely together and prefer interacting with people of their own nationality. According to Ajrouch (2000), this closeness may be because Arabs regard it as important to be around people who share their language, religion and cultural customs in order to maintain their heritage and familiarise their children with their ethnic customs, values and beliefs. Over half of the Arab migrants have settled in Auckland (52%), with 19% living in the Wellington region and only 9% in Canterbury (Thomson, 1999).

As a result of the increasing number of Arabs and Muslims in New Zealand and in order to maintain ethnic and religious beliefs, migrants have established their own ethnic groups and religious places in various cities in New Zealand, such as cultural centres, mosques and Islamic centres. There has also been an increase in the emergence of various Arab associations that have been encouraging Arab migrants, young and old, to attend seminars and other cultural activities in order to sustain Arab culture and customs. These Arab associations include the Arab New Zealand Cultural Society (ANZCS), the Lebanese Society of Auckland, the Somali Friendship Society, the Egyptian Association, the Palestinian Association, and many more (Joudi, 2002). Religious centres include, for example, the Ponsonby Mosque, Abo Baqir Mosque, Al-

¹⁸ This number is relatively small compared to the Australian 2001 census, which indicated that around 20,000 of the 20 Million Australians speak Arabic, and almost 250,000 indicated Arab background. The most common country of origin for the Australian Arab population was Lebanon, followed by Egypt, Iraq and Syria (Austrian Human Rights Commission, 2003).

Manar Trust, Al-Farooq Islamic Centre, and Blockhouse Bay Islamic Centre in Auckland, the Masjid Al-Noor in Christchurch, the Jamii Mosque in Hamilton, the Al-Huda Mosque in Dunedin, and the Wellington Masjid in Wellington. Recent developments have been the creation of a Muslim playschool, Marhaba, in Auckland, and an Auckland based Muslim NGO organisation named Working Together Group (WTG),¹⁹ which is a Muslim run community group that works together with the community, the government and other NGOs for the benefit of the Muslim people in New Zealand.

The organisations are important as they enable Arab Muslim migrants to remain in touch and preserve their ethnic identity, Arab values and Islamic beliefs. Also, by establishing their own ethnic and religious institutes, Arab and Muslim migrants are able to create an environment that in some ways may be similar to the environment back in their homelands (Ajrouch, 2000; Carter & Rashidi, 2004; Hattar-Pollara & Meleis, 1995). This may assist the migrants and their children to maintain ethnic culture and religion, and assist the subsequent generations to retain Arab customs and values (Hattar-Pollara & Meleis, 1995).

Arabs and Muslim are more comfortable within their own community and this preference extends to their dealings with social and mental health.. In the health field, attempts were made in 2006 to locate Arab or Muslims with psychiatry, counselling, mental health, or social services expertise. There were only three people in Auckland with these skills, one of whom left the country later that year (WTG, personal communication, January 2, 2007).

It is also important to note that the majority of Arab immigrants who arrived in New Zealand did so during the mid to late 1990s through the General Skills Category, a point-based system that is based on factors such as qualification, age and work experience (NZIS, 2008a). In a research report for the New Zealand Department of Internal Affairs, Thomson (1999) indicated that in 1996, 63% of Arab immigrants in New Zealand held University degrees compared to 16% of New Zealanders. Nevertheless, only 40% of Arabs in New Zealand were employed in 1996 and mostly in jobs that were not in their areas of expertise. Due to the structure of roles in Arab families, Arab males are more likely to seek jobs in New Zealand than females. Arab males are inclined to work long hours outside the home. Thus, the Arab mother faces

¹⁹ I have personally been involved in establishing and running this group.

alone the responsibilities of raising her children according to Arab protocol: passing on the Arab culture and heritage, maintaining their Arab values, and making sure that her children do not become westernised and lose the importance of Arab values (Joudi, 2002). All this is often done without the assistance of her extended family.

For Arab migrants in general, ethnic identity is formed through culture and traditional practices and beliefs that are transported from the homeland. Thus, Arabs who arrive in New Zealand at a very young age, and are raised in a Western society that has its own different beliefs and traditions, are faced with an apparent dilemma. The younger Arabs are expected to be the conduits through which the homeland traditions and culture are either transmitted and preserved, or lost. According to Portes and Rumbaut (1996) the second-generation migrants become a critical point from which to examine the processes of ethnic identity formation and acculturation. Indeed, they are the first in their family to spend the majority, if not all, of their life in New Zealand. Issues of identity, language, economic mobility, ethnic community and intermarriage become fundamental areas of adaptation for the subsequent generations. Unfortunately, there is little written information about Arabs in New Zealand, although their number is relatively high. For that reason, I am not able to shed further light on this ethnic group.

Islam

Although the majority of Arabs are Muslim, there are sizable numbers of Christians, living primarily in Lebanon (Maronite, Melkite, Catholics, Greek and Armenian orthodox), Egypt (as much as one tenth of Egyptians are Coptic Christians), Palestine, Iraq (Assyrians, Armenians, and Roman Catholics), Jordan, Sudan, and Syria (Carter & Rashidi, 2004). In addition, Arab Christians living in Western society live a lifestyle that resembles the Muslim way of life due to Islam having a considerable influence on Arabs regardless of their religion (Carter & Rashidi, 2004).

Formerly, there were significant minorities of Arab Jews throughout the Arab World; however, the establishment of the state of Israel prompted their subsequent mass emigration and expulsion within a few decades. Nevertheless, small Jewish communities remain, ranging anywhere from ten in Bahrain to 7,000 in Morocco and more than 1,000 in Tunisia (Carter & Rashidi, 2004).

Islam is the second largest growing religion in the world with an estimate of over one billion followers worldwide (Carter & Rashidi, 2004). The term Islam is derived from Arabic and means 'peace' and 'submission' (Ghayur, 1981). It is also perceived as a 'way

of life.’ Islam emerged in the 7th century in Saudi Arabia with the teachings of Mohammed (pbuh), and the holy book the Qur’an was revealed to him by God (Allah) through the Angel Gabriel.

For Muslim people, the religion regulates everyday behaviour through commandments or rules in the Qur’an and Sunnah that are carefully observed (Nobles & Sciarra, 2000).

The ten countries with the largest Muslim population are Indonesia (170.3 million), Pakistan (136 million), Bangladesh (106 million), India (103 million), Turkey (62.4 million), Iran (60.7 million), Egypt (53.7 million), Nigeria (47.7 million) and China (37.1 million). Of these countries only Egypt is an Arab country. A brief outline of Islam is summarised below:

- Islam was revealed in Saudi Arabia (Mecca) during the 7th century to Mohammed, to whom Muslims refer to as the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh).
- Muslims believe that there is no God but Allah, and that Mohammed (pbuh) is his prophet.
- Muslims believe that Allah had sent prophets to mankind to teach them how to live according to Allah’s divine laws; thus, Muslims believe in prophets like Abraham, Moses, Isaac, Jacob, and Jesus, and that Mohammed was his last prophet.
- Muslims believe that the holy books of the Torah and the Gospels (Bible) are religious and sacred books, but that they also have been distorted with time, unlike the Qur’an.
- There are five basic pillars of Islam which include: 1) the Shahadah, a declaration of faith that there is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his messenger; 2) Salat, to pray five times a day; 3) to give Zakat, alms-giving or charity to the poor, needy and orphans; 4) Sawm, to fast during Ramadan, and 5) Hajj, to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca.

The importance of religion in the lives of Muslim migrants assists in overcoming uncertainties and confusion, and maps out the ‘way of living’ for individuals. As Nobles and Sciarra (2000, p. 183) state, “Islam is not just one aspect of life but its centre, affecting all activity, thought and feeling.” Islam plays an important role in the life of Muslim refugees (Shoeb et al., 2007). According to McMichael (2002), Islam provides an enduring home during the struggles of displacement and resettlement.

Muslims in New Zealand

Islam in New Zealand is considered the second fastest growing immigrant religion, with 53% of the immigrant population stating it as their religion; it follows Hindu at 61.9%, while the Buddhist religion in New Zealand is practised by 25.8% of the immigrant population (Kolig, 2003).

The history of Muslim migration to New Zealand began in the 19th century, though there is a lack of research done on this group, and confusion over historical dates and numbers. According to the Global Education Centre (GlobalEd), the first time Muslim people appeared in a census was 1874, and they were 17 Indian and Fijian Muslim migrants (GlobalEd, 2005). These migrants were also predominately male; forcing themselves to adapt to the foreign environment in New Zealand, they would have also left their families behind, but sent money and made frequent visits to their homeland (GlobalEd, 2005).

An article about the history of Muslims in New Zealand by The Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand (FIANZ) states that the first Muslims to arrive in the country were from China, migrating to New Zealand in 1868 to work as gold diggers and miners. However, after the decline of this industry they soon left the country and it was not until the early 1900s that Indian Muslims permanently settled in New Zealand and in particular in Auckland (FIANZ, 2003). Also, following the Second World War, Muslim refugees began to settle in New Zealand during the 1940s and 1950s; the 1960s saw flows of Indian Muslims from the Pacific, often via Fiji. During the 1970s and 1980s the country resettled refugees of wars from Cambodia and Afghanistan, while the 1990s and 2000s witnessed the arrival of refugees of wars from Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, the former Yugoslavia, and Iraq.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the Muslim community in New Zealand began to gradually grow, however it was not until the late 1990s that New Zealand began to see a rapid increase in the number of Muslim residents in the country. The 1996 census stated that there were approximately 13,545 Muslims in New Zealand; several years later there was a considerable leap in that number when the 2001 census recorded that there were 23,631 Muslims in New Zealand.²⁰ Once again this number increased even more by the time of the 2006 census, when the number of Muslims in New Zealand grew to 35,979 individuals, an increase of 490% since 1990 (Roberts, 2007). Though the number of

²⁰ The 2001 census revealed 700 Māori registered as Muslim by faith and 3000 European.

Muslims in the country seems relatively large, when compared to the numbers of Muslim people in other well established Muslim communities such as the USA, Australia, France, Germany or the UK, the numbers of Muslims in New Zealand are relatively modest (Kolig, 2003).

Muslims come from diverse ethnic, national and linguistic backgrounds. According to FIANZ (2003) the Muslims of New Zealand who have resettled in the country come from various continents and countries; some of these include Indonesia, Somalia, Sudan, Turkey, Fiji, Malaysia, Bosnia, Egypt, Algeria, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Kosovo (Serbia), Macedonia, the former Soviet Union, Brunei, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, and Palestine. Roberts (2003) mentions that many within the Muslim community have migrated to New Zealand to escape hardship and wars in their native countries, or the instability caused by a temporary stay in their countries of first asylum.

Gender Issues

There are a growing number of studies on the process of resettlement and gender differences in dealing with migration challenges; however, they are notably limited when it comes to researching this concern among the Muslim migrant group.

Since World War II there have been more than 127 wars in the world (McCool, 2003), resulting in millions of people worldwide fleeing their countries. Fifty percent of the refugee population have been female (UNHCR, 2006). According to Lacroix (2004), refugee studies have mainly focused on a non-gendered refugee experience, by assuming that there are shared experiences among refugee men and women which revoke the reason to differentiate between the two genders when dealing with refugee research. However, there has been a steady development of research which suggests that despite the fact that there are shared experiences between the two genders, there are also considerable differences in a number of refugee and resettlement issues (Kang, Kahler, & Tesar, 1998; Lacroix, 2004).

Most studies demonstrate that women have more difficulties in adjusting to their host society than do men. Reasons behind these gender differences include gender specific refugee experiences such as rape and torture, culturally specific practices that are related to gender and the emergence of adaptation difficulties as a result of the changes in gender roles, which may occur when refugees arrive in the host society or as a result of the pressure of social integration (Lacroix, 2004). Foster et al. (2006) argue that the reason women are highly vulnerable when it comes to refugee experiences is because, in

addition to possibly having experienced rape, they have often left most, if not all, of their family and social support network behind. Leaving familiarity behind can become a daunting experience, especially if it is paired with the challenge of maintaining traditional and cultural roles in a foreign society. Foster et al. (2006) mention several resettlement challenges that affect women more than men, such as role changes, family separation, relocation challenges, and concern over the welfare of their children. Learning English, employment and unsupportive spouses are additional challenges that are specific to refugee women (Casimiro et al., 2007).

Ghaffarian (1998; 2001) investigated the relationship between acculturation and the psychological adjustment of young Iranian immigrants in the USA, Iranians share similar traditional and cultural values and beliefs with Arabs and Muslims due to their history and shared religion, although it was not clear if the participants' religion was noted or of any importance to the researcher (Ghaffarian, 1998; 2001). The participants completed a questionnaire which comprised three scales: an acculturation rating scale, a depression and anxiety scale, and a traditional family ideology scale. Ghaffarian's findings suggest that Iranian men acculturate better than Iranian women, and that acculturation was positively correlated with better mental health. The findings also suggest that overall, women in this study tended to be more depressed and anxious than men. The reasons behind that are many and varied. The underlying point that Ghaffarian wants to clarify is that even when in their own native country, Iranian women have little freedom and opportunity to voice opinions on various issues at the personal and societal levels.

According to Dion and Dion (2001) and Hegde (1998), in traditional cultures, the man is usually the head of the household; therefore, he has the main responsibility of going out in the society and finding a job, whereas the women may tend to accept traditional gender roles, staying at home to take care of the children and raise them according to cultural traditions and beliefs. Moreover, by and large, the decision to migrate to Western society is typically made by the husband for the whole family (Dion & Dion, 2001; Hegde, 1998). Hegde (1998) also mentions that when migrating, women who come from restrictive, male dominant societies are caught between two cultures; at times this conflict may affect their resettlement in the new country. Hegde (1998) argues that while one culture calls for freedom and independence, the other calls for maintaining the 'ideal' traditional culture and living it accordingly in Western society.

As a result, these women are exposed to conflict among themselves and among their families, in addition to stress of trying to ‘please’ everyone (Joudi, 2002).

Migrant families from traditional cultures are likely to be more restrictive and monitoring of daughters than sons (Dion & Dion, 2001; Joudi, 2002). In Arab culture, the reason underlying this is that the female is expected to raise her children according to cultural traditions and pass on cultural heritage to her children. That way she is considered a ‘good, sensible’ mother, and it reflects her ‘good’ upbringing as well (Joudi, 2002). However, there has also been evidence that in immigrant families, females are more likely to voice their rejection towards certain traditions and practices that prevent them from being able to fit in with the host society (or peers) and make them stick out as strangers (Rosenthal, Ranieri, & Klimidis, 1996; Dion & Dion, 1996; Joudi, 2002). Hegde (1998) also suggests that young migrant females may express that they are “trapped” or “suffocating” in their ethnic culture that places emphasis on values such as maintaining traditions and securing family relationships.

Additionally, Hegde (1998) points out that refugee women experience various difficulties that may hinder their resettlement and integration. One of the barriers lies in the fact that women, and especially those from Third World countries, tend to be tied down by their cultural and ethnic traditions and beliefs, which may prevent them from establishing a secure sense of identity. According to Hegde (1998), migrant women struggle to balance multiple and at times contradictory beliefs and ideas, which may affect the formation of ethnic identity and affect their adjustment in a new society. In addition, wearing the hijab plays an important role in the way Muslim women are treated by the host society, and in turn, how they experience their resettlement. Hegde (1998) also argues that migrant women are forced to walk in and out of their cultural comfort zone in order to deal with the contradictions surrounding them. She stated that it is this “swinging back and forth” behaviour that causes women to struggle with resettlement more than men.

Several refugee research studies have explored the experiences of both men and women refugees in order to shed light into gender related differences. Such research includes that done by Ager et al. (1995) who explored the impact of gender on the refugee experiences of male and female Mozambican refugees who resided in several Malawi refugee camps. In their study, Ager et al. (1995) adopted a multi-method, quantitative (survey) and qualitative (open ended interviews) approach to data collection. The study focused on the refugees’ circumstances and life in Mozambique, reasons for flight, the

benefits and deficits of the refugee label, current occupation, and expectations and hopes for the future. Their findings reported that men have greater access to education than women, and that in order to reduce women's vulnerability during displacement, empowering them through education provides them with resources to better cope with the challenges and demands of being a refugee. Moreover, Ager et al.'s (1995) findings also suggested that women reported higher frequency in health problems and higher involvement in domestic tasks, such as cooking and taking care of their family. Their findings proposed the need for better planning and management of refugee assistance programmes, which may increase the availability of support for refugee women.

A study by Ghaffarian (1998) addressed the acculturation of Iranian men and women migrants in the United States using an Iranian version of Mendoza's Cultural Life Style Inventory. The findings of this study suggest that men had lower cultural resistance than women, and that there was a significant difference in mental well-being between genders, with men having better mental health than women. The study also suggests that the higher the level of education of the migrant, the less they will resist the new culture, and the more they will be shifting towards integrating into the new society. However, this study did not conduct a clear comparison between genders in aspects of adjustment and acculturation. Also, despite making an assumption that older immigrants face more cultural adaptation difficulties than the younger generation, the study did not make a clear comparison of these acculturation difficulties.

Indeed, younger refugees also face social integration difficulties, which are prevalent among the female gender and especially girls at the age of adolescence. Such difficulties relate mainly to cultural and religious restraints which play an important role in reshaping the way these girls interact with others from the new society (Dunstan et al., 2004).

Females who come from cultures where the man is traditionally the head of the household and the household spokesperson experience various societal and cultural resettlement difficulties once arriving in Western societies (Joudi, 2002). Such difficulties include: mixing with males in educational institutes or work; wearing head scarves, or hijab, which may prevent girls from performing school activities; socialising with peers who may have different values and beliefs; and other social activities that may impact on the way female refugees think and behave. Such cultural differences would make the female resettlement experience a challenging one. In research on the role of religion in the lives of Somali refugee women in the USA, De Voe (2002) states

that hijab makes it more challenging for Somali females to adapt to Western society, and they may not readily be accepted by their non-Muslim peers at school. De Voe also suggests that the apparent visibility of Muslim females makes them an easy target for hostility and aggression by certain individuals, especially those who are not ready to accept them into the society.

Some studies show differences in the experiences of men and women. Pavlish (2007) noted recurring themes in a narrative analysis study conducted on the life experiences of refugee men and women in Rwanda. Pavlish (2007) argued that despite certain gender variations, the concerns of both male and female refugees evolved around concern towards their family and the future. Specifically, the themes for women included leaving status and wealth behind, concern for their daughters, uncertainty about their marital relationship, and feelings of hopelessness. The men, on the other hand, talked about leaving status and wealth behind, concern over the future of their family, and pressure in being the protector and provider for the family.

Other studies conclude that it is more difficult for male migrants and refugees coming to the new society. In a study by Nghe et al. (2003) on the experiences of acculturation and racism faced by Vietnamese refugees in the USA, the findings state that for both men and women refugees who arrive in a foreign society, the lack of family support, as well as acculturation and discrimination challenges, may cause refugees to experience traumatic distress. Yet their findings concluded that male Vietnamese participants in the study were more likely to experience distress during resettlement, and not seek mental or professional health help. Nghe et al. (2003) point out that this may be due to the masculine socialisation of Asian men, such as being the breadwinner, providing for the family, protecting the family and having higher education than Asian women. Nghe et al. (2003, p. 251) argue: "For all refugee men, the refugee journey is a life-altering experience."

In their research, Nghe et al. (2003) argue that the reason behind men facing more adjustment challenges than women is because their traditional role as the head of family is likely to be disrupted as a result of the shift in gender roles, where the female is more likely to find a job than the male. The overwhelming experience of resettlement was also reported to cause the Vietnamese male anxiety and depression as he struggles to carry on his role as a provider of protection and consolidation to his family, while he himself adjusts to a foreign society and culture, and struggles to find 'good' job opportunities. Nghe et al. (2003) found that the refugee male participants experienced

disappointment that their economic opportunities and hopes of a better life for themselves and their family were shattered once arriving in a host society that may be reluctant to acknowledge the refugee's skills and experience. Thus, according to their findings, it is economic success in the host society that may secure the traditional masculine roles of ethnic refugees and help them adjust and settle in their new country.

In another study of the mental health needs of South East Asian refugees, Chung, Bemak, and Kagawa-Singer (1998) examined a group of Southeast Asian refugees in the United States and explored gender differences in dealing with psychological stress and its impact on resettlement. The data was collected through a combined face-to-face interview and questionnaire based approach. This study was carried out using psychometric measures that assessed depression, anxiety and psychosocial dysfunction. Chung and Bemak (2002) mention that when settling into a new society, refugee men may experience downward mobility due to lack of employment opportunities in their area of expertise and the difficulties in accrediting their overseas qualifications, whereas female refugees may experience an increase in employment opportunities due to the variety of jobs offered, and the sometimes inevitable need for two household incomes. However, Chung and Bemak (2002) also state that the change in gender roles may change family dynamics, placing pressure on traditional family roles and relationships. Their findings suggested that conflicts between the cultural values of the refugee and those of the new society may create a substantial amount of stress for both genders, particularly as a result of the change in gender roles, in which the male may not necessarily remain as the main household provider. Such cultural conflict would put pressure on the family, marriage, or relationship.

The findings of Chung and Bemak (2002) were also exemplified in a study by Dion and Dion (2001). Their study was conducted by interviewing small samples of Korean migrant working couples. Themes that emerged from their study included the male participants' concern that role changes within the family resulted in them feeling that their authority in the family was challenged and that their wives were becoming more independent and demanding of the husbands to be involved in household work and other expectations that to the male seemed inappropriate.

Moghissi (1999) conducted a study based on observations made from several support groups for Persian-speaking abused women in Toronto and individual interviews. This study was concerned with exploring the displacement and adjustment of Iranian migrants in Canadian society. The findings of this study proposed that women were

healthier mentally than their male counterparts, and that those women indicated that they were coping better in their new society than were the men. Moghissi (1999) proposes that women who come from patriarchal societies and who rely on the man to decide upon resettling or moving may in fact be better at coping with change in a new society and are more flexible at adjusting to new conditions. However, Moghissi (1999) mentions that this 'readiness' to adjust is accompanied by problems that cause conflict and concern for both genders. Women complained that as a result of a decline in the male's economic status and loss of power over women, men become resentful and more dependent on women.

Gender difference in the exploration of ethnic identity of migrants has also been addressed in several studies in the USA. In a qualitative grounded-theory study by Davey et al. (2003) exploring parenting practices and transmission of ethnic identity among Jewish families in the United States, a constant comparative method of analysis was used to discover meanings of experience as understood and told by the families. Davey et al. (2003) found that females tended to be more affiliated to their religious and traditional practices than males, and that males did not seem to have a desire to explore their ethnic identity or participate in Jewish activities. According to Davey et al. (2003), the reason females are more inclined to maintain their traditional roles than males is because of the expected gender specific role of mothers in Jewish culture, who are considered the maintainer or "keepers" of ethnic identity.

Alternatively, there has been research which has suggested that there is no evidence of gender difference in acculturation or resettlement of refugees. In Nwadiora and McAdoo's (1996) study on Amerasian refugees (individuals born of American servicemen and Vietnamese or Cambodian women during the Vietnam War), participants were asked to complete a refugee acculturative inventory to study their adjustment and resettlement in the United States. The study's findings did not support the assumption that females are at greater risk than males when resettling in a new society. However, the study did indicate other issues that may impact on resettlement, such as proficiency of English, employment, and limited education. The authors did not clearly indicate if there were gender differences among those alternative resettlement issues, such as whether or not men were more proficient in English than women or better equipped educationally. However, it is suggested that if such factors were put into consideration, the results of this study may have indicated a gender difference in acculturation.

Ajrouch (2000) mentions that among traditional groups such as Arabs, there exists gender division of responsibility, with the gender-specific roles leading the Arab community to rely on females to maintain the cultural values and traditions and Arab identity. The male, on the other hand, faces less cultural pressure to maintain these traditions, and thus adapts to Western values and behaviours more easily. An explanation of this issue is proposed by Barakat (1993), who argues that although in Arab culture the father is assigned as the household provider and family authority figure, it is the wife who actually exercises power over the children. According to Barakat (1993), the Arab mother is entrusted with raising the children according to their culture and implanting religious and cultural practices and beliefs in the children, and children are obliged to respect their parents, to conform to their suggestions and accept their advice without disgruntlement or defiance.

Prejudice and Islamaphobia

Discrimination occurs in increasingly subtle ways (Colic-Peisker, 2005). Prejudice is defined as “an attitude (usually negative) toward a distinguishable group of people, based solely on their membership to that group” (Aronson, Wilson, Akert, & Fehr, 2007, p. 400). Aronson et al. (2007) also define stereotypes as a “generalisation about a group of people in which identical characteristics are assigned to virtually all members of the group” (p. 401). According to Devine (1989), as long as stereotypes exist, prejudice will follow. After several terrorist incidents in the USA and UK, Muslims living in Western societies have been presented and viewed as “problems” (Kolig, 2003). As such, Muslims in Western society are currently facing several ordeals that may not only hinder their integration, but also make them a visible minority who feels the need to defend themselves in the face of prejudice and incorrect ideologies. Such ideologies may include the notion that Islam is a religion which oppresses women and is incompatible with democracy and human rights, as well as the belief that it is a religion of fundamentalism and fanaticism, and is anti-Western (Kolig, 2003). Kolig (2003) argues that it is not that Muslims do not wish to integrate and adjust to Western society; rather, it is that Western society does not exhibit interest in supporting Muslim integration. Moreover, Dibley and Dunstan (2002) acknowledge that prejudice against refugees by individuals from the host society presents a significant barrier to resettlement. Dibley and Dunstan (2002) mention that Muslims, and especially women, may become targets of prejudice and discrimination in Western societies, due to the way they dress or their religious practices. However, Dibley and Dunstan’s (2002) research

findings suggest that few of the participants they interviewed mentioned being discriminated against by the New Zealand host society.

Verkuyten and Kinket (1999) point out that in Western countries where large groups of refugees are resettled, Islam is described as a “backward religion” that is a threat to society. Muslims from Iraq, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Egypt, Sudan and Algeria may be mentioned in the media, not in a positive way, but in connection to people-trafficking, terrorism, radicalism, or suicide attacks (Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007). In the past, Arab and Muslims have been misinterpreted and stereotyped in the media as terrorists, fanatics, or oil-rich sheikhs (Erickson & Al-timimi, 2001).

In New Zealand there is a lack of a general understanding about Muslims and Arabs, and the cultural and ethnic challenges facing this group when trying to settle in the country. The misunderstanding of Muslims may also lead to a current phenomenon which mainly emerged after the September 11th terrorist attacks, known as Islamophobia. Although not common or obvious among the New Zealand people, this may not necessarily mean it does not exist in the society. Haque (2004, p.1) defines this phenomenon as “an unfounded fear of Islam and its followers.”

Larsson (2005) presents a more extensive definition of Islamophobia, in which he states:

the Islamophobia in question is more like anti-semitism than anti-judaism. It is more a form of racism than a form of religious intolerance, though it may perhaps be best described as a form of cultural racism, in recognition of the fact that the target group, the Muslims, are identified in terms of their non-European descent, in terms of their not being white, and in terms of their perceived culture, and that the prejudice against each of these aspects interacts with and reinforces the prejudice against the others. (p.4)

Zine (2003) posits that Islamophobia is defined as “a fear or hatred of Islam and its adherents that translates into individual, ideological and systemic forms of oppression and discrimination” (p. 2).

Researchers in religion, ethnicity and culture have agreed that Islamophobia is relatively similar to other forms of racism and discrimination, based on colour of skin, religion or ethnicity (Larsson, 2005). Although there is some debate over the historic origins of this term, Zine (2001) suggests that Islamophobia goes back in time to Arabia in the 7th century when people were persecuted for their beliefs. On the other hand, Larsson

(2005) suggests that Islamophobia is a more recent term that emerged in the late 1980s and was first printed in a United States magazine in 1991.

Nonetheless, no matter when Islamophobia first emerged, it is crucial for the continuation of human beings living together in harmony that issues of discrimination are properly addressed and resolved. One method which may resolve these issues is to provide understanding and clarification through adequate research.

Although there may be prejudices, actions of a few cannot be generalised. This matter goes both ways: for Muslims in Western society, and for Western societies that resettle Muslims. Muslim religious leaders in Western society also play an important role in correcting or increasing prejudices against Muslims. For example, leaders such as Imam Hamza Yusuf who is the Director of an Islamic Institute in California, is an example of a Muslim leader who advocates for a better understanding between the Muslim world and the West (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2003). On the other hand, Hamid Ali is an example of a Muslim religious leader in the UK who referred to non-Muslims as “cockroaches ripe for extermination” (TimesOnline, 2006).

Refugee Strengths and Support

While Muslims are subject to Islamaphobia, on the other hand Islam can play a role in giving Muslims who live in Western countries means to help them cope with suffering. A study by Shoeb et al. (2007) on the mental health of Iraqi refugees in Michigan suggested that for refugees who come from war-torn countries and who have been exposed to traumatic experiences, it is the moral and social obligation of the resettlement nation to provide refugees with adequate and suitable mental health treatments and resettlement services. Shoeb et al. (2007) go on to suggest that refugee agencies need to understand how their health approaches can incorporate fundamental ethnic values and beliefs, such as religion. The Muslim refugees in their study described how Islamic rituals and worship assisted in easing their anxiety, stress, and loneliness (Shoeb et al., 2007).

This section will look at the literature concerning ways in which refugees demonstrate strength and resilience in coping with resettlement in a new country, and the main sources of support that contribute to this resettlement.

Coping and Resilience

According to Chile et al. (2003), refugees generally come to their resettlement country with an array of survival skills due to the varying degrees of trauma that they had to overcome in their refugee journey. Chile et al. (2003) suggests that these resiliency skills need to be fostered and encouraged by the host society because it will inevitably be a source of strength for the refugee supporting his/her adjustment in the new society. Providing adequate resettlement support has also been linked to enhancing and encouraging refugee resilience and natural coping mechanisms and abilities.

Schweitzer, Greenslade, and Kagee (2007) identified the coping and resilience strategies of 13 resettled Sudanese refugees in Australia. Their research took on a qualitative approach and asked refugees to describe their resettlement experiences and methods of coping with resettlement challenges. Their findings suggested that there were three themes characterizing the experience of resettled refugees across all periods: religious beliefs, social support and personal qualities. Their research suggests that these themes may be translated into strategies to assist the refugees in responding constructively to trauma and that such approaches may be used to improve the wellbeing of resettled refugees in Australia.

Similarly, Hamilton and Moore (2004) also point out that resilience, with its key element of focusing on strengths, is a way that individuals overcome adversity. Identifying resilience skills that refugees have assists them in adapting to a new society and overcoming resettlement barriers. It has been suggested that people are productive, satisfied, and mentally healthy when provided with opportunities for achievement, recognition, challenge, responsibility and learning (Chile et al., 2003; Hamilton & Moore, 2004; McKelvey, Webb, & Mao, 1993).

Refugee mental health challenges may, therefore, also be understood within the context of refugee resilience and coping capacity. The opportunity to freely practise traditions, beliefs, and customs and to recreate social institutions can serve as protection factors. The following protective factors are identified by Jablensky et al., (1994): (1) availability of extended family, such as structure and rules in household, shared values and a sense of coherence; (2) access to employment; (3) participation in self-help groups; and (4) situational transcendence, or the ability of individuals and groups to frame their status and problems in terms that transcend the immediate situation and give it meaning (e. g., ethnic identity, cultural history). Hamilton and Moore (2004) suggest

that focusing on resilience and survival skills that refugees come equipped with, offers a positive focus on good outcomes and possible interventions.

Ethnic Community Associations and Social Support

Refugees flee their countries leaving behind their social networks their family and friends, and arrive in their host country stressed as a result of the surrounding new environment and isolation, so they require a system that helps to teach them ‘the ropes’ of living in their new country (Simich et al., 2003). Social support has been defined as “interactions with family members, friends, peers and professionals that communicate information, esteem, practical or emotional help” (Simich et al., 2005, p. 259).

It is only during the last ten years that research on Somali, Kurdish, Afghani and Iraqi refugees has been conducted in the UK, Australia, and Canada (Ajrouch, 2000; Erickson & Al-Timimi, 2001; Fangen, 2006). As previously mentioned in this research, this increase in interest may due to the growing numbers of resettled refugees from those ethnic backgrounds in various Western host countries.

Despite the cultural and linguistic differences among these ethnic groups (Somali, Kurdish, and Iraqi etc.), they share many similarities when it comes to the resettlement challenges they experience in their host country. For example, Somalis and Kurds who have resettled in the UK can be considered a heterogeneous group (Bruinessen, 1992; Griffiths, 2000; 2002). Also, Griffiths (2000) states that the Somali and Kurdish refugee groups in the UK share similarities in terms of their arrival in the country, the size of the groups and the resettlement challenges that are common among refugees, namely language and education barriers.

In order to overcome resettlement barriers, refugees seek the aid of the available formal support carried out by governmental and NGO resettlement services; though these seldom meet their specific needs (Simich, 2003). They also resort to informal social support by ethnic community organisations and networks (Gray & Elliot, 2001; Simich, 2003; Simich et al., 2005). The role of ethnic social support groups and community organisations has also been highlighted in research on refugee resettlement as a recommended and somewhat more appropriate source of resettlement support. Family, friends, and neighbours are likewise important in helping refugees overcome the isolation and challenges of living in a new country (Dunstan et al., 2004; Gray & Elliot, 2001). Simich et al. (2005) mentioned that social support serves multiple functions, such as providing refugees with assistance in coping with challenges and reducing their

stress. Social support also encourages maintaining health, achieving self efficiency, and boosting self-confidence.

It is suggested that refugee groups find comfort in seeking assistance from their established ethnic community associations, who are people who share a common language and cultural background, and may also share common experiences with refugees. Not only are community associations considered a form of informal social support, but they also serve as the voice of the ethnic community (Hopkins, 2006). Another important role that ethnic social support or community groups play is to assist in the strengthening and preservation of the ethnic identity of the group, and maintain the link or cultural continuity between the refugees, especially children, and their homelands (De Voe, 2002; Eastmond, 2007; Griffiths, 2000). Dunstan et al. (2004) stated that refugees who arrive in New Zealand find it important to maintain their ethnic identity and pass it on to subsequent generations, and although a large number of refugees interviewed stated that they try to maintain their heritage by practising their religion and speaking their own language, a small number of participants stated that they were struggling to maintain their ethnic culture due to the lack of ethnic community members and activities. Refugees also turn to religion, frequently attending religious seminars, praying and reciting their holy book, in order to cope with resettlement or adjustment challenges (Shoeb, Weinstein, & Halpern, 2007).

In the UK, social support groups referred to as Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs) have been set up to assist refugees. Tomlinson and Egan (2002) talk of the benefits of establishing RCOs for the refugee and migrant ethnic community in the UK. RCOs are organisations that are usually set up and managed by previous refugees, and provide social and ethnic support to members of their community, especially newly arrived refugees. RCOs provide mother tongue language classes, and organise social and cultural activities that link members to their national, religious or ethnic traditions. Their purpose can be considered as providing members with a continuing sense of identity as a member of a national group. They also provide legal, housing, health, and welfare advice, in addition to training and employment services. According to Tomlinson and Egan (2002), ethnic social support groups are links for refugees and migrants between their home country and their country of resettlement.

On the other hand, Hopkins (2006) also highlighted that despite the importance of ethnic community groups, and the belief that refugees are best served by their own

community-led organisations, in some cases this may not be the ideal situation. Hopkins (2006) pointed out that when there is division within the ethnic community in terms of group dynamics, and lingering political or religious conflict, it may disrupt the expected cohesiveness of refugee groups. Thus, according to Hopkins, the only solution is to allow non-like ethnic groups to provide resettlement services for refugees. The study conducted by Hopkins (2006) investigated the importance of Somali community groups providing services to Somali refugees in the UK, and her findings indicated that Somali refugees were open to and preferred accessing resettlement services that were not provided by Somali community groups, which she suggested was due to the division within the group on political and ethnic grounds. A similar study by Madjar and Humpage (as cited in Gray & Elliot, 2001, p. 37) on Bosnian refugees in New Zealand also noted that despite the important support role that an established ethnic community plays in the lives of Bosnian refugees, there was tension which emerged from conflicting political perspectives among the community members who ran the support services, and which affected the overall satisfaction of Bosnian refugees with the services provided by their ethnic community service. Ethnic groups that share common goals and political views, such as the Kurds, who desire a unified Kurdish nation (Hopkins, 2006), are considered better candidates in terms of providing suitable services for their ethnic refugee groups.

In addition, Simich et al. (2005) mentioned that both formal and informal social support networks face challenges, such as limited financial and human resources, which impact in a negative way on issues such as client follow ups, and contribute to lack of adequate interpretation, outreach and community development services. Another challenge is the underrepresentation of certain refugee ethnic groups, which disadvantages them in terms of policy making. Finally, Simich et al. (2005) suggested that another important obstacle that support networks may face is what they termed “narrow agency mandates,” which refers to the “one size fits all” services that are provided to all refugees, despite some of these services being culturally and ethnically inappropriate in terms of what they have to provide to refugees.

According to Gray and Elliot (2001), another obstacle facing ethnic support groups, especially those that have a long established community, is the influence of past experience within the ethnic community. Gray and Elliot (2001) suggest that the difference in migration status (i.e., immigrant or refugee) may create resettlement obstacles or barriers for refugees, especially when ethnic groups that have been formed

by the arrival of immigrants over the years, are expected to readily embrace refugees, who may differ in their education, regional origins, political affiliations and religious beliefs. Gray and Elliot (2001) believe that these differences may impact on the refugees' readiness to become part of the established ethnic community, and seeking its social support.

Family Reunification

Refugees who come from traditional cultures in which people tend to view themselves as members of groups (families, tribes, nations), consider the needs of the group to be more important than the needs of individuals (Barakat, 1993). Refugees may also consider family as an important social, economic and mental support unit (Ajrouch, 2000; Barnes, 2001). Some refugees arriving in host countries may have left family members behind, and reuniting with them is one of their main priorities once landing in their resettlement country (Dunstan et al., 2004). In a report by the UNHCR (2001) about the importance of family unity, family reunification was highlighted as a natural right that ought to be respected, as refugees who have been forced to leave their family members behind are not able to go back to their native countries.

In their findings, Dunstan et al. (2004) stated that participants in their research mentioned the importance of bringing family members to live with them in New Zealand. However, they pointed out that family reunification was also a costly matter. When asked why it mattered to refugees that they are reunited with family members, refugees mentioned that it is simply because they are "family" (Dunstan et al., 2004). Family reunification is important for refugees, to ensure that the lives of their extended family members are protected, and also because it is culturally expected for family members to look after the well-being of one another.

Family reunification helps resettled refugees to overcome their concern over the safety and well-being of their family members left behind in their war-torn country, and therefore family reunification may be a key factor into successful resettlement (Altinkaya & Omundsen, 1999; Dunstan et al., 2004; Gray & Elliot, 2001). The effect of waiting too long to reunite with their family, or having to overcome various barriers for reunification, can have detrimental effects on the resettlement of refugees. Gray and Elliot (2001) suggest that waiting to be reunited with family members may also take its toll on the refugees' mental and physical well-being.

In a report about the impact of delayed family reunification processes, the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) points out that prolonging the wait for family reunification may put refugee family members who live overseas at risk (CCR, 2004). Refugee family members who remain in UN based camps in countries of asylum are usually living in severe conditions, with limited access to food, clean water, and education for their children. Refugees who have successfully resettled desire to reunite with the members they have left behind as soon as possible, to guarantee their safety and well-being. CCR (2004) also discusses the mental toll on refugees due to the long separation from family members. According to CCR (2004), the longer it takes for family reunification to be processed, the more guilt the resettled refugee feels:

Members suspect them of not wanting them to come, because they cannot believe that a country like Canada could be so inefficient in its processing. Families that finally reunite after years of separation face the stress of trying to live together after having grown apart. Some families' ties don't survive. (p.4)

CCR (2004) notes that resettled refugees continue to struggle through mental challenges during their first year of arrival in their host country, in addition to their obligation to send money to their family members who remain in their native country or in refugee camps.

Conclusion

It is important to understand that we – as a New Zealand nation – cannot allow ethnic groups hoping to rebuild their shattered future in a new country, to become an invisible minority who will always be the “other”. This chapter has provided a background for the study of Arab Muslim refugees resettling in New Zealand. The review of literature for this study not only revealed that the global refugee crisis is significantly affecting the demographics of New Zealand, but it also suggested that the refugee experience has yet to be fully understood by countries that host this migrant group. In order to understand the newly arriving populations and to provide culturally relevant services, these services must understand important aspects of their lives, such as their history, culture, and migration experiences. In a review of the history and culture of Arab Muslims, it is evident that this population has had a long history of war and hardship that warrants the attention of social researchers. Reviewing various resettlement models sheds light into the importance of understanding the resettlement approaches and

refugee services that host countries such as the USA, Canada, and Australia offer their refugees. The literature demonstrates that the New Zealand resettlement model has some strength compared to other resettlement models. In addition, New Zealand does not face to the same degree issues relating to people trafficking and boat smuggling as do other countries. Nevertheless, refugees in New Zealand face significant challenges, which include practical challenges such as housing, financial concerns, access to healthcare, mental health issues, employment, qualification accreditation and language barriers. Arab Muslim refugees face some specific challenges, which are Arab and Islamic identity preservation, lack of ethnic and community support facilities and family reunification challenges, and Islamophobia. Overall, there is a need for clarification in refugee resettlement provision, in terms of services, and support provided to newly arrived refugees. As Beiser (2006) mentioned, there has been much attention paid to admitting refugees, however, resettlement countries continue to lack the development of programmes and support services to help them resettle in a new country. To understand how a country may assist refugees, it is first important to understand their refugee journey. The approach to conducting this research is discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This research on the refugee journey and experiences of Muslim refugees in New Zealand was conducted in Auckland and Wellington between the years 2005 and 2006. The data was collected from face-to-face interviews of 31 (16 female and 15 male) Arabic-speaking Muslim refugees from five Arab/Muslim countries, and my involvement with these people continued throughout the research.

This chapter discusses the methodology that underpins this research. First, I will address the appropriateness of qualitative methods for the collection of this research data. Then, I will outline the method and research design in terms of the participants and access to participants, followed by the procedure by which the data were collected. I will then outline the interview points used to shape the conversation between the participant and researcher, and lastly the qualitative analysis conducted.

Qualitative vs. Quantitative Research Methods in Refugee Studies

This research takes on a qualitative approach. Oakley (1992) suggests that qualitative methods allow exploration of the quality of experience through the study of meaning and processes. Qualitative research on migration and refugee issues can explore displacement, resettlement and emotional well-being on a more personal, and sensitive level than would a quantitative ‘pencil-paper’ method such as a survey or questionnaire. Interviews or group discussions allow us to gain a richer understanding of the participants’ experiences through their own world and perspective.

Why Use Qualitative Methods

There is a growing body of research in the area of refugee and migration studies with interests varying from the refugee’s access to the healthcare system, to resettlement challenges and cultural barrier concerns. Some of these topics may not have been adequately addressed, therefore requiring researchers to understand the real issues through an inductive qualitative approach. The majority of refugee and migrant research has been conducted using a qualitative approach. Goodkind and Deacon (2004) suggest that quantitative methodologies may be difficult to use especially with people with limited literacy such as refugees. Goodkind and Deacon (2004) also mention that surveys and questionnaires may be regarded as an impersonal and silencing method, especially for people who come from cultures that encourage interpersonal relationships.

It could be argued that research is most grounded and reliable if it is based on quantitative methods that use deductive reasoning and statistical analysis (Belgrave, Zablotsky, & Guadagno, 2002). We are all well aware of the notion “numbers talk.” What I would like to propose is, so do people. When carrying out research with refugees and migrants, it is important that as researchers, we respect the individuals interviewed, and their experiences should be given weight (Kisoon, 2006). Qualitative research methods offer such weight and respect to the individual’s experiences and sensitive stories. They require that “we become active ‘listeners’ seeking knowledge and understanding” (Padgett, 1998, p. 21).

For the purpose of conducting a study that enriches us as researchers, refugee support workers, and members of a growing migrant and refugee community, I chose to talk to participants and to allow them to reflect on their personal experiences. Rather than forming impersonal contact with the people who are the focal point of the research, my approach allowed the participants to be empowered by addressing their challenges. Goodkind and Deacon (2004) mention that quantitative methodologies may limit the researcher’s opportunities to further examine or explore assumptions about their participants. In contrast, qualitative research may have an impact on the researcher’s life, as the participants often “hold up a mirror to us and challenge us” (Padgett, 1998, p. 22). In this current study, the Muslim refugees felt at ease when the interview was conversation-based and included my understanding, empathy and own experiences as a Muslim migrant. Goodkind and Deacon (2004) suggest that a qualitative approach often allows participants to express themselves in a natural way, and it allows the researcher to explore the participants’ experiences and give them an opportunity to voice their opinions and views. This approach may also assist participants to reflect on and acknowledge their experiences.

One of the valuable aspects of qualitative research is the researcher-participant dynamics that grow as a result of the lengthy time spent and trust bonds formed with the participants. According to Padgett (1998), gender/religion/race matches between researcher and participants, though valuable, do not always guarantee rapport. However, building mutual respect and understanding is important in order to gain the participants’ trust. Conducting “culturally appropriate research” is also an important matter that researchers need to acknowledge. Goodkind and Deacon (2004) suggest that research that is not culturally appropriate and structured carefully by providing bilingual

researchers or translators, and developing programmes that incorporate the strengths of participants, may fail or have negative consequences.

According to Padgett, the pros and cons of using qualitative vs. quantitative methods in social sciences are numerous. Clearly, in conducting qualitative methods one cannot fall back on a ‘scientific recipe’ to guide the analysis of a study, as a quantitative method would. In using qualitative methods of analysis, the researcher needs to be creative, sensitive, reflexive, and analytic (Padgett, 1998). The use of qualitative methods in refugee and migrant research has been popular due to the fact that qualitative methods tend to discover and explore, rather than to test theories. Padgett (1998, p.7) has addressed six reasons why researchers may choose qualitative methods in research. In the table below, I have included how these points relate to the current research.

	Reasons for choosing qualitative methods (Padgett, 1998, p.7)	Relating these reasons to the current research
1	You want to explore a topic about which little is known. <i>Using qualitative methods as a frontier during the initial exploratory stage of a research (after which “hard” science takes over).</i>	Exploring the refugee journey of Muslim refugees, including those who were smuggled on boats and detained in Nauru, has not been researched in New Zealand before.
2	You are pursuing a topic of sensitivity and emotional depth. <i>Using qualitative methods in researching topics that require empathy and understanding. Using a standardised survey or questionnaire may seem insensitive or inappropriate.</i>	Enabling the participants to reflect on their journey and talk about their experiences is a sensitive issue that requires sensitive measures. The researcher needs to be empathetic, gain the participants’ respect and become a personal part of this unique sharing experience.
3	You wish to capture ‘lived experiences’ from the perspectives of those who live it and create meaning from it. <i>When the researcher seeks to ‘understand,’ by capturing the participants’ point of view, rather than to seeking to explain from the perspective of an outsider.</i>	This research explores the ‘life story’ interviews of Arabic-speaking Muslim refugees from their own perspective, to create meaning from their journey.
4	You wish to study the outcomes of programmes and interventions. <i>Qualitative methods are useful in evaluating programmes and services. Qualitative and quantitative methods compliment each other by providing in-depth understanding of how interventions succeed or fail.</i>	The research aims to explore the participants’ perceptions of current programmes and services provided for refugees (e.g. WINZ, HNZC, ESOL classes and community support groups) in terms of their appropriateness and effectiveness in assisting their resettlement.
5	You are a quantitative researcher who has reached an impasse in data collection or in explaining findings. <i>Quantitative researchers may resort to qualitative methods to explain findings that</i>	N/A

	<i>cannot be explained through qualitative methods.</i>	
6	<p>You are seeking to merge activism with research.</p> <p><i>Action or participatory research can be used in fighting oppression or social injustice. Those who are studied maintain substantial control over the study from start to finish.</i></p>	<p>Refugees have been exposed to many negative experiences and come from oppressive countries, and although not directly oppressed in the host society, they are exposed to challenges which may hinder their resettlement experience and affect their mental well-being and their overall view of the host country. My own action in helping in this resettlement includes working as a resettlement support volunteer with RMS, in addition to working with the Department of Ethnic Affairs in Auckland, conducting research and meeting with members of the Arab refugee communities in New Zealand.</p>

Unlike a quantitative researcher, a qualitative researcher needs to be immersed in the data, as she or he is the instrument of data collection. In the case of conducting face to face interviews, the researcher (or interviewer) is able to direct, or allow the participant to direct, the interview in ways that will benefit the research. This allows the researcher to pick up on other issues that she or he may not have considered and that may have an impact on the research outcomes, such as additional challenges, or to adjust and tailor the research questions to the particular needs of the participant. The researcher must be a sensitive instrument in order to develop and gather meaning from the raw data. In a report written for the UNHCR, Jacobsen and Landau (2003) suggest that as researchers we are in a constant battle with ourselves. This is a result of the demands of academia to prove that our work is not only valid, but also beneficial, and that it contributes to the growing research in refugee issues and its ultimate influence on policymakers and humanitarian agencies dealing with refugees and migrants. Jacobsen and Landau express that in order for research to be replicated and validated, we should strive to produce data that is based on ‘hard science,’ is representative, and obtained in ways that could be analysed quantitatively in order for it to have a degree of construct validity (Rodgers, 2004).

According to Rodgers (2004), in order for us to believe that the ‘best’ approach to refugee and migration studies is a quantitative approach, there are assumptions that must be considered, such as:

- Researchers working in the field of forced migration already know the relevant questions.

- The experiences, lives, and concerns of refugees are irrelevant beyond the aspects that can be recognised and measured as valid ‘variables.’
- That findings and knowledge through quantitative means will necessarily lead to better understanding of forced migration challenges, and that quantitative methods will lead to better policy decisions than findings and knowledge that were derived from qualitative ‘guesses.’
- That the costs and effort of producing statistical data is justifiable in relation to the benefits that refugees reap from a more scientific understanding of their predicament.

Rodgers (2004) stated that all of the above would hold true if refugees lived in environments that demonstrated ‘laboratory-like conditions.’ Rodgers then adds:

Attempts to make sense of their predicaments through the imposition of neatly - even perfectly - designed surveys may completely miss this defining aspect of the social experience of forced migration and systemic order that is beyond the experiences of the people most affected. (p. 1)

In another study of young refugee people in Australia, Mohamed (2003) determined that the most appropriate approach to study the arrival and settlement experiences of refugees in Australia is by qualitative measures, as it allows for a better understanding of the circumstances that led refugees to flee, to document their experiences at resettlement and detention centres, and to verify the impact that current and ongoing governmental policies have on refugees in Australia.

Moreover, Arab and Muslim refugees and migrants have not been adequately researched in New Zealand. The bulk of qualitative research on those groups has been conducted in other Western countries for example in Australia (e.g. Colic-Peisker, 2005; Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003; Mansouri & Cauchi, 2007; McMichael & Ahmed, 2003; Mohamed, 2003), Canada (e.g. Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000; Simich et al., 2003; Simich et al., 2006;), UK/Europe (e.g. Chatty et al., 2005; Fangen, 2006; Griffiths, 2000; Hopkins, 2006; Mestheneos & Ioannidi, 2002; Nagel, 2002; Robinson, 1999; Valtonen, 1998), and the USA (e.g. Ajrouch, 2000; De Voe, 2002). However, several reports and studies have been produced in New Zealand by researchers such as Gray and Elliot (2001), Dibley and Dunstan (2002), and Dunstan et al. (2004), all of whom worked on the Refugee Resettlement Project, *Refugee Voices*, which is a research programme developed by the New Zealand Immigration Service in the hope of being

able to fill the information gap on the experiences of refugees resettling in New Zealand.

Research on Arab, Middle Eastern, or Muslim refugees in New Zealand is scarce, and there is little, if any, information known about their resettlement, adaptation, and integration experiences, hence the need for carrying out this type of research in New Zealand.

Qualitative methods are considered a more appropriate approach for this group as a result of the following:

- 1) Arabs and Muslims are not researched in their own country, and therefore they are not accustomed to filling in surveys or questionnaires to discuss social issues and challenges.
- 2) Arabs and Muslims can be quite protective of their personal information or experiences, as a result of their not trusting governmental officials or researchers. This is mainly true for those who come from dictatorship countries, where they are discouraged from speaking up for themselves or voicing out their opinions or concerns, and those who do may indeed be persecuted for their actions. Therefore meeting them face to face, and gaining their trust as a researcher who exhibits cultural and religious respect, may be a more suitable method.
- 3) Allowing participants to discuss and share their experiences shows that the researcher/interviewer appreciates and gives value to their unique experiences, rather than suggesting they 'rate their experience' or 'tick' the most appropriate word that matches how they feel about their experience.
- 4) Arabs and Muslims may be ashamed of admitting they have mental health problems or social challenges, as these issues are considered weaknesses and bring shame to the person and their families. The relative privacy a face-to-face interview creates may allow the participant to openly discuss and reflect on their experiences.
- 5) In-depth interviewing allows the questions to be tailored to the needs of each individual being interviewed. The revelation of other issues of interest can also be added to the interview, as questions can be altered and adjusted as other topics arise from talking to refugees.

6) A qualitative approach may allow for further crucial research questions or issues to arise and be addressed.

As a result of this study being inductive, a potentially formalised research question that is the basis of this project is: *Do (resettled) refugees really resettle?*

This question led me to examine the refugee journey, and look at factors and experiences along their journey, from their country of asylum, to detention centres or travelling on fake-documents, all of which are experiences that may impact on their current resettlement situation.

This research takes on a holistic approach, building on sociological, anthropological, and psychological methodology; face-to-face individual semi-structured interviewing and collecting life story experiences from female and male refugees were key research tools in this study. Life stories and narratives allow us to focus on important aspects of the refugee journey, and shed light on the experiences of young and old, male and female generations of Arabic-speaking Muslim refugees (Chatty et al., 2005).

Finally, as Rodgers (2004) stated, there are aspects of the refugee experience that cannot be understood using rigorous quantitative methods. There is no doubt that the method used to obtain valuable and relevant information depends on the topic being researched. The current study aims to reveal and explore the lived experiences of Arabic-speaking Muslim refugees in New Zealand. A qualitative approach remains the most culturally and ethically appropriate method of analysis that will assist us in understanding the refugee journey.

Method

Access to Participants

Gaining access to participants was a lengthy process and took one year to achieve. Initially, access to participants was arranged through Refugee Migrant Services (RMS). During this process I had contacted several RMS branches around New Zealand (Auckland, Hamilton and Wellington). My hope was that RMS, which is New Zealand's only refugee resettlement agency, might assist me in gaining access to communities, or community leaders, of Muslim refugees in New Zealand. However, this process was not fruitful, as RMS was hesitant in providing me with information that may have affected the privacy or confidentiality of these refugees.

The next method I used in order to gain access to potential participants was to contact the School of Languages at Auckland University of Technology (AUT), who provide English language courses for newly arrived refugees through the Training Opportunities Programme (TOPs). I was allowed to give a short 30 minute presentation at the end of their English lesson, briefly outlining my research and the importance of conducting this study. An information sheet was provided for the students. I discussed in detail its content, and most importantly their rights as participants in this study. I requested that the students contact me either by phone or email if they were willing to participate, and to take extra copies of the information sheet to others they knew who may fit the criteria. The outcome of this method resulted in one person willing to participate in the study.

My next attempt was to contact professionals, such as doctors, dentists, interpreters, or bilingual migrant advisors who were of Muslim or Arab heritage, and who had direct access to or dealt with migrant groups including refugees. I sent copies of my research information sheet to these professionals and requested they give them out to their clients who might be willing to partake in this research. This step was important, as it meant that I was respecting the participant's privacy and confidentiality by requesting their permission to be interviewed through their doctor or migrant advisor. Once the participant agreed to meet me, the doctor or advisor would contact me and give me the participant's details in order for me to contact the potential participant directly and organise an initial interview date. It is important to note that I had to see four potential participants more than once in order to gain their trust, and then be allowed to conduct an interview with them.

Once I interviewed a participant, he or she may have suggested another potential person whom I could contact; this method is referred to as the snowballing technique. The majority of the sample obtained for this study was gained through this method. Padgett (1998) mentions that qualitative researchers select participants based on their ability to provide the information needed. When it becomes challenging to find participants, particularly if the target group is difficult to access or the research is sensitive, qualitative researchers do as their quantitative counterparts do, use the snowballing technique (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981).

This technique uses 'referrals' from current participants, who may suggest another person known to them who would be suitable for the study. Researchers in the refugee and asylum seeking area usually use snowballing in order to gain access to participants,

mainly because refugees and asylum seekers are difficult to locate by other means due to their sensitive status and challenging experiences (Bloch, 2000). One issue with snowballing techniques is that the refugee would tend to name others who are in their network or part of their community (Jacobsen & Landau, 2003). However, as the sample grows, the researcher will then be able to gain access to other networks in order to gain access to other potential participants (Willig, 2001). For my research, I originally had access to potential Iraqi participants, and through snowballing they would refer me to other Iraqi refugees: however, this technique also opened the opportunity for me to gain access to refugees of other nationalities who my initial participants knew of through their own community or religious networks.

Another aspect of snowballing that Bloch (2000) discusses is the danger of research being over-dependent on groups who have had similar experiences. This is something that contradicts the belief that each refugee family comes with their own unique perspectives and experiences of their refugee journey. This research was conducted by interviewing refugees who had arrived in New Zealand during various times, by various means.

From the beginning, I kept a journal that had my reflection notes on each pre-interview and on the interview itself. I noted who linked me to each participant, how contact was made, the date of the interview, the environment or place we met (at home or any other place which the participant decided upon), and feelings expressed by the participant during and after the completion of the interview. This journal became invaluable once I was ready to interpret my data, because it brought the experiences of these participants alive.

Interviews were conducted at an appropriate time according to the contract (information sheet), and at the end of most of the interviews, I spent some time having a social conversation with the participant and at times with their family. When interviews occurred in the home of the participant, I was frequently invited to a meal or tea and shared it with the family. This was also when the participant and their family may have asked questions about my personal life. They expressed pleasure at the fact that I was an Arab Muslim female who was pursuing my PhD degree, and that as a migrant, I have been able to excel in a non-Arab, non-Muslim society. Many of the parents expressed their desire that their children would also follow the same path. Bonding between the participants, their family, and myself occurred during these conversations, and we remained in contact even after the research had been completed.

Data Saturation

After conducting 31 interviews, no new information was being given to me. Glaser and Straus (1967) suggest that when no new information is obtained from additional data, then the data (or the inquiry into understanding the phenomena) has reached “theoretical saturation.” Glaser and Strauss (1967) define theoretical saturation as the point at which “no additional data are being found whereby the (researcher) can develop properties of the category, as he sees similar instances over and over again” (p. 65). Glaser and Straus (1967) mention that saturation may occur in as few as six sources. Other researchers such as Guest, Bunch, and Johnson (2006) suggest that for most qualitative research, twelve participants would suffice for the researcher whose aim is to understand common perceptions and experiences among a group of relatively homogeneous individuals. According to Guest et al. (2006), choosing a purposive sample of participants who share common criteria (for example, Arab Muslim refugees) may support the concept that the sample is homogenous and likely to share similar experiences with respect to the research area, and thus we may expect to reach saturation using a relatively small sample. In my research, the participants were homogeneous in the sense that they were Arab Muslim refugees living in New Zealand.

Participants

Thirty one participants, 16 female and 15 male, were included in this study. These participants met the following criteria: they were Muslim refugees who were born in or came from Arabic countries, spoke and understood Arabic, or identified as having Arab heritage, and had been in New Zealand for more than six months (this time period was selected based on the six month resettlement volunteer support time frame provided by RMS).²¹ Twenty-three participants were from Iraq, three were from Kuwait, two were from Sudan, two were from Somalia, and one participant was from Tunisia. Out of the 31 participants, 27 were from Auckland and four from Wellington. In order to obtain a general representation of refugee experiences, this sample contained diverse ethnic affiliations, Arabs, Arabs with Iranian heritage, Africans, and Iraqi-Kurds. The political contexts of the countries that these participants have come from are briefly outlined in Appendix A.

As for New Zealand residency (or time spent in New Zealand), female participants’ residency ranged from one year to eleven years (mean = three years and eight months).

²¹ It is suggested by RMS that it would take six months for refugees to resettle independently.

New Zealand residency for males also ranged from one year to eleven years (mean = five years and one month).

Twelve of the female participants came to New Zealand with their family or spouse, and four arrived on their own. Two of these four females were married and had husbands who were refugees in Australia, and they had reunited within a year of arriving in New Zealand. One female had a husband who was a refugee in the Middle East, and reunited with him within two years of arriving in New Zealand. However, one female whose husband was a refugee on a Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) in Australia, had been unsuccessful in being reunited with him, and at the time of conducting this research, their situation remained unknown. Among the male participants, ten came to New Zealand with their family or spouse, two others were reunited with their families after two years of their arrival, and three participants were single at the time of their arrival to New Zealand.

Tables 1 to 6 summarise selected demographic information for each of the participants interviewed, by gender, nationality language, education, employment, marital status, their prior knowledge of New Zealand, initial refuge destination, and period of residency in New Zealand at the time of conducting this research.

Table 1. Demographics of Female Participants

Name*	Age**	Nationality	Languages Spoken Fluently	Highest Educational Level	Approx. NZ Residency***
Fawzya	35	Iraqi	Arabic	High School	2 years 3 months
Layla	20	Iraqi/Iranian	Arabic, Farsi	High School	3 years
Rana	25	Kuwaiti	Arabic, English	University Degree	11 years
Nora	38	Iraqi/Kurd	Arabic, Kurdish	High School	2 years 6 months
May	34	Iraqi	Arabic	University Post Grad	2 years 6 months
Hiba	29	Iraqi	Arabic, Farsi	Intermediate School	3 years, 5 months
Zina	33	Iraqi	Arabic, Farsi	Intermediate School	2 years 4 months

Hind	16	Iraqi	Arabic, Farsi	Completing High School	2 years 2 months
Sabrya	42	Iraqi	Arabic	Intermediate School	2 years
Fatma	32	Iraqi	Arabic	High School	3 years 5 months
Hayam	29	Iraqi/Kurd	Arabic, Kurdish	Intermediate School	2 years
Wafa	37	Iraqi/Kurd	Arabic, Kurdish	Intermediate School	1 year
Zainab	41	Iraqi	Arabic	Primary School	2 years
Amal	39	Iraqi/Kurd	Arabic, Kurdish	No Schooling	9 years
Aseel	36	Iraqi	Arabic	Intermediate School	5 years
Hana	26	Iraqi	Arabic	Intermediate School	5 years

* All names of participants have been changed to preserve anonymity. The given names in this study are pseudonyms.

/ At the time of conducting this study in 2005.

Table 2. Demographics of Male Participants

Name*	Age**	Nationality	Languages Spoken Fluently	Highest Educational Level	Approx. NZ Residency***
Ali	45	Iraqi	Arabic	High School	2 years 2 months
Khalid	48	Iraqi	Arabic, Farsi	Intermediate School	2 years 2 months
Fahad	52	Kuwaiti	Arabic, English	High School	11 years
Saad	45	Iraqi	Arabic	University degree	3 years
Saif	30	Sudan/Nubia	Arabic, Nubian	University Degree	2 years
Jamal	35	Kuwait	Arabic	High School	6 years
Raad	36	Iraq	Arabic	High School	3 years
Hashim	45	Tunisian	Arabic, English	University Degree	9 years
Mohanad	51	Iraqi	Arabic	Intermediate School	6 years
Kareem	21	Iraqi	Arabic	Intermediate School	1 year 6 months
Ahmed	41	Iraqi/Kurd	Arabic, Kurdish	High School	9 years
Thamir	37	Sudanese	Arabic, English	University Degree	7 years
Jasim	36	Somali	Arabic, English	University Degree	9 years
Firas	40	Somali	Arabic, English	University Degree	5 years
Belal	27	Iraqi/Iranian	Arabic, Farsi	Intermediate School	1 year

* All names of participants have been changed to preserve anonymity. The given names in this study are pseudonyms.

/ At the time of conducting this study in 2005.

Table 3. Female Participants' Marital Status, Children and Employment

Name	Marital Status	Children	Employment
Fawzya	Married	3	Not employed
Layla	Single	None	Not employed
Rana	Single	None	Employed
Nora	Married	2	Not employed
May	Married	2	Not employed
Hiba	Widow	None	Not employed
Zina	Engaged	None	Not employed
Hind	Single	None	Not employed
Sabrya	Married	3	Not employed
Fatma	Married	3	Not employed
Hayam	Married	2	Not employed
Wafa	Married	5	Not employed
Zainab	Married	6	Not employed
Amal	Married	4	Not employed
Aseel	Married	5	Not employed
Hana	Married	2	Not employed

For women, past education and employment experiences play a role in their resettlement in New Zealand and their refugee experiences. Also, having young children and wanting to raise them may hinder them from seeking employment and learning the English language. In this study, out of the 16 female participants interviewed, 15 were unemployed. Females arriving in New Zealand with their spouse or children tended to hold a traditional role within the family by which the mother raises her children according to religion and culture, in the hope of preserving ethnic identity. In contrast, the husband ventures into the new culture, learns the language, and seeks employment as the breadwinner of the household. It is important to mention that this may not always be the case for *all* Arab Muslim refugees in New Zealand.

Table 4. Male Participants' Marital Status and Employment

Name	Marital Status	Children	Employment
Ali	Married	3	Employed
Khalid	Married	9	Employed
Fahad	Divorced	4	Not employed
Saad	Married	10	Employed
Saif	Married	None	Employed
Jamal	Married	4	Not employed
Raad	Married	3	Not employed
Hashim	Married	4	Employed
Mohanad	Married	6	Employed
Kareem	Single	None	Employed
Ahmed	Married	4	Employed
Thamir	Married	2	Employed
Jasim	Married	None	Employed
Firas	Married	3	Employed
Belal	Single	None	Not employed

Three males in this study, who were unemployed, were unable to work due to a physical disability, and were on sickness benefit. One was unemployed since he was attending English language courses. As for the male participants who were employed, eight were engaged in semi-skilled or non-skilled positions such as working at a factory, driving a taxi, or shop-keeping, and only three males held office or academic positions.

Table 5. Female Participants' Prior Knowledge of New Zealand and Original Destination

Name	Prior Knowledge of New Zealand	Original Refuge Destination
Fawzya	None	Australia
Layla	Very little	Australia
Rana	None	Canada
Nora	Very little	New Zealand
May	Very little	New Zealand
Hiba	None	Australia
Zina	None	Australia
Hind	Very little	New Zealand
Sabrya	None	U.S.A.
Fatma	None	U.S.A.
Hayam	None	Australia
Wafa	None	Australia
Zainab	None	New Zealand
Amal	Very little	Canada
Aseel	None	New Zealand
Hana	None	New Zealand

Table 6. Male Participants' Prior Knowledge of New Zealand and Original Destination

Name	Prior Knowledge of New Zealand	Original Refuge Destination
Ali	None	New Zealand
Khalid	Very little	New Zealand
Fahad	Very little	New Zealand
Saad	Very little	Italy
Saif	Substantial	New Zealand
Jamal	None	Canada
Raad	None	Australia
Hashim	Substantial	New Zealand
Mohanad	None	Unknown*
Kareem	None	New Zealand
Ahmed	None	Canada
Thamir	None	New Zealand
Jasim	Very little	U.S.A.
Firas	None	New Zealand
Belal	None	New Zealand

* This participant had acquired fake travel documents and had no knowledge where he was heading even after boarding the plane.

Refugees' prior knowledge about the country and their original resettlement destination may also affect their resettlement experiences and their level of satisfaction at being in New Zealand, wanting to remain in New Zealand, or eventually leaving the country and travelling to their original destination after gaining citizenship.

These tables give insight to the lives, personal backgrounds and experiences of each participant. The information provided here may shed light into the nature of their refugee experiences, and how personal backgrounds affect each leg of their refugee journey.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collected for this study were obtained from conducting semi-structured life story interviews of 31 Muslim Arab refugees resettled in New Zealand. This procedure was approved by the ethics committee of Auckland University of Technology.

The in-depth interviews were designed to reveal meanings from the participants' experiences concerning their refugee journey. The role of social support networks (or lack of), their resettlement experiences, and usage of available services such as WINZ, HNZC, and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes, and any gender related differences in their resettlement experiences were also revealed.

All except three interviews were conducted in Arabic, and then translated to English. Each interview lasted no longer than two hours. The interviews were tape-recorded, translated and transcribed by the researcher in order to preserve confidentiality and the privacy of the participants. Samples of the interviews and the translated scripts were also given to an Arabic-speaking translator for verification.

Depending on their preference, participants were interviewed either at their homes or at another location of their choice. The Arab Muslim participants in this study were generous and hospitable people, therefore when interviewed at their homes the interviews were conducted in a relaxed environment, sometimes over refreshments, lunch or dinner. As mentioned earlier, on many occasions, after the interview was over, the participant and I would continue conversing on various issues that related to their personal lives. In these instances, some participants would request my assistance in obtaining further information regarding immigration policies or governmental forms, ask me to translate a letter for them, or inquire about an educational matter concerning their children.

As previously mentioned, the Muslim participants in this research came from five different Arabic-speaking (predominately Muslim) countries. All participants had obtained New Zealand permanent residency, and all but two²² had received six months of RMS volunteer resettlement support.

The aim of the interviews was to explore the refugee resettlement journey: from initial displacement to preparations for their New Zealand arrival, and finally their

²² These participants had arrived in New Zealand and declared asylum at Auckland International Airport, and therefore were not eligible for RMS support.

resettlement experience after arriving in New Zealand. Each interview focused mostly on the participant's feelings, concerns and expectations before coming to New Zealand, while also addressing their journey to New Zealand and the experiences and feelings accompanying that leg of the journey. The interview points also encouraged the participants to discuss their expectations once they arrived in New Zealand, and the services that were provided for them. Participants who were parents were encouraged to discuss how raising their children in a non-Muslim society affected their resettlement, and if there were services that they currently required while living in New Zealand. Finally, the interview points addressed the future of these refugees, and what goals they had once obtaining New Zealand citizenship (see Appendix B for details on the interview points and questions).

Ethical Considerations

Ultimately, in deciding how much to tell and how to tell it, I chose to be guided by a commitment to the integrity of the refugee's stories, and to trust in the readers' appreciation for the integrity of their experiences. Semi-structured interviews that encouraged the participants to share their experiences were designed to serve these intentions. The research norms employed to protect the participants in this study included agreements to do no harm, and regarding informed consent, confidentiality, and the right to results.

Before conducting interviews, it was important to obtain ethical approval from Auckland University of Technology (AUT). The process involved submitting an application for ethics approval for the research project to Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTECH), which included detailed information about the proposed research, such as the procedure, participants (recruitment methods), and ethical risks relating to issues of confidentiality and privacy. Ethical approval was obtained for this research on the 20th of April 2005.

In order to protect the participants from exploitation and harm while providing maximum benefits to the research, it was ethically imperative to assume a research position that did not jeopardise the participants' well-being. Several precautions were taken in order to ensure that all ethical standards were met in this research. Prior to conducting the interviews, information sheets were provided for the participants in both Arabic and English (see Appendix C & D). The information and consent forms were reviewed verbally before beginning the interview. The information sheet outlined the

purpose of the study, the procedure that each participant would be going through, confidentiality agreements, and their rights as participants in this study. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Although participants may often find that telling their story is a very positive experience, there is always the risk that painful memories could surface. Therefore, in the case that participants found themselves distressed during the interview process, I was ready to provide a referral for a free counselling session with a Muslim counsellor (the counsellor's contact details were also available in the information sheet given to each participant).

In this study, I did not ask specific and personal questions about traumatic events that may have occurred in the lives of the participant. Any personal information about their experiences mentioned in this research was solely the decision of the participant, and even then, specific details about their lives were omitted from the written report to ensure maximum confidentiality.

After the study was outlined and explained to the participants, I asked if they had any questions or concerns regarding the study or their participation. Once their questions had been answered to their full satisfaction and their rights as participants were explained to them, they were asked to sign the consent forms (see Appendix E & F).

It may also be valid to note that in order to create a rapport and trust and to make the participants feel comfortable talking about their personal experiences or culturally sensitive issues, I, at times, had to meet the participant once or twice before actually conducting the interview; 'small talk' was made prior to the recording of the interviews. Consequently, the points used in these semi-structured interviews were adjusted depending on the participant's age, gender or personal background. Occasionally, these points required some change in their context or wording. Some interviews required little prompting by me, whereas other interviews required more effort in order to maintain a successful flow of conversation. Also, to ensure participants' anonymity, each person was identified with a pseudonym, in addition to identifying male and female participants.

Recorded and transcribed materials were treated with great concern for confidentiality. The audio-tapes used to record interviews were labelled with the participants' pseudonyms. Consent forms were kept separate from audio-tapes in a locked cabinet at

the School of Social Sciences. Upon completion of the study, all consent forms, original transcripts, and audio-tapes will be destroyed.

Findings in qualitative studies cannot always be generalised to other populations or even to the larger population from which the target group was drawn. However, it will assist us to make some observations on the nature of the integration process, which could facilitate theory-building and expansion of our knowledge regarding ‘the refugee journey.’

Data Analysis

The data collected in the life story interviews of 31 Arab Muslim male and female refugees were analysed thematically. The interviews were transcribed without the use of any specific transcription notation. It is important to reiterate that the interviews were conducted in Arabic, thus the scripts needed to be translated from Arabic to English before analysing them. For some Arabic words, a literal translation was not possible because Arabic is structured very differently to English. Nevertheless, during translation, I tried as much as possible to find an equivalent meaning for Arabic words in English. However, for those words that did not have a clear-cut equivalent term in English, the original Arabic word was used and a detailed explanation of the word’s meaning was provided (see Appendix G for a glossary).

Thematic analysis was used in this research to understand and explore refugee experiences. Thematic analysis is defined as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the benefit of thematic analysis in research is that it is a flexible tool that can provide rich, descriptive and useful information to the research. Thematic analysis has been used as a research tool in various studies, yet there remains insufficient literature that clearly outlines the pragmatic process of this method (Aronson, 1994; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The process that I undertook for the analysis of the data was that all throughout the interviewing processes, and after each interview, I would jot down my own notes or ideas. Then, I would translate and transcribe the interview, and during this process I would review and add to my notes, recording certain issues that seemed to be of interest in relation to the research topic. I read and re-read the transcripts (data), and after all the interviews were transcribed, I developed a categorised list of situations to include

the various experiences or challenges that participants said they encountered as Arab Muslim refugees.

Categories were defined by looking at each entire individual transcript and grouping together categories that seemed similar. For example, the refugee journey was divided into three parts or legs as a result of participants beginning their conversation by describing the reasons behind their initially becoming refugees, then their first year in the country, followed by their experiences as refugees more than a year after their New Zealand arrival. Also, each leg of the refugee journey contained themes or sub-themes of its own, relating to experiences or challenges that the participants dealt with as part of their refugee journey. Braun and Clarke (2006) explain that “a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (p. 82). Themes only make sense when they are pieced together; when viewed alone, themes are meaningless (Aronson, 1994).

Once I developed the categories, I ‘thematized’ participants’ transcripts on the basis of an interpretive approach similar to the one described by Pollio, Thompson, and Henley (1997). This approach focuses on the researcher identifying his/her biases, use of participants’ words, and a thematic structure representing the whole experience. I will now briefly describe each focus and how it relates to the present research.

The first focus is on the self (i.e., the researcher). The researcher needs to ensure that his or her biases are identified and that he or she is mindful of these biases when conducting the research. The second focus is on the participants, who are being interviewed. Pollio et al. (1997) state that an interview is a dialogue in which meaning unfolds in the context of the conversation. Interview questions are designed to induce descriptions of direct experiences as they are lived. In other words, the descriptions are not focused on what the participant thought about the experience; instead, the focus is on the specific details of the experience. In this research, the participants described the experience of becoming refugees or arriving in an unknown country. Pollio et al. (1997) mention that it is the participant, rather than the interviewer, who chooses the experience that relates to the phenomenon under study. The next focus, according to Pollio et al. (1997), is on the text, where the interviews are transcribed and participants are given pseudonyms and not referred to as “subjects.” The purpose of interpretation is to recognize patterns or themes, and to describe relationships in a thematic structure. Here, Pollio et al. (1997) reveal that it is important to understand the relation between a passage or part of the

transcript and the entire transcript, and an individual transcript in relation to all of the transcripts. All transcripts as wholes need to also be understood in relation to the parts. This “back-and-forth” process can be time consuming, but it allows the researcher to create a deeper understanding of the data presented. During analysis or interpretation of transcripts, themes develop across transcripts, whereby the actual words of participants are used in the interpretation, thus the focus remains close to the text, and hence, with the participant.

By using this approach the researcher can develop a thematic structure, which is a representation demonstrating the interrelationship of themes. This provides a view of the whole experience and the relationship among themes. Once the thematic structures are created, Pollio et al. (1997) then recommend that the focus shifts back to the participants, where the themes can be shared with the participants to check for their plausibility and to see if it empowers participants. This step suggests that when possible, the researcher gives the participants a written copy of the themes extrapolated and asks them about the validity of these findings in the form of two validity check questions: (a) “Have I left anything out of your experience?” and (b) “What needs to be added to this description?” For this research, no new information was found at this stage. Furthermore, Pollio et al. (1997) mention that most participants in such studies may express gratitude at being given an opportunity to talk about something important to them, and such was the case in this research. Conducting this research was also a profound experience for me, the researcher. The final focus, according to Pollio et al.’s (1997) approach, is on the research or practice community, as the findings are explored and experiences or the phenomena are more deeply understood.

In all cases, the process of interpretation entailed a continuous reading and re-reading of the transcripts to pick out thematic meanings of the refugee journey. An example of one such transcript is as follows:

When I came to New Zealand as a refugee... I mean... I wasn't like that... I left my country because of war and sought asylum in Syria and worked as a liaison officer for the UN. I took it and became familiar with the system, and then I applied. I just realised that I had to accept the concept of moving to the refugee mood. When you apply, you have to go through the psychological process of saying, really, I am a refugee, I have no home, I am a stateless person, your status drops from being proud and in charge, flexible and creative, to become very dependent on the mercy of ... others. When I was given a refugee status, I continued working as a liaison officer for the UN but I felt my status dropped, to somehow... a very low level (Jasim - Male).

After reading through this description a number of times, I attempted to specify as many different thematic meanings as possible that were mentioned by the participant. In the extract above, the participant began by describing his situation in New Zealand as being a refugee when he “came” to New Zealand, hence creating the assumption that prior to his New Zealand arrival, the reality of him becoming a refugee was not as apparent, and that he needed to clarify the reasons behind his becoming a refugee. The participant also noted that he left his native country as a result of conflict and instability, and sought asylum in Syria. Despite the participant living in a country not his own, he did not consider himself to be a refugee or of lower status than the citizens of the country. In Syria he worked as a UN liaison officer and he felt stable and secure. Due to the nature of his work with the UN, the participant had to deal with refugees and refugee applications, which is how he became “familiar with the system” and was advised by friends to apply for refugee status. The participant noted that it was not until he applied for refugee status (despite continuing to work as a liaison officer with the UN) that he came to the realisation that as a refugee he has to acknowledge that he is a stateless, inferior, homeless person, dependent on the “mercy of others.”

Next I considered provisional meanings of the themes derived from other transcripts. For example, the participant noted, “When I came to New Zealand as a refugee...I wasn’t like that” and “when you apply, you have to go through a psychological process.” These descriptions were grouped together with quotations from other transcripts in which participants described their life before becoming refugees and how life has become once they became known or labelled as refugees.

After organising participant descriptions into potential themes such as “life before New Zealand,” “the refugee label,” “heading to an unknown country”, the next step was to group themes, define them as sub-themes, and include them in a major theme. For example, the first leg of the refugee journey was derived from participant statements to the effect that they were “normal” people before becoming refugees and arriving in New Zealand, and that they had their reasons for becoming known as refugees, yet did not want the label to become part of their identity or who they are.

After developing smaller sets of themes, I reviewed the transcripts once again to determine if, and how well, such themes fit the transcripts. If the thematic structure did not fit the particular transcript I was reviewing, changes were made in specific themes; if it did fit, no changes were made. This process continued until all transcripts could be included within the overall set of themes developed.

Narrative Analysis: Life Story Interviews

McCool (2003) suggests that narrative analysis is an approach that achieves what is unique to social sciences and health studies. Pavlish (2007) stated that narratives often contain the participant's perceptions and their own interpretations of meaning derived from their lived realities. Pavlish (2007) mentions three essential guidelines for narrative inquiry:

First, the researcher should not judge or analyse the storyteller but, should instead, focus on establishing connections and examining the personal relevance of each story; second, the life story can stand independently in offering insights into the human experience and, third, each life story reveals something about life. (p.29)

This research has incorporated aspects of life story interviews as a specific type of narrative approach (Van Manen, 1990). In my research I allowed the participants to give as much information as they felt comfortable with from their life stories. I did not prompt them, and I gave them the opportunity to identify for themselves the key elements of their refugee journey.

Life stories have been presented as a means to enter and describe specific personal worlds through what Van Mannen, Manning, and Miller (1993) called the guiding spirit of the person telling the story. Life story interviews have unique strengths when it comes to gaining insight into different opinions, collecting a diversity of experiences, and sharing personal and sensitive life experiences. For allowing participants to share their refugee experiences, interviews are more personal and sensitive than conducting a survey or questionnaire. It was important to conduct interviews sensitively in order for the research to succeed, and to maintain the respect and trust of the research participants. This method allows participants to construct their experience chronologically and thematically, which also allows the refugee to share their understanding and mechanisms of resettlement and adaptation (Mestheneos & Ioannidi, 2002). Emotions and feelings expressed in the interviews became an important part of the life story of participants. During the exploration of their refugee journey, participants used powerful words to make sense and meaning of their past, present and future. The life story method also allows participants to tell their stories from a perspective which enables them to see their life and their refugee journey as a whole, rather than focusing on segments of their lives. Prior to their refugee experiences, Arab Muslim refugees may not have had much contact with researchers; therefore, in order

for them to open up to me, and to realise that their refugee experience was important and valued, it was essential that data collection was conducted face-to-face.

Much research conducted in the refugee field has been based on interviews and life experiences. Batalden (2005) suggested that:

Life stories are useful in understanding the process of change and adaptation that refugees undergo because they provide the personal background and social and historical context in which these changes occur. (p. 77)

From life stories emerge important lessons, issues, and themes that may have had a dramatic influence on the lives of participants and how they perceive their future (Atkinson, 1998). Furthermore, life stories create coping strategies that assist individuals to overcome their current challenges and bring order to their lives.

In addition, life story interviews together with the participant's background, education level, experiences that led them to become refugees, their method of arriving in New Zealand, their gender, and ethnicity, are continuous factors that have an ongoing influence in shaping their resettlement experiences (Batalden, 2005).

In a narrative analysis of the refugee experience, Bek-Pedersen and Montgomery (2006) argue that in order for us to understand reality, we have to study experience. Eastmond (2007) also agrees that by using life stories as an ethnographic method we can gain insight into how actors construct meaningful personal experience in relation to a complex and changing social reality. The individual constructs a meaningful personal narrative out of past events in light of the present and in expectation of the future. Life stories are constructed in a dialectic relation between reality and story (Peacock & Holland, 1993), which make this a tool to explore how people perceive and experience the reality of their lives: the reality of having a refugee background.

To conclude, the emphasis of a life story is to focus on what is most meaningful to the teller, as the researcher is guided toward understanding struggles, challenges, accomplishments, values, and hopes. The information that a life story unravels may lead to the development of new insight into human struggles and dilemmas, as well as an appreciation as to how individuals overcome these challenges over time.

The recognition and insight that has been presented in this section supports the choice of using life story interviews for this type of study, since the essential questions that this research seeks to explore relate to understanding the refugee journey, its challenges, and

its influence on the lives of Arab Muslims in New Zealand. It also seeks to explore and understand the way in which refugees make meaning out of their experiences, as the refugee experience is often presented not only as the experience of war and violence, but also the loss of home, and the seeking of stability (Bek-Pedersen & Montgomery, 2006).

Validity and Reliability

According to Libarkin and Kurdziel (2002), the validity and reliability of a qualitative study must be established if the results of the research are going to be meaningful to others. While in quantitative research one can use a strict set of statistical steps to judge the appropriateness of the research, this may not be the case for qualitative research. In qualitative research, validity and reliability have different meanings than in quantitative methods. According to Fischer (2006), a participant's experience or account is considered valid if the findings are considered valuable, and if they contribute to understanding a particular topic and related research issue.

Conversely, Schamberger (1997) mentions that a phenomenological study is considered valid if the participants' experience is honestly represented by the results and if the readers come away with an accurate understanding of what the experience is like.

To check the reliability and validity of this research, I have used a similar approach to what Libarkin and Kurdziel (2002) suggest as criteria that can measure the validity and reliability of qualitative research. These criteria include:

- **Credibility** - The participants themselves can verify interpretations made about their attitudes and opinions.
- **Transferability** – This measure emphasises establishing research value outside of the immediate context under study. Libarkin and Kurdziel (2002) state that for other researchers to replicate the study, the initial researcher needs to clearly document the setting of the original study giving subsequent researchers the opportunity to identify all of the variables inherent to that context.
- **Dependability** - Libarkin and Kurdziel (2002) point out that the reliability of a study depends upon three factors: repeatability, stability over time, and similarity between measures. However, with qualitative research, reliability may never be achieved, as participants, their stories, or recollection of experiences and incidents may change over time and identical data can never be collected twice. However, a careful review

of the process of data collection and the research product, especially as time evolves, can help establish reliability.

- **Confirmability** - In qualitative research, the investigator must be able to demonstrate that interpretations are free of subjectivity, and that potential biases have been controlled. Keeping careful records, including original notes, transcriptions, and analyses will allow other researchers an opportunity to review the interpretation process.

Libarkin and Kurdziel (2002) also point out that the participants themselves can verify interpretations made about their attitudes and opinions, as well as inferred causal relationships. This was another approach I took in order to measure the validity and reliability of my data. In this present study, I managed to contact five of the participants who had agreed to assist me with establishing the validity of the themes and issues that had been stated in the findings of this study. Each of these participants was given a list of themes, including a description of what each theme represented. The participants agreed that the themes presented an accurate description of the issues that they had addressed in the interview. None of them had any new information to add, however two participants asked me to emphasise the importance of being employed and accepted by the host society in order for them to be able to experience satisfactory resettlement.

A validity concern that may be related to translation was also addressed in this study. In this study, as the researcher I conducted the interviews, translation, and transcription. Translations were verbatim and not interpretations or paraphrasing. To verify the data I sought the assistance of an independent bilingual Arabic/English speaking person (a postgraduate Engineering student, who identified as being Iraqi), who was presented with samples of the text and interviews and confirmed the accuracy of translation.

Researcher Reflexivity²³

Reflexivity allows the researcher to excavate, articulate, evaluate, and in some cases transform the collective unconscious she or he deploys in structuring research activities as well as in apprehending and interpreting what is observed. (Johnson & Cassell, 2001, p. 131)

The researcher's reflexivity is one dimension on which qualitative research may be assessed (Willig, 2001). Reflexivity calls on the researcher to interrogate their own

²³ This section is somewhat similar to that written in my MSc Thesis, yet adjusted to fit in with the current thesis.

assumptions and their own impact on the research process, and as researchers in the area of social sciences, we cannot detach ourselves from applying our own experiences or beliefs onto the way we analyse or approach our research. Hence, the notion of reflexivity allows us to identify the way in which our own perspectives regarding the researched area affect the way that we analyse and interpret our results. Thus, the researcher (or the interviewer) becomes part of a dynamic relationship within which interview data are produced. According to Chamberlain (2001), researchers are inter-related with the research as a result of being part of the social world they are exploring.

Chamberlain (2001) suggested that reflexivity raises three inter-related questions that researchers need to approach in order to investigate the nature of their involvement and their effect on the researched area: Who is the researcher? What do they bring to the research? And, how does this all impact on the outcomes and findings of the research? This type of reflexivity is referred to as *personal reflexivity*. In addition to involving the researcher's personal values and experiences, it also involves thinking about how the research might have affected and changed us as researchers and as people (Willig, 2001). Thus, these questions will be answered in light of my study.

In answer to the first question, the researcher is a female Iraqi Muslim, in her late 20s, completing a PhD degree in Social Sciences in New Zealand. In late 1996, when I had just turned 18 years old, I migrated to New Zealand with my family from Libya (North Africa). Personally, I have gone through stages of ethnic identification, rejection, questioning, and acceptance, in addition to feelings of happiness, pain, confusion, and resistance, which are characteristic phases of minority groups who were raised to live in both ethnic and Western cultures. There are several reasons as to why I am interested in Arab and Muslim migrants and refugees and their resettlement in Western societies. The first is that, as an Arab Muslim academic and researcher, I have been approached by the Arab and Muslim community in New Zealand, and the government and its services for advice, resettlement assistant, and information regarding policies and laws in New Zealand. The second reason is that after completing a Masters degree regarding Iraqi immigrant mothers and daughters and their understanding of cultural adaption in New Zealand, I realised that there was little research available on the Muslim and Arab communities in New Zealand despite their considerable growth since the late 1990s. The Department of Ethnic Affairs and The Mental Health Foundation have both requested that I conduct several projects and reports that investigate the specific needs of Arab Muslims in New Zealand. During 2006, and with the collaboration of the

Mental Health Foundation, I ran a workshop for health practitioners in Auckland on how to deal with Muslim health clients. Furthermore, I am a member of Muslim NGO group called MuslimCare which is a community-based group that works in collaboration with governmental and non-governmental organisations in New Zealand and the Muslim community. Finally, the third reason behind my interest in this research area was that after working as a resettlement support volunteer for RMS, and as part of MuslimCare, I realised that there were a lot of misconceived ideas and stereotypes that needed to be addressed and clarified regarding refugees in general, and Muslim Arab refugees in particular. I believe that in order to improve the services of NGOs and governmental organisations working with refugees, these stereotypes need to be dealt with and/or corrected.

The increase in the number of Muslims refugees triggered many questions I wanted to explore: How does their journey to New Zealand impact on their resettlement in the country? Once they arrive in New Zealand, what are their experiences at the Mangere Centre, and what services are available for them inside the centre and inside the host society? How do they adapt in Western societies? How do they feel as ‘refugees,’ and does the label refugee impact on their lives at all? What is it like being a Muslim refugee in New Zealand, and what happens to their ethnic cultural and traditional practices? Later on, when I had decided to begin my PhD degree, I approached my supervisors who assisted me in forming my research points in a more insightful and direct manner. I chose to explore this study thematically, to investigate refugees’ life stories and experiences and how it impacts on their resettlement process.

The second question that needs addressing concerns what I bring to the research. As previously mentioned, being a Muslim Arab and a migrant, I was brought up in various countries before my parents decided to leave their status and family behind and immigrate to New Zealand. This displacement, though not as tragic as that experienced by refugees, still had an impact on my parents and the way they raised us in New Zealand. My parents tried to bring us up according to Arab culture and traditions, and according to Islamic values. My parents passed on to me the language (Arabic), religion (Islam), and cultural practises and customs of traditional Arab culture. Thus, what I bring to the research is my appreciation and acknowledgment of Islamic values and Arab beliefs, in addition to my appreciation of the resettlement experience. Which leads us to the third question, “How did this all impact on the researcher and the researched?”

As a result of the research process, I felt I was more able to fully appreciate and understand the concerns that Muslims go through when migrating to the unknown world of Western societies. I felt empathy towards the parents and their subtle, yet apparent, concern over the future of their children. I felt that I had achieved a greater understanding of the degree of hardship, loss, and humiliation Muslim refugees experience in order to arrive in New Zealand and their continuous concern over their unknown future.

As for the participants, it was the first opportunity for them to discuss their refugee experience in such depth and detail with an Arabic-speaking Muslim researcher. The interview topics that we discussed allowed them to think about their resettlement in more depth and with insight, and to reflect on their journey. A few participants thanked me for helping them look at their refugee experience in a different way. Participants mentioned that talking about their refugee experience allowed them to see their experience in a different and more insightful light. Several female participants were able to express their continuous worry, fear, and disappointment at what their refugee experience has been so far, yet they also expressed their gratitude that someone was finally willing to listen to the struggle Muslim refugees have had to go through and continue going through as they resettle in New Zealand.

A couple of participants also became quite emotional when talking about their refugee journey and broke down in tears a few times, but slowly regained their calmness once again during the interview. These participants later stated that they felt a sense of relief in being able to talk about this matter, and they felt that there were many underlying issues regarding this topic that they had not really considered before. Some of them stated that talking about the refugee journey, the impact of the refugee label, and life as Muslim refugees in New Zealand contained issues they had not really considered before, and that my interview points made them think deeply about these challenges.

My sense of cultural belonging and awareness assisted me in being able to 'fit in' with the interviewees. I had the cultural and religious background knowledge and I knew the Arabic language. These characteristics allowed a type of comfort and mutual understanding between the participants and myself. Therefore, when evaluating and analysing the data, I was able to understand where the participant was coming from, due to the similar values and assumptions we share regarding Arab and Islamic culture and its traditions. As previously mentioned, during the interview process I developed a

rapport with the participants and my relationship with them has continued well beyond the completion of the interviews.

Although my own personal experiences may have benefited me in this research, they may have also hindered me. Access to male participants was not an apparent issue in my research, however my gender as a female may have limited the information they shared with me regarding some of their personal experiences. Also, the fact that I share the same ethnicity and religion, and attend many of the same community events as the participants may have meant they censored themselves regarding certain private or personal experiences due to fear of having their experiences shared with the wider Arab or Muslim community. It was important to form rapport and build trust with the participants in order to gain their confidence and allow them to open up and share their refugee journey and experiences, and give meaning to the various stages of their journey. In Arab culture it is important not to ‘blacken’ the face of the family or shame them by sharing family secrets or personal matters that might dishonour the person and their family. Also, in Arab culture it is important to express gratitude and humbleness towards the hosts who are offering shelter and assistance. These refugees consider New Zealand to be their ‘host’ and conveying their appreciation was an important aspect in many of these interviews. The participants seemed to almost always have the need to express their thanks to New Zealand and its government, even when they were not directly asked to do so in the interview conversation. That being said, not all of them were grateful, as we will see in the following chapter. These are some of the issues that I addressed while interviewing the participants of this research.

Overall, what surprised me the most was that almost all of the participants in this study stated that they were relieved that they were finally able to talk about their resettlement experience, and express their concerns and challenges. Their hope was that their stories and experiences would reach the ears of refugee and immigration service providers and policy-makers, and that refugee resettlement challenges would eventually be appropriately addressed.

Conclusion

To be able to conduct this research in an accurate and professional manner, I had to distance myself enough from each participant while listening to their life story unravel before me. In order to listen critically and locate my voice within the text, I had to understand that both the participant and I had perspectives that represented relative

truths. This chapter has described the participants, data collection method and procedure. It discussed the use of life story interviews and thematic analysis as the methodological tool. It concluded by addressing the reflexivity issue and how the researcher impacts on their own research and findings. The next chapter addresses the findings of this research and unravels the refugee journey experience.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

In order to gain a better understanding of the refugee journey as a whole, it was important to explore various experiences that participants addressed which occurred in various stages of their refugee-lives. The experiences of the Arab Muslim refugees in this study were divided according to three legs of a refugee journey. Each leg contained experiences and challenges that were a result of their displacement and resettlement. The refugee journey of the participants in this study developed as their resettlement in New Zealand progressed. The first leg of the refugee journey dealt with the experience of 'becoming a refugee,' knowledge of New Zealand as a country in general and a resettlement country in particular, and the first six weeks of New Zealand resettlement at MRRC. The second leg of the refugee journey centred on the challenges the participants experienced once leaving MRRC and the struggles they had to overcome as a result of living in a society that differed culturally and religiously from their country of origin. Finally, the third leg of the refugee journey dealt with the experiences that the participants were currently dealing with after living in New Zealand for more than a year, and how they perceived their lives and saw their future as Arab Muslims in the country. Based on the analysis of this research the model below briefly summarises the findings and maps out the refugee journey of the participants.

The Refugee Journey

The first Leg

This leg explored refugees' experience prior to resettlement and the first six-weeks of New Zealand arrival at MRRC, in addition to:

- Acquiring the refugee label
- Experiences in refugee camps and/or detention centres
- The refugees' main destination
- Lack of New Zealand knowledge

The Second Leg

This leg explored the refugees' experiences after leaving MRRC, and dealing with various New Zealand refugee services such as RMS, HNZA and WINZ, in addition to:

- Challenges adjusting to a non-Muslim society and raising a family.
- Lack of social support
- Gender related issues

The Third Leg

This leg explored the refugees' experiences and challenges that the refugees were currently experiencing one year onwards since their New Zealand arrival, in addition to:

- Sources of strength and resilience (religion, family and realism)
- Ongoing resettlement challenges, including; employment and language proficiency
- Their overall experiences in New Zealand and future aspirations

The First Leg of the Refugee Journey: Becoming a Refugee

This first leg of the refugee journey will explore the findings that pertain to the participants' reasons for fleeing (their pre-migration life), their prior knowledge, perceptions and expectations of New Zealand, and their acquiring and utilising the label of 'Refugee.' Gender differences did not play a major role in this leg of the journey. Males and females alike had no previous knowledge or idea about New Zealand, and male and female refugees alike were affected by the refugee label.

For most of the participants in this study, seeking asylum in a country that borders with their homeland was the first step of their refugee journey. The participants in this research had sought initial asylum in neighbouring countries like Iran, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Egypt. However, their journey did not end at these countries, and for some of these individuals, their experiences of the refugee journey went beyond temporary UN camps, and included purchasing false travel documents from the black markets in Asia, being smuggled by boat from South East Asia, and living in the detention centres and prisons of Nauru and Christmas Island. Although the participants were not directly asked about their refugee journey before their New Zealand arrival, it was important for them to explain how they became Arab Muslim refugees in New Zealand before they talked about their resettlement experiences. Some participants mentioned that when fleeing they did not take any personal belongings such as clothes or household items; instead, they took memories from their homeland. These memories would later become one aspect of their 'unsettlement' process.

When talking about their flight from their homeland, participants began by sharing the experiences of hardship and difficult circumstances that led them to leave their country. The journey unravelled from the reasons for their flight and being forced out of their country. When talking about the beginning of their somewhat long refugee journey, all participants, regardless of their ethnic background, talked about the emotions they had experienced during and after their journey, using words such as "sad," "isolated," "scared," and "anxious" about the unknown. The participants had strong attachments towards their homelands, and stated that if it were not for their country's instability they would not have left at all.

Fleeing Their Homeland

Political and religious events in the refugees' countries are the catalyst which 'starts' their experience of becoming a refugee. The perception of threat and danger is one of

the important factors that may lead people to flee their country, seek asylum in neighbouring countries, and begin their long journey of becoming refugees. Although not everyone decides to leave their country, in this research all of the participants fled their country of origin as a result of their feeling unsafe, threatened, or at times, unwanted. The participants in this study fled their homeland due to its political or religious instability and their fear of being persecuted due to their different political ideologies, or due to their economic hardship in their homeland. To put it simply, the participants fled their country because they had no other (or better) choice. Out of the five different countries that these participants originated from (Kuwait, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, and Tunisia), three of those countries (Iraq, Somalia, and Sudan) were experiencing, and continue to experience, political and religious instabilities, conflict, and wars.

“To be honest, I have always been a migrant; I have never lived long in my country Somalia. I was brought up outside of my own country. There was a war in Somalia when I was in high school; I went to another Arab country where I studied at a University. The war in Somalia became worse, so I never really thought of going back. After the Somali country collapsed, all the documentations we had were considered invalid. I couldn’t go back to Somalia, or go anywhere else, so I became a refugee. I had to accept defeat and become a refugee.” (Jasim – Male)

“When we left it wasn’t planned or anything, it was very spontaneous. It’s impossible that someone would leave their country regardless of what happened. But life in Iraq is difficult and sad. We have had too many wars, economic sanctions, and now this religious conflict and American occupation. I remember a revolution in 1991, where the Iraqis wanted to rage against the Baath party after Saddam invaded Kuwait. During that period, my husband was a soldier in the army but after a week he and his brother decided to leave the country. He couldn’t handle seeing his own people get killed, tortured and imprisoned. So he had to leave before they caught and imprison him. When he left he found out that Saddam executed two of his brothers.” (Hiba - Female)

The common theme in this leg of the journey was that regardless of their nationality, the aim of all of the participants in this study was to resettle in a safe country that could provide them and their family with a better and more prosperous future. It was evident in all of the interviews that the trauma of flight experienced by the participants had produced some unsettlement and mental despair. All participants reflected that they felt trapped and unsafe in their native country, especially as bombs and death surrounded them and their family every day. The participants in this research expressed a need to make sense of their experience as the instability in their country of origin shattered their

lives, dreams, and families, leading them down the road to becoming refugees. For several Iraqi participants, experiencing torture and the execution of family members aroused strong feelings, especially if the refugee in question had been present or if the torture, imprisonment, or execution was due to their own political or religious involvement. Participants were concerned that they or their family members would be further interrogated, tortured, or executed if they remained in the country, and this led many of the participants to flee their homeland. As they were forced out of their countries, the hope for a better future in their homeland and the possibility of being part of that future was extinguished. Leaving their country and seeking asylum or applying for refugee status was considered as accepting defeat. For many participants in this study, letting go of their home, their belongings, and traditional lives diminished their sense of who they are and made them anxious about who they were going to become.

Becoming a Refugee

The refugee label is first and foremost a categorisation or a distinction. The refugee label was not always part of the lives of the participants in this study. The participants were individuals who had families, land, a home, employment, and no intention of leaving their homeland and being displaced. Yet, wars and conflicts have forced millions of people to acquire the refugee label. In Arabic, the refugee stigma has linguistic roots; the word ‘refugee’ in Arabic is *Laj’e*, which literally translates into ‘someone who seeks shelter or assistance.’ This notion of needing assistance was clearly evident in the way the participants talked about ‘who they have become.’

“When you apply to the UN, you have to go through the psychological process of saying, really, I am a refugee, I have no home, and I am a stateless person. Your status drops from being proud and in charge, flexible and creative, to becoming very dependent on the mercy of others.” (Jasim - Male)

Becoming a refugee was mentioned by the participants as being unarguably the most recognised and influential experience in the refugee journey. It pertained to the individual’s acknowledgment and acceptance that they no longer had control over their own destiny or future, rather it was in the hands of officials from their host/resettlement countries. The humanitarian label has an apparent effect on the lives and resettlement experiences of these individuals. By acquiring the refugee label, individuals accept that they have no other legal or political status. This label also becomes a tool that is utilised and allows displaced individuals to seek a better future and opportunities for themselves and their families in a foreign country. It also becomes a label that develops into an

inseparable part of their identity. In turn, it is this identity that they eventually desire to shed.

When talking about how the refugee label affects their lives, participants used a variety of words and phrases, such as feeling like they are a burden, having a heavy label, having a restraining label, being discriminated against, isolated, belittled, aliens, strangers, and many other words used to describe how being labelled a refugee affected them.

Labelling was considered a type of stereotyping by the participants. They felt that by being considered refugees, they were perceived within a stereotypical category of being dependent, poor, uneducated and helpless. Participants in this study were clearly aware of the labelling process, and how it affected and continued to affect their lives in New Zealand, even years after their resettlement. The participants talked about the meaning of refugee, utilising the refugee label, shedding the refugee label, and the perceived differences between a refugee and an immigrant.

For many participants, the refugee journey, and the impact the refugee label has on their lives and the lives of their family, begins in the country of asylum, when applying to the UNHCR office to be considered as refugees. It is during this initial, and subsequent, contact with the UNHCR and various refugee officials that they finally are aware of their lives shifting from being individuals with a name, a homeland, a family, and a past, to being categorised and referred to as refugees who are fleeing for fear of persecution. The participants discussed their experience of having to prepare themselves mentally to become ‘refugees.’ This initial aspect of the displacement journey generated various long-term consequences and effects on the individual. Later on, the refugee label resulted in conflicting reactions, mainly shame, resentment and frustration; this issue is discussed further in the subsequent legs of the refugee journey. All of the participants in this study felt that there was no preparation for or introduction to how this label would impact on their lives. By acquiring this label, the participants stated that they needed to adjust themselves mentally, in order to acknowledge that with this label comes the reality of displacement, homelessness, and vulnerability.

The Meaning(s) of ‘Refugee’

Participants in this study expressed their frustration at being perceived as refugees for the rest of their life while in New Zealand. This issue was considered a potential obstacle that prevented individuals who arrived as refugees to integrate and settle in the

country. Almost all of the participants were clearly distressed at how the refugee label was developing into being a permanent part of their identity and life, rather than a temporary situation. The participants believed that as Arab Muslim refugees they will always be treated and considered as outsiders in New Zealand. They considered that if New Zealand society continued to treat them as refugees that that would be a form of discrimination, which would have an impact on consecutive generations, as refugee parents would remind their children that they were treated differently. Nonetheless, participants accepted the fact that discrimination was part of the package that comes with being a refugee.

When talking about their refugee experiences, the participants reflected on how being categorised as a refugee has caused them much distress and suffering. These feelings were experienced during displacement, and after their New Zealand resettlement. When describing their suffering, the participants stated that it was a result of their feeling powerless and vulnerable, and ashamed of being refugees.

Powerlessness, Vulnerability and Shame

By becoming a refugee, individuals have had to accept that they no longer have control over their lives and can no longer take part in making any personal decisions. The majority of participants in this study mentioned that as a result of their refugee status, they felt helpless, weak, and vulnerable. One female participant used a cultural metaphor, stating that as a refugee in New Zealand, she felt like she was a bird with broken wings, unable to fly freely (to see her extended family) or to take care of her own needs and those of her family (as a result of the language barrier and discrimination she believed she had experienced in New Zealand). Many participants in this study believed that they were not provided with the ability or resources to take care of their financial or mental needs, or those of their family members.

“I am someone with no support and broken wings” (Amal – Female)

According to the participants in this study, being refugees in New Zealand with minimal support had forced them to be dependent on the government and other agencies for their survival. As such, decision-making is in the hands of those in authority, such as the Immigration officials, HNZA officers, and WINZ managers:

“I don’t like the label at all, I feel weak and helpless. I think, Oh what has life brought me to...Iraq is a rich country, natural richness and the richness of its people, now we are nothing. I have a 15 year old and he has needs of an

adolescent and the income officer... an old lady she turns her face and says "I'm going to lunch, I'll talk to you when I am back"... why am I putting myself in such a degrading position?"(Aseel – Female)

Throughout most of their resettlement, refugees have to attend various appointments, especially with Work and Income New Zealand, which deals with their income support benefits, special benefits, sickness benefits, and food vouchers. The participants felt quite degraded and ashamed when having to ask for financial assistance. This shame was a natural response to having to use the little English they knew (or at times, to bring their children to translate), and requesting money that they felt was given to them as a form of charity. There were two sides to this type of suffering: one was that refugees arrived in New Zealand with no money of their own, and therefore expected the New Zealand government to provide for them. The second side pertained to the role of Arab and Muslim pride, in which participants felt ashamed of being financially dependent on their weekly benefit. Suffering because of their vulnerability inevitably led to a different form of suffering that pertained to feeling continuously ashamed of being refugees.

"It makes me feel like I have been through wars and they haven't, that I am poor, and they are rich. It sometimes bothers me, and I would lie and tell them I am not a refugee." (Hind – Female)

For all of the participants in this study, the refugee label caused a lot of distress and psychological scarring. This was reinforced in the interviews as participants talked about being ashamed of their dependency on the government benefit, and as a result of the host society feeling 'sorry for them.'

The Refugee Label is a Burden

The notion of feeling like a burden was common in many of the conversations in this study. In the eyes of most participants, being a refugee meant being a liability and a burden on the New Zealand government and its society. Participants frequently used this expression when describing their life as a refugee. Not only did participants express themselves as feeling like 'beggars' when going to WINZ, but they also talked about feeling as if the society looks down on them, and considers them 'unwanted' or unwelcome.

"I don't let the label affect me greatly really, because I know that I am here temporarily. But certainly, we never thought we would be in this situation when we are considered a burden on others, and that's what a refugee is, a burden and nothing more, that is what they [New Zealand society] consider you, if you

look like you're from the middle east that is it: you're a burden...my RMS support person would indirectly make me feel that way.” (Nora – Female)

“I am a person who hates the term refugee. The main problem, as a refugee, is that you feel as if they themselves, the society, look down on you because you're a liability. Let me be honest with you, the Income benefit, I consider it as a disgrace to my dignity. This assistance is disgraceful, if I meet someone who says, Oh New Zealand spends on me, I hate that.” (Jamal – Male)

“Being a refugee is like a black dot in the person's life, and unfortunately they make you feel like that once you arrive here... they make you feel like you're nothing, you are full of problems and they feel sorry for you.” (Mohanad – Male)

Several participants talked about personal incidents in which they were shouted at in the streets to go back to their homeland and told that they did not belong in New Zealand. Such incidents had a huge impact on their feelings of being outsiders and a burden on this society. A participant even acknowledged that on occasions in offices or governmental services, he would be ignored and not attended to once people knew he was a refugee, and that the label itself made him feel inferior and less than any other 'Kiwi or Māori' citizen.

The participants were aware of negative stereotypes that accompany the refugee label. These stereotypes were prevalent in the participants' conversations when talking about mainstream society, and also through their interactions with governmental and non-governmental agencies. Participants encountered the negativity of this label from their WINZ case managers, other governmental officials, and various NGO support services, as well as at school or university. Participants were unaware of the impact the refugee label would have once they left the Mangere centre.

Utilising the Refugee Label

In all of the interviews, male and female participants referred to the label 'refugee' as a title that was only necessary when they applied to the UNHCR, and that upon New Zealand arrival, they no longer required the label. For many of these participants, the label was used to gain access to a peaceful and stable country, and not part of their identity, or who they are.

“Being a refugee makes things easier, from a governmental perspective. The country brought us here because they recognised us as refugees, and it knows our limited capabilities. You go the Housing they give you, you go to WINZ they give you. It's because you're a refugee.” (Belal – Male)

“The main thing is to acknowledge that refugees are different than other groups. I think it should be a positive discrimination. By that I mean to put people in jobs without having to compete with the wider community, because of the circumstance. So there should be positive discrimination by locating specific jobs for refugees just to bring them up to the level of the rest of society.”(Thamir – Male)

“I don’t mind the label, and I do. I don’t, because the label ‘refugee,’ it is a situation, and it’s about accessing certain services. I wanted to use the label to access the services but I didn’t want it to become this discriminatory label. There is a lot of prejudice and ignorance about the label. Mainstream New Zealand sees us as poor, uneducated, people from poor areas and camps.” (Firas – Male)

Although it could be painful and demeaning, the label itself allowed the participants to gain the attention of the UNHCR and resettlement countries. Accessing certain services that are readily available to refugees, such as affordable housing, and income and health benefits, was another enticing aspect of being referred to and acknowledged as a refugee. As a result of the refugee label, the participants were able to travel to New Zealand (free of charge), and while they were in MRRC they were provided with a six-week orientation and free English lessons, in addition to other personal matters being taken care of, such as setting up a bank account, obtaining a tax number, and organising a welfare benefit. The participants realised that if they had not been considered or approved by the UNHCR as refugees, and if they had applied as immigrants, they would not have been taken care of like they were.

On a deeper level, most participants mentioned that as a refugee, and as such having limited financial, language or education capabilities, it was important that the New Zealand society and its government provide services to support their resettlement. For example, in the third extract above, Firas believed that positive discrimination should be enforced in terms of employment opportunities. Employment is, without doubt, a major aspect in positively integrating and resettling migrants and refugees. Firas, along with other participants in this research, stated that because refugees have arrived in New Zealand after facing severe traumatic experiences and hardships, they should not be expected to compete with other individuals in society on matters such as employment. The participant believed that if a refugee has similar skills or education to an immigrant or New Zealander, then the refugee should have priority in being chosen for the job.

The refugee label was also utilised as a method of protecting these individuals and removing them from the hardship they had experienced either at UN camps or detention centres.

*“I don’t mind the label because I know what it means, it is a protection label.”
(Saif – Male)*

All of the participants in this research were well aware of the refugee label being a protection tool that had assisted them in overcoming the difficult circumstances they may have faced either in their country of asylum or at detention centres. They considered the refugee label a temporary state, merely a method of survival and flight. Arriving safely in their host society meant not only leaving behind them the despair and hardship of the past, but also, they suggested, shedding the refugee label.

Shedding the Refugee Label

Despite acknowledging that by becoming refugees they were able to resettle in a safe society, many participants also suggested that being a refugee has its pros and cons. The refugee label was never part of these individuals’ original identities. Rather, it was forced upon them in order to gain an opportunity to access a better life for themselves and their families. Several participants who considered themselves the ‘first generation’ of refugees mentioned that if they could not get rid of the label then they hoped their children would be able to do so. Employment, learning to talk in a New Zealand accent, and being educated in New Zealand institutions were mentioned as some ways in which refugees may shed the label.

*“I don’t want them to categorise me, the label itself makes me feel like I am a lower class citizen. As if you come here and they force upon you rules and regulations. The term itself is difficult, quite difficult. It makes you feel they differentiate between refugee and the son of this land [a native]. But I hope that as time goes by, the label dissolves, how... because our kids are educated here, and enter university and gain degrees and become employed here, and we all become equals, no difference between refugee, immigrant, Kiwi²⁴ or Māori.”
(Khalid – Male)*

“Once arriving to New Zealand, that is the end of the refugee label – but the way I came, was a refugee, but I will not restrain my life and categorise it as a refugee.” (Zina – Female)

²⁴ 'Kiwi' (capital K) is a term which means 'New Zealander.'

All of the participants in this study seemed to share this general sense of necessity for the refugee label to be a temporary status, and they desired to be treated and viewed as ‘potential citizens.’ The participants believed that they encountered discrimination and prejudices because they were both refugees and Arab Muslims. Participants stated that after being in New Zealand for a period of time, they had the desire to leave their trauma and refugee status behind.

Refugee vs. Immigrant

Talking about their ‘refugeeness’ led to the comparison between the participants’ refugee situation, and the situation of immigrants. When participants positioned themselves as a migrant group in society, they did so in comparison to another Arab Muslim migrant group, the immigrants. Though the definitions of immigrant and refugee were substantially different, it was interesting to see that most participants felt that immigrants were considered just as ‘unfortunate’ as refugees.

Refugee Means Hardship and Immigrant Means Points

Some participants perceived that being a refugee carried with it more disadvantages than being an immigrant. Immigrants were seen as having a higher status among the Arab Muslim community than refugees because the immigrant’s journey to New Zealand has not been tarnished by the hardship the refugees have had to endure to arrive in the country. In addition, the immigrants arrived through the skilled migrant category (point system), which meant they had academic qualifications, English language ability, employment skills, and expertise, as opposed to the refugees who may have little or no education, language, or previous contact with a foreign culture. Participants referred to the immigrants’ ability to move ahead of their situation and ‘see clearly,’ unlike the refugees, who because of their difficult experiences have ‘blurred vision,’ and are not only physically, but also mentally exhausted by their journey.

“Those who come through the point system are immigrants, and that term, is not like the term refugee. Refugee means hardship, immigrant means he has points, and he chose to come here, and if he hadn’t qualifications he wouldn’t be accepted, so he has something. I hope that in time the label disappears and we all become equals, no difference.” (Khalid – Male)

“Life in New Zealand is...It’s easier for the immigrant... they have better status. But as refugee things are easier for you, nearly everything is sorted out for you to start living in this society. We came here blind, we knew nothing at all, and when you consider yourself blind you need someone to guide you.” (Ahmed – Male)

As mentioned previously, for some participants being a refugee as opposed to an immigrant made them feel looked down on and pitied. Therefore, when talking about the differences between these two migrant groups, participants noted that the refugee endured experiences that may have been traumatic, and that the immigrant may not have endured the same hardships or struggles. Immigrant status automatically meant that the individual arrived through the point system and therefore had academic degrees, work experience, and English language, which might be skills that the refugee lacked.

Participants believed that as the refugees come with emotional or psychological baggage, they are unable to clearly see their goals in life, whereas the immigrants, who are equipped with their education, qualifications and expertise, and did not have to endure hardship in order to arrive in the country, are able to see their goals clearly regarding what they wanted to achieve while in New Zealand, and have ambition to excel in their chosen field. Being 'blind' and in need of guidance is how some participants referred to themselves when they first landed in the country as a refugee with little or no knowledge about the country and its society. The concept of the refugee being unable to see clearly as opposed to the immigrant who has clearer and brighter 'sight' was a notion that was mentioned by several participants. This may indicate a cultural way of describing their situation as refugees in the country. Immigrants were referred to as individuals who came 'normally' or on their own will, without being forced to come to New Zealand, and having an option as to which country they reside in, whereas refugees were provided with no options.

Furthermore, the participants suggested that it is because society considered refugees as individuals who have been through traumatic experiences that society deems them like blind people who cannot see and require someone to guide them around in order to familiarise themselves with the surroundings. Newly arrived refugees are not physically blind; rather, they are unable to find their way around due to their inability to speak English, and being in a different culture and society. Therefore, just as a blind person, a refugee also needs someone to guide them through the 'ways of New Zealand living,' to teach them how to sense and understand the culture, and to learn how to communicate by teaching them the language of the country.

According to the participants, although both refugees and immigrants 'migrate' to New Zealand, there was a visible difference in the way refugees were treated once they arrived in the country. The participants thought that this discrimination was apparent in the way refugees and immigrants interacted with governmental services that were

provided for both of these migrant groups, such as WINZ. The participants revealed that they felt immigrants were treated better because they were not perceived as being societal liabilities or dependent on the host society to take care of their needs.

For some refugees in this study, the experiences of being smuggled on boats or living in prisons or detention centres was what made their migration journey uniquely different to that of an immigrant. Immigrants are financially equipped and have planned and prepared for their New Zealand life even before arriving in the country. Refugees, on the other hand, may never have heard of New Zealand, or were not intending to come to the country, yet had no other option. Refugees, coming to New Zealand with no money of their own, require the help of settlement agencies and become dependent on financial assistance during their first few years of settlement. According to the participants, people who have experienced hardship during their journey are not only vulnerable, but are also discriminated against as it is assumed they come with no skills or education, and that the hardship they have endured overshadows who they were as individuals before they acquired the refugee label. Thus, it is the hardship the refugees have to endure which makes them more vulnerable in society than the immigrants.

Others mentioned that the legal stance of refugees is what differentiated them from immigrants. Refugee claimants are often forced to travel without a genuine passport or are given temporary travel documents to get from one destination to another while heading towards New Zealand. Immigrants, on the other hand, are able to retain their passports, which allows them to travel or return to their homelands if they choose to do so. The choice immigrants have in selecting their new homeland, rather than being forced to come to New Zealand, was also perceived as a factor that differentiates the two migrant groups. From the participants' viewpoint, the better options that immigrants have in comparison to refugees were considered a luxury.

Both 'Labels' Lead to the Same Destination

Some participants suggested that an immigrant is merely a refugee without the status or trauma. Participants also believed that refugees and immigrants share much in common, for example living in exile, leaving family behind, and for some nationalities (such as Iraqi, Somali and Sudanese) inability to easily return to their homelands.

Participants felt that Arab Muslim refugees and immigrants are practically in the same situation, as they both experience some sort of 'displacement.' They explained that Arab

Muslim immigrants do not necessarily ‘choose’ to leave their homeland; rather they are also ‘forced’ to leave their homeland as a result of the hardship in their countries.

“There is no difference between those who came through the point system, or through the UN, we all left our country but different means. Both ways lead you to the same destination. We are all here, under one government, and under one law, and have the same rights, so there is no difference at all.” (Fatma – Female)

“I don’t see any difference, I don’t know... he’s in need [the immigrant] and we’re also in need, so there is no difference. He [the immigrant] arrived here with difficulty, and so did we, but each one of us faced different difficulties...we didn’t get a citizenship instantly, and migrants didn’t get jobs! So you had different struggles.” (Wafa – Female)

“They’re both the same... they’re running away from a certain situation, but each had his own way. No one came here for a holiday.” (Fahad – Male)

The participants in this research mentioned that for Arab Muslims migrants, who come either through the UNHCR or NZIS point system, the two means of coming to New Zealand lead to the same destination (or country), and both migrant groups have to abide by the same laws, have the same rights, and live according to the same societal rules; in the end, there is no appreciable difference between them. This idea was simply put by Fahad, a male participant, who joked that living in exile was ‘no holiday’ for either Arab Muslim refugees or immigrants.

Those participants who believed that there is no difference between the refugee or the immigrant reasoned that, in fact, both migrant groups have had to try and avoid the same difficult circumstances while settling in the country, and although they have been through different processes, neither group would have chosen to leave their homeland and extended family behind, instead both were forced to leave because of the instability in their countries.

Being an Arab Muslim was considered a commonality that both migrant groups shared regardless of how they came to New Zealand. The participants addressed this matter as being the reason behind their experiencing discrimination, rather than their migrant status.

“...how I see it, they look at you the same way, be you an immigrant or refugee, you’re secondary, you’re dependent on them [the Host country], even if you work and pay tax you remain an outsider. The immigrant might think he is better because he has money.... And the refugee may think he is better because he has

rights that he is given instantly... They have pros and cons but they are the same at the end.” (Nora – Female)

The comparison that was drawn was not between refugee and immigrant, but between Arab Muslim and New Zealander. For example, although employment and paying tax were considered tasks that were meant to link the individual to the country, participants suggested that not even those responsibilities would cause Arab Muslim migrants to be considered primary or important members of New Zealand society.

The participants also acknowledged that both refugees and immigrants may experience disappointments once arriving in New Zealand. For example, the unemployment of refugees and immigrants, the refugees’ lack of English, and the immigrants’ inability to accredit their foreign qualifications were all considered factors that put both migrant groups in the same ‘disadvantaged’ category.

In some interviews, participants directly stated that there was no such thing as the ‘forced versus voluntary’ difference between refugees and immigrants. Participants clearly indicated that contrary to common belief, refugees also had a choice in whether to flee their homeland, head towards a particular country of asylum, and apply as a refugee.

Regardless, it seemed from the interviews that all participants wanted the refugee label dissolved in hope that this might result in all people being equally treated in New Zealand.

The Refugees’ Original Destination

For eight participants in this research, Australia, not New Zealand, was their original resettlement destination. These participants stated that they had chosen Australia, not due to its ‘welcoming’ nature, but due to its relative closeness to Indonesia and the availability of Indonesian people/boat smugglers, who for several thousand American dollars, are willing to cram hundreds of people on tiny poorly built fishing-boats and smuggle them into Australia. Typically, this results in people being caught by the Australian Navy and transported to detention camps on Christmas Island and then to Papua New Guinea, Nauru, and Manus Islands as part of the ‘Pacific Solution’ to the illegal arrival of people by boat to Australia. The ‘potential refugees’ may spend months to years in detention centres waiting for their refugee case to be considered and their resettlement to be approved by the UNHCR. During the last eight years, the many

refugees detained at Nauru centres were taken by New Zealand as a humanitarian action by the New Zealand government.

“There were a group of Afghanis from a ship that had sunk before ours, and then we came, so the court was so packed. We remained there for a while, then they sent us to Papua New Guinea, we were there for seven months, waiting for the UN to study our cases, and some were approved while others were declined.”(Raad – Male)

Participants who were detained on Christmas Island talked about the poor, cramped conditions while living among other hundreds of refugees in what seemed to them like a Basketball arena that was turned into a detention centre. The participants initially experienced the reality of displacement once they were informed by the Australian government that they would be sent to more ‘permanent’ detention centres in the Pacific Ocean. The participants were then transferred in army aircrafts to Nauru, Papua New Guinea, or Manus Island. The participants mentioned that waiting for the unknown to happen was mentally exhausting, especially as some had to wait for several months to be approved for resettlement in New Zealand after being declined by the Australian government. Participants also talked about their feelings of distress and hopelessness especially when being treated like ‘prisoners’ or ‘outlaws,’ which occurred when participants were addressed by a file number rather than a name, and were informed that they were considered convicts because they had tried to enter Australia illegally. Regardless of their detention location, participants in this research who had been detained by Australian officials shared similar distressing experiences when it came to the method of treatment and the subsequent realisation that their life and future were no longer in their own hands, but in the hands of higher authority.

Even for participants who were not detained, but lived in countries of asylum, such as Jordan, Syria, or Egypt, the chance to leave those countries and live a more stable life in a Western resettlement country, regardless of which country, was considered an opportunity that was not to be missed.

“My husband wanted us to go to Canada, but we were not approved. I mean we waited for seven years, and nothing! So when we knew we were coming to New Zealand, we felt like nothing before, we were so thrilled, we couldn’t believe that we were going to live overseas. I was beginning to feel like I was getting sick from the horrible circumstances in the UN camp.”(Amal – Female)

Despite UN approved refugees being declined for resettlement in their countries of first choice, they still mentioned being ‘blown away’ by joy at the prospect of resettlement in

any Western country. For many of these participants, feeling distressed and wanting to 'escape' from the hardship of living in the unstable and hard conditions of refugee camps or detention centres was the main reason for their accepting to come to New Zealand.

"We were on the waiting list in Jakarta, and waited for the UN group to contact us. Initially we were told we wanted Australia, but then we were told we would be going to the US, then that changed. After a year from the US declining our request they [UN] moved us to the Norwegian list. So they looked into countries that were accepting refugees. Then, I don't know how, they moved us to the New Zealand list. But I was relieved, I mean a three or four year wait was tiresome. Imagine what would happen to a person that goes through such circumstances." (Hiba – Female)

"Initially, two groups came and interviewed us, the Americans who didn't approve because of my hijab, and then it was the Bin Laden thing, so they didn't want us. The Australian group came and declined us too, not sure why, maybe also because of the Bin Laden problems. Then the New Zealand group came, and they told us they were taking people. We just wanted to get out of the area, and we were going to agree to any group coming." (Sabrya – Female)

Not only do these extracts illuminate the complicated nature of displacement, it is a potent display of how some refugees have to live through and deal with an unknown future. Fourteen participants confirmed that for the most part, New Zealand was not their main destination or initial 'resettlement country,' instead, the participants had applied to countries such as USA, Canada, Australia and several European countries (such as The Netherlands, Sweden, the U.K., and Italy). The reasons behind choosing other resettlement countries varied from having extended family or friends in the country, the availability of an established ethnic community, better employment opportunities, or the relative proximity to their native country (as opposed to the distance to their countries from New Zealand). However, when the participants were advised that the countries of their initial choice did not offer to take them and that they were accepted for New Zealand resettlement, most participants stated that they agreed to come to New Zealand merely out of desperation. For the participants in this study, desperation was a result of the financial, emotional and social hardship they experienced living in an asylum country. Several participants in this research believed that after the September 11th terrorist attacks, Muslim refugees were an 'unwanted' refugee group by several Western countries, in particular the USA and Australia. Participants stated that as a result of the widespread media coverage of Islamic fundamentalism, terrorism and concerns over the emergence of radical Muslim individuals in Western countries,

Muslim refugees were being discriminated against even by countries that should be abiding by their UNHCR agreement over resettling refugees.

The Importance of Providing Pre-Orientation Information to Refugees

The participants perceived New Zealand as a Muslim-accepting and non-discriminatory Western country, because it had agreed to resettle them. However, a common theme in all of the interviews was related to the lack of pre-orientation information provided to the participants by the resettlement (or UN) officials regarding their host destination, New Zealand. In this theme, the participants discussed their experiences of not having adequate or enough information about New Zealand as a resettlement country and how that may have created some unrealistic expectations for refugees about the services and resources that would be available to them once they arrived in the country. For many of the participants, knowledge and information about New Zealand did not come from the UNHCR or refugee services. Rather information about their resettlement country came from other sources such as the internet, T.V. advertisements, or friends and family who had already been living in New Zealand.

“I was aware of New Zealand as a country, as I would watch a lot of sports. I knew that New Zealand was known for export good New Zealand cheese, and there was a wrestler called Tony that was all my connection about New Zealand, my perception was that it is a big land, a big farming land. I didn’t think about the weather, I didn’t realise it was this green. That’s all I knew about it.”(Jasim – Male)

“I didn’t know it was that far. But the plane kept going...to the end of the world, towards the South Pole. Yes, that was the first thing that hit me, Oh my God it is so far away! What if I wanted to go back?” (Firas – Male)

“We didn’t know anything about the country, it was my sister-in-laws idea, she’s well informed. She said New Zealand is a green land, and it’s a peaceful country, it’s clean, and their people are nice and modest. It was a dream of mine to live overseas; I had watched American movies and I saw how they lived, and I wished I lived that same life.”(Luma – Female)

“We had never heard of New Zealand at all, so we started searching in the atlas and on the internet to gather information. We had no idea at all what it was, aside from it being a Western country just like the other countries; it was like an uncertain situation.”(Fatma – Female)

Out of the 31 participants in this study only three had some basic idea about New Zealand, and even then they stated that they were ‘shocked’ when they arrived in the country, as it was not what they expected. Other resettlement countries, such as Canada,

provided pre-orientation programmes for their refugees prior to arrival in Canada. However, New Zealand refugees are given little information, if any at all, and are therefore expected to obtain information on their own. The lack of knowledge and information about a host country may create anxiety, and various refugee concerns may go unaddressed. When talking about what they knew of New Zealand, the participants used words such as “isolated,” “green,” “friendly,” “a dot in the Atlas,” or “safe.”

Many participants mentioned a common description which was that New Zealand was “far away.” This issue of New Zealand’s geographical distance from their homeland and other countries was important to refugees, especially those still with family ties in their homeland or neighbouring countries. The lack of information regarding their destination made it difficult for refugees to prepare themselves for the long travel *to* New Zealand, and it also made displacement and living in exile ‘real.’ As a result of the lack of New Zealand information, the participants recalled feeling anxious and panicking when their journey to the host country seemed like a never ending air flight that continued for hours.

Nonetheless, the impression that the participants had from friends and family already in the country was that New Zealand was safe, welcoming, and peaceful. On the other hand, several participants alleged that that officials, friends, and family may have been giving the refugee an unrealistically bright image of the host society merely in order for them to come to New Zealand.

In this research, I argue that when there is a lack of adequate and informative information provided to refugees ‘prior’ to their departure for New Zealand, this may create unrealistic expectations that if not met, may then lead to disappointment, shock, dissatisfaction, and feelings of betrayal. The findings as to the expectations of refugees are dealt in the following section, which shows that there was a certain degree of hesitation by the participants regarding New Zealand.

Expectations of New Zealand

It is my opinion that expectations about life in the resettlement country had an impact on the resettlement experiences of the participants in this study. From the interviews, most participants expected New Zealand to offer opportunities for work and study that would help them achieve an easier and better life. However, the majority of participants said that New Zealand was not the way they thought it would be. Most of the

participants came with high and at times unrealistic expectations about the resources, the services, the climate, and the society. Aside from participants suggesting that they expected to live in a safe and secure environment, they also expected to easily find employment, and be given spacious and new accommodation. In one interview the female refugee told me that she expected to be given mobile phones and cars upon arrival:

“I never knew anything about New Zealand but we had friends here, and they pictured it as a rich country, they described it differently to how we saw it when we arrived. They told us when you arrive, they give each person two apartments, a winter and summer one! And that at times they would give you a car. They told us that employment comes to your door, you won’t face hardship. So we imagined a lavish life, and we were happy. They even told us that they give you mobiles as soon as you arrive at the airport. They painted a picture-perfect life of New Zealand. None of our friends told us the truth about New Zealand. That it is a poor country that doesn’t have many resources.” (Sabrya – Female)

Other expectations were that they would have a better life, they would be accepted by New Zealanders, their life would be easier, and they would have access to the education system. Having said this, several participants stated that they had no expectations or did not know what to expect from New Zealand considering that they did not have any information about the country. When asked if they found New Zealand similar to their expectations, the majority of participants mentioned that they were disappointed. Several participants expressed disappointment at not seeing much advanced infrastructure such as sky-scrapers or tall buildings in Auckland.

“Well to be honest, when I arrived I was shocked! When you think of going to a Western country, you expect high buildings and sky-scrapers. So when we arrived to the airport after that long trip, from Auckland airport to Mangere, on the way I was searching for the skyscrapers nothing but greenness and houses of wood. I come from a town where we had concrete houses; usually wooden houses are associated with a certain rural area and class of people which is the poorest areas.” (Thamir – Male)

The participants came predominately from busy and crowded cities, where people would be out and about, and shops and markets would be open until late at night. For many participants, New Zealand was a far cry from the lively, bustling cities they had come from, and it was also different to the Western country they had imagined it to be. New Zealand was considered ‘too quiet’ and lacked the activity of a social life which included friends and family. Many male participants complained that the combination of

living in stillness and quietness and unemployment were factors that made life in New Zealand both intimidating and frustrating.

For many participants, it seemed that the lack of information, or obtaining misleading and incorrect information, created a far-fetched image of how New Zealand really was. In my opinion, it was desperation to flee hardship and trauma and resettle, rather than naivety, which created an unrealistic image for the participants, who upon arrival to New Zealand expected luxury accommodation, easy access to cars, employment and mobile phones.

Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre: The Mirror to Life in New Zealand

Once the refugees arrived in New Zealand they were instantly sent to MRRC in South Auckland, where they remained for six weeks as part of their arrival orientation programme. During their stay at the centre, the participants reported that they were in contact with New Zealanders on many varying levels, including those who are a part of the health clinic, the English language classes, the kitchen staff, the translators, RMS and RAS workers, and others who are part of the working group at the centre. The experiences from the centre and its people played a role in how participants perceived New Zealand society, its individuals, and the country's policies. To some refugees, MRRC portrayed how life would be in the host country.

As previously mentioned, the participants reached the country mentally and physically drained, and concerned over their new lives in a strange country, which may have beliefs and values that differ considerably from their own and to which they have to adapt. Participants were also concerned over the well-being of their extended family that they may have left behind in war-torn countries. Also previously mentioned, there seemed to be an expectation from the participants that once they reached New Zealand, their 'refugee journey' would end, and their concerns and well-being would be addressed as soon as they arrived in their new homeland. Participants also expected that they could begin to build a new life again, from scratch. However, as presented in this section, the participants' experiences in MRRC played a major role in becoming part of what seemed to be a continuous refugee journey. It was noted that if refugees had a positive experience at MRRC, their reflection on their refugee journey would generally be positive, and vice versa, if they had encountered negative experiences at MRRC, the

refugees would have a generally negative outlook on their refugee experience in New Zealand.

Despite MRRC accommodating asylum seekers, as well as convention and quota refugees, two of the participants in this study who had sought asylum at the airport were not taken to MRRC. One of the participants had arrived alone, and the other participant had arrived with his wife and two children. Although these two participants were not able to comment on their experience at MRRC, their comments on their ‘first resettlement experience in New Zealand’ are addressed at the end of this section.

Participants who had arrived in MRRC talked about their six-week stay at the centre when reflecting back on their resettlement experience in New Zealand. The majority of participants shared common notions in their conversation regarding their experience in the centre and stated they it was “tiring,” “traumatic,” “shocking,” “a waste of time,” or a generally unpleasant experience. They also felt that the orientation programme was not fulfilling, and that it had given them no relevant, useful skills or tools to take with them once they had left the centre. The experiences that were constantly reflected upon during their stay at the centre involved the following:

- The issue of privacy at MRRC
- The unstable life at MRRC
- The food at MRRC
- The centre’s emphasis on the dependency and neediness of refugees
- The efficiency of ethnic interpreters
- The refugee education programme
- The MRRC departure

When talking about the challenges they faced while living at MRRC, many participants expressed feeling suffocated and that their freedom was stripped from them due to the rigid lifestyle they had to endure in the centre. MRRC did not provide these participants with a sense of security and stability; rather, it seemed to have caused them considerable discomfort and distress.

The Issue of Privacy at MRRC

When talking about their MRRC experience, an important concern for participants was the unavailability of privacy in the centre. Privacy was an important issue in general for Muslim women and in particular for those who wear the Islamic head scarf, hijab. Participants talked about the difficulties they experienced in having to share bathroom facilities with others, being unable to meet the needs of their young children because they would be sleeping in separate rooms in different parts of the centre, or having to sleep in small rooms with little or no privacy. Several female participants talked about their experience in MRRC as allowing them ‘no resettlement satisfaction’:

“Those six-weeks were my worst times...I was pregnant and... the...I mean the whole experience... people from various backgrounds and natures and you are forced to mingle with them. And the place was not comfortable, the rooms were small, all wood, and we had one shared toilet facility. Muslim women wearing hijab, you know, conservative issues like that...made it uncomfortable. You speak one word; the person at the end of the hallway would hear and know what you said. We weren't settled.”(May – Female)

“My time at the camp was the most miserable time of my life. Not from the people there...but we truly felt like real refugees, the camp and the chaos, and so many people were with you, from different cultures, it was hard. The kids making noise, the group doesn't greet you and you wonder why, every room is stuck to the next room, families aren't living together, those types of people were hard to live within the six-weeks. But we had a higher goal...any normal service was provided... it wasn't a hotel right? I mean if there were independent houses in the camp, to have all family members together rather than separate them, that would have been good. But it is a refugee camp for single men rather than families.” (Fahad – Male)

“It was a struggle... it was such a struggle. As a family we had one room with a bunk bed, all four of us in one room, so then we complained and said how can you do this? Other family's have more than one room, we complained so they gave us another room, but still it was a struggle, my son and I would sleep in one bed, I mean there wasn't room to put a cot. We could hear the people beside us snoring and coughing, you know, the beds were uncomfortable and we had back pain, and we got fleas from the beds.” (Nora – Female)

Life in the refugee centre provided the participants with general expectations of how their life in New Zealand may look. Participants in this research talked about the various challenges and traumatic experiences they endured while being at MRRC. To some extent, almost all of the participants referred to life in the centre as the most miserable days of their life. Female participants who were either pregnant or had younger children

were especially distressed when recalling their six-weeks in MRRC. The women referred to their stay in MRRC as causing them considerable mental and physical distress, saying that it was mentally tiring. The issue of privacy was one reason why their stay in MRRC was tiring, as participants felt that for Arab Muslims, and especially refugees who had been through traumatic experiences, allowing them some private time for themselves, without feeling watched, analysed, or demeaned, was missing during their time at the centre. The few shared toilet and bathroom facilities, and the small crowded barrack rooms, provided the participants with minimal opportunities for solitude. Many participants referred to their experience at MRRC as a struggle, due to the difficult circumstances that they had to overcome while living there. Several female participants who wore hijab mentioned that they felt uncomfortable having to share bathrooms with other people whom they had no relation to, and that they felt embarrassed when repeatedly passing by men who were strangers and not family members while heading to the toilet. One pregnant woman asserted that being pregnant and wearing hijab made her experience at the centre extremely uncomfortable and unsatisfying especially as pregnancy among Islamic societies is considered a private and personal experience, in which the pregnant woman requires her own personal space and facilities. According to many participants, the centre was not aware of such 'conservative' matters or the needs of refugees who come from conservative societies, and that if the centre's aim was to help refugees unwind from their long journey, they had missed the point, as the experience itself made them feel unsettled.

Several participants in this research explained that their realisation of being a refugee surfaced while they were in MRRC as a result of the existence of other refugees and asylum seekers, the centre's structure and design, and the unavailability of privacy. One participant recalled that the difficult situation of living at the centre made it challenging for him and his family to feel at ease. The centre was initially a military barrack, and because of its structure, the sleeping room arrangements forced parents to be separated from their children, or they would have other families living in rooms beside them and separated by only a wall, so there would be no privacy due to being able to hear others talking in the rooms next to them. Most of the participants believed that the centre was best fit for single refugee men rather than families because of the way it was structured and organised, and several participants even suggested that it would be more reasonable to have 'refugee homes' inside the centre for those with families, leaving the barrack rooms for the single men.

The Unstable Life at MRRC

MRRC was constantly referred to as a ‘camp’ and not a centre by all participants in this study. This notion may have been a result of the participants feeling that they were unhappy, isolated, and imprisoned at the centre. Also the centre’s lifestyle was commonly referred to as a ‘military lifestyle’ by most of the participants. The rigid schedule run by the centre was one reason that life at MRRC was perceived as military-like. Another discomfoting matter was the ‘steel beds’ they had to sleep on, which one participant believed were old beds made for the military because they were purposefully uncomfortable and unclean, which is why she believed she contracted back pain and fleas.

“You felt like you are in a military camp, everything is according to a schedule, if you were late for lunch or dinner for half an hour, there is no food for you. I had a youngster and he was sick, so I had to go to the hospital for a while with him, which was tough on me and when we would be late for lunch there would be no lunch for me... I would have to practically beg before they give me something.” (Nora – Female)

“I call Mangere a prison... because it is. But we didn’t want to cause problems for the translators who worked in the centre. My disappointment about fleeing the country was fed by greater disappointment here. I felt that this place is no different; I mean we came here for no reason apparently. But we didn’t lose hope, we couldn’t have, so when we left the camp we understood society better...we realised that it was merely individuals who were acting like that and making up laws at the camp. They didn’t want the refugees to talk, the people who they bring, they wanted us to follow them blindly, and any issue you wish to discuss you aren’t allowed to do, so I told the counsellor, there is no difference between Saddam and the people running the camp, if you speak you shall be persecuted!” (Fatma – Female)

According to the participants in this research, life in the military and at the centre were considered similar, since eating, sleeping, language and orientation classes, and recreation time ran during set hours of the day. All of the participants mentioned that the rigid schedule they had to abide by affected their well-being and that of their families. Several participants encountered negative experiences at MRRC that later influenced their overall perception of the resettlement experience in New Zealand. This led some participants to clearly refer to MRRC as a “prison” due to the hardship they had endured while staying at the centre. A number of participants likened the centre to a prison in respect to their inability to address matters concerning their families. Several female participants recalled feeling distressed when their children were not able to eat during

the set times and as a result they were told that they would not be given any food until the next meal was served. One participant recounted that her youngest child was ill and had to be taken to a local hospital several times, and it would happen that during that time she would miss her MRRC lunchtime meal. According to the participant, she was not given any food because she had missed the set lunch hour, and that in order for her to be given food, she would have to plead with the kitchen staff. The concern over food is also discussed later on in this section.

The participants in this research expressed their disappointment at the treatment they endured at the centre and compared it to the way dictators and tyrants treated their people. In this part of the interview, the participants noted that MRRC was the first contact refugees had with New Zealand society and its individuals, and they felt that the experience was fairly disappointing. For many participants, the refugee journey and the hardship they endured in order to escape their war-torn countries were meaningless after facing the disappointment at the centre. They encountered people who were not open to refugees complaining about policies or discussing their concerns, such as the rigid eating times, and they were also disappointed at the decision-making that involved housing and relocating refugees to various cities in New Zealand, which they believed the refugees had no say in. Several participants believed that the policy at the centre was one of “follow blindly and do not complain.” Nevertheless, the participants also stated that they had to remain positive despite the challenges they faced, because they believed that the centre was run by a non-representative sample of people who had authority and power, and that the majority of the New Zealand society were not tyrants. One participant and her family were satisfied once they took their complaint to a higher level and the person involved in their discomfort was removed from the centre.

It is important to note that for many of the participants in this research, life in the centre was quite traumatic and distressing. Many participants explained that these negative experiences had left them with a bad impression of the country.

Participants were clearly distressed when recounting these experiences and recalled that they had envisaged a better quality of life in New Zealand for themselves and their family, compared with that experienced in their country of asylum and homeland. For many of these participants, their New Zealand resettlement approval had made them consider New Zealand as a second home in hope of a stable and peaceful life; however, their hopes were shattered once they arrived and experienced the stay at MRRC. I believe that it is quite unfortunate that the negative occurrences the participants and

their families endured at the centre forced them to change their way of thinking about New Zealand. Several participants stated that New Zealand was no longer their second home, but the source of their misery.

The Food at MRRC

Another common concern over their resettlement experience at MRRC pertained to the food provided for refugees. This disappointing aspect of life at MRRC, linked to the 'military lifestyle,' addressed the unavailability of ethnic food, and the fact that food is presented only during the set eating times, so that anyone who is late ends up not being fed. Refugees did not have their own cooking facilities, nor were they allowed to cook in their rooms. Therefore, some participants chose to purchase foods that they were able to eat in their rooms, such as chips and biscuits, or to cook noodles and boil eggs using a hot water kettle.

“At the camp it was like a mini-community. But you felt imprisoned; you didn't have your freedom, to eat when you want, sleep when you want. No, this time you go to English class, this time you had to eat... it was an annoying thing, I mean at 7AM you had to have breakfast, what child wakes at 7AM? Or else you miss food. So you live in instability...you had to abide by time so you weren't free. It was a military life. The food was different... we complained, we weren't eating the food they cook for us. They would boil the rice; we don't eat it that way. I mean not just Iraqis complained, anyone who wasn't from this country complained.” (Fatma – Female)

“The time spent at the camp was sheer boredom, it wasn't pleasant. I'd sit and count the days pass by, it was so boring. And from 7 am we had to go and have breakfast, why would we have to all wake up at 7 am! If you forget or sleep in, that's it, they'd ask us to leave because there was no breakfast. My eldest child was nine years old and my youngest was three weeks old, he was so small. You'd have to wake up and get them all ready from the morning. They had even fed us pig and we never knew! You know the cooks were all Western.” (Amal – Female)

Almost all of the participants in this research complained that the quality and types of food provided for them at the centre were foreign to them and unsatisfactory. In fact, several participants even distrusted the centre's kitchen staff in cooking them halal meats (and no pig meat), which are a religious prerequisite for Muslims. Many participants stated that the food had unknown ingredients and that it was cooked in a way that was foreign to them. This was deemed a serious concern by all Muslim participants and was highlighted by one female participant, who was adamant that the

meat they had served them at MRRC looked similar to pork meat she saw one time at a local butchery.

The participants also expressed their concern that MRRC did not consider the importance of having Muslim or ethnic cooks in the kitchen, rather relying on Western cooks who do not give regard to the significance of the type of food they cook for refugees. Some participants also mentioned that the refugees wanted to have a say in what they ate, but they could not rely on the translators who were often reluctant to convey the refugees' concerns over fear of losing their jobs.

Participants even reported that throughout their MRRC stay they rarely ate what was provided to them because it was food they were not acquainted with. Instead, some participants would use the minimal allowance given to them during their six-week stay at the centre to purchase food of their own. According to the participants in this research, everyone at the centre was well aware that if they missed a meal, they were accountable for their actions. However, that did not deter refugees from refusing to eat the cooked meals and complaining about the food, though the participants believed that their complaints were not addressed at all during their stay at the centre.

The Emphasis on the Dependency and Neediness of Refugees

Life at MRRC reinforced a perception the participants were becoming increasingly aware of during their refugee journey, which was that refugees are people in need of assistance, and dependent on the host country and its society. During their six-week stay at the centre, participants felt that the way they were treated, and the decision making and interaction with others at the centre reflected a reality to them which was that they had lost control of their lives. This loss of control was considered a weakness, and the cause of misery for participants as it ultimately emphasised the fact that 'refugee' was a degrading and negative concept:

“When I arrived to the camp, it wasn't a pleasant environment. I mean though we knew we arrived as refugees and there is no shame in that, but regardless the place was disgusting, the beds were horrible, I was surprised they have funds, how come the beds were iron and old, the blankets were rough and uncomfortable, every person had a plastic bag – when we arrived – you have a bar of soap, and old second hand clothes. Though I realised the society has that culture, but as a refugee your pride and dignity, or what is left of it is gone. But still, I was happy to be here, I thought, when we leave the camp we'd be free and we can live the way we want. I can't say no, I don't want, while I am in the camp.” (Zina – Female)

“They would give us 65 or 70 dollars, what do you think that would do? I had children, they needed food, we came we had nothing, sometimes my heart would burn because I had no money to buy my kids anything at all. And to do the laundry you had to put coins in a machine, we came here, with nothing all, a hand behind our back, and a hand in the front [An Arab saying, which means they hold nothing (no money) in their hands].” (Amal – Female)

Life at MRRC was especially unsettling for participants who had arrived from detention camps in Manus and Christmas Islands. The participants talked about feeling degraded and lowly when they arrived in MRRC, not only due to their refugee status, but also due to the way the system treated them during their six-week stay at the centre. Although many participants in this research acknowledged that there was no shame in their status as a refugee because it was a realistic part of their ‘temporary’ situation; they were disappointed when arriving at MRRC due to its unsatisfactory image. None of the refugees had previous knowledge of New Zealand and therefore had high and unrealistic expectations of the country, and may have pictured in their minds a far more agreeable image of the resettlement centre than they had actually encountered. Once more, within this theme the participants notably used the term ‘military camp’ when talking about MRRC, due to the original usage of the centre as a military barrack, its sectioned structure and design, the furniture that was provided in the rooms, which according to the participants had consisted of metal beds, rough blankets, a bar of soap, second hand clothes, and a rigid eating schedule that affected families. Many participants stated that they were disappointed that despite Governmental funding for the centre, it still had a military feel to it. Several participants stated that what was left of their pride and dignity as human beings somehow diminished as a result of the experiences encountered at MRRC. Conversely, for some participants, the challenging experiences at their previous detention centres led them to compare the state of the detention centres in their previous location with life in MRRC.

Another issue that made the participants feel like needy and dependent people at the centre was when they addressed some of the services provided for refugees at the centre, such as their laundry. During their six-week stay at the centre, refugees were given a weekly allowance to pay for ‘other’ expenses and services inside and outside the centre. This allowance was expected to be spent on services such as laundry, for purchasing foods (mentioned above, such as chips, eggs and noodles) from the supermarket, or for transport outside the centre. Participants explained that they were given a modest weekly allowance which was barely enough to buy them alternative

foods, but they also were charged money to do their laundry, as they had to use coin laundry machines. Several participants stated their belief that for as long as refugees were living at MRRC, they should not have to pay for services inside the centre, especially ones that were directly linked to their hygiene and general well-being.

Some participants believed that they were given an allowance by the centre only for them to take it back by making refugees pay for these services. The participants argued that if the centre genuinely took their well-being and happiness into consideration they should not expect refugees to pay for washing their clothes, and if they wanted refugees to be comfortable they should have provided them with better meals, so refugees would not have to purchase food from outside the centre. The complaint from several participants that the allowance was minimal and inadequate gave the conflicting impression that on one hand, the refugees disliked being treated as dependent individuals, and on the other hand, they came to their new resettlement country with virtually no personal belongings or financial support, and so they felt that New Zealand is obliged to meet their needs and provide adequate services because the country had agreed to resettle them.

For many participants, although MRRC was unpleasant and shocking, the fact that refugees were scheduled to leave the centre at the end of their six-week period was some consolation.

The Efficiency of Interpreters

MRRC provides free bilingual translation services for newly arrived refugees who settle in the centre during their six-week stay. Male and female translators are available to refugees when they require translation assistance during medical or legal appointments, or even during English language classes. The availability of interpreters is necessary, especially if the refugee has no English language skills, but when talking about their resettlement experience at the centre, the participants in this study talked about their concern over the efficiency and the competence of the interpreters at MRRC.

According to the participants in this research, interpreters who were employed by MRRC had fears and issues of their own that needed to be addressed and resolved before attempting to interpret for newcomers to New Zealand. The participants questioned the reliability of a person who is unable to speak the facts or convey the true picture, and is only willing to please their employer.

Several participants in this study talked about their experience in using interpreters at the centre, and how they were not always regarded as a 'positive' or reliable resource. Participants talked about how they were unsure of the accuracy of the interpretation:

"The translators were completely useless. They would be afraid to speak on our behalf fearing they might lose their job. But if we couldn't voice our concerns, and they wouldn't, then who would?" (Aseel – Female)

"How can you make someone a translator to solve an issue in a camp if he himself is scared and has fear? How will he translate and speak facts. I needed their help at the centre, and they have no clue what they're doing. They ruin lives this way. An interpreter with fear doesn't translate the true picture, he benefits his bosses, he said so himself, he is like a servant, he only does what he is told." (Ali- Male)

The participants talked about experiencing frustration when having to rely on interpreters to convey their perspectives and concerns to the officials running MRRC. The participants complained that the interpreters who were contracted by MRRC to help those at the centre who were struggling with their English and required assistance during their six-week stay were unreliable. Several participants mentioned that they had felt that the interpreters were reluctant to translate the refugees' actual concerns, for fear of losing their job at the centre. (To ensure and maintain the privacy and confidentiality of the participants, I am not able to clarify further what these concerns were, as they may identify the participants). Nonetheless, the participants were worried that if they were unable to convey their distress regarding the policies or officials at MRRC, and if the interpreter was unwilling to tell the 'true story' because of his fear of losing his job, then how would refugees be able to talk about the issues that concern them?

On some occasions the participants stated that they were concerned about how they and their family were being treated by MRRC officers and requested that interpreters convey these concerns to the MRRC officials. However, the interpreters had refused to assist them out of their own concern that if the centre found out that they had helped to translate a complaint, they might lose their jobs. Thus, it was considered a dilemma when refugees felt that they could not trust or rely on the interpreters provided for them at the centre. This issue only magnified the negative experience of individuals at MRRC, and may have resulted in them feeling incapable of trusting immigration or refugee officials, and possibly social researchers.

The Refugee Education Programme

Another issue that was raised by participants when talking about their resettlement experience at MRRC was the six-week refugee education programme that is provided to all refugees who arrive at the centre. This programme addresses topics such as New Zealand culture, living and working in New Zealand, banking, money and finance, support services, medical and health services, and other information pertaining to life in New Zealand. Participants addressed the usefulness and relevance of some of the topics that were discussed in the programme. Most participants felt that topics were ‘rushed’ and required further elaboration:

“The time we were in the camp was a short period, and temporary, and everything went quickly... I call it the speedy-course (laughs), and when you have kids, you can’t concentrate on English. To be honest I didn’t benefit from the course at all, because it was fast, and your situation there was unstable, you hadn’t relaxed from the long trip to New Zealand. So I wasn’t focusing really.” (Fatma – Female)

“When you tell them the programme isn’t useful or relevant, they don’t like to hear you. When the lecture is well planned and talks about life and employment opportunities in New Zealand and how to deal with the New Zealand society, what are the pros and cons... it attracts you, because you want to understand how to survive here. Those were topics no one had addressed. They’d talk about the History, or topics that I believe don’t provide me with survival skills. We come from a different culture and society, so explain to us this culture and society as a way to help us enter the New Zealand life, not things we will never use. Don’t give me info that is irrelevant and useless, why, because you just want time to pass by because you have been paid an hourly rate to teach us.” (Ali – Male)

The general and common belief in this theme was that the orientation provided by MRRC was irrelevant and useless, as it did not provide the participants with ‘real-life’ methods of how to resettle and adjust in a new culture, gain employment or further their education. Some participants stated their dissatisfaction over the education programme at the centre and referred to it as a ‘speedy course’ which was presented in haste and during a vulnerable time for refugees, who may have just arrived in New Zealand after various long and traumatic experiences, and had not been given enough time to recuperate from their long refugee journey to New Zealand. Several female participants mentioned that they could not concentrate at what was being discussed in the programme because they needed to take care of their young children. According to the participants in this research, refugees come to the centre feeling mentally and physically

drained from the hardship they and their families have had to overcome in order to reach New Zealand. Moreover, the situation in their country of resettlement remains unstable due to the unknown challenges the refugee anticipates overcoming.

Some participants stated that the rigid 'lecture' based orientation lessons made the classes feel boring and uneventful, and that in order for the refugee to understand and apply their knowledge in the real world, the education programme required more 'hands-on' experience. This issue was addressed by several participants who stated that because the programme topics were structured like a lecture and because many refugees struggled to understand the English language easily, the education sessions seemed ineffective.

Although there was no doubt that the orientation programme was necessary for refugees, many participants were frustrated over the irrelevant information presented in the education programme, and stated that the programme was a "waste of time." The topics that were presented did not address real life issues such as teaching refugees survival skills in the new country. The participants acknowledged that although they were given the opportunity to ask questions during these educational classes, they were only able to ask about matters they were aware of and that were mentioned in class. Other matters were not addressed due to the language barrier or general mental fatigue, and remained unknown to them until they left MRRC. It was only when refugees left MRRC and mixed with the host society did they realise that there were other issues and topics that they were not aware of or were not addressed during the education programme.

The MRRC Departure

After their six-week stay, refugees are expected to leave MRRC and settle in the houses that have been provided for them by HNZC in various cities in New Zealand. For some, the departure was a cause of anxiety, for others it was long awaited. Participants talked about their relief at being able to once again exercise their freedom and make their own decisions.

"I was counting the days to leave the camp, it was like a prison sentence; I told my husband if God comes here or the prophet, I didn't care I wanted to go back to [Country of Asylum]! Now I yearned for the days of [Country of Asylum], I went mad in the camp...I was so frustrated I even started hitting my children... God helped us through it though. But, I was comfortable as soon as we left the

camp really. As long as it's your home you will feel comfortable. In the camp, I felt like I was in a prison, even the kids had hair lice!" (Amal – Female)

The general feeling expressed by most if not all of the participants in this research was that they experienced a sense of relief once they left MRRC. Many participants confessed feeling unhappy and uncomfortable during their six-week stay at the centre. The participants stated that it was not just about the uncomfortable beds, the shared bathroom facilities and used clothes that were charitably given, it was also because of their feelings of isolation, missing family members, and feeling guilty at being the ones who managed to flee their homeland. Several participants stated that by leaving MRRC, they felt that they would be released from having no say in decisions made about their life in New Zealand, such as where they would live, or when they could eat and sleep. They also looked forward to being able to walk out of their home whenever they desired. Participants were relieved to be able to be in control of their life once again.

However, despite their general unhappiness during their MRRC stay, several participants felt the need to address their gratitude and appreciation to the New Zealand refugee and immigration officials because they had allowed them and their families to come to New Zealand, and to the people that ran MRRC because they took care of their needs. Also another important aspect that was appreciated by the participants was the fact that they were given legal documents outlining their permanent New Zealand residency, which according to the participants meant that they once again had legal rights, and that their situation was at last stable.

On a final note, both of the male participants who had sought asylum at Auckland International Airport expressed their disappointment at not being taken MRRC. Instead, the single male participant was taken to short-term asylum seeker hostel,²⁵ and the other participant and his family were taken by a police officer to local “home-stay” accommodation. Both participants expressed their distress at having to endure additional hardship once they arrived at the airport in New Zealand. They were both interrogated by the police and immigration officials at the airport, and after enduring hours of questioning, they were given a temporary work permit.

One of these male participants, Jamal, who had his wife and young children with him, explained that he felt distressed at being requested to find accommodation on his own, especially when he had informed the immigration officials that he personally knew no

²⁵ Grove Hostel, located in Sandringham, Auckland, is a “short-term” emergency accommodation service provided to asylum seekers.

one in New Zealand. However, a policeman who had been part of the interview team at the airport had sympathised with Jamal and his family and offered to take the family to a local home-stay accommodation, where the family stayed for the night. Jamal then contacted his brother who lived in the U.K. and through his brother was able to obtain contact information of a friend living in New Zealand. The following day the friend picked the family up and accommodated them temporarily while they searched for a permanent home.

Jamal's experience raises a valid concern: why was this asylum seeking family not sent to MRRC where they would be provided with adequate services and assistance while their refugee case was being reviewed?

Summary of the First Leg of the Refugee Journey

The perception of threat, danger, and concern over the lives of their family members had led the participants in this study to flee their homelands in search of a better future and more peaceful life. Upon beginning to talk about their refugee experience in New Zealand, all participants initially discussed the reasons they fled their country. Although they did not go into much detail, the brief comments made by the participants outlined the simple truth behind their displacement: they had no other choice but to leave. The following issues were addressed in this first leg of the refugee journey:

- The participants began by briefly mentioning their reasons for fleeing their homeland. This pre-migration period made up the first part of their refugee journey. Despite the various nationalities of the participants, the common reasons for departure related to the political or religious instability of their homelands. The participants talked about the lack of choice they had in their countries, as it was evident life there had become and would continue to be difficult for them and their families. Several participants reported that they had to flee their country for fear that their family members would be interrogated, imprisoned or executed due to the participant's political activities.
- Acquiring the refugee label was also an important part of their refugee journey. It provided them with access to a better future; however, the refugee label also brought with it negative experiences as it was associated with the individual being vulnerable, unwanted by their native country, shamed, or a prospective burden on the resettling country. Participants talked about the importance of shedding the

refugee label once they arrived in their resettlement country, and being treated as potential citizens rather than dependent needy individuals.

- Participants also mentioned that by being labelled Arab Muslim refugees they felt less than the Arab Muslim immigrants, who were considered educated, successful and motivated people who came to New Zealand by choice, rather than force like refugees. On the other hand, several participants stated that being a refugee or immigrant makes no difference as both individuals had to sacrifice their familiar environment and leave behind their extended family to live in exile for a better future.
- New Zealand was not the chosen resettlement destination for several participants, who had hoped to be resettled in Canada, Australia, or Europe where they had friends or extended family. However, due to lack of other options they succumbed to being resettled in the country.
- All participants had very little to no information about New Zealand, and as such they had unrealistically high expectations of how their life would be once they arrived in the country. Providing refugees with pre-orientation prior to their departure for New Zealand was suggested as an important necessity that would put matters into perspective for the refugees.
- Finally, once arriving in New Zealand and being sent to MRRC for a six-week orientation, an additional chapter to the first leg of the refugee journey began. All participants stated their dissatisfaction with their treatment, the services and the facilities in the centre. Participants talked about the issues that concerned them the most, which included lack of privacy at the centre, feeling uncomfortable, demeaned and unwanted, the ethnically inappropriate food, their distrust in the ethnic interpreters provided for them, the uninformative orientation programme which they felt was a ‘waste of time,’ and their relief at leaving the centre and regaining their freedom.

The Second Leg of the Refugee Journey: The Start of a New Life

At MRRC, participants seemed to be somewhat sheltered from how life ‘really’ is in New Zealand. It was not until the participants left MRRC that they had to face the reality of life in a new country. While in the first leg of the journey the participants discussed their New Zealand arrival, their expectations, disappointments, and their six-week stay at MRRC, this section concerns the challenges and experiences they overcame once they left the security and familiarity of MRRC. This stage of the participants’ experiences is referred to as the second leg of the refugee journey. In this leg of the refugee journey, participants began to discuss their resettlement experiences after leaving MRRC. These experiences include their adjustment to a new life in New Zealand, and how several resettlement agencies such as RMS, HNZC, and WINZ played a role in this. This leg of the refugee journey also dealt with the challenges of raising an Arab Muslim family in a non-Arab, non-Muslim society, and gender-related differences in the resettlement experience. Finally, a summary of the second leg of the refugee journey is outlined.

Refugee Migrant Services (RMS)

The participants each had to make major adjustments in their lifestyles. The RMS resettlement volunteers and other resettlement personnel had to teach them how to use public transport, bank machines, go to the library, and fill in forms. When talking about the usefulness of the refugee services available to refugees, the participants mentioned the influence that RMS and its support volunteers had on their refugee journey both generally and specifically with respect to their resettlement experience in New Zealand. Participants in this study had both negative and positive experiences when it came to their contact and experience with RMS.

Positive Experiences

RMS played an essential and valuable role in the lives of the newly arrived refugees by facilitating much needed resettlement volunteers to assist refugees and their families with day-to-day tasks, such as enrolling children at school, registering with a local doctor, or using public transport. Most participants were satisfied with their RMS support volunteers, and maintained contact with them even after the six-month support period ended. RMS volunteers were particularly useful when the refugees were unhappy

with their housing situation or other resettlement concerns that required “English communication.” RMS volunteers would write letters of recommendation or complaint, or accompany participants to appointments if they needed their assistance.

“We had some nice RMS volunteers, they stood by us, we went to the people at Housing²⁶ because our English wasn’t good, they spoke on our behalf, they told them we’re a Muslim family with girls wearing hijab and that we’d like a more appropriate home that has its own privacy.” (Sabrya-Female)

“Our RMS volunteers taught us how to get on a bus, get money from the machines. We didn’t have these plastic cards [bank cards] back in our country. It was strange having money come out from a hole in the wall. But they taught us things like that, you know. They also brought us some used furniture, but we had to bring our own later.” (Layla-Female)

Several participants talked about the positive experience they had when dealing with the resettlement support volunteers who assisted the family at various levels, especially when one family had been unhappy in being relocated to Wellington rather than Auckland. The role of RMS support volunteers was crucial in ensuring that newly arrived refugees had the practical support they required during the first six months of their New Zealand arrival. Whenever possible, RMS support volunteers played multiple roles in assisting the family to make their transition into the New Zealand society simple and more importantly, positive. On many occasions, when talking about their experiences with RMS, the participants in this research only referred to the support volunteers, rather than the agency itself. This may be because the RMS support worker was the main point of contact between the refugee and RMS services.

Negative Experiences

On the other hand, some participants in this study talked about disheartening and unsatisfying experiences from their contact with RMS and the support volunteers. Not all participants in this study felt they had equal access to RMS resettlement support volunteers. Within this theme, the participants addressed their disappointment in feeling unsupported by the very same agency that is meant to support the resettlement of refugees and their families. Several participants mentioned they were denied RMS assistance, either as a result of refusing to relocate to the city or destination that had been assigned to them when they were still at MRRC, or as a result of declaring asylum

²⁶ When talking about their HNZC experience, all participants in this study would refer to HNZC as “Housing”.

at the airport, and therefore being denied the privileges of quota refugees (such as access to MRRC, RMS support).

“We had a volunteer who came every week for an hour a day. She would come for an hour a week and even then she say she was busy. The way they allocated the volunteers at the camp was wrong... some had four volunteers... they have to divide them according to size of each family. Some families had four volunteers who were financially able, for example one volunteer took the man he was supporting in his car and showed him around Auckland. We were supposed to have three, one has him and wife, he was unemployed and his wife we didn't know was a support person. She was pregnant in her last months, how was she meant to help support us? He then found a job and left to Wellington. We saw him twice, and then they both left to Wellington. The only one left was an older female, who would come one hour a week and say “I am busy I must go home...” (Raad-Male)

“My first year here I was miserable, alone, pregnant and not resettled. They'd say ‘why didn't you stay in Wellington’...so they said ‘we won't give you support workers,’ nor did Housing help us. Others, who did leave the camp, so the volunteers instantly helped them, furnished their house and taught them all the important ropes. We were lost. We didn't know what to do or where to go. I thought everyone would be equally treated. You know, it was a new country, how to connect the phone, transport, electricity, things like that, we didn't know. We didn't even have furniture. We slept on the floor. No T.V., nothing. We didn't know where to get it from. I mean it was a struggle to start with. We'd buy a few objects very expensive ones too from second- hand shops and they weren't worth it, but others had support workers.” (May-Female)

The participants reported on the difficulties they had to overcome when they were not provided with adequate resettlement support. One of the most difficult challenges was using Western (English) amenities, which involved filling in forms, having to communicate in basic English, sometimes using hand gestures, or having to rely on a third person to translate for them. Not having an RMS support person to help overcome such hurdles made resettlement and adjustment to life in New Zealand considerably more challenging and stressful for some participants, especially during the first six months. The participant in the extract above had to deal with having unreliable support from only one support worker. Lack of RMS support was perceived as not only frustrating, but also an extremely disappointing experience, especially for refugees who anxiously arrive in host countries with little or no prior information about the country, no language proficiency, and no extended family or friends. All of the participants who had inadequate or no RMS support mentioned how their first year in New Zealand was an “unsettling” experience that defied the purpose of bringing refugees to New Zealand

to “resettle.” This is exemplified in the second extract above, in which when the participant talked about her “miserable first year” in New Zealand due to the lack of support provided for her family (as a result of refusing to move to Wellington). An unfortunate consequence of this matter was that participants who were unhappy with receiving minimal or no resettlement support had formed an impression that refugees in New Zealand were unequally treated, which reinforced their belief that they were discriminated against. The participants believed that providing some families with efficient and dedicated support workers and others with inefficient ones was an issue which RMS needed to address in order to ensure that all refugee families feel “equally supported.” Such experiences from their first year of New Zealand resettlement may become imprinted in the mind of the refugee as unforgettable, and it may have an impact on their overall adjustment and resettlement in the country.

Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC)

The government agency HNZC provides newly arrived refugees with affordable accommodation and housing through the assistance of RMS. Generally, this arrangement is made between HNZC and RMS to ensure that the participants are located in appropriate accommodation, and in an appropriate location, mainly in areas where there are already established communities or groups of people from the same ethnicity. This arrangement is made while the participants are still at the Mangere Resettlement Centre, in order for them to have a home available once they leave there. When participants talked about their experiences with refugee services, they discussed their dissatisfaction with the service provided by HNZC and the poor housing decisions that were made on behalf of the family. Several participants discussed the inappropriate location of their HNZC homes in deprived areas of the city, where the homes were potential targets for theft and vandalism. HNZC was blamed for making unfortunate housing decisions on behalf of a refugee family who did not know any better and who had trusted the judgment of HNZC and RMS officials.

Positive Experiences

Only two participants, who had been provided with spacious, new or relatively new homes in suitable locations, reflected back on their satisfactory experience with HNZC.

“We feel quite humbled of the way we have been treated here. You have seen this house, I mean Housing, they knew I had a big family and they asked me what my needs were, and I told them we needed a big spacious house, and then I wanted the house to be close to schools and shops. Praise to Allah they provided

this for us, we couldn't believe it! They must have worked very hard to find something like this for us. It is all great; we are embarrassed from their kindness." (Saad-Male)

Arab Muslims, like other refugees and immigrants, tend to have larger nuclear families than European New Zealanders and prefer to live with their extended families. When these cultural differences are reflected in housing policy, the refugee feels appreciated and acknowledged. The two participants who expressed satisfaction with their housing allocation each had more than eight children living with them, and therefore may have been given spacious and new homes that had been recently built to accommodate larger families.

Negative Experiences

The majority of participants in this study were unhappy with the homes provided to them by HNZN. Several participants were allocated apartments rather than houses, despite one participant particularly mentioning to HNZN that they required a house because of their big family. Other reasons for their dissatisfaction arose from the belief that the accommodation was old and unkempt, that it was too small and cramped, or that the accommodation was located in a disadvantaged area. Several female participants believed that they were taken advantage of by HNZN and had been given homes in poor condition because they had arrived in New Zealand without their husbands and lacked English language skills, which also meant they were unaware of the housing arrangement till they left MRRC. In addition, a couple of participants addressed the fact that HNZN did not understand the significance of certain accommodation requests that were culturally important for the refugees; some females above the age of 18 years were provided with separate accommodation when it is culturally inappropriate for unmarried or single Arab Muslim females to live on their own, and families that had females who wore hijab were not provided with accommodation that provided them with privacy, such as a house with a high fence which would prevent neighbours looking into the participant's home. Due to feeling isolated and distant from family or friends, some participants chose to relocate and find independent accommodation and pay full rent, as opposed to the subsidised rental paid to HNZN. Also, for all participants it was important to be involved in the consultation process between HNZN and RMS. Participants indicated that they did not appreciate being left out of the consultation with

the refugee agencies before HNZN located a house for the family. The extract below underlines this matter:

“When Housing gave us the contract we hadn’t seen the house. They wanted to choose the area for us but that isn’t right, because we’re all clustering in one area. So they gave us a house in a filthy area, and there aren’t many Kurds there. Then the next refugee lot that were behind us were given the new houses. There was a fence between the new and filthy area, just as if we were animals. We tried to apply to change the house and that was a struggle. I guess this is the price we pay for being here. Others who hear we’re living abroad envy us and think we live an easy life; they don’t know how it really is here.” (Nora-Female)

In the extract above the participant mentioned that after her family had left MRRC, the next refugee group that arrived were assigned newly built houses in an area across the road from where her home was, and that these new houses were surrounded by a fence which separated the “new houses” from the “filthy houses.” According to Nora, it seemed as if those living in the new homes wanted to be protected from the savages or animals living behind the fence. For Nora, the fence was a symbol of the unjust New Zealand policies that may favour some refugees over others. However, it was not merely the fact that the state of the house was disappointing to her, but according to Nora, the location of the house was in a deprived and “suspicious” area, and it had many stray dogs which terrorised the family and especially their young daughter who had to walk to the nearby school.

The majority of participants felt that in terms of providing an affordable home to refugees, most of the houses were located in deprived areas of Auckland, or in secluded areas where new houses are being built. In either situation, participants deemed it necessary that refugees be included and have a say in the decision of where they are resettled. During their MRRC stay, all participants were requested to sign tenancy contracts through HNZN. This matter concerned the participants, especially when they did not know the location of the house, or what state the house would be in. Participants believed that the role of HNZN in choosing the location of the house on behalf of the refugees seemed to illustrate their powerlessness and dependency, and that their lives were in the hands of others. Interestingly, some participants in this study did not wish to be located in an area which was considered highly populated with people from their own ethnic background. It was not appreciated because participants were concerned that living among their own ethnic people may only cause them social problems, and gossip. Participants believed that they would be able to live comfortably in New Zealand without having to justify their actions or behaviours according to ethnic culture and

values. In addition, having people from the same ethnic group clustered in one area disadvantages new migrants as it may have an effect on their learning English and mixing with other New Zealanders. Newly arrived refugees may become more isolated from the host society if they live in areas with a similar ethnic population.

Other participants seemed to contradict this view and stated their disappointment in being allocated homes that were not chosen carefully by HNZC to ensure the refugees had community support. It seemed important that regardless of the area decision made by HNZC, the participants needed to be involved and included in the decision making process.

“I don't know, when I was in the south, I felt I was isolated from others and the world. I mean the people there were groups, like the Christians would be together Assyrians, Catholics... they'd be a bit prejudiced against others...I was there and had no one and I was so bored, people would sleep early, and I wasn't used to that. I wasn't talking to anyone, and that affected me a lot.” (May-Female)

Staying in Auckland

Several participants went through the distressing experience of feeling forced to leave Auckland and relocate to Wellington. Most participants had preferred to remain in Auckland because they alleged that it had a better established Arab and Muslim community and better employment opportunities, and several participants complained that weather-wise, Wellington was too windy and colder than Auckland. Two families refused to move to Wellington, while several participants went to Wellington but relocated themselves and their families back to Auckland after a period of time.

The problem is that while resettlement agencies such as HNZC and RMS, which respectively locate a home and assign resettlement support volunteers for refugee families, the move to another city may only hinder the resettlement of refugees. In particular, the resources to support refugees cannot be shifted from one city to another.

“They [MRRC and RMS] forced me to go to a city I didn't want to go. They told me they chose it for me because they said ‘you told us you had a friend in Wellington.’ I told them ‘but I also have friends in Auckland, did you ever see my friend from Wellington come to visit me here?’ A day before leaving the camp, Housing brought the contracts for people to sign, and no one came near me. At six in the evening they sent for me and they told me, ‘you're in Wellington but we didn't find you a house so you'll stay in an apartment. If you put chickens in that house, they wouldn't be comfortable. They made me go to Wellington, it

is cold and the wind is too strong, so I chose to come back to Auckland. But right till this day I am paying that debt of moving. I borrowed money that I have to repay.” (Ali-Male)

Refugee services such as RMS and HNZC, which are meant to provide resettlement assistance to newly arrived forced migrants, stated their unwillingness to assist this family once they voluntarily chose to move to a different city from that which had been selected by the officials at MRRC and RMS. Participants indicated that the lack of resettlement support may taint the image in their mind of “friendly New Zealand” for a very long time (and throughout their resettlement).

Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ)

WINZ is a government department that helps New Zealand residents find employment and provides benefit assistance to refugees while they look for work. Most participants in this study talked about the humiliation they felt when their WINZ case manager suggested that as refugees, they should take any employment opportunity that was being offered to them, and specifically, when it was suggested by their WINZ case managers that they work as cleaners. Although many participants stated their desire to become employed and active in New Zealand society, being asked to work as a cleaner was not only humiliating, but it showed refugees that New Zealand society views them as lower class individuals who are expected to take on such offers.

When talking about the refugee services that have been and continue to provide refugees with assistance, the majority of the participants in this study mentioned WINZ as one of the services that made them feel uncomfortable and degraded. Being mistreated by their WINZ case manager was not only a demoralizing experience for refugees, but it may also have impacted on their overall view of their treatment by New Zealand society, or its social services. This mistreatment may have also affected their satisfaction with their resettlement experience in their host country. Although participants did not state that they were verbally abused by their case managers, some participants did report that they had been either provided with inadequate assistance by their case managers, or had been ignored or yelled at by them, and participants generally felt that their case managers had no cultural understanding about their ethnic clients. Being mistreated by the New Zealand support system may have only increased the participants’ perceptions that ethnic refugees have no place in a predominately Western society. Such mistreatment was mentioned by one male participant, Jamal, who talked about his embarrassment at being yelled at by his WINZ case manager, who had also

stated that if he could not work, then his wife should seek employment. Jamal did not appreciate the case manager's offensive tone nor did he appreciate the case manager's inability to comprehend how his wife, who wears hijab and has two children under the age of five years old, would be unable to find employment.

"... when I first went to my case manager, she was very rude, very loud, yelling... If I were a Kiwi or a Māori ...I don't think they'd have treated me this way. She was arguing with me and said that I have to work... I'd tell her [his case manager] "I am sick, on the sickness benefit" so she'd say "Then let your wife work." I would say "but she has children and they are under the age of five." I complained and they changed my case manager, the new one... she's ok, I mean she doesn't do anything extra... but it's just her treatment, it's more civil. She says I am sorry if there is something worthwhile apologising for, or she'd explain to us the policies, you know. But if I were Māori or Kiwi she wouldn't have dared to mistreat me." (Jamal-Male)

"I don't find it nice at all going to WINZ, I feel weak, helpless. I wonder to myself why life has brought me to this level. We rely on their charity. We go to the income everyday for some reason, to ask for financial assistance, sickness benefit, or renewing it or finding why it has been cut. Things like that." (Aseel-Female)

Generally, the participants who had indicated that they felt mistreated by WINZ concluded that this was due to their status as a refugee and because they were Arab Muslim. This belief was illustrated when they constantly compared the way they were treated as Arab Muslim refugees with how they would be treated if they were indigenous or European New Zealanders. The participants would generally talk about their WINZ experience as leaving them humiliated and feeling like "a nothing." The whole experience of having to request financial assistance from a governmental agency made these Arab Muslim participants feel like helpless and incompetent individuals. Typically, back in their native countries, there are no government supported income benefits. If an individual required financial assistance their first point of contact would be to request help from their extended family. Therefore, going to WINZ to ask for financial support was a relatively new and embarrassing experience to all the participants.

Occasionally WINZ would review the employment situation of refugees. Those who were able to work or had found employment had their income benefit either entirely or partially discontinued depending on the individual's salary. Thus, it was common for the participants in this study to talk about feeling degraded as if they were asking for charity or begging for money from the WINZ agency whenever they were summoned to

the WINZ agency for their financial review. For many of the participants, the degrading experience of having to stretch their hands to the “charity” of WINZ made them yearn even more for their native countries, their lost status, and the social support of their extended family. Several participants also mentioned their shock at being pressured or asked to work as cleaners. For these participants, such a request may have only highlighted their belief that some WINZ case managers had low expectations of refugees. Also, most of the participants expressed their disgust at such a suggestion especially as back in their native country, this type of work would be regarded as a degrading and somewhat shameful job.

According to several participants, the reason behind resettlement services’ mistreatment of refugees was the incorrect perceptions of refugees, and the low expectations that some individuals within these resettlement agencies had of refugees.

“...Even WINZ who referred me to a TOPs course, those courses are designed for people who cannot handle mainstream education or who do not have a qualification. I think this is a challenge for the professional person. They consider all refugees as illiterate or with poor educational backgrounds and this prevent them from integrating. Low expectations come especially from teachers, or volunteers for NGOs, or representatives of the host society or governmental organisations; people who have a prime responsibility to work with refugees. They can be very judgemental and have low expectations of refugees, like being asked by WINZ to work as a cleaner. I mean people judge refugees ‘through’ those who interact with us, so those who work with refugees will definitely influence the views of others, and this is in itself another problem refugee’s encounter.” (Jamal-Male)

This person also went as far as stating that the New Zealand refugee system was built to meet the needs of uneducated, needy refugees, and that it does not seem to cater for the needs of the educated and motivated refugees. Male participants, in particular, mentioned that for a WINZ case manager to suggest that refugees work as cleaners only exemplified the fact that New Zealand society has low expectations of the capabilities of forced migrants. The extract above illustrates a shared view among the majority of participants in this study, which reflected on the notion that the refugee system in New Zealand was geared towards meeting the needs of the uneducated refugees. This notion was also perceived to exist among mainstream society and refugee agencies alike, who, participants believed, both have low expectations of refugees. For the participant in the extract above, his previous University education seemed to mean nothing to his WINZ case manager, who provided the participant with incorrect information and services.

Usually, WINZ clients who are referred to TOPs are clients whose first language is not English, and their ability to speak or write English is limited to the extent that it is likely to be a barrier to them getting employment or undertaking further education. The participant in the extract above was referred to TOPs even though he held a bachelor degree in engineering and comfortably spoke English during the interview with me. Therefore, his natural response when being sent to TOPs was disappointment at the expectation that he was an uneducated refugee. The participants in this study mentioned that it is the responsibility of refugee services, non-governmental organisations, agencies and employees of these agencies to correct the negative image that has been given to refugees. The majority of participants in this research believed that if the refugee agencies themselves held negative perceptions of refugees, which would undoubtedly be imbedded in their policies and systems, then in turn these resettlement agencies may convey these negative perceptions to their employees and volunteers. Therefore, it was no wonder that New Zealand society perceived refugees as incapable, illiterate, helpless individuals.

Several male and female participants in this study also suggested that the social welfare system or WINZ, was a system that taught (and to some degree, encouraged) both refugees and immigrants alike to become “liabilities on the society.” This allegation was based on the participants’ perceptions that the New Zealand government did not encourage the independence or success of ethnic people.

Though the concept of assisting newly arrived refugees was seen by the participants as a beneficial initiative, they criticised the management of resettlement services and their policies. For example, all participants were well aware that if they sought part-time employment their social welfare benefit may be jeopardised, and as a result they were unwilling to find employment unless it was a ‘financially’ good arrangement.

The Arab Muslim participants in this study had hoped for a better quality of life for themselves and their family once they arrived in New Zealand and left MRRC. This meant being treated respectfully, being involved in various decision-making matters, access to resettlement support, and “adequate” employment opportunities. Participants were generally disappointed once these expectations were not met, or when the participant realised that they were being unrealistic.

The Arab Muslim Refugee Family

Once refugees arrived in the country, they expected their needs to be taken care of by the governmental support services at MRRC. Examples of this type of support included having their bank accounts set up, their housing and their health care provided, in addition to being granted an income benefit. All of these methods of resettlement support were considered to assist the newly arrived refugees in building security and stability in their resettlement country. However, an important method of support, which was addressed in this research by the participants, and which they believed was lacking in New Zealand, was the role of social support from family and community members of similar ethnicity. This issue of lack of ethnic social support was tied to their concern over having to be entirely responsible for maintaining their children's ethnic identity, when back in their homeland this was also the role of extended family and the ethnic society.

Therefore, when talking about their resettlement challenges in New Zealand, the participants discussed their struggle to raise their children in a culture that differs from their own, coupled with the unavailability of extended family and community support. The parents in this research talked about how the refugee experience had affected their traditional roles in the family, with fathers becoming actively involved in their children's upbringing more than if they were in living in their ethnic society. Parents suggested that as refugees in a foreign society, they had become ethnic advisors or leaders, constantly keeping an eye over their children and directing their behaviour.

According to accounts provided by the parents in this study, Muslim Arab children in New Zealand are considered the endangered Muslim generation as a result of these younger generations of Arabs being raised in Western society. Muslim parents are concerned that their children might be influenced or tempted to adopt more aspects of Western culture than their own ethnic culture. The fear that their children would lose their ethnic identity was evident in interviews with the parents. This fear had a significant impact on the parents' determination regarding the importance of their children becoming aware that as Arabs and Muslims they were different from Westerners.

The challenges parents talked about involved concerns and issues like providing financially for the family, in addition to raising their children according to Islamic values, customs and beliefs, despite a lack of family and ethnic support. New Zealand

society was perceived as a Western society that had both positive and negative attributes, and the parents were hoping that their children would adopt the “good” traits, such as pursuing education and employment, and disregard the traits that were religiously and culturally inappropriate, such as wanting to live independently from the family, premarital relationships, dating, drinking, and clubbing. Several parents also addressed the gender difference in dealing with their children, and how concern for their daughters and sons varied to some degree, depending on what behaviours were exhibited by their children. This section of the refugee journey addresses the challenges faced by Arab Muslim refugees when raising their children, their concern over the loss of ethnic identity, and changes in the role and dynamics of parents in the family. Furthermore, this part of the refugee journey also discusses the source of the refugees’ mental and emotional strength and resilience, in spite of the lack of social, ethnic and community support provided to refugees.

Changes in Family Roles and Dynamics

When fleeing their homeland and arriving in resettlement countries, families are often separated or broken up. Sometimes the father leaves first and then reunites with his family, or in certain situations, the mother and children are resettled first and then the father reunites with them. In the interviews, participants were encouraged to discuss how the refugee journey impacted on their family role as parents and if the resettlement experience in New Zealand had changed their family dynamics.

When talking about the changes that had occurred in their family due to their resettlement in New Zealand, the mothers stated that since arriving in the country and having no access to community or social support, they were now playing both their traditional role of preserving and maintaining the culture and religion, and also the role of advising their children on proper conduct and behaviours. The resettlement experience and lack of support caused the fathers to shift from their traditional role as being merely the household provider, to being involved in raising their children by also taking on the role of cultural and religious preservers and advisors.

“My role has changed ever since we got to New Zealand. My role before was an observer, it wasn’t interactive, I was occupied with a 16-hour job, but the things I couldn’t do, I had those who would do it for me... like drivers, I had two, I had servants, I was away from the ground but I was a supervisor. When the kids were young I was the father, the servant, the maid, the driver, and the mother, but now the kids have grown and we all help out. Now I’m an advisor for my

kids. The girls all help out now. But the real catastrophe was seven years ago, we came here, no culture, no society, no job, it was difficult.” (Fahad-Male)

“The Muslim and Arab parent has a mission that won’t change, that is to raise our children well. Here our mission is more challenging because we have no help from the community and the extended family doesn’t exist. For that reason the father has also been forced to take part in raising his children. Right now our responsibilities are to advise and supervise them. Here we have to teach them Arabic, teach them about Islam, to take care of them from this society.” (Fatma – Female)

The majority of participants shared the perception that their role or responsibilities within the family had changed since arriving in New Zealand. Female and male participants mentioned that they had become more involved in their children’s upbringing, with special emphasis on the fact that fathers were involved in raising their children in New Zealand due to the lack of available ethnic support.

Resettlement in a different ethnic society may have influenced a change in family gender roles, and since the same ethnic society and extended family are largely unattainable in New Zealand, Arab Muslim parents played both the roles of ethnic identity preservers and advisors for their children. These roles also portrayed the parent as someone who “sacrifices” for their family. Back in the participants’ homelands, the father’s role was to be the financial provider for the family, while raising the children was almost entirely up to the mother, extended family, and the ethnic society.

Moreover, fathers acknowledged that they had become increasingly involved in their children’s upbringing. Not only did the father’s amount of involvement change as a result of living in a foreign society, but also other traditional aspects relating to the role of fathers in Arab or Muslim culture had to change. For example, when resettling in New Zealand, some Arab Muslim fathers felt that they had lost control of their children’s behaviour, as children in New Zealand have more rights than they do back in their home country. The participants in this research felt intimidated by the current ‘anti-smacking’ laws in New Zealand,²⁷ which prevented these participants from being able to “traditionally discipline” their children. They also believed that their children were empowered by the awareness that “physical discipline” was not permissible and was punishable by law. Parents felt that this weakness forced them to resort to

²⁷ The Crimes (Substituted Section 59) Amendment Bill was passed in 2007, and its purpose is to stop force, and associated violence, being inflicted on children in the context of correction and discipline.

becoming their children's "friends" rather than "parents," which definitely was not how their parental roles would be back in their homeland.

"We left for the children of course. I always try and ensure they have everything they need. But here, there are these laws that prevent you from raising your children properly like the 111²⁸ calls. It's like our children have a new weapon and twist our arm with it. So for parents, as time goes by here, you have to become calmer in how you deal with them. You have to become their friend, and give them freedom. But everything has a limit." (Ahmed-Male)

Physical discipline is considered culturally appropriate in Arab and Muslim societies, and therefore Arab Muslim refugee parents who come to New Zealand struggle to adhere to the law that prevents force being used towards a child for the purposes of correction. In school, children are instructed to call 111 if they believed they are being verbally or physically abused. Participants were concerned that this threat of a 111-phone call may become a weapon for some of their children to hold over their parents. Several participants mentioned that their children were becoming difficult to handle, arrogant or disrespectful because of knowing they could get away with it without being punished. Participants were also concerned that if they did physically discipline their children, they may be taken away from them by Children Youth and Family Services (CYFS). On the other hand, there was a general understanding among the participants that for as long as they remained in New Zealand, they not only had to abide with the country's laws, but parents may also have to consider changing their "disciplinary" approach. In the extract above, Ahmed, as a father, felt that by becoming a friend to his children, and by allowing them "limited" freedom, listening to and helping them overcome their challenges, and clarifying their concerns, he had discovered a better way to raise and reach out to his children rather than taking on the role of the traditional, authoritarian (demanding and directing), leading father figure.

The Quest for Ethnic Continuity

When discussing the challenges that Arab Muslim parents were facing in New Zealand, all of the participants felt strongly about the need to maintain their ethnic identity, and that of their children, and their sense of who they were as Arab Muslims. Participants mentioned the struggles they encountered while raising their children according to Islamic and cultural values and beliefs, in a society that differs religiously and culturally from their own. In their interviews, the participants talked about this struggle being a

²⁸ Dialling 111 is the emergency number for fire, police, and ambulance in New Zealand.

result of the clash between “two worlds,” in which the child is taught ethnic values and beliefs by the parents, while at the same time being taught Western values and beliefs at school and by mixing with New Zealand society. By identifying differences in various aspects of family living, values, rules and relations, the participants seemed to be struggling to balance their lives as Arab Muslims in a non-Arab, non-Muslim society.

Participants were mainly concerned that their children may lose their ethnic identity if they had no one to guide them, especially during the period of the child becoming curious and beginning to question certain conflicting religious and cultural values. This “phase” of their children’s lives was referred to by several participants as the “danger zone,” which reflected the intensity and seriousness of this matter for the participants. Even for parents who did not yet have school-aged children, it seemed as if they were developing a sense of concern over this matter.

Parents were concerned that their ethnic influence was not as strong as that of Western society, due to their children spending more time at school and less time at home. The concern over the loss of their children’s ethnic identity was multiplied as a result of the participants’ children spending the majority of their days speaking English at school or communicating with their peers, rather than spending time with their parents at home. There was a general notion that the longer Muslim children were raised and lived in New Zealand the more susceptible they are towards adopting Western values and behaviours, and eventually shedding their own ethnic identity.

“I try to teach her Arabic, but she would open the book once a month, she always writes English and her friends speak English to her, and that is something I am struggling with. They spend most time outside the home, they learn everything outside. But the role of parents inside the home is important, that’s why all day I give her advice and talk to her. But that is how we were brought up, right?” (Nora – Female)

“The schools in general don’t force the kids to do anything. The lessons that I feel are inappropriate like dance lessons or sex education lessons, I have the right to exclude my kids from that.” (Ali – Male)

“The schools here aren’t disciplined enough. The children may learn wrong values, use them and think they are normal! One of the things me and my wife agreed on at home was that we use Arabic; no one would speak in English. And that’s how they have maintained it. There are parents, who only use it for a year or two, then they started speaking English at home, and then when they go to Arab countries, they’d speak in broken Arabic. If the child spoke English, he’ll think in an English way which would impact on his behaviour.... But if it they

spoke in Arabic, it's not only assisting in maintaining the language, but also the customs, the Arab values...the respect as well. These will all help the child walk in the right path." (Jamal – male)

Despite the participants in this study realising that they would be resettled in a non-Muslim, non-Arab society, they were not prepared to deal with the challenge of being solely responsible for teaching their children religious beliefs and cultural traditions. All of the participants with children mentioned that one their main fears while living in New Zealand was that their children would lose their appreciation and understanding of their ethnic identity. All the participants also stated that it was important that their children were raised according to the Islamic teachings and that they were able to read the Quran (one female participant stated that she was so desperate for her son to read the Quran that she did not mind him reading the English translated version). The Arab Muslim participants in this study felt that their identity and that of their children was under threat, especially when their own children questioned certain topics that relate to Islam and how the West view certain Islamic beliefs or behaviours.

As a result, the participants reported that they tried various methods of embedding religious and cultural values, such as speaking to their children in their mother tongue, sending their children to Islamic Sunday School, and purchasing, or asking extended family who live in Muslim or Arab countries to send them, religious or cultural books and stories. The role of the parent in enforcing ethnic values and language was also mentioned in this leg of the journey, and is addressed shortly. For the majority of participants, this matter was causing them considerable stress and pressure especially when they felt that every time the child came home from school the parents had to “undo” the influences of Western society. This matter was best captured in the extract below:

“My main responsibility is that when my child goes to school for seven hours, in that time he is living in a different ‘environment’ when he comes home you have to correct all these behaviours he may have picked up there that may be against our religion and culture. You’re against the tide, to raise your children the way you yourself think is appropriate, so try as best you can to put your children on the right path and pray to Allah that things will be normal.” (Ali-Male)

Several participants were also relieved to be able to exclude their children from what they considered as being religiously inappropriate school activities, such as dance lessons, sex education and mixed-gender swimming. The participants believed that these activities may only hinder their children’s appreciation for their ethnic identity.

Some participants believed that the older generation of Arab Muslims in New Zealand were concerned over their children's ethnic identity, while later on the younger generation may not have such concern about religion or values when raising their own children.

On the other hand, despite their concern over the ethnic well-being of their children, several participants admitted that they allowed their children a certain degree of freedom when mixing with others in order for their children to benefit and learn from Western society. At the same time, this type of freedom was limited by Muslim parents monitoring and supervising their children's behaviour.

The participants in this research were concerned not only that their children raised in New Zealand would lose attachment to their ethnic identity, but also that they would lose their sense of attachment towards their family. Several participants thought that the difference between their ethnic culture and that of New Zealand was that the New Zealand society was not as family-orientated as Arab Muslim society. Therefore it was important for the participants to convey these differences to their children as they grow up, so as not to sever family ties.

Despite highlighting the importance of maintaining ethnic and religious values and beliefs, some parents in this research felt that realistically it may be difficult for them to have control over their children and teach them their ethnic values and beliefs, especially if the child comes home from school tired and drained. Therefore, some parents felt that the longer they remained in New Zealand, the more the Western values and behaviours of the society may influence their children. These participants would then go on to suggest that after obtaining New Zealand citizenship and in order to be in control of their children's upbringing, they may consider leaving New Zealand and raising their children in a more culturally appropriate environment

Conversely, despite parents' concerns about their children's upbringing and values, they also talked about the positive side of living in a Western society. Participants talked about the various opportunities for education and a stable lifestyle that were available for their children in New Zealand, and how such opportunities would not be available back in their homelands. Participants also discussed their relief that New Zealand is a society that encourages families to maintain their ethnic identity, and that Muslim children can make use of the positive values learnt both from their own ethnic culture and from New Zealand culture. Some participants conveyed their appreciation that their

family were given the opportunity to be able to live a stable and fulfilling life in a society that allows ethnic groups to maintain their own values and beliefs rather than forcing them to assimilate. These participants also expressed the importance of their children completing their education in New Zealand and finding employment in the country in order to be able to give back to the society that had welcomed them in the beginning. The extract below exemplified this notion:

“I would like my children to give back to this country by using their own values and those that they learn from the society here. I am not concerned over my older children, they understand our religion and traditions, but I think I will have problems with my younger children, in the future. But I try to tell them about our religion. So I explain to them, you can’t have sexual relationships, this is wrong, that is right.” (Wafa-Female)

Despite having concern towards her children, the participant mentioned that Muslim parents should not overlook the fact that New Zealand people have various positive qualities and opportunities that her children can learn from, and that in order to live a stable and stress-free life in New Zealand, Muslim parents need to go on living their lives the way they want to and should not be distracted by the differing values and behaviours of the wider society.

Lack of Ethnic Social Support

Lack of ethnic social support, or in other words, support from ethnic services that are culturally and religiously appropriate, was a recurring theme which was identified in relation to the methods participants used to maintain their ethnic identity and raise their children. A major consequence of the unavailability of ethnic social support was the change in family dynamics, in which parents became more involved in their children’s upbringing than they were back in their homeland, since refugee parents have to play both the role of society, and the extended family.

The participants in this study reported that appropriate ethnic support did not exist in New Zealand, and if it did, it was inadequate and misleading. Participants recalled the important role the community and extended family played back in their homelands with respect to helping parents raise their children. Parents discussed how in their homeland children would have understood culturally appropriate behaviour from society, school and relatives, but in New Zealand, due to the lack of such social support, Western-style freedom and values led to detrimental behaviour.

“Back home we have something called – Ay’b²⁹ – so even if you don’t explain to her, naturally from the environments at school and the society, it teaches her that notion, she will understand from the neighbours or friends, but here this doesn’t exist, here the freedom is a destruction to our soul.” (Nora-Female)

“When you have your own parents, your uncles, your aunts, cousins, the society itself and the school, all of these people participate in raising your children, you know. And I am sure, that your kids won’t go astray from the right path, you know, because in all circumstances you will find someone who will put them back on the right track. These are good elements that are not available here which in turn would make us extra cautious over our children and how they behave...it’d be double the effort...they don’t have an uncle here to learn from him, there aren’t any relatives to keep an eye on them, I have a friend here who said we need to visit one another so our children can see and say that we have Uncle so-and-so to see, so he can learn the concepts of uncle and aunt and respect of elderly etc, as they don’t have relatives here.” (Hashim-Male)

Participants identified the importance of creating a familiar ethnic environment for their family in order to ensure that they were protected from the culturally and religiously conflicting or inappropriate values of the Western society. The participants believed that by creating an ethnic support infrastructure, ethnic continuity could be maintained.

Having an ethnic community or ethnic support eased the apprehension and concern most refugee parents felt when raising their children. Almost all of the participants in this study talked about the important role their society, back in their homeland, had as a second environment in which children learnt their ethnic values, religion, and culturally appropriate behaviour. Although Arab Muslim children would learn critical religious and cultural values and traditions from home, the school, extended family, and society also played an important role in teaching the child culturally appropriate behaviours.

Participants believed that individuals from their own ethnic background, such as schoolmates, neighbours, extended family, and friends who “keep an eye” on the children, could play a role in raising children that not only teaches them values and language but also serves to direct the children to the culturally and religiously appropriate path. This would prevent Arab Muslim refugee children from “succumbing” to other improper ways. Some participants also talked about having to substitute the unavailable “ethnic society” by organising community gatherings with other Arab Muslim family friends in New Zealand who would be referred to in a culturally appropriate manner as “uncle” and “aunt” and considered as part of the

²⁹ Its literal translation from Arabic means disgraced, disgraceful, or inappropriate behaviour.

extended family. Participants believed that this may allow their children to learn cultural values and appropriate behaviours, such as respecting their elders.

One participant also suggested that the role of social and community support was twofold: it not only taught children appropriate behaviour, but was also used to 'correct' culturally or religiously inappropriate behaviours and put individuals on the right (Islamic or ethnic) path.

Although there are several Islamic centres in Auckland that provide weekend classes for Muslim children to teach them basic religious and cultural values, only one participant stated that she was happy to send her children to these Islamic sessions. This participant explained that she found the religious classes, the reciting of the Qur'an, and the Sunday Arabic classes for children extremely useful and it allowed her to worry less about her children being brought up in a non-Muslim society.

Obviously, having such social support is deemed important for all Arab Muslim participants, especially those who were concerned that the clash between two cultures (West and Islam) may confuse their children. Muslim parents realised that without an ethnic community, and social support services that are culturally and religiously appropriate, Muslim children will lose their ethnic identity, which is a serious concern for parents, and as a result, migrant parents may choose to leave the country in order to raise their children in a more appropriate environment.

Gender Differences in Resettlement Challenges

In this research both male and female Arabic-speaking Muslim refugees were interviewed. Although for the most part, gender differences did not seem to appear as an issue, most refugees who participated in this study acknowledged that 'some' gender-difference in resettlement may exist.

All female participants in this study mentioned that they had no or little input in the decision behind coming to the country. However, only one said that she was reluctant about coming to New Zealand, whereas the other females seemed to have agreed with their husbands or fathers that resettlement was the only option to ensure a better quality of life for the family. Although most participants did not identify gender differences in resettlement, others identified gender differences that were mainly related to traditional expectations of men and women. Also some participants discussed the fact that wearing hijab may become a barrier for women, especially when seeking employment.

No Difference if there is a Common Goal

For the majority of the participants in this study, the main reason behind fleeing their homeland and seeking refuge in a foreign country was their concern over their well-being or that of their family members (children, parents, spouses). As presented in the previous section, participants stated their worry over their children maintaining ethnic identity, and the challenge of raising their children according to religious and cultural values, while encouraging their children to pursue further education in New Zealand. Therefore, it was no surprise that when the participants were questioned as to which gender may face more resettlement challenges, a recurring theme was that both genders face similar challenges. One reason behind this was that both mothers and fathers had an important priority while in New Zealand, which was the well-being of their children.

“We both face the same things. We have the same views, men and women and look at life in a similar manner. When raising our children the responsibility is the same and shared between us. But if parents have different values, it would cause a problem.” (Raad-Male)

“Both men and women face the same challenges. We have both been through the same disheartening experiences, and here we’re both here in exile. And we have our children who we need to raise and educate. Why did we flee? It’s for their well-being.” (Fawzya-Female)

Participants believed that as long as they shared a mutual goal or concern, the resettlement challenges faced by men and women would be similar. This mutual goal for most participants was their children and raising them according to Islamic teachings and traditional values, especially while living in a Western society without ethnic social support groups. Both male and female refugees in this study felt the need to participate in the upbringing of their children, especially when the parents value their beliefs and religion and want to teach their child their mother-tongue. Also, some female participants argued that both genders share various commonalities such as living in a foreign society, where they may struggle to find employment, learn the language, struggle to raise their children, and struggle to overcome resettlement hardships. To an extent, New Zealand provides equal opportunities and rights for both genders, and it is up to the individual to take advantage of these opportunities.

All things being equal, such as English language and employment opportunities, and time of arrival in the country, it may be true that both genders have similar experiences. However, one female participant talked about how, as a result of her arriving in New

Zealand a few years before her husband, she learnt how to drive and became accustomed to life in the country. When her husband arrived in New Zealand, he felt dependent and that his traditional role as the family provider and ‘manhood’ was jeopardised.

“He is waiting for his resettlement. It is very difficult, he is unemployed... he wants to go out, and he can’t, he’s paralysed... we don’t have neither time nor finance. I leave to go to the course from morning till 3pm when the girls come back from school, and I pay attention to the needs of the house... and that’s the day gone, it is a routine, and you know you are forced to this lifestyle.” (Fawzya-Female)

For this participant in particular, gender differences in resettlement did exist but mainly because she had to take on the role of being the family provider for two years prior to her husband arriving in New Zealand. In the extract above, the participant mentioned that her husband was “waiting for his resettlement,” referring to his ability to drive, learn the language and find employment. The husband’s inability to drive or work was compared to a physical disability, because his cultural role and responsibility as the household provider was disabled. Despite having her husband with her, Fawzya felt that she was solely responsible for taking care of her children and family by meeting their needs at home. Having to learn a foreign language and other new skills, while at the same time being entirely responsible for the well-being of the family, was perceived as a “forced” type of lifestyle brought upon these individuals by their refugee situation.

Discussing gender-related resettlement challenges led to another important issue for the participants, pertaining to the effect the refugee journey had on the possible shifting of family roles.

Women Are More Sensitive and Emotional

The participants in this study revealed that although there were no major gender differences in resettlement, women were more sensitive and emotional in their dealing with various challenges than men were, and these were matters that differentiated the Arab Muslim refugee man and woman.

“We’re both struggling here, we’re both lost. But when a man is frustrated he can go out, but not the woman. If she’s upset she is devastated and falls into depression. I mean us women, we have emotions and feelings, and we are women in need of...protection.” (Zina-Female)

“We women, the Muslim women, our way of thinking is different than theirs. The woman is more sensitive, overly sensitive probably, and she worries a lot, things that are in the far future she brings them closer and sooner than they are meant to appear or happen. I mean personally speaking, I worry about my family. What if something happens to my husband? What am I to do? Where am I supposed to go? I think these thoughts. The man doesn’t worry about these things... We are strangers here.” (Aseel-Female)

Several female participants talked about the difference between Arab Muslim males and females in terms of emotionality and sensitivity. When discussing the differences in the challenges experienced by each gender during resettlement, the women in this study mentioned that they experienced more adjustment challenges due to their sensitive nature and their constant concern over their responsibilities of caring for the children in the family, and ensuring they are raised according to culture and religion. According to some female participants, the Arab Muslim woman is a worrier, more than the man. This may be due to the Arab Muslim female feeling that her role as a mother or traditional maintainer continues to be her sole responsibility, despite her husband’s willingness to assist or support her. For the females in this study, it seemed difficult to accept the idea that their husbands are able to assist them in raising the children, and they continued to feel that the pressure is entirely on them alone.

It is important to note, that in the second extract, Aseel, a female participant, addressed a concern that most female participants in this study also expressed to varying degrees, which pertained to the lack of support provided for them by mainstream society and their own community.

The majority of females in this study seemed to continue to consider their husbands or fathers as the main household provider. Female participants talked about how their resettlement experience had made them overly ‘emotional and sensitive,’ and indicated that they were also concerned about the health and well-being of their husbands/fathers. The female participants in this study were unemployed (except for one), and therefore were concerned that if something harmful happened to their husbands they would be devastated as they would not know what to do, especially when they did not have extended family members in New Zealand, and no support system. Refugee women and especially those with children are disadvantaged when having to support themselves and deal with their resettlement in New Zealand if they lack important skills such as English language, education, and experience about the ways of living in the New Zealand society.

Un/Employment

Employment is no doubt one of the main resettlement goals and it assists refugees and immigrants alike to integrate into their new society and build a stable and satisfying life for themselves and their families. In this research, both male and female participants talked about unemployment as an ongoing resettlement challenge that was hindering their full integration into the New Zealand society. Many participants felt that their ability to integrate was hindered by their inability to communicate with the wider society, thus making them feel isolated. These participants also believed that learning English would not only provide them with confidence to converse with others and become independent, but it might also open up future employment opportunities for them. In addition, while females talked about the ongoing challenge of finding a suitable job that would not affect their family or prejudice them against their personal religious decisions to wear the hijab, males talked about the importance of being employed in order to maintain their cultural role as the authoritative family provider. Both genders disapproved of being asked to work as cleaners, waiters, or other positions that they deemed as appropriate for lower class, illiterate or uneducated individuals.

Female Employment and Hijab

When arriving in a host society, refugees who come from family-oriented, patriarchal societies, may become more ethnocentric, and tend to look at the world primarily from the perspective of their own culture. As mentioned, only one female participant in this study was employed. The other 30 female participants were unemployed from the time of their New Zealand arrival up to the time of conducting this research. From a cultural perspective, the reason behind their unemployment is not at all surprising. The majority of the women had children, and staying at home and teaching their children cultural and religious values and beliefs is considered to be the mother's main role, while the father takes on his expected traditional role, that of the provider.

In this part of their refugee journey, some contradictions were detected. On the one hand, the female participants in this study talked about the challenge of finding suitable employment that did not interfere with either their roles as mothers or needs as females who wore hijab. On the other hand, traditional gender roles were stated as the reason why female participants felt that finding employment was not as crucial for them as it was for the male family members of their household, because at the end of the day,

Arab Muslim women were expected to attend to the needs of their family and home, while men were expected to be the providers.

In interviews relating to the first leg of the refugee journey, some females expressed their concern that hijab prevented them from finding employment, and when asked about their ongoing resettlement challenges, these female participants once again mentioned hijab as a current issue they were tackling. Participants also talked about the difficulty in finding suitable jobs that would fit their expertise and education.

Despite participants mentioning that they would like to find employment in New Zealand, wearing the Islamic headscarf was talked about as the reason why Muslim women may not be able to become active members in the society. By wearing the headscarf, the Muslim female 'stands out' and may be concerned about attracting prejudice and discriminatory remarks from the host society. The participants stated that although hijab was considered an Islamic obligation, it may also be considered a 'problem' or hindrance to the female's integration into society as it may affect her employment opportunities. However, the Muslim male may easily merge into society without being differentiated against because he does not wear any symbol of difference.

"Well I didn't look for work; I was pregnant and had given birth. From what other women have told me, they would not employ them because they wear hijab...I am aware of this issue, wherever you go, they may stare at you. Work wise for Muslim females... it is easier for a man to work not just because I am a woman, but I am a Muslim woman and it shows, I wear the sign [hijab]...but a man, they wouldn't know what religion he's from." (May-Female)

"The Hijab...it's a problem for women. It's a symbol of Islam it prevents them from work and integrating. She sticks out... for a man; if he mixed with them he is Ok. For a woman she also has to take care of her children she may feel under pressure to ensure the kids are raised properly, the right Islamic way." (Jamal-Male)

Among the participants in this study, there was a general acceptance that as 'the caregivers,' Muslim women had a more important role than being employed, which was to teach their children their mother tongue, cultural beliefs, culturally appropriate behaviour and Islamic values.

From my observation, economic adaptation or employment is a critical key to a successful resettlement. Employment is especially crucial when both man and woman are expected to work to supplement their family income. However, for many of the female participants in this study (and some males), finding employment was not

considered a priority for the women as much as raising their children and taking care of the family's needs. The majority of females in this study had completed up to six years of schooling, while only two females had a University degree, and all except one female had never been employed even in their homeland. Therefore, these females had few, if any, expectations about their chances of finding employment, especially if they were taking care of young children, and/or wearing the hijab. If these females were to enter employment they would be working in jobs that had no correspondence to their training or interest. Also, if these female participants were to work, they mentioned that they would prefer to work in a company that is run by Muslims and employs Muslim people. When asked why this may be the case, the women in this study responded that a person who employs Muslims would understand their cultural and religious beliefs and circumstances; for example, if the Muslim individual wanted to pray five-times a day, fast Ramadan, or take care of the children and not go to work, then a Muslim employer would not object to that.

All of the participants in this study felt that Western society, including New Zealand, generally held the incorrect perception that all Muslim women were weak, helpless and oppressed. Also, the concern these participants addressed was that the Muslim woman who wore hijab may also be incorrectly thought of as being 'forced' into concealing her hair because her male family members imposed this belief on her. It was notable that all of the Muslim participants in this study talked about the inaccurate ideas mainstream New Zealand has regarding Islam, women's rights and hijab. Lack of awareness regarding Islam may result in many uncomfortable situations for Muslim women. The overall concern by the participants in this study was that Muslim refugee women, in addition to having to deal with the refugee label and misconceived ideas about refugees, may also feel pressured to gain social approval of the Western society regarding her gender, especially if she experiences social rejection, stereotypical views, and having to always explain and defend her beliefs when mixing with mainstream society. The Muslim woman may be more disadvantaged than her male counterpart by virtue of being a single mother in New Zealand, having several children, little or no education or employment experience, and perhaps also wearing hijab. All these issues play a role in making her resettlement process in New Zealand very difficult, if it is not adequately addressed by the host society, and if the society itself discriminates against these women.

The only female participant who was a University student and was employed did not wear hijab. She had mentioned that she wanted to wear hijab, but her concern was that once she completed her University degree and wanted to find a job using her academic qualifications, she would not find employment and be discriminated against because she wore hijab.

“Everyone is encouraging me to do it you know, to wear the hijab. But I know I am going to find it very difficult especially now that I will be finishing my diploma very soon. I know it’s going to be really difficult to find a job if I wear it, especially in my area which is marketing, communication. I don’t know if there would be any company that would employ me... but if it comes to that, maybe after wearing it, I’ll seek employment in an Arab country, you never know.” (Rana-Female)

Although Rana had been living in New Zealand for 11 years, she still had resettlement concerns pertaining to her Islamic identity, and the reaction of mainstream New Zealand if she eventually decided to wear the hijab. Rana explained in her interview that her father and family were encouraging her to wear the hijab, but although she also hoped to be able to fulfil her Islamic obligation, she had put it on hold until she completed her education and found full-time employment. Rana was concerned that hijab would prevent potential employers from considering her, especially as her preferred type of job required customer service skills and interacting with business clients. If finding employment while wearing hijab became a challenge for Rana, leaving New Zealand and finding employment in an Arab or Muslim country would be her next step.

The religious needs of Muslim females were an important issue for those who wore hijab and also wanted to become part of the society. Being allowed to perform their prayers five times daily and having a small space to carry out these prayers, in addition to wearing their Islamic headscarf without discrimination or disadvantage, were important employment-related issues. Some women in this study mentioned that they were worried about being forced to take off their hijab in order to secure employment opportunities. According to Islamic belief, Muslim women who wear hijab should never show any compromise with regards to her Islamic dress code, which is believed to be an obligation ordained by Allah. Therefore, Muslim women who take off their hijab are considered to be committing a sin regardless of the reasons why they took it off. The notion of Muslim women being discriminated against at work because of their

appearance was compared to the appearance of a Māori person with a Moko³⁰ or a body tattoo. Several participants believed that Māori were not discriminated against because people were aware of the fact that discrimination was illegal, and they would not discriminate against someone who was able to communicate in English. The female participants tackled the misconception that hijab was meant to isolate, degrade or prevent Muslim women from playing an active role in society. Instead, hijab was considered a method of preserving the female's modesty, chastity, and acknowledging Islamic pride. It would not hinder or affect the Muslim woman's work performance, and it was clear from my discussion with the females in this research, hijab does not hinder their intellectual abilities.

Male Unemployment Issues

Both female and male participants in this research noted that employment was important for Muslim men in order for them to maintain their traditional family role as the household provider. Male participants in various parts of their refugee journey talked about the importance of finding suitable employment in order to feel resettled and live a life of stability. When talking about their ongoing resettlement challenges, employment was once again cited as a primary challenge that the male participants wanted to address and find a solution to. According to the male participants, providing refugees with employment would benefit both the individual and the host society. Refugees who came to the country with previous qualifications and experience were unaware of the weight or relevance these would carry in their resettlement country, or how their lack of New Zealand employment experience would impact on them finding employment.

"I remember my first job interview, it was nerve wracking, and my application was rejected. They said I don't have this X factor, I don't even know what that X factor means! If I applied for this same job back home, I would have gotten it because I am qualified. The rejection didn't put me off...but you feel upset a little bit. But you just pick yourself up." (Thamir-Male)

'When you work, you're no longer a burden on this society once you work, it helps to integrate too. Unemployment and refugees are negative issues which are causing the huge gap between us refugees and the society. For instance, in the first five years if you couldn't find work that would cause problems for you and your family and conflict within the family will happen. It seems as if the government is saying, we've brought you here, and now you can sit at home and

³⁰ Moko is the permanent body and face marking worn by Māori, the indigenous people of New Zealand. It is distinct from a tattoo in that the skin is traditionally carved by chisels rather than punctured. This leaves the skin with grooves, rather than a smooth surface.

we'll help you survive. The host community doesn't help us either, they're quite selective when it comes to employing others, and it's just not right. They want to always be in charge.” (Hashim-Male)

Throughout their interviews the male participants in this research emphasised the importance of being able to find suitable employment, which matched their experience, interests and qualifications, and which would provide a comfortable living for their newly resettled families. Most, if not all, of the male and female participants believed that if adequate employment was provided for them or their spouses, then they would lead a more comfortable and stable life in New Zealand. The lack of employment opportunities that fitted with their expectations, and their consequent reliance on a social benefit from the government, provided them with no true ‘settlement’ in the country. When applying for jobs for the first time since arriving in the country, several participants recalled feeling apprehensive and nervous especially as they did not know the exact process of the New Zealand employment interviews, or if their national degrees or experiences would be accredited or even acknowledged. Participants with academic degrees stressed that they felt disappointed when being told that they needed to learn more “Kiwi” skills and obtain several years of New Zealand employment experience before their qualifications were acknowledged. Most importantly, several participants believed that refugees and immigrants arriving in New Zealand were misled and misinformed by the government about the prospects of employment and opportunities available in the country. Male participants in particular were frustrated after arriving in the country and realising that the New Zealand government did not have the resources or the financial ability to accept as many migrants in the country as it did, and that the government should therefore take responsibility for the number of unemployed refugees and immigrants.

The participants in this research asserted that they believed that to an extent, both refugees and immigrants experience the same challenges in New Zealand and are suffering mentally and financially as a result of unemployment. Participants referred to employment being a type of security that would ensure their family and children lived a better life in New Zealand. After all, it is the prospects of living a better life and providing a better future for themselves and their families that led these participants to leave their homelands. Some participants also believed that being over concerned and preoccupied with their unemployment situation might cause them to ignore the needs of their children, and that they might drift from the cultural and religious environment at home to a rebellious and inappropriate environment available in the host society.

It is important to note that employment is not only an important matter that would assist in the integration of refugees, but it may also prevent refugees from viewing themselves as a social and financial burden on society. Unemployment of refugees was considered a cause of the “social gap” between New Zealand society and refugees.

Summary of the Second Leg of the Refugee Journey

While the first leg of the refugee journey presented the participants’ initial experiences in New Zealand, such as their journey to the country and their arrival at MRRC, the second leg of the refugee journey addressed the refugees’ experiences after leaving MRRC, and the challenges they had to overcome in order to adjust and resettle in a new country. This leg of the journey also addressed the gender-related differences in their resettlement experiences, and family roles and dynamics, as well as the lack of community support to raise their children.

- RMS, HNZA, and WINZ were discussed in terms of the assistance or resettlement support they provided (or lack of assistance) for refugee families once they departed from MRRC.
- Male and female participants discussed their resettlement experiences in New Zealand and how gender may play a role in hindering or assisting their resettlement in New Zealand.
- The participants discussed the challenges of raising their families in a non-Muslim, non-Arab society. All participants who had children mentioned their concern that their children might lose their ethnic identity and would then begin to behave and think like Westerners.
- The lack of available or adequate informal community and ethnic support made the resettlement of these participants challenging and mentally draining.
- Participants in this study talked about maintaining traditional family roles where the father is the provider, while the mother is the cultural and traditional preserver.
- Employment of refugees was addressed as an important resettlement factor. Specific challenges of resettlement faced by the females in this study related to the issue of wearing hijab and its potential hindrance to their employment opportunities. All female and several male participants mentioned that the New Zealand labour market discriminates against, and is not accepting of, Muslim women who wear hijab.
- Most female participants also reported that taking care of their family’s needs is a priority above their own employment. Taking care of the family was also a reason

why the majority of female participants in this study were not able to attend English language courses.

- Participants also mentioned that unemployment, or the desire to raise their children in a more culturally appropriate environment, may cause them to re-think remaining in New Zealand after obtaining their citizenship.

The Third Leg of the Refugee Journey: Reflecting on the Refugee Journey

As the refugee journey of the participant unravelled, and once the participants talked about their reasons for fleeing, becoming refugees, having to deal with ‘real life’ once they left the centre, the participants then began to discuss the challenges that they were currently experiencing, and the ongoing issues of resettlement that they continued to struggle with. This was especially important and was highlighted in their conversation, because all of the participants had been living in New Zealand for more than a year. In this third leg of the refugee journey, the participants talked about their sources of resilience and strength, ongoing resettlement challenges, and the psychological discomfort that instability has caused them. This leg of the refugee journey also tapped into the participants’ reflections on their overall refugee journey, and their future aspirations and dreams as Arab Muslim refugees in New Zealand.

The Source of Arab Muslim Refugee Strength

When refugees arrived in New Zealand, their inner-strength and resilience was tested by being forced to overcome the hurdles that life had thrown in their way, such as fleeing their homeland safely, seeking asylum, being smuggled on boats, and resettling in a foreign society. When talking about the challenges they had dealt with before coming to New Zealand, and the challenges they face living in New Zealand, participants talked about various resettlement challenges such as adapting to a new society, learning a new language, seeking employment, and raising children according to their ethnic values and religious beliefs. In order for each of these challenges to be dealt with adequately, the individual required a source of strength, patience, and determination. According to the male and female Arab Muslim refugees in this study, their sources of resilience were their Islamic religion, their family, and accepting the reality of their situation.

Religion

Muslims are religious people who believe in Allah’s complete authority over human destiny. When talking about their source of strength, participants in this study referred to Islam or Allah as the basis of their inner resilience and perseverance. Participants stated that when facing obstacles during their resettlement experience, praying, reading the Qur’an, or attending religious talks at the mosque reminded them that as Muslims, the mercy of Allah will enable them to overcome the challenges that life in New

Zealand brings to them. In various parts of their interviews, all of the participants mentioned to some degree the role that Islam played in providing them with the motivation to overcome the various struggles and hurdles that came their way throughout their refugee journey. Participants believed that by praying to God, they were given the gift of perseverance in order to conquer the obstacles of resettlement.

“We had to go through so much, but I feel that I can go on... it is Allah...my strength comes from him. Do you think I have it in me? If you rely on him, then you won't be disappointed. I went through things that aren't easy at all. I felt lost and lonely...but I can't give up...no, I can't give up because it would destroy me. Everything, strength and patience and defiance are all from Allah.” (Hiba-Female)

“When I feel frustrated from my situation, I seek comfort in my religion...Allah is who I turn to, to get strength from, and my culture as well sometimes. My experience also gives me strength. I went through nine different countries as a refugee, and each country I try to adopt the system of each county. So first it's my religion, my culture and then my experience.” (Firas – male)

For all of the participants in this research, the hardship they had endured from displacement and resettlement were not only physically, but emotionally and mentally draining for them. Nonetheless, when in doubt about their capability to carry on living in New Zealand and cope with resettlement without the support of extended family or appropriate services, religion was the best remedy that provided the participants with resilience and hope. For these Muslim participants, the practice of observing their five times a day prayers was an important part of obtaining strength from their religion, and it was also a source of comfort and inner-peace. Prayer was compared to performing yoga or some type of relaxation exercise that allowed the participants to centre their energy and focus on their inner-strength and ability to overcome life's obstacles. Participants found that talking through prayers and reciting their holy book the Qur'an helped them to calm down and gather their thoughts on ways to tackle the challenges that they encountered.

Many of the participants believed that during moments of hardship and challenges, a Muslim individual should never view the difficult circumstances that came in his way as failures; rather, the challenges of life were progressive signs from God that good things are bound to happen as long as the Muslim individual was patient and believed in the abilities of Allah as the all mighty.

For these participants, Islam was not only considered a source of strength, but it also differentiated their willpower and abilities from those of their Western host society. According to the participants in this research, it is difficult, if not impossible, for any individual except a refugee to understand and appreciate the continual hardships experienced by Muslim refugees in New Zealand. Nevertheless, Muslims endured the challenges of life without giving up and becoming suicidal, by finding solace in Islamic religion, its teachings and beliefs. Several participants mentioned that if it were not for their strong faith and belief that God would help them overcome life's various challenges, they would have given up and ended their life.

Although religion was one of the main sources of strength for the Muslim refugees in this study, several participants talked about the comfort and strength they also obtained from other sources, such as from people of the same ethnic group. Being close to the local mosque and thus having access to other similar-ethnic people was an important detail for a lot of the participants in this research. In order to access this source of strength, several participants reported that they and their family had to relocate from an affordable house provided by HNZC to one that was either smaller or slightly more expensive.

Family

As mentioned in the second leg of the refugee journey, family plays an important role for Muslims and Arabs. Not only does the family provide social, financial, and emotional support for each of its members, it also provides refugees with the motivation and strength to overcome resettlement anxieties and challenges. Islamic and Arabic culture is a collectivist culture, which means the individual regards the well-being of the family above his/her own well-being. When talking about their source of motivation, female and male participants stated that their feelings of responsibility towards their family gave them the willpower to tackle the challenges of resettlement in New Zealand. Also, as mentioned in the first leg of the refugee journey, most if not all of the participants fled their countries of origin to secure a better and safer future for their family.

“The effort we had put before coming here in raising them and treating them continues even while we're here. The children know we left things and sold things we owned just to ensure their future, I mean this isn't a favour we are doing, but I want them to know we did this for their benefit and safety.” (Raad – Male)

“I have three daughters and I have to be strong and defiant for them. Here in New Zealand life is different, it forces you to stand in the faces of those who challenge you and overcome those challenges. Who are we doing this for? Why are we living as strangers here? It’s for the children.” (Fawzya-Female)

“...I don’t care how far the goal is, I know I will reach it. Family is the only thing left for me. I have nothing else but to take care of my family. When I see my children succeed here, it’s like watering a seed and watching it grow, to become a strong plant.” (Fahad – Male)

The perception that refugee parents in New Zealand persevered to ensure a successful future for their children was a view shared by all participants with children in New Zealand. Participants would refer to their children as seeds that required continuous nourishing and care in order for them to grow and prosper. By nourishment and care, the participants referred to ensuring that their children succeeded in their education, and had all means of comfort and financial stability.

As Arab Muslim parents, the participants believed that they had to be aware that New Zealand society may influence their children’s behaviour by teaching them culturally or religiously inappropriate values or behaviours. Therefore it was important to attempt to counteract this influence in the way they raised their children. Their concern that their children may divert from their ethnic culture and religious values were the key reasons that participants felt they were required to be strong and resilient for the sake of their children’s well-being. Participants stated that it was important that children of forced migrants and voluntary migrants realised that their parents may have left behind wealth, status, extended family, and jobs to flee the hardship and wars in order to ensure their children were provided with better life opportunities. In return, this realisation may pressure migrant children to excel in their education, succeed in their host society and fulfil their parents’ dreams as a way of returning their parents’ act of kindness. Much of these participants’ determination seemed to stem from the fact that they viewed their children and their success as the only “riches” that were left for them in a foreign country, society, and life. Various emotions and notions surfaced from these extracts, which revealed the importance for participants to be strong for their family and endure resettlement challenges to ensure that their children benefited from the opportunities of living in New Zealand. It was this issue that encouraged Muslim parents to not give up on dealing with resettlement challenges, because a weak parent would create weak offspring.

Realism

Although religion and family were considered the main sources of resilience and strength mentioned by the participants, several participants talked about another source of strength: the acceptance of the reality of their situation. This reality was that they were Arab Muslims living (for an unknown period of time) in a non-Arab and non-Muslim society. Participants believed that life continually places obstacles in front of them and that these obstacles have the potential to teach them valuable life lessons. Some participants believed that their current resettlement situation was a test that Allah put them through to test their faith in him, and that nothing in life is wasted; even pain, hardship, and sadness can be utilised and turned into strength and wisdom.

“It isn’t about strength, but acceptance of the situation. Allah has created humans to benefit this world. Here I have to teach them Arabic, teach them about Islam, to take care of them from this society. This is the reality, no matter what you come across you can’t give up.” (Fatma - Female)

“The problem is that there are no alternatives. We have to go through this, because there is a lack of resources here in New Zealand, so I have to do everything myself. I have to face these issues.” (Jamal-Male)

Some participants rejected the idea that ‘strength’ was the reason they were able to deal with the resettlement challenges. Rather, they stated that resilience came from the fact that as Muslims, they had to accept the reality of the situation that God had led them to experience, as it was his divine way in teaching his believers valuable life lessons and skills. These participants also mentioned that the reality was there were no other alternatives for them or their families, other than having to endure the challenges of resettlement. Participants seemed to approach this issue with some sort of composure, stating that by accepting the reality of their resettlement situation and approaching the challenges of Western society resettlement with a level-headed frame of mind, they and their family may overcome the obstacles that life threw in their way. The participants also talked about how they were realistic about New Zealand society’s lack of ability to support them in facing resettlement challenges. They also believed that this forced Arab Muslims to persevere and efficiently rely on themselves to overcome their resettlement issues.

Current and Ongoing Resettlement Challenges

Although many participants had been in New Zealand for several years, they continued to tackle challenges as a result of their resettlement in New Zealand. According to the

participants in this study, the main ongoing challenges affecting their resettlement in New Zealand were learning the English language and unemployment (this has already been dealt with in the second leg of the refugee journey, therefore will not be further explored in this leg of the journey).

Mental Health Issues

A recurring theme revealed in this study related to the emotional expressions and needs of the participants. These included expressions of being happy or being sad. Throughout their conversations as they were talking about their refugee journey and resettlement experience, both male and female participants would use expressions such as feeling “mentally drained,” “mentally tired,” “sad,” “suffocating,” or “suicidal.” Other themes that surfaced that are related to mental health issues were sleeplessness, depression, traumatic memories, and anxiety. Loneliness and isolation was also expressed by some of the participants in the form of not having anyone to talk to about their problems, or not being able to socialise with anyone. These mental health issues had apparent impact on the participants and their feelings of continuous suffering while living in New Zealand.

“We are all mentally tired, and I feel that I am not able to relax. I feel I become annoyed from the slightest issues around me. Being a refugee, it’s like you have to beg and ask them to give you more money, the next thing is they say ok go and work, but where is work? I can’t find work. I can’t focus because my soul is tired.”(Fawzya – Female)

“I am tired, mentally drained, if I would go to a counsellor, they would realise I am tired and destroyed within. I mean talking to you about this; I feel that I have been destroyed. The New Zealand government is causing me mental, not physical pain. There are probably other problems surrounding me but I am giving them the blind eye.”(Zina – Female)

“If I weren’t a Muslim and had strong faith in God, I would have committed suicide a long time ago. No one can survive living like this.” (Belal-Male)

Men and women talked about feeling sad, isolated, depressed, and some complained of headaches they got when they thought about their extended family left behind in war-torn countries. Some women mentioned that they did not talk to anyone when they were feeling depressed, and they did not seek counselling or therapy for fear that friends or the Muslim community may find out and think that they have “gone crazy.” Seeking mental assistance was considered to be admitting weakness and defeat, and it was preferable if the individual became more involved in their religion and prayed to God,

who would be a better healer than a therapist or counsellor. Most of the participants also described experiencing anxiety over those who they left behind and their inability to do anything for them. In their homeland, parents, uncles, aunts and various members of the extended family would have provided these participants with the mental and financial support they needed to overcome challenges. However, being in New Zealand, they felt that they had to rely on themselves. When the participants felt that their needs were not met, that they continued to face resettlement challenges, and that they felt isolated from society, they tended to express feeling mentally uncomfortable about being in the country.

The English Language

Learning the language of the resettlement country is most certainly one of the main indicators of a better and more satisfying resettlement experience for refugees. It was predominately female participants who talked about their current challenge with learning the English language. Almost all of the women in this study were mothers who stated that taking care of their family and children was a priority that had hindered their chances of learning English or attending English classes. It was important for these refugee women to be able to converse in English, even if on a basic level, in order for them to slowly integrate and resettle into the society. Furthermore, knowing how to speak English assists migrant women in being able to deal with medical and educational matters, to obtain their drivers licence, and to move towards stabilising their life and that of their family.

“When my husband was in the hospital I was in despair, I couldn’t drive, I knew no one, and I didn’t know how to ride a bus. I was embarrassed to ask people to help. I didn’t learn to drive, I wanted to, but the roads were narrow and too busy. I rang the hospital; but I didn’t know how to check up on him.”
(Sabrya - Female)

“I went a few times to WINZ to ask to be enrolled in a course, but you know my kids were young, and I couldn’t go to courses, I had no energy. I wish if someone could have come here to teach me, and also driving, I don’t know how to drive either. I’m always home on my own.” (Amal – Female)

“If I were to talk about any ongoing challenges of mine, I’d say it’s the language. If we had language, and we go out and about and mix, then we wouldn’t feel isolated or many other difficult things. If anyone would knock on the door I wouldn’t open, if he was a man or someone, because I didn’t want to I was scared I didn’t have English.” (Hana - Female)

Being able to communicate and understand English was a major concern for all participants, but particularly for female participants. Female participants were simply fearful and apprehensive, lacking confidence to pay bills, shop, answer the door, or pick up the phone when someone ‘English’ was at the end of the line. Several female participants mentioned that they felt isolated and in despair when they were unable to communicate to others, especially in critical situations such as taking their children to the doctor or enquiring about their health in the hospital. As one female participant explained:

“When I don’t have the language, I don’t want to say anything. I’m embarrassed to make a mistake.”(Sabyra – Female)

Some women were prevented from attending English courses due to their taking care of several young children, and having no access to day-care or kindergarten. Furthermore, the fact that Arab Muslim mothers believe they have the sole responsibility for teaching their children the ethnic values and beliefs that protect them against the “immoral” values of society, may prevent these women from achieving integration and independence. The female participants clearly projected these concerns: despite their desire to learn English, taking care of their young children had physically and mentally drained them and left them with no energy to pursue or focus on accomplishing this desire.

Two female participants stated that they had access to a home tutor who taught them English, but only one had continued with this service, as the other participant felt that these lessons were distracting her from taking care of her two children who were both under 3 years old.

It was apparent that the inability of these migrant women to communicate in English not only prevented them from tackling daily aspects of life in New Zealand, but it also prevented them from mixing with others and integrating. Almost all of the female participants mentioned that as a result of their lack of confidence in their English, and due to cultural differences, they tended to socialise and mix only with other Arab women in the community.

The challenge of language was not a main concern for the male participants in this research, given that all of the male participants had access to English classes.

Reflections on New Zealand as a Resettlement Country

For many of the refugees, choosing their resettlement destination was a decision not entirely in their hands. Rather it may have been based on the country of resettlement's refugee intake that year, and according to the suggestions of some of the participants in this study, the political agendas or decisions of resettlement countries that choose to decline or take refugee groups from a particular national or ethnic background may also come into play. A common theme pertaining to the suitability of New Zealand as a resettlement country and the efficiency of its refugee system and policies emerged from both male and female refugees in this study. Although the general accounts by participants were that they were grateful to be accepted by New Zealand and live in a safe country, participants also talked about the extent of their overall dissatisfaction with the way New Zealand handles the refugee issue through the refugee system and the policies of the country.

Gratitude Towards New Zealand

The majority of participants in this research expressed much gratitude about the comforts they now had access to. Participants would compare their current situation to the hardships and struggles of their life prior to coming to New Zealand, noting that some of the problems they now had were small compared to the problems they had before their arrival in this country.

Participants were grateful for the lifestyle they had, the availability of food, and being able to sleep in the knowledge that their children are safe. The participants were also grateful that their children had the opportunity to be educated and obtain New Zealand citizenship, which would allow them to travel freely and comfortably to many countries that they would not previously have been allowed to enter on their national passport. Others expressed gratitude for their health, such as controlling their blood pressure and diabetes, and obtaining eye glasses for improved vision. Some of the participants expressed several times that they did not like to think about their previous hardships and focused on how good New Zealand was. Some were grateful for being able to tell their story through the interviews for this study.

“We felt a freedom which we had never felt before, we felt safe, we felt free, we were here legally, and we had rights here. New Zealand provided us with the legal right to stay, we don't expect someone to come and ask us to leave because we were Arab or outsiders. You see, New Zealand is dealing with refugees in a

well and fair manner. I mean, I personally didn't face discrimination.” (Raad-Male)

“Personally, I think this is a good humanitarian initiative that we all integrate, regardless of our backgrounds. It has provided us with everything, and I encourage it to bring more groups here.” (Khalid-Male)

Despite various concerns and challenges that these participants have had to endure, and continue to overcome, several participants expressed their genuine gratitude and gratefulness that New Zealand has provided them with the opportunity for a better life for themselves and their families. The participants gave various reasons, aside from accepting them for resettlement, that they were grateful to the New Zealand government, such as being provided with ESOL home tutors and spacious (sometimes brand new) HNZA homes, and despite the reluctance of some participants to accept help, they also admitted they were grateful for social-welfare benefits that allowed them to pay bills and provide for their family.

New Zealand as a Preferred Resettlement Country

Various participants in this study compared New Zealand as a resettlement country to other Western countries of resettlement. Although some of the participants stated that the refugee system in New Zealand required further development, they mentioned that New Zealand was considered a better resettlement option than other Western resettlement countries, such as Holland and Australia. These comparisons were validated by the participants as a result of them having extended family members or friends who had been resettled in other countries.

“Everything I need is here. A brother of mine is in Holland and the benefit there is monthly; the nice thing here is that the pay is weekly, an English system which is nice. I loved the nature and enjoyed it; I've been to lovely places. New Zealand is beautiful, and I feel myself as a human being. When I would go out, people make you feel like you matter. I'm grateful to Allah.” (Luma-Female)

“I am used to it now; it is safe compared to other societies. I went to Canada, USA and Australia, and though I had family there which made it fun, but their societies were unsafe. New Zealand is different; you have peace of mind about the schooling and communities and raising your children. They're more accepting of others too, but they do discriminate sometimes.” (Ahmed-Male)

“Overall, I think the treatment of Arab and Muslim refugees is excellent, especially if we compare it to Australia I guess. I have heard about how they are in Australia.” (Thamir-Male)

Generally, the participants in this research stated that New Zealand refugees were treated better than those in other Western resettlement countries in Europe, Australia or North America. Participants would use examples from their family members or friends who had been resettled in other countries and were believed to be unhappy because of being mistreated or unassisted. For many participants, the peacefulness of New Zealand and the relative safety of its society were important aspects that made them feel that New Zealand was a better resettlement option. Raising their children in a safe and secure environment was one of the main reasons refugees fled their homeland, and preferred New Zealand as a resettlement country.

It was also common for participants to refer to Australia as a distinctly undesirable choice for resettlement. During their conversations, participants compared the refugee system of Australia to that of New Zealand, and they thought that the overall treatment of Arab Muslim refugees in New Zealand is outstanding in comparison to the unfair treatment of Arab Muslim refugees in Australia. From these extracts there seemed to be a correlation between the way refugees were treated in their resettlement countries and their overall satisfaction with their resettlement experience. If individuals become aware of a resettlement country in which resettled refugees were unhappy, then that resettlement country automatically became an option that potential refugees tried to avoid. Australia was talked about as one of those countries. Many participants had heard, through family members or friends living there, that Australia mistreated its refugees and only provided them with a TPV which was generally three years. It restricted access to basic services and family reunion, providing refugees with no stability or true resettlement. Therefore, when comparing the life of a refugee in Australia to that of the New Zealand, participants mentioned that New Zealand, through its government, social and community workers, and society in general, seemed to have much to offer, especially once the society and system were provided with adequate awareness and information about the needs and abilities of refugees.

The Flawed Refugee System of New Zealand

Some participants in this study, including those who had stated their gratitude at being resettled in New Zealand, readily talked about the inadequate and flawed refugee system of the country. In this section, participants talked about the “space for improvement” in the refugee system, services and policies of New Zealand, in order for the country to sufficiently meet the needs of refugees. The participants talked about the gaps that needed to be filled in the New Zealand refugee system to better understand the

mental and physical hardship refugees experience in order to reach the country, and to allow refugees to make their own decisions pertaining to various issues while living at MRRC. Furthermore, when talking about the services that had been and continue to be provided to Arab Muslim refugees in New Zealand, several participants mentioned that these services were “Ok,” yet insufficient, and at many times, the services were culturally inappropriate.

“The government here provides various services that are... I mean they’re alright, but they are not adequate or enough. We realise that there is a form of unawareness and ignorance with regards to Arab Muslim culture that the society has, they lack awareness and they don’t have adequate awareness. The Muslim population is growing, but is still considered a small group....the society has no awareness when it comes to Arab or Muslim culture.” (Belal-Male)

It was apparent from the interviews that all of the participants were willing to share a considerable amount of opinions regarding their refugee resettlement experiences. Although the participants did not want to sound like ungrateful “complainers,” they stated that it was important for them to express their opinions and views on how the New Zealand refugee system worked (or not) for them. Most of the participants did not seem to tackle the issue that New Zealand, as a resettlement country and a signatory of the Geneva Convention, had to abide by its agreement with the UN to accept refugees who were in need of resettlement, regardless of their ethnic or religious background. Only several male participants who had worked voluntarily with UN agencies in various countries of asylum acknowledged that New Zealand was doing its best to bring as many refugees as possible via the refugee quota, Geneva Convention, and family reunification programme, or based on emergency cases. Most of the participants believed that the few refugee services that are provided by the government are inadequate, as they do not meet the needs of the diverse ethnic groups that make up the refugee population.

The participants talked about refugee services that did not acknowledge, respect, or understand the diversity of refugee groups, because they expected that all refugees would have the exact same needs. This issue portrays the lack of awareness and ignorance of the government, refugee system and host society when it comes to Arab and Islamic culture and beliefs. The participants suggested that when the government and its refugee services have little or no understanding of the cultural background of refugee groups, this may create barriers to refugees integrating into their new society. According to many of the participants, each ethnic group has its own unique needs and

background, but New Zealand as a multi-ethnic society does not recognise these distinctive needs. Being unaware of the differences between people may also lead to unreasonable expectations by the host society in assuming that all ethnic groups will integrate into New Zealand society and behave like the majority of people. The country believes that in time, everyone will equally integrate into the society and use services that are available, regardless of whether these services are culturally appropriate or linguistically compatible.

Several participants believed that the lack of awareness increased the gap between Arab Muslims and New Zealanders, which meant that Arab Muslims did not want anything to do with New Zealanders, and New Zealanders wanted nothing to do with Arab Muslims. These “flaws” within the New Zealand immigration system were causing the refugees resettlement problems and general dissatisfaction with their lives in the country.

The participants in this research stated that in response to the various issues and stereotypes accompanying Arab or Muslim people, there had been small yet influential initiatives by various groups in the society to build a bridge between Muslims and the host society, in order to decrease the gap of ignorance between the two groups. The participants believed that there was a need to focus on this “positive” matter in order for the entire society to move forward, together.

In addition, several participants gave differing reasons why they believed that the refugee system in New Zealand was flawed. Some thought that it was a result of the country running according to a colonial system that takes on the assumption that “the government knows what is best for everyone,” rather than approaching the refugees themselves to enquire about their needs and find out how they could improve existing services. By seeking the advice of migrants to ensure that services are useful for them and cater to the specific needs of each ethnic group, the government may avoid making the same errors or having to deal with unsettled refugees in future.

Although participants praised the humanitarian approach of New Zealand for accepting refugees, they cast doubt on the society and the government’s preparedness and ability to deal with the issues for refugee groups, or to provide culturally appropriate language, health, and employment services.

Another flaw in the system was created by the lack of refugee research, despite the country accepting hundreds of refugees yearly. Participants believed that the

government does not ‘do its homework’ when it comes to accepting ethnic refugee groups and expecting the current services to work for them all. Several participants stated that as unsatisfied refugees who believed that New Zealand had not benefited them in any way, they were thinking of leaving the country as soon as they obtained their New Zealand citizenship.

Predicting the Future: Refugees talk about their future and overall experience in New Zealand

During the final leg of the refugee journey, refugees talked about their future plans and overall resettlement experience in New Zealand. Though several participants in this study talked about their desire to remain in New Zealand, other participants discussed trying to balance their yearning for their homeland with wanting to stay together with their children who plan to remain in New Zealand, whereas several talked about their bleak future in New Zealand and their desire to leave the country. There appeared to be no difference in attitude between participants who had been living in New Zealand for a long or short period of time.

Remaining loyal to New Zealand

Generally, participants who talked positively about their resettlement experience in New Zealand also stated their desire to remain in the country. Participants in this group talked about feeling happy and settled in New Zealand, which had provided them and their children with the opportunity to live in a stable and safe society, in addition to providing the services that have assisted them to resettle comfortably in the society. Some participants talked passionately about how they “loved” New Zealand and would “dedicate” their life to bettering the country that had kindly agreed to take them in.

“My children want to stay here, and I see myself living here... I wouldn’t like to go back. If I were to summarise my experience in New Zealand, I feel comfortable, safe, and happy, something which I had never felt before. My family are around me, and I don’t want anything else in life. I want them to grow up here, to be educated here and to work here. Now we are here, we’re one of the people, and we want our children to give back to this country and to live here.” (Wafa-Female)

“I want to stay and my sons do as well. Even my son, when he came here he wasn’t able to relate or communicate with people here, we all couldn’t, he hated it here but now it is different; he loves the country. The nice thing here is that they help and they have patience, and the country is beautiful.” (Luma-Female)

Participants who had a generally positive resettlement experience in New Zealand had nothing but praise and positive things to say about their New Zealand refugee experience overall, the government and its system. Therefore, when talking about their future aspirations and plans, these participants fervently talked about remaining loyal to New Zealand and living in the country with their direct family. Many of these participants acknowledged that New Zealand had opened its arms to their family, and had allowed them freedom and given them rights they had never experienced before in either their homeland or country of asylum. These participants also summarised their experience in New Zealand as a comfortable, settled and happy experience, which allowed them to provide stability for their family. One female participant in particular stated that she wanted to share with her children who came with her to New Zealand, and those she had given birth to in the country her belief that New Zealand is a welcoming and humanistic society, so that her children develop a sense of pride and loyalty towards this country that has allowed them to be part of their society. This participant believed that when her children were educated in the country and in turn employed, they would be able to give back to the country that had allowed them to have a better chance of living a safe and peaceful life.

It also seemed important for participants to talk about the mistreatment they had faced in their native country or country of asylum, and how they felt content that New Zealand was treating them better and providing them with services, better opportunities, and respect as human beings, which they had not experienced before. This experience provided participants with the mental “comfort” that they had not felt for a long time since displacement.

On the other hand, several participants found that their love and loyalty towards New Zealand grew as their level of communication in English grew. For many of these participants, being unable to talk to others because of their lack of English language was an initial frustrating experience. However, as the years progressed, they slowly came to feel that they had comfortably adjusted to life in New Zealand, especially when they felt that their English was improving and their children were adapting well in school and forming new friends. Participants who were overall satisfied with their life in New Zealand also mentioned that their future desire was to reunite with other family members who were left behind in their homelands and to bring them to resettle in New Zealand. It was clear to see that the participants believed that when refugees were provided with knowledge about the realistic capabilities of the host society, then they

could adjust their expectations, and in turn, refugees would be able to engage with the wider society and positively influence others through their own ethnic values and beliefs.

Some participants believed that refugees are able to improve their situation in the resettlement country by understanding and learning from their own refugee experience. By doing so, this ‘enlightenment’ may play a role in assisting their adjustment in a new environment, as the refugee individual learns to overcome his/her weakness such as lack of English language proficiency, and polishing their educational or employment skills.

Also, refugee challenges were considered not only what refugees had to endure in order to arrive in a resettlement country, but also what refugees continued to endure while trying to adjust to their new environment, along with what they, as refugees, were trying to gain from being in their new country.

Overall, there did not seem to be a relationship between the length of time participants had lived in New Zealand and their positive or negative attitudes about the country. This was evident in the fact that whether participants had been in New Zealand for a year or for 11 years, they still felt that they were facing challenges and concerns that were impacting on their resettlement and their overall satisfaction about New Zealand being their “new home.”

Torn between two desires: the Homeland or the Children

Despite the obvious, that New Zealand had indeed provided their families and children with a better future and considerably safer life, some participants in this study did not directly mention a desire of their own to remain in New Zealand. Instead, because their children felt comfortable in the country, had made friends, learnt the language, and had little if any recollection of their native homeland, the parents had reluctantly decided to remain in New Zealand.

“I would lie if I said I haven’t gotten used to this place, I would do anything to see the sand and dust of Iraq even if for a moment. With all due respect to this country that has accepted us, Iraq remains my country [emphasised by participant]. But it’s for the sake of my children that we’re now here. I feel that my dreams and goals are now my children. I always tell them that as a payment for the hardship I went through, I want to see them educate. When you obtain an important status as a refugee in this country, it would be great; you feel your hardship wasn’t for nothing.” (Fawzya-Female)

“...it’s different here for the children. They came here young, and some were born here, so they don’t recall anything from back home, and they know nothing about it. Why put them through the same sufferings we went through? We sacrificed for them, and we continue to sacrifice for them. We came here didn’t we? Here [in New Zealand] they feel respected as humans and there [in their native country] they are treated like animals. But by talking about my experience now to you, you have tried to surface so many issues and experiences, and my talking about them and acknowledging them, it’s a healthy thing, it’s a breather. But the concern lies in the unknown future.” (Jamal-Male)

“For the sake of the children” was a common notion that was expressed in many interviews when participants were asked why they want to remain in New Zealand. This selfless act was part of the expected traditional role of Arab Muslim parents and the main component of their ongoing sacrifice for their own families. As a result, parents said that they intended to remain in the country, despite feeling uncomfortable in New Zealand and yearning to go back to their native land and their extended families. Furthermore, it was common for the participants in this research to talk about their concern, yet they accepted that their own future aspirations had gradually faded away and were replaced by their concern for the future of their children. The dilemma of not being able to return to their native country was a natural predicament faced by several refugee families in this research who had arrived in New Zealand bringing their young children with them, and experienced challenges related to raising their children in a foreign land. Refugee children grow up in a Western society, are primarily exposed to Western environments, learn the language, behaviours and values of the resettlement society, and in turn become attached to their “new homeland.” Refugee parents in this research had previously addressed their concerns over raising their children in an environment where they may adopt habits and behaviours that are deemed inappropriate, and several participants became distressed when they realised that their children expressed loyalty and felt a sense of belonging to the resettlement country rather than their native homeland.

Nevertheless, most of the participants in this research expressed their own desire to go back to their native country for which they continued to yearn. Participants admitted that despite New Zealand providing them and their families a safe environment to live in, they continued to believe that New Zealand remained a foreign country, which they did not originally belong to. Many participants described their native country as “their” country, which despite experiencing wars, conflict, and destruction, remained beautiful and giving countries, rich in culture and history. However, the future with its dreams,

goals and decisions no longer belonged to the participants alone; rather, several of them stated that their dreams and goals now involved what their children could achieve while living in New Zealand.

Many participants, and especially those who had little academic education back in their native countries, anticipated that despite their children being refugee children, it was important for the parents that they succeed in their education and studies in New Zealand and hold high-status positions, as the participants considered the children's success as a reward for the displacement and sacrifice their refugee parents made for them. Also, although New Zealand was not considered the native country for refugee parents, it was nonetheless the country of birth of some of their children. Thus, participants who talked about their yearning to go back to their homeland also felt that they could not force their children to live in a country to which the children had no connection.

Towards the end of the interviews, many participants in this research mentioned that to summarise their feelings about being Arab Muslim refugee in New Zealand seemed like a "small question," but one that required a "big answer." The participants believed that their experiences thus far in the country had been an emotional journey, full of challenges that needed to be dealt with adequately. However, they admitted that participating in the interview had been revealing and relaxing at the same time, as a result of their being able to talk about the various issues they had experienced during their refugee journey. However, their concern over what the future would hold for them and their families continued to be one they realised they needed to deal with as part of their ongoing sacrifice as refugees.

Leaving New Zealand: No Future or Settlement

New Zealand, although a haven for many refugees, was also considered the land of "no future or hope" for others. Participants in this study who talked about their desire to leave New Zealand had experienced various struggles and challenges throughout their refugee journey that had led them to be dissatisfied with being in the country. In this section, participants talked about the negative struggles they had to endure before and after their arrival in New Zealand, and in some cases, the struggles they continued to experience throughout their resettlement in the country. Participants in this section talked about their inability to create their future goals and aspirations as a result of their

belief that their future is “unknown” and “distant,” and they did not wish to dream, for risk of facing disappointment.

“What future? The future is unknown, the future comes on its own, we can’t think ahead because it may not happen.” (Zina-Female)

“There is no definite future here. For me the future is a difficult word; it is a far away word, but I hope to be a better person in a better situation. I don’t know. I don’t think of the future, I only think about the current present. I mean there is nothing wrong with thinking ahead, but to think way too ahead, and if you never reach it, it destroys you, and that concerns me. I am worried, worried to be alone and in a country far away. I used to have goals, but now I don’t.” (Hiba-Female)

“Here freedom is important and is available as is education, safety, and various services that are readily available. But you may find a lot of parents saying, I’m taking my kids and leaving. Because the future is murky, you don’t know what may happen tomorrow. If it were up to me I yearn to go back to my own country, though I am grateful for this country here that has provided me with safety and services. But as Muslims, we still miss our home country.” (Hashim-Male)

The participants who had gone through severe negative experiences throughout their refugee journey were the ones who clearly stated that they were unsure of their future in New Zealand. When talking about resettling in the country and their life thus far, many participants stated that their refugee experience had stripped them of any certainty about many matters in their lives, especially when it came to their opinions about where they see themselves in the future. Several participants were clearly distressed at their unresolved situation in New Zealand, and their struggles to feel welcomed and settled in the country. It was common for participants to use notions such as “destroyed,” “loss,” and “unknown” when talking about their frustrations, struggles, and perception of the future in New Zealand.

Feeling unsettled and without a brighter future was at times related to the participants’ feelings of being unsupported in New Zealand, with no real opportunity to be independent citizens of the country. Several participants expressed their desire to fulfil the dreams that they had hoped to accomplish once arriving in a peaceful and safe country, such as completing their education, finding employment, and integrating successfully, thus becoming productive individuals and good roles models for their children. However, according to these participants, most of these aspirations and dreams had been “destroyed” at the hands of the same resettlement country and its few services that had previously promised the refugees a stable and fulfilling life in New Zealand.

According to many participants, it is important that the refugee and immigration systems do not neglect the needs of refugees, and especially female refugees who may arrive in the country alone and who may have family members in other resettlement countries with whom they wish to be reunited, rather than being forced to live a lonely, isolated and “unknown” life in their new country. The participants in this research admitted that being a useful and needed person remained a goal that they desired to fulfil because of their belief that human beings were created and put on Earth to have a useful purpose, and not “just to eat and drink.” However, for the time being, this hope for a better future remained a far-fetched goal, while the participants struggled to establish themselves in the country.

It is important to point out that several participants expressed their desire to leave New Zealand as a result of their growing concern that their children had become “too comfortable” in the new society. These participants expressed their desire to leave the country after obtaining New Zealand citizenship in order to raise their children in a more culturally and religiously appropriate environment. When summarising their experience in the country, these participants indicated that New Zealand was merely considered a temporary stop in their family’s journey for stability and settlement, and that the difficult experiences they encountered when they arrived in New Zealand and throughout their resettlement were deemed necessary, as this was part of what God had planned for them to endure.

Summary of the Third Leg of the Refugee Journey

This final leg of the refugee journey presented the resettlement experiences of the participants one year or more after their initial resettlement. Participants talked about the ongoing challenges that seemed to have had, and still have, an impact on the lives of this group of “resettled refugees.” Participants talked about New Zealand as a resettlement country, and some compared it to other countries such as Australia and Canada. The participants also talked about the services that are provided for refugees in New Zealand and their levels of adequacy. The participants all concluded their refugee journey story by sharing their future aspirations and overall experiences as Arab Muslim refugees in New Zealand. A summary of these issues are provided below:

- **Current and Ongoing Challenges:** All of the participants, and especially the females in this research, acknowledged that there was no doubt learning the English language was a fundamental aspect of integration into the society in New Zealand.

Female participants admitted that their lack of English language isolated them from the host society and prevented them from tackling difficult tasks. However, their desire to learn English was not a main priority as they had various friends and family members who were in the community and would help out when needed. Another ongoing challenge was the issue of the participant's mental health. The participants talked about this in terms of strength and resilience. Several participants made a religious statement that was common for believers of Islam, which pertained to the notion that for Muslim people, relying on Allah was a satisfying feeling, as Allah is merciful and caring, and provides his believers with the strength they need to tackle life's challenges. Other participants stated that their sources of resilience and motivation stemmed from their concern over the future of their family and their inevitable situation as refugees in a foreign land.

- New Zealand as a resettlement country: Participants expressed their gratitude over being accepted by New Zealand and given the opportunity to live in a safe, war-free country. However, some participants mentioned that there was still plenty of room for improvement that the New Zealand refugee and immigration system could explore.
- Predicting the future and overall experience as Arab Muslim refugees in New Zealand: Despite the hardships, struggles and continuing challenges of living in New Zealand, many participants expressed their desire to remain in New Zealand and to be loyal and useful citizens to the country that had accepted them for resettlement, and provided them with various opportunities. Participants who were parents yearned to be reunited with their extended family members, to go back to their native countries, and raise their children in an appropriate environment; however, they also stated that they are unable to do so because their children have adjusted to their lives in New Zealand, learned the language, made friends, and are succeeding in their education. For some, leaving New Zealand was the only option they deemed appropriate for themselves and their family. In particular, if participants did not choose New Zealand as a country of resettlement, instead being 'forced' to choose it out of desperation or given New Zealand as the 'only' option, this may have played a role in their feeling unsettled or unhappy. These individuals may have friends or relatives in other countries, or may have had negative experiences in New Zealand, which may have also escalated these unsettled

feelings. As a result, these individuals would leave as soon as they obtained their citizenship/passport.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of the in-depth life story interviews that were conducted with 31 male and female Arab Muslim refugees. The participants' descriptions of the refugee journey and their resettlement experiences in New Zealand were framed by what I have called the 'three legs' of the refugee journey: becoming a refugee, a new life, and moving forward. Each leg included distinct experiences, however across the journey, the refugees' voices revealed themes of struggle and resilience as they faced challenges, interacted with various support agencies, and sought to rebuild a life for their families far away from their homelands. The following chapter provides a thematic analysis of the findings of the study and places them in the context of existing literature.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The chapter will illustrate the ways in which the findings of this research support and expand on previous literature regarding refugee experiences of resettlement. It will also incorporate recommendations based on these findings related to possible policy changes that could improve the situation for refugees to New Zealand.

The current research sought to reveal the overall refugee journey and resettlement experience of thirty-one male and female Arabic-speaking Muslim refugees resettled in New Zealand. The interviews shed light on the obstacles and challenges the refugees experienced during resettlement in a largely unknown society, their overall strengths and sources of resilience, and their perspectives on their future in a foreign country. These refugees were given the opportunity to define their own experiences from displacement to resettlement. As the researcher, I set out to explore the experiences of Arab Muslim refugees living in New Zealand and the effects these experiences had on their resettlement in the country, taking an eclectic approach of thematic analysis and aspects of life story narratives to reveal the essence of their experiences.

As outlined in this chapter, the themes that emerged from the research included the displacement experience where participants stated their reasons for fleeing their homeland, acquiring the refugee identity and the challenges that came with the refugee label, life after their New Zealand arrival and the expectations that participants had of their new host country, the challenges that participants came across when having to deal with various refugee services which to them, did not meet their needs. Other themes that emerged from the interviews involved the sources of coping and resilience that participants had to rely on, in order for them to adjust in a new society, and finally ongoing challenges of resettlement and reflections on their refugee journey as it unravelled during the interviews.

However, when discussing possible policy changes, we need to be aware that all refugees to New Zealand are entering a host country that incorporates two approaches to questions of identity, multiculturalism and biculturalism. Biculturalism is an official policy that recognises the partnership between Maori, the indigenous people of New Zealand, and the settlers, or Pakeha. In this model, all immigrant groups form part of the non-indigenous partner. Multiculturalism, on the other hand, is the recognition that modern nation states are not adequately represented by one common culture, and that

minority groups want more representation in the public or civic realm of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and/or religious identities (see for example May 2002). Glazer (1998) who was originally sceptical of the multicultural movement concedes that ‘we are all multiculturalists now’ (cited in May 2002, p.36).

It is also evident that multiculturalism does not necessarily address the problems of inequality, racism and material disadvantage. Bauman (2001), for example, paints a grim picture of the countries as hosts for refugees and other ethnic minorities. He claims that ‘we live in times of great and growing globewide migration. Governments strain their ingenuity to the utmost in order to ingratiate themselves with the electors by tightening the immigration laws, restricting the rights to asylum, blackening the image of ‘economic migrants’ (p.101) He also argues that “‘multiculturalism” plays into the hands of politically unconstrained globalization.’ And that the new multiculturalism formula is a way of governments not taking responsibility for inequality, by presenting freedom of choice to people who then have to seek their own place ‘in the fluid order of reality and [to] bear the consequences of that choice.’ (p.109).

In the New Zealand case, Friesen (2006) claims that ‘despite the dramatic changes which have occurred in migrant streams in recent years, there has been relatively little attempt on the part of the Government to monitor outcomes for migrants or the country’ and that the ‘impacts of immigration and the evolving multicultural landscape’ are dealt with often on an ad hoc basis. (p.61).

While the political climate is not conducive to solving the problems of refugees, nonetheless the research indicates that in order to provide a stable and welcoming environment to enable refugees to be able to participate and contribute to society, there are some relatively small changes that could make a difference.

The Refugee Journey from Displacement to Resettlement

The stories of the people who participated in this study revealed interesting experiences and deep concerns on the part of Arab Muslim refugees living in New Zealand. Participants spoke out about their concerns regarding their overall resettlement experience, their ongoing resettlement challenges, and raising their children in a society that does not embrace the same religion, language, culture, and values. Behind each participant there is a story of struggle to achieve stability and peace of mind, and a long journey for a better life. None of the participants came to New Zealand without a strong

reason; in fact, all of them were forced to leave their homelands to escape a deteriorating political situation, with the hope of living in a war-free, conflict-free country.

According to the findings of this research, the refugee journey was a combination of the participants' experiences before and after coming to New Zealand, including their six-week orientation at MRRC, their continuing and/or unresolved resettlement concerns, their sources of resilience, and their future aspirations. The refugee experience can be understood as occurring in several 'legs', in which each leg combines the events and experiences faced by refugees during crucial moments of their displaced lives. Stein (1981) stated that the refugee experience is made up of several "parts," which include fleeing, time spent in camps or detention centres, departure from camps/detention centres, and resettlement (including early and late resettlement). A similar approach was also considered in Hyndman and McLean's (2006) study, in which it was suggested that "key moments" in the lives of refugees – for example, staying in detention camps, arriving in their resettlement country, and the first year of resettlement - need to be explored in order to understand issues such as refugees' access to services and information.

Each of the three legs that comprise the refugee journey of Arab Muslims represents particular experiences and challenges. The first leg of the refugee journey included the participants' pre-migration experiences and reasons for leaving their homelands, their experiences of becoming a refugee and utilising this humanitarian label, their original resettlement destination, their expectations of New Zealand, and their experiences in MRRC. The second leg of the refugee journey involved the participants' adjustment to their 'new' lives after leaving MRRC, their experiences with several resettlement agencies such as RMS, HNZA and WINZ, the issue of unemployment and how that impacted on their resettlement, and their concerns over raising their children in a non-Muslim society. The third leg uncovered the ongoing resettlement experiences of the participants at least one year after their initial arrival. This third leg of the journey also explored the methods of coping and resilience that participants used in order to overcome their ongoing resettlement challenges and mental health concerns, as well as considering their perspective on New Zealand as a resettlement country, their future aspirations and their long-term resettlement plans. Although each leg of the refugee journey was different in its experiences, and different in the time that each leg occurred within the refugee journey, we cannot separate these legs if we truly wanted to

understand and appreciate the resettlement journey of refugees. As Stein (1981) mentioned, to look at the refugee experience, we have to appreciate their journey and events in whole. The experiences that occurred in one leg of the journey such as being forced to relocate in New Zealand, as opposed to the refugee's initial destination where they may have extended family members, may predict the outcome of the experiences in the consecutive leg of the refugee journey which is that they may feel some sort of resentment and overall dissatisfaction with being in New Zealand, which may then suggest, that when the chance arises, the refugee may obtain their New Zealand citizenship and relocate to the country that was their actual destination.

New Zealand has an obligation to ensure that the refugees it has accepted to live in the country are provided with adequate and effective resettlement support services to help them rebuild their lives in their new country, and most importantly, to rebuild a *stable* life. Stein (1981) revealed that an inaccurate perspective that has filtered into and established itself in some refugee services worldwide is that refugee problems are temporary and unique events. The current study highlights that refugee experiences and challenges are neither temporary nor unique, and that it is possible for us, as a refugee-receiving nation, to be better prepared, better equipped and better coordinated when agreeing to resettle refugees from various ethnic backgrounds. The hardships and trauma that refugees have had to endure in order to settle in New Zealand deserves respect. The story of Arab Muslim refugees in New Zealand begins with the refugee journey and the experiences that accompany this journey. These experiences, good or bad, cannot be erased or ignored once Arab Muslim refugees arrive in New Zealand.

Moreover, with the refugee journey come resettlement experiences. As Altinkaya and Omundsen (1999) state, "refugee resettlement involves the permanent settlement of people in another nation." (p.31). It is inevitable that refugees face certain obstacles and challenges during their resettlement in a foreign society, especially in a society that has yet to understand the diverse needs of the refugees in the country. Based on the previously mentioned definitions of resettlement, in order to have successfully resettled, the participants in this study would have had to experience feelings of being protected, safe, adjusted, and successfully integrated into the host society (ICAR, 2005). Moreover, for resettlement to have occurred, the host society would have been expected to accommodate the refugees, provide them with access to language classes, employment opportunities, and make them feel welcomed in their new country (Gray & Elliot, 2001). However, the findings of the current study suggest that despite being in

New Zealand for more than one year, most participants in this research expressed feeling unsettled, disappointed, and isolated, and were struggling with ongoing resettlement challenges.

Pre-migration and reasons for fleeing

Similar to numerous other studies, the majority of participants in this research, when talking about their reasons for fleeing their native country or their country of asylum, stated that it was because the war and political conflict in their homelands had become unbearable, they were concerned their family members would be imprisoned or tortured because of their political involvements, or they feared for their children's safety and security. When refugees have no choice but to leave, there may be many unresolved personal matters, family and belongings left behind, and in certain situations, refugees may be detained or imprisoned in the new country. All of these factors may influence the adjustment level of the migrant (Colic-Peisker, 2005; Field, 2006; Richmond, 2002; Ward et al., 2001). However, regardless of the participants' reasons, their departure and displacement was considered a sacrifice that they had to endure; in particular, they sacrificed leaving behind their extended family members, their home, their lands, and familiarity. Related to this theme was the issue of whether participants had actively chosen New Zealand as a resettlement country or were forced, as a result of having no other choice, to accept being resettled in New Zealand. It seemed that participants who had applied for resettlement in New Zealand were more likely than those who had not to indicate that they were generally satisfied with their life in the country. However, for both of these groups, the lack of information regarding their resettlement country before they arrived was mentioned as a cause of anxiety and fear towards the unknown destination they were heading towards.

The most common reason reflected in the decision to resettle in New Zealand was "for the children's sake." Most of the participants who were parents reported that they wanted to provide their children with better opportunities, to live in a war-free country that also offered them the potential to realise their ambitions, not usually available in asylum camps or in their homelands. These findings were similar to those suggested by Maydell-Stevens et al. (2007) who also stated that people 'choose' to relocate and resettle because they want to provide their children with better options for the future, in terms of education, financial security, and overall lifestyle.

However, unlike the study by Maydell-Stevens et al., some of the participants in the current research seemed to have a change of heart as their children grew up speaking more English than their native language and lacking knowledge about their ethnic culture and religion, causing parents to re-think their future resettlement plans in New Zealand and discuss moving back to an Arab Muslim country where they could teach and encourage their children to learn more about their ethnic identity.

The Refugee Label

The refugee label is one that seems to have defined the lives of the participants; they reported that the label had become an inseparable part of their identity, which was something that they did not appreciate or desire. The participants talked about how they had to prepare themselves mentally to acquire the humanitarian label ‘refugee,’ but nevertheless, this aspect of the initial displacement journey generated various long-term consequences and effects on the individual. Later on, the refugee label resulted in conflicting reactions, mainly resentment and frustration towards the host society. When talking about being a refugee the majority of the participants in this study referred to themselves as refugees in the past tense, which according to Tomlinson and Egan (2002) suggests that refugee “status” is something temporary, especially once the individual arrives in their resettlement country and acquires employment. Moreover, while the participants wanted to have their refugee experience, hardships, and pride in their Islamic identity acknowledged, they also stated that they disliked being identified as refugees because they believed that the New Zealand host society is not as welcoming towards them as most people would assume, especially when coupled with their being Arab Muslims. Portes and Rumbaut (1996) stated that groups who are most exposed to negativity and prejudice are most likely to internalise negative feelings about their ethnic identity and history.

On the other hand, the findings also suggest that once the participants were “officially” granted refugee status and had arrived at their resettlement destination, they utilised this humanitarian label to gain access to various resettlement services. According to Fanjoy et al. (2005), “successful resettlement of refugees is highly dependent on the individual, personal and situational circumstances that make each refugee unique” (p. 66). However, the findings of this research suggest that successful resettlement could be difficult to achieve if the support and services provided to refugees are inadequate. As indicated above, providing information about their resettlement destination was another

crucial issue that affected the refugees' overall satisfaction with New Zealand as a resettlement country and the level of disappointment experienced by refugees once arriving in New Zealand.

Utilising the refugee label was considered a natural thing, and to be referred to as a refugee was permissible as long as it guaranteed the participants and their families a way out of their displacement, asylum, and detention, and it also opened up the opportunities to gain access to various services that only cater for the needs of refugees (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003). Once these immediate needs were met, the humanitarian label was no longer required, and it was rejected. There is a general agreement that once refugees arrive in the resettlement country, they are no longer in danger or fearful of persecution (UNCHR, 2007c), and if that is the case then these individuals should not be referred to or treated as refugees'. Research on the refugee label has suggested that when arriving in the host society, refugee services may make migrants feel patronised and declassified which in turn may destroy the refugee's sense of belonging or affect their integration to the host society (Harrell-Bond, 1999, Queensland Health Department, 2002).

The findings in this research suggest that 'refugees' consider the label to be a burden, a liability, weak and shameful. It prevented participants from feeling as if they genuinely belonged to New Zealand and from fully integrating into their new society. These refugee notions were similar to those that Inhetveen (2006) outlined in her report to the UNHCR. Participants desired to dispose of the refugee label once they arrived in New Zealand; the common notion projected in the interviews was that once arriving in the country, participants wanted to shed the refugee identity (or label) and be considered 'potential citizens,' which would make them feel equally valued and treated by others in New Zealand society. It is important that we, as a humanitarian society, are careful when using the label refugee. As Zetter (1991) argues, the labelling issue is significant in the integration of refugees in their resettlement countries, and if not carefully observed by refugee and migration agencies and services, it may lead to "predetermined stereotypes, inappropriately applied models from other cultures, crisis-imposed identities of powerlessness and dependency, which tend to destroy much of what they wish to support and undermine the identities they wish to sustain" (p.61). When refugees are depicted as passive recipients of aid, it may be more debilitating than helpful for their resettlement (Harrell-Bond, 1999).

Thus, the refugee label was a cause of suffering for the participants in my study, as they talked about how they felt vulnerable, weak, and ashamed of being identified as refugees. The feelings of shame and being a social burden, are seen in the negative and incorrect stereotypes held by New Zealand society and reflected in the interactions of various governmental and NGO services. To eliminate negative stereotypes about refugees, it is important for NGOs and governmental agencies to educate society, but most importantly, to educate their own employees who work and deal with forced migrants. Moreover, if refugees were instead constructed as role models because of their survival and resilience, they would have more promise of becoming respected members of the community in the future. The findings of this study about the affect of the refugee label were similar to those suggested by Inhetveen (2006), who also mentioned that the refugees she interviewed defined themselves as “sufferers” on various levels, due to insufficient food, their sense of powerlessness, and their vulnerability. Suffering was not only a notion that described what the refugee label meant to the participants in this research, but it also described the lives of the participants in New Zealand.

Furthermore, when it came to discussing how migration status may influence both the refugees’ social and economic adjustment and the perceptions of the host society, the participants distinguished between Arab Muslim immigrants to New Zealand and those who are refugees. They stated that being a refugee is shameful, as it means that individuals have experienced hardship, trauma and are ‘perceived’ to be uneducated; being an immigrant means that individual have arrived through the skilled migrant point system, which automatically means that they are perceived to be highly qualified, educated, financially stable, and that that they have not experienced humiliating, traumatic experiences throughout their journey to the country and when establishing a life in the new society. According to most of the participants, refugees and immigrants do share an important similarity: the migration ‘status’ of Arab Muslims, whether refugees or immigrants, leads to the same conclusion or ‘fate,’ that they are ‘foreigners’ in a predominately non-Arab, non-Muslim country, and hence they face similar resettlement challenges, such as accrediting their qualifications, finding appropriate employment, and overcoming ethnic discrimination in the labour market.

New Zealand Arrival and Disappointment

In this study, participants were asked, “Before coming to New Zealand, did you have any expectations about how life will be like?” The majority of participants stated that they were disappointed that the country did not meet their expectations.

None of the participants had any prior knowledge or information about New Zealand at the time of applying for resettlement. Furthermore, almost all of the participants stated that they were provided with little to no information prior to their departure for New Zealand. The lack of pre-orientation information created unrealistic expectations, and anxiety for participants, who felt that they were heading to the ‘unknown.’ Many participants wished they had been provided with adequate and informative details about their new country, which may have helped ease their concerns and anxieties. However, despite their anxiety that they did not know much about their resettlement destination, most of the participants expressed feeling relieved that they were going to be resettled in ‘any’ Western country after living in asylum and displacement for months or years.

Many of the participants in this research stated that New Zealand was not their original resettlement destination, as they had applied to other host countries where they already had extended family members or friends. However, once their initial resettlement choice was rejected, they were included in the New Zealand list because it was the only country receiving refugees. As a result, they came to New Zealand out of desperation and lack of choice, rather than through their own decision. Participants who stated that they had family members in other resettlement countries were more likely than others to indicate that they intended to leave New Zealand once they obtained their citizenship and were able to travel freely to almost any country.

Prior to their arrival in New Zealand, participants in this research had either never heard of New Zealand, or had minimal information. For several participants, the information they obtained about the country was mainly collected through their own online research and looking at Atlas maps to locate “this New Zealand country.” Rarely did the participants state that their UN or NGO agency provided them with useful information about their destination. Having received minimal information about New Zealand, the migrants built expectations and images of how their Western host society would be. Many of the participants’ somewhat unrealistic expectations were not met when they arrived in New Zealand, and thus they felt disappointed and unsatisfied. Dibley and Dunstan (2002) suggest that although New Zealand quota refugees arrive in the country

with little or no information about New Zealand, family reunion refugees may arrive in the country prepared with some basic information from their family members already living in New Zealand.

The findings of my research were similar to a study of Sudanese refugees in Canada (Simich et al., 2006), which indicated that the majority of participants were disappointed that Canada did not offer them a better and easier life, as the refugees had expected. Moreover, Simich et al (2003) found that refugees, who have experienced tremendous amounts of stress and had to overcome obstacles, are in search of reliable information about their resettlement destination which may allow them some peace of mind and provide them with some insight about their future in a new country. In addition, receiving pre-arrival information about the country of resettlement reduces stress and anxiety associated with relocating to a different country and environment (Simich et al., 2003; Simich et al., 2006). This current study also suggested that the lack of information about their country of resettlement may have been the reason that participants expressed feeling shocked, disappointed, and anxious about resettling and living in New Zealand.

It is important to reiterate that the lack of information regarding their resettlement country created false impressions of the country and unrealistic expectations. This issue seemed to inhibit their overall resettlement experience, as some of the participants felt 'cheated' into expecting things they did not receive from the host country. Simich et al. (2003) point out that while preparing to leave their country of asylum or detention centres, refugees naturally go through a tremendous amount of stress and anxiety caused by the trauma of fleeing their homeland and leaving extended family members behind, and as such, it is vital to provide adequate and reliable pre-orientation information to refugees so as to reduce, even if slightly, their levels of stress and anxiety about their unknown future. Several countries such as Canada and the USA provide pre-orientation programmes, whereas New Zealand only provides on-arrival orientation.

Some migrants in this research were disappointed on arrival in New Zealand because it was not their first choice for a resettlement country, as they were declined by other European or North American resettlement countries. At the same time, those who arrived willingly to New Zealand had also felt let down by the distance of the country with its modest houses and vast endless green lands. According to Fanjoy et al. (2005), when refugees' expectations were confirmed by their experiences of resettlement, they were much more likely to feel that they had achieved success than those who were

given no information or false information. Mestheneos and Ioannidi (2002) also confirmed that regardless of their individual characteristics and geographical location, the most significant determinant of refugees' perception of success in resettlement was not their unique demographic profile or even their country of resettlement, it was the amount and accuracy of the information available to refugees before their actual resettlement. This was apparent in the findings of this study when participants reported that they experienced disappointment as a result of the minimal or lack of information about their resettlement destination; participants were let down to find New Zealand a technologically under developed, distant, and mainly rural country.

The findings suggest that during resettlement, when refugees were forced to accept pre-arranged situations, such as housing or location, and felt that they had no control over their own destiny or future, this experience may have been traumatic in itself. Being 'forced' to come to New Zealand, while extended family members live in other resettlement countries, may be an initial reason why refugees state their desire to leave New Zealand once they obtain New Zealand citizenship and are able to comfortably travel using their New Zealand passport. When discussing their disappointment about their New Zealand arrival, participants also reflected on their MRRC experience. It was during this six-week stay that refugees began to form impressions on how life would be thereafter in New Zealand, and how New Zealanders are as members of the host society. These issues also influenced how participants perceived and talked about their overall resettlement experience in New Zealand.

Once more, it is important to emphasise that as a host country, it is our obligation towards the refugees that we accept to provide adequate support and assistance for their successful resettlement. This issue was verified by Beiser (2006), who stated:

There is a moral imperative to provide needed services to the people to whom we open our doors. It also makes good sense to support successful resettlement, an early investment in their future helps to ensure that people admitted as refugees will become contributing members of their adopted societies. (p.57)

Services that cater for the needs of refugees have been established only since 1995 in Auckland and 1997 in Wellington (Altinkaya & Omundsen, 1999). Though more than a decade has passed since their establishment, there continues to be a lack of interest in updating these services to meet the needs of the various ethnic groups that arrive in New Zealand. Thus, the findings of this research suggest that the specific needs of refugees

have been neglected, and there remains a need to revise and diversify existing services.³¹

RECOMMENDATION:

Information and Pre-Orientation

There is a need for New Zealand to provide advance information to refugees about their resettlement country, by following in the example of Canada, which provides “pre-orientation” programmes to refugees in their country of first asylum, in order to clarify any misconceptions, and eliminate disappointment. Advance information may reduce stress and anxiety about an “unknown destination and future.”

On-Arrival Orientation

Upon arrival in New Zealand, MRRC and its staff need to be more informed about the cultural backgrounds of each refugee group to ensure that the orientation programme the centre provides to the newly arrived refugees is tailored to meet their needs, address their abilities, qualifications, and work experience. It is important that the orientation programme provides refugees with adequate and useful information on how to integrate and succeed in society through acquiring the language, employment, and education, in addition to other information which the refugee is able to use in his/her daily life regarding coping in a new and foreign society.

RMS currently contracts support volunteers to assist in the resettlement of refugees for six months. It is suggested that RMS tries to either extend that support period or employ volunteers to do follow-ups on refugees who have been in the country for one year to ensure that they are coping well in the new society and face no resettlement challenges.

It is crucial to take into account the specific cultural and religious needs of each refugee group that arrives to MRRC rather than placing them all into the same category or melting pot. Therefore, it is important to update the services and facilities provided by MRRC, RAS and RMS to fit the needs of specific ethnic groups that arrive to MRRC.

For asylum seekers who arrive at the airport with no on-arrival access to resettlement services there is the need for a Muslim or Arab immigration officer at Auckland International Airport to provide them with a basic resettlement alternative. Also it may

³¹ As of 2008, the orientation programme at MRRC has been reduced to five weeks rather than six (RMS, personal communication, November 11, 2008).

be important to provide a diversity of information pamphlets at the airport in various ethnic languages about basic information such as affordable motels/hostels, transport, government and non-governmental agencies, and local ethnic support groups and communities.

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## **Resettlement Services in New Zealand**

At the beginning of this thesis, it was mentioned that this study would refer to resettlement as the process of re-building the lives of refugees in resettlement countries. This would occur by providing refugees with support that assists them in adjusting successfully in their new society and overcoming their anxiety of relocation, adjusting to cultural differences, learning the language, accreditation of their qualifications, and finding employment (ICAR, 2005; Neuwirth, 1988; Parsons, 2005; Singer & Wilson, 2006; Stein, 1986). Thus if the above were to be considered as “resettlement criteria”, then the findings of this research suggest that the majority of the participants in this study who were supposed to be resettled refugees, were in fact “un-resettled”. The majority of the participants were still anxious about their lives in New Zealand: they had not adjusted well. Females in particular lacked much English language knowledge, and most of the men and almost all of the women were either unemployed or underemployed.

The participants in this study had continuous contact with several migrant agencies that were assigned to assist them resettle after their MRRC departure. The services mentioned extensively by most participants were RMS, HNZA and WINZ. These agencies provide key resettlement services: RMS provides practical resettlement assistance to refugees during the first six months of their arrival in New Zealand, while HNZA provides refugees with affordable housing, and WINZ provides financial assistance to refugees such as an income support benefit, job search assistance, and access to English language courses, all of which are services directly associated with overcoming the key resettlement challenges - namely, employment and language - identified in refugee research (Dunstan et al., 2004; Gray & Elliot, 2001; Simich et al., 2003; 2005). However, for the most part, the majority of the participants were not impressed with either one or more of the services and support that was provided, a reality consistent with other refugee studies (eg, Fangen, 2006; Michalski, 2001;

Simich, 2003; Simich et al., 2003, 2006). Some were concerned that the failures of the system were a result of the lack of awareness on the part of service providers regarding the different ethnic refugee groups and their needs.

This research also suggested that the Arab Muslim participants felt controlled by officials, and that they felt disrespected and put down by those with whom they are in contact at various resettlement agencies. RMS provides six-month resettlement support through volunteers from the society, and though this was appreciated by participants in my study, there is a need to address the possibility of extending this six-month period, as the findings suggest that refugees continue to require resettlement support well beyond this allocated period. In addition, because resettlement support workers were volunteers, there may have been a tendency to be inefficient or unsupportive during the six-month resettlement period. For the participants in my study, during their initial resettlement period, their vulnerability caused by their lack of English may have caused them to be dependent on the support workers, and expect the RMS volunteers to provide them with resettlement necessities. Furthermore, it is also important that RMS continuously follows up on the progress of the resettlement volunteers and addresses any issues or incompetency that they may come across, especially if it involves volunteers not showing up to support the refugees during their contracted six months.

As for HNZC, which provided affordable housing, it is important that this agency is mindful of some of the specific needs of refugees when it comes to choosing a home. For example, Muslim families with women who wear the hijab may require a home that is not in the public view of passersby, that it is private, yet comfortable. Other families with young children may wish to have a home that is not on a main road, or if so, to have a high fence (to protect the privacy and the safety of the family). Refugees should be involved throughout the process of home allocation in order for them to feel that they remain in control of their lives, and that they do not feel forced to accept pre-made decisions. Finally, case managers at WINZ need to be more mindful of the sensibilities of refugees; for example, they may come from a culture in which talking in an aggressive or loud manner is considered disrespectful and hurtful. WINZ officers need to be more appreciative of the refugees' situation and less judgemental. Fangen (2006) stated that when refugees are treated poorly and talked about in a negative way or feel they are being mistreated because of their skin colour or ethnic background, they experience humiliation that is detrimental for resettlement. In addition, when the abilities of resettlement services do not match the expectations of refugees then conflict

can occur which leads to disappointment and dissatisfaction (Robinson, 1998; Simich, 2003; Simich et al., 2003, 2005, 2006). On the one hand, in some situations the expectations of refugees are probably unrealistic about what or how much they should receive; on the other hand, these unrealistic expectations are a result of the lack of communication and information provided to refugees by refugee agencies.

The findings of this research suggest that refugee resettlement services play a key role in assisting, or in some cases hindering, the resettlement of refugees, and therefore it is important to ensure that these services provide adequate services that meet the needs of refugees. Therefore, to assist in a positive resettlement, it is important for refugee and migration agencies to look at empowering refugees by incorporating the existing resettlement services, encouraging self-help and the involvement of refugee communities (Tomlinson & Egan, 2002). This needs to be incorporated into the training of employees and managers in the key institutions.

### **Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre (MRRC)**

Depending on resources and availability, resettlement countries such as Australia, Canada, UK and the USA tend to provide some pre-orientation to their approved quota refugees. Once the quota refugees arrive in their host countries they may not necessarily be sent to reception centres; rather, they are met at the airport by resettlement delegates and taken to pre-arranged accommodation, which may either be temporary, such as boarding houses, or permanent homes (Australian Refugee Association, n.d.; Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2005). On the other hand, New Zealand refugees are met at the airport and taken to MRRC, which becomes their temporary home for six weeks. There they are provided with an educational orientation programme that includes English lessons and cultural, legal, and social information about New Zealand. The goal of this six-week stay is to provide refugees with sufficient and useful information that will assist them to gradually acclimatise to New Zealand, learn survival language skills, and understand their basic legal rights and obligations. The general purpose of cultural and social orientation sessions is to prepare and empower refugees to pursue independent livelihoods.

Unlike the findings of Dibley and Dunstan (2002), who suggested that refugees felt that their MRRC stay prepared them well for living in New Zealand, the findings reported in this current study suggest that the majority of refugees were unhappy and dissatisfied with their MRRC stay, and they discussed various concerns which they felt were

unaddressed by MRRC's management. These concerns included lack of privacy, feeling as if they lived a military life at the centre, eating foreign foods, feeling as if the centre emphasised the dependency and neediness of refugees, the lack of interpreter efficiency, discontent with the quality of the orientation programme, and finally, feeling relieved at leaving MRRC and regaining control over their lives. Language barriers and comforting themselves with the fact that life in MRRC is a temporary state, in addition to fearing that their permanent residency may be affected if they spoke out about their concerns, were the main reasons why most of the refugees did not complain to MRRC about their concerns. Interestingly, this issue was raised as part of a Refugee Policy Forum panel discussion in 2005 by the Council of International Development (CID) in New Zealand, in which it criticised the information given to refugees and the MRRC services, despite the effort presented at MRRC, although the specificities of this criticism were not stated. However, the forum also concluded that whatever these issues were, they had yet to be addressed by the government, which suggests a wider problem within the refugee and immigration system. The findings of this study reveal that the environment in MRRC created various experiences and impressions for the participants. Unfortunately, many of these experiences were disappointing and negative. In order for effective resettlement to occur, New Zealand needs to provide services and means in which individuals are able to become productive and participatory citizens in society (Altinkaya & Omundsen, 1999).

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is clear that making resettlement easier for refugees would require more resources. It is also evident from this and other research that refugees have had to deal with many traumatic experiences on their journeys to resettlement. It is also clear that the expectations that refugees have of their host country are often not met. The host countries are not adequately prepared to meet those expectations and the resources are either not available or not prioritized. The host country often has to balance the needs of the refugees with the demands of the rest of the population. While recognizing this, it is also clear that refugees have some resources of their own and demonstrate resilience and coping strategies.

Nevertheless, there are some recommendations about aspects that might help to address the failed expectations of refugees, soften their resettlement experience, and encourage

them to become comfortable citizens of the host country. This section will look at how some of the expectations might be addressed in the New Zealand context

## **Resettlement Services**

### **Housing**

To ensure that refugees realise they have control over their own lives, before their MRRC departure they need to be included in the decision making on the area or city where they will be located in New Zealand. Furthermore, it may be important that HNZA confirms with the refugees prior to their MRRC departure that their housing needs are addressed and met, so that refugees locate to a city and type of accommodation that fits their specific needs.

### **Health**

Many participants declared that it was a mental relief for them to be able to discuss their refugee journey and their resettlement concerns. Engaging refugees in a conversation about their refugee journey may shed light and open doors to better understanding where these individuals came from, and where they want to be in life. Providing adequate mental and physical health services or therapies that effectively meet the cultural needs of refugees and offer positive and satisfactory outcomes will assist them in their resettlement and integration in the host society. It may also necessary to identify, involve, and train social workers or counsellors who are of Arab or Muslim background or who have knowledge about this culture and religion, to assist refugee children in adjusting to their new school environment, and to assist non-Arab non-Muslim children to accept and embrace their new peers.

### **Language**

Increasing the number of free introductory English language classes may encourage refugees to pursue additional advanced courses or to complete their education. Also, despite the existence of a home-tutoring system, ESOL Home Tutors, who primarily provide English home-based language skills and social support for adult refugees and migrants in New Zealand, it remains important to create a scheme in which refugee women with children or family commitments are identified, motivated, and encouraged

to learn English, through a schedule that works with the refugee women's daily commitments and needs. For refugee women who are able to leave their home and attend courses, but are concerned over leaving their young children at home, a beneficial service might be English courses that provide temporary child-care while these women are attending their language classes. Otherwise, for refugee women who are housebound and unable to leave their home or family, providing free or affordable child-care for them in the home while a home-tutor is available may be of benefit. Learning English may also motivate and encourage refugee women to obtain employment, which will assist in their resettlement and liberate refugee families from the financial burden they may experience while adjusting in the host country.

### **Interpretation and Legal Rights Services**

There is a need for adequate and reliable translation and interpretation services for refugees, provided through individuals or agencies that speak their language and have a similar cultural or religious appreciation. Most importantly, there is a need to monitor refugee-interpreter match to ensure that the refugee is comfortable with the interpretation service. It may also be helpful to provide support for the translators at MRRC so that they can freely translate the needs and concerns of refugees and not worry about losing their jobs. Some Arab and Muslim refugees who have minimal or no grasp of English also have minimal or no understanding about their legal rights in New Zealand. Despite the orientation programme in MRRC providing information on the law in New Zealand upon the request of Arab Muslim refugees, it is necessary to provide information and access to adequate legal support.

### **Employment and Accreditation of Qualifications**

Employment opportunities and adequate information regarding accrediting qualifications are crucial for refugees who arrive in New Zealand with extensive work experience and academic qualifications. Therefore, it is important to address the needs of ethnic groups that have an array of skills and abilities which may benefit the country, yet go unnoticed due to the lack of government assistance. Also, government, private industries and NGO agencies that deal with refugees need to partake in significant employment opportunity collaboration, to match job opportunities with refugee skills and qualifications. The current research suggests that many aspects of being integrated such as employment, language, and financial stability, if adequately addressed by the

host society and its refugee policies, may trigger positive reactions from refugees along their process of resettlement.



## **The Refugee Family and Gender Roles**

The following section discusses an area that was expected to have a great impact on the resettlement experiences of participants. Various studies on gender related issues among refugees suggest that men and women may report differing resettlement challenges based on gendered experiences (eg: Foster et al., 2006; Lacroix, 2004; McCool, 2003; Moussa, 1992). The findings of this research were similar to those by Pavlish (2007), Nwadiora and McAdoo (1996), and Nghe et al. (2003), who noted that despite certain gender variations, the concerns of both male and female refugees revolved around concern towards their family and the future. This research also suggested that for both men and women refugees who arrive in a foreign society, the lack of family support, acculturation and discrimination challenges may cause refugees to experience traumatic distress. Additionally, while both men and women considered language and employment as key resettlement challenges, they reported feeling equally concerned over the well-being of their family, the future of their children, and the cultural and value differences of New Zealand society.

In this research there was a difference between men and women related to access to English language classes, with men having more access than women, who reported that family commitments, such as taking care of their children and home, were the main reasons that they were not able to attend English language courses. Consequently, almost all of the male participants were attending an English language course at the time of conducting this research, as opposed to only a few female participants. Also, the majority of males in this study were employed, as opposed to only one female who was employed. However, most of the employed males were in low-paying positions, thus increasing their families' dependence on government aid, or working "under-the-table" (unreported employment, receiving payment in cash so as not to affect their government benefit).

The females in this research acknowledged the importance of learning the language of their resettlement country, which would in turn assist them in finding employment and becoming financially independent. However, the females were concerned that if they

did venture outside their homes to attend English courses or to become employed, then that may mean that they were ignoring their traditional roles as mothers and preservers of the ethnic culture, language and traditions in the family. Several females stated that it is the role of the mother to ensure that her family and children are taken care of, and it is up to the father of the family to provide financially. Several females also mentioned that they would not mind having access to home tutors who would be willing to come to their home to teach them English, as the females had young children who they were not able to leave, or had no means of transportation. Their concern that they would be ignoring their traditional role as mothers was also the reason that all but one of the females were unemployed at the time of conducting this research. The female participants seemed to have lower levels of schooling and English proficiency than the male participants, and when combined with a lack of appropriate childcare facilities, the females had relatively no employment and earning prospects, resulting in possible poor economic and social adjustment.

Previous studies have found that refugees may come across differing resettlement challenges in host countries due to the gender-shaped experiences of fleeing their country of origin, life in refugee camps, and resettlement (Kang et al., 1998; Lacroix, 2004; Moussa, 1992). For example, female refugees may have also experienced rape and sexual harassment, in addition to death of family members or leaving their family behind (Foster et al., 2006). However, the females in this research did not report any of these issues, nor were they asked about them, as they were considered to be too personal and private. The labour market and employment may also be expected to be a gendered experience (De Voe, 2002; Casimiro et al., 2007).

There were specific concerns for women entering the labour market and finding employment. This was reported by the female participants as being a challenge, especially if the female wore hijab and had other family responsibilities (De Voe, 2002). One female who was unemployed held a Masters degree and reported being unable to find employment due to her wearing the hijab, experiencing difficulties in accrediting her degree, and having two children under the age of 18 months.

Muslim women share similar experiences to other refugee women who come from patriarchal societies: their unique cultural and religious identities and roles give rise to unique needs. Muslim women may experience conflict and discrimination related to their dress and ethnicity, as well as their role as women.

However, participants did not mention difficulties in resettlement resulting from conflict of religious and traditional roles. When discussing employment, the females in my study stated that it was due to family commitments, language barriers and the hijab that they were unable to work, and not because of their husband's unwillingness for them to become employed. Traditional roles such as raising the children and teaching them ethnic and religious values were reported as being tasks shared by both parents due to the lack of extended family and community support.

Indeed, the preservation of culture and values were crucial matters addressed by refugees in this research. The findings suggest that Arab Muslim mother and fathers emphasise the importance of ethnic identity, and raising their children in an environment that illustrates the importance of maintaining ethnic language, values and religion. Both male and female participants shared the responsibility of teaching values, beliefs and religion to their children, whereas back in their native land this role was solely the role of the mother. The participants stated that this joint responsibility was due to the lack of adequate ethnic community support and lack of available extended family members, who would have also assisted in the children's upbringing.

Participants who were parents and had young children or who gave birth to children in New Zealand stated that they were concerned over raising their children in a non-Muslim society. Their anxiety over the well-being and future of their children was the main reason that most of the participants had left their war-torn countries; however, once they arrived in New Zealand and parents experienced resettlement difficulties, they developed a growing concern that their children may lose their grasp on their ethnic language and lose their religious identity, and pick up on Western values and behaviours that were considered culturally or religiously inappropriate, such as dating, pre-marital sex, or behaving disrespectfully towards their parents and elders.

## **Coping and Resilience**

All of the participants at some point in their interview talked about the impact that loss of extended family had on their resettlement in New Zealand. Arabs and Muslims are a collectivist group, meaning that the extended family plays a significant role in the lives of each member of the family. Extended family had provided social, emotional, and economic support to the participants back in their homelands, but all these types of support no longer existed when the participants were separated from the rest of their family. As a result, the participants talked about having to rely on themselves in order

to deal with the daily and continuous challenges of resettling in a foreign society. The issue of refugee resilience has been discussed by various studies on survival skills of refugees (e.g. Chile et al., 2003; Hamilton & Moore, 2004; Jablensky et al., 1994). According to Hamilton and Moore (2004) resilience was a survival element, in which the focus was on strengths, existing resources, and successful outcomes that assisted the refugee not only in adapting to a new society, but also to overcome the stressors of settlement.

The findings in this research stated that there were three key elements through which the Arab Muslim participants had established resilience that assisted them to overcome their daily resettlement challenges: religion, family, and realism. First, religion: generally Islam plays an important role in the daily lives of Muslim people. Islam and its commandments were perceived as a way of living for many of the participants. Having faith in Allah (God), and that he knows best, was used as a source of inspiration and resilience for many participants. Religion provided the participants with the strength to cope with their difficult resettlement challenges and their feelings of isolation, sadness and depression. Participants also noted that they used their belief in God as a form of emotional support. Specifically, they described how praying to God provided them with a way to cope with their present unhappiness and loneliness. This research suggested that when looking for ways of dealing or coping with the challenges of resettlement in a foreign society, participants turned to religion for consolation and strength. Likewise, Shoeb et al. (2007) also suggested that religious coping, such as praying or reading the holy book, is common among refugees in order to overcome their concerns while adjusting in a new society. Participants in this research talked about having to look for and acquire inner strength that was derived from their Islamic religion and their belief that all life matters are in the hands of Allah. Conversely, religion was also a challenge in terms of participants being uncomfortable or unable to practise their religion at work, and for women who wore hijab, standing out as a Muslim was a reason that they felt uncomfortable looking for employment, as they felt that they may be discriminated against or disadvantaged.

A study by McMichael (2002) on the role of religion in the lives of Somali refugees in Australia reported a similar pattern, in which religion becomes an important part of the lives of Muslim refugees, both due to the negative images and discrimination they encounter in their resettlement country, and the fact that religion sustains them during times of emotional distress. Similarly, in Fangen's (2006) study on Somali refugees in

Norway, participants reported that they that they were not religious back in their homeland, however after settling in Norway became extremely religious and rigid in their outlook and eventually held negative views of Norwegian culture. This development was not reported by participants in the current research; nonetheless, the Arab Muslim participants stated that they were aware of the existing differences between them and New Zealand society, but rather had a “to each his own” attitude about it.

Second, the family was a significant source of resilience, and by this participants meant their nuclear family and especially their children. To some participants, the importance of family was another source of strength, as concern over family well-being was considered a reason to be strong and resilient. Participants emphasised that taking care of the family’s needs and well-being is a priority, especially as the majority of participants did not have other members of their extended family in New Zealand. In addition, the well-being of their family was the main reason that so many participants chose to seek refuge in resettlement countries. Moreover, for many of these participants, being with their family was an essential element of rebuilding their life and creating social stability in their host country. Family separation is considered a principal source of depression, sadness and loneliness among refugees and can lead to significant mental health concerns (McMichael & Ahmed, 2003). Family reunification helps to eliminate the feelings of isolation and alienation that refugees face in their host society, and which may impact on their level of social adjustment and integration (Gray & Elliot, 2001).

Lastly, participants also mentioned that coming to terms with the reality of their current situation was a source of strength and a reason why some were able to move on with their lives. Each participant felt that they had to rely on themselves in order to protect their family and improve their own well-being. Participants talked about having to accept their inevitable and current situation, that of being Arab Muslims in a non-Arab, non-Muslim society. This finding was closely tied to the religious beliefs of the Muslim participants in this study, in which accepting Allah’s decisions in various avenues of life tests the individual’s faith. Muslim refugees tend to use religious explanations to justify and make meaning of events that occur in their lives (Shoeb et al., 2007).

## **Social Support**

It should be noted that social support (or lack of) also played an important role in the resettlement experience of the participants in this research. All of the participants

believed that there is a lack of ethnic specific support, which had an impact on their adjustment in New Zealand. An established ethnic community may have been able to provide the participants with housing and employment opportunities that were adequate to the family's needs. Maydell-Stevens et al. (2007) state that social support is the most widely used coping strategy that facilitates a less challenging, less apprehensive transition, which may assist refugees and migrants to change their perspectives of living in an unknown country, to living in their 'new homeland.'

The majority of the participants did not have extended family members in New Zealand; as a result they commonly reported that if they had adequate social support from other sources, such as friends and the community, then that would assist them in their resettlement. In the pre-migration periods, participants reported largely receiving support from their extended family, which may have included grandparents, cousins, aunts, uncles, and siblings. These family members provided the participants with emotional support and encouragement to flee their native country and seek a better, more stable country for resettlement. However, upon their arrival in New Zealand, participants reported having lost a large degree of their social network. As such, they relied on a broader range of individuals for social support. Specifically, individuals no longer relied on only family and friends but utilised support from others in the Muslim community whenever possible. Although some of the participants stated that they discussed and shared some of the problems related to adaptation to life in New Zealand with other members of their community, and especially those who were also going through the same resettlement challenges, the majority of the participants indicated that they had no knowledge of social support networks that were ready and able to assist them overcome their resettlement challenges.

Several participants reported that they isolate themselves from the community and/or mainstream society. Such participants felt either that the community and/or society did not understand their problems or that they were concerned that their community may gossip about them if they were to admit that they were experiencing challenges or difficulties. Mental health problems were most likely the reason why participants did not seek social assistance.

One participant reported that he preferred to seek assistance from non-Arab, non-Muslim individuals, as the Arab or Muslim who may have been oppressed in his own country may also continue to carry his insecurities with him. However, the majority of the participants admitted that they did not tend to mix or befriend New Zealanders, and

that their friends consisted mainly of people from their own ethnic culture or religion. This 'voluntary' isolation may also be the reason that many participants complained that they felt unwanted and unhappy in New Zealand and lacked a sense of belonging to the country. Befriending people from mainstream society may have provided these participants with informational support that would have assisted adaptation to the culture and emotional support so that individuals could discuss their difficulties. Besides, they may have also been a source of distraction from ongoing problems.

Despite the availability of some support for refugees upon arrival in New Zealand, it is important to outline the benefits and necessity of having 'informal support' provided to refugees such as personal contacts, community, and ethnic-like services that are both culturally and religiously appropriate. Similar to numerous studies on the importance of community social support for refugees, the findings of this research suggest that another resettlement challenge is the lack of adequate and reliable ethnic community support, as this support is an important element in ensuring refugees' wellbeing and resettlement (Hopkins, 2006; Simich, 2003; Simich et al., 2005).

Studies have suggested that in order for community support to be influential in the resettlement and integration of ethnic groups, it has to be positive, sustained and interactive with the "host society" (Simich, 2003). However, where social support is given by the Arab or Muslim community to each other, although it strengthens the community within the host society, it may also lead to minimal interaction with the society, and the ethnic groups become isolated rather than integrated.

This study found that participants reported a lack of social, community and ethnic support, which they felt would have been important. Participants talked about the need for community support groups that assist in the emotional and financial well-being of Arab Muslims, especially as in New Zealand extended family are hard to reach. Dibley and Dunstan (2002) also found that Muslims in their research explained that they wanted to join cultural or religious clubs to maintain their ethnic culture and values, and those of their children.

It is crucial, according to Griffiths (2000) that the ethnic community also play a role in rebuilding the disrupted lives of refugees, and it needs to be encouraged. Ethnic community associations play an important role in alleviating the anxiety, depression and isolation that comes with resettlement in a foreign country. It can also give refugees a sense of empowerment and confidence to be able to integrate and succeed in their new

life in the host country, and protect them from discrimination (Griffiths, 2000; Hopkins, 2006). Social support also provides emotional support for refugees who experience isolation and family separation challenges, by allowing migrants to share their experiences, affirm their situation, and encourage refugees to overcome resettlement challenges (Simich et al., 2005). Community associations were perceived as key contributors to the effective and successful resettlement and integration of refugees (Hopkins, 2006). Community social support groups may encourage refugees to become independent, assist them in finding jobs, and improve their language (Dunstan et al., 2004; Gray & Elliot, 2001). Griffiths (2000) also outlined that for a community association to succeed in playing such a role in the lives of refugees, it is necessary for it to have been founded by an established ethnic group of well-integrated people, who have set values, accessible services, are financially established, and have the support of the host society (Dorais, 1991). Refugees may choose to leave their country of resettlement and relocate in a different Western country that has a long established ethnic community, even if the country of “second” resettlement may have less generous welfare benefits (Fangen, 2006).

These findings coincide with those obtained by other researchers. For example, Schweitzer et al. (2007) also proposed that religion, social support, and “personality qualities” are coping strategies that their Sudanese refugee participants used in order to overcome resettlement and adaptation challenges. Maydell-Stevens et al. (2007) stated that in addition to social support (family, friends) being a coping method, displaced migrants (and possibly refugees) may also use cognitive strategies that include rational techniques, positive thinking, optimism, and self-persuasion, behavioural strategies that include avoiding situations that may make people feel inadequate, or forms of distraction that may keep the individual busy such as studying, taking care of other family members, or socialising with native-speakers in the community. For the participants in this thesis research, religion and realism may be considered to some extent as the “cognitive” coping strategies that were used by the participants in order to overcome their resettlement challenges.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Attitudes

Before treating and viewing refugees as, poor, illiterate, needy “refugees,” it is important for the New Zealand society and its agencies to understand that these individuals are, first and foremost, human beings. It is important to listen to the concerns, challenges, issues, and experiences of refugees and to include refugees and their communities in all levels of planning, policy and decision making that have a direct impact on their lives. Furthermore, as a humanitarian society that is largely comprised of immigrants and refugees, we have an obligation towards refugees in terms of respecting their refugee experience, but also respecting their identity as individuals, and avoiding referring to them as ‘refugees’ when introducing them to others. Also, we may assist refugees to stop seeing themselves as victims and focus on supporting them to build their sense of dignity and pride, and most importantly, helping them reconstruct their lives. Moreover, it may be relevant to explore the possibility of including the community and/or potential employers in “awareness” workshops or seminars on how to accept and engage with each other, and to respect and acknowledge differences, and to live in harmony with these differences. One thing that affects attitudes is to have the media provide informative articles and documentaries to help New Zealand understand the issues that refugees face and to encourage the society to learn about each other.



## Health Issues

Issues related to work, social welfare, language, and raising children in a foreign society were identified by the participants in this study as significant causes for negative emotions and outlooks. These resettlement challenges produced feelings of low self-worth, stress, depression, and overall sadness. A sense of loss and powerlessness seemed to have engulfed the lives of each of the participants. Participants used the term “mentally tired” to refer to their feelings of distress, helplessness, and hopelessness. Several participants reported that they would at times feel sad, lost, isolated and depressed when thinking of their current lives and their extended family that they left behind in their native countries. One female participant gave a powerful explanation of

her feelings of isolation and distress because she felt that by living in New Zealand she was far away from her family:

*It's like a tidy prison. I feel I am staying in a prison with a big garden that is far away...a tidy prison. (May-Female)*

Although life in New Zealand allowed this participant to live in a democratic society, the distance between New Zealand and the country where her parents lived made the participant feel like she was imprisoned with no way out.

Tilbury (2007) suggests that when refugees express feelings of sadness, disempowerment, shock, disappointment, and loneliness, it is important for mental health providers and refugee services to pick up on these emotions before they escalate into severe mental health problems and a negative end result to resettlement. Physical and mental health problems were discussed as being the 'price' the participants had to pay in order to arrive in New Zealand and resettle. Unlike the findings of Dibley and Dunstan's (2002) research, in which participants indicated that their health had become better since arriving in New Zealand, both male and female participants in this study stated that they felt their health had deteriorated since arriving in New Zealand, as a result of lack of employment, issues with accrediting their qualifications, lack of social support and feelings of isolation. A lack of culturally or religiously appropriate mental health support prevented the participants from seeking assistance, in addition to their concern that by seeking mental assistance, they would admit to being weak and defeated, and the people in their ethnic community may gossip about them and label them as 'crazy.'

## **Current and Ongoing Resettlement Challenges**

English language proficiency, lack of employment, and the lack of overseas qualification recognition were addressed throughout the research as challenges that the participants continuously had to deal with during their resettlement in New Zealand and which they were struggling to overcome. Several participants also believed that their resettlement was being affected by the change in their socioeconomic and educational background.

According to Waxman (2001) refugees who have been confined to a refugee camp or detention centre for an extended period of time prior to resettlement are more likely than those who have not to experience resettlement challenges in the shape of unemployment

or underemployment, and feelings of self-doubt. Waxman also suggested that other factors that may hinder refugees reaching their potential include lack of documentation or problems with accrediting the refugee's overseas qualifications and skills.

When the participants in this research were asked, "what are your current or ongoing challenges," or "what would make your resettlement experience more positive," participants reported that the English language and employment were the critical factors that influenced resettlement. The majority of the participants in this study had no functional level of English proficiency upon arrival, and those who knew a few words had acquired them during their childhood or schooling years. These findings were similar to those stated by Dibley and Dunstan (2002), who maintain that if the practical needs of refugees (such as English and employment) are not met, then this can create barriers to resettlement. Although it is the responsibility of the refugee to engage with the host society in order to learn the language and integrate, very few participants, and especially females, stated that they engaged with New Zealand society on a regular basis.

In addition, refugees who come from English speaking backgrounds or countries that teach English as a second language have an easier resettlement experience in host countries that are English speaking such as the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the UK. These refugees may have an advantage over refugees who have not been taught English at school in that it is not entirely foreign to use some, even if basic, English words. This does not, however, mean that Arab Muslim refugees without prior English language ability should not be resettled in English speaking countries, but it may be a matter that needs to be taken into consideration so that English language courses for refugees can be tailored to their needs and abilities. Altinkaya and Omundsen (1999) stress that of all the factors that affect and assist resettlement, English proficiency is one of the most important. However, most of the participants in this research did not have the advantage of this built-in familiarity with English.

Once in New Zealand, refugees are provided with introductory English lessons during their six-week stay at MRRC. Although it is recommended to migrants that they enrol in English courses after their departure from MRRC, many of the female participants stated that they had no access to English classes due to their family commitments. Also, for both male and female participants, the cost of English language proficiency classes prevented them from attending. In Auckland there are limited seats for free English

language classes, and those participants who could not afford to pay for English classes stated they were on waiting lists for access to free courses. As a result, participants from either gender who did not complete their English courses or did not attend language lessons spoke little, if any, English at all.

Beiser and Hou (2001) argue that there is a correlation between language proficiency and exposure to work. Their Canadian study found that despite more women attending language proficiency courses than men, women who remained at home and unemployed were less likely to master the language than men. Lack of language proficiency was a reason that refugee women's employment options were limited (Beiser & Hou, 2001). Language was considered one of the main barriers that may have prevented refugees from integrating and resettling well in the new country (Burnett & Peel, 2001; Colic-Peisker, 2002; Gray & Elliot, 2001; Pernice & Brook, 1994). Without language, refugees cannot communicate, work, fill in forms, answer the telephone, make appointments, or further their education. Without language, refugees may feel isolated, frustrated, and anxious when confronting or dealing with people from the host society. Although this current research suggested that the refugee's first goal was to find employment so that their English skills improved, it also suggested that it could be difficult to learn English on the job because refugees may lack the skills to open up and interact with co-workers. Researchers such as Altinkaya and Omudnsen (1999) and Gray and Elliot (2001) emphasise that language be considered a high priority among all refugee receiving countries and that language proficiency should be considered an important part of integration for refugees. Dunstan et al. (2004) also argue that the ability to communicate in the language of the host country is essential for the economic, social advancement, and overall well-being of refugees (Dunstan et al., 2004). However, when the participants in this research talked about access to and learning the English language, they stated that New Zealand had taken ineffective measures to help them become proficient. Altinkaya and Omundsen (1999) posit that refugees did not choose to come to New Zealand and therefore the country has a special obligation to provide refugees with access to English classes, and other information that may have not been provided to immigrants. It has been recognised in refugee resettlement literature that access to language classes is the most important service that refugees require.

When it came to cultural and traditional role challenges, the females did not report any conflict or pressure from their family or husbands to remain unemployed, rather they

suggested that it was either their choice to not seek a job, or a result of their lack of confidence in speaking English, family commitments, or their wearing hijab. In light of these concerns, married women in this research 'chose' to remain unemployed and had less access to English courses as taking care of their family was a main priority, while depending on their husbands for economic sustenance. Most female participants in this research complained of feeling isolated, however they did not state that they felt isolated because of lack of English language, but expressed feeling isolated from other Arab Muslims in the community. However, researchers such as Goodkind and Deacon (2004) found that refugee women risk becoming socially isolated due to a lack of language skills. Lack of language skills may also affect refugee women's employment opportunities. Reinforcing the importance of learning English and assisting women in attending English courses, by providing information on transportation and making English courses accessible, are important concerns that need to be addressed. Similarly, Beiser and Hou (2001) mention that for refugee women English proficiency is a salient job securing advantage. Chung et al. (1998) found that lack of English proficiency was a significant predictor of psychological distress amongst refugee women, thus highlighting the importance of providing Arab Muslim women with language assistance. Aside from researchers pointing out the obvious - that there is a need for more affordable English language courses, especially those that provide home tutoring for refugee women who may be otherwise isolated due to their traditional family role - there is little information on what has been done as an intervention with regards to providing refugee women with access to English proficiency courses. In New Zealand, refugee women remain a vulnerable migrant group as they stay home tending to their family's needs and are thus prevented from benefiting from available English courses (Gray & Elliot, 2001). Nonetheless, taking the same approach as other resettlement countries, such as Australia and Canada, by providing refugees with free English language classes may be beneficial for both male and female refugees, and in particular those who are concerned about the costs of attending language courses (Gray & Elliot, 2001).

As for employment, it was considered both an economic and social imperative for participants in this study. This finding is consistent with numerous refugee studies about the influence of employment on the resettlement of refugees (e.g., Korac, 2001; Valtonen, 1998) that having a job contributes to the development of the individual's well-being, and provides structure and meaning to their lives. Employment also

supports the individual's competence and self worth, and helps to eliminate the refugee's feelings of independency, burden and shame.

In this research, all females except one were unemployed, and she did not wear hijab, while all males except four males were employed. Most participants worked in areas that had no relation to their qualifications or skills. So rather than renewing their careers, they felt that they had to find employment for subsistence. The participants reported they were dissatisfied with their employment. Those who were unemployed reported being frustrated with the inability to find work. As Korac (2001) found in her study of refugees resettled in Rome, employment was one of the most difficult challenges due to a variety of factors, such as the refugee's skills and qualifications being unrecognised in the host country, and language proficiency. Other factors reported by participants include discrimination, and lack information and assistance by governmental and NGO agencies. Similar incidents of discrimination in employment were suggested in several studies (eg: Mestheneos & Ioannidi, 2002; Valtonen, 1998). Participants felt that they were denied access to employment solely based on their ethnic and religious background. Mestheneos and Ioannidi (2002) refer to these challenges as the "prejudices and preferences" (p. 315) of employers, which hindered refugees' abilities to find work. However, participants reported that this concern would not prevent their children from finding employment in New Zealand. Those who did state that discrimination occurred in the labour market felt that it was not only the fault of individual actors, but they also that it was a national dilemma, which was a result of negative stereotypes of refugees (as inadequate, uneducated, dependent people) and in particular the stereotypes of Arab Muslims (as backward, lacked English language, uncultured), which needed to be adequately addressed. The findings in this study agreed with research done by Colic-Peisker and Walker (2003) who argued that it is important to consider employment a key resettlement concern for refugees, as gaining access to employment is vital in providing them with the opportunity to become independent and productive citizens in their new country. Employment not only empowers refugees, but it also plays a role in supporting the integration of migrants (Dunstan et al., 2004).

Participants expressed frustration and confusion at needing New Zealand approval of and accreditation for their 'foreign' academic qualifications. The participants in this study stated that they were not provided with any information while at MRRC as to how to use their skills or what their qualifications meant in New Zealand. Gray and Elliot

(2001) mention that for refugees, finding appropriate employment is especially difficult if their local qualifications or degrees are not easily accredited or acknowledged. Valtonen (1998) also states that for refugees who hold college or university qualifications, the frustration of having to accredit their degrees, or even worse, when the society does not acknowledge the qualification, creates intense stress and frustration for refugees trying to rebuild their lives in a new country. When requested to enrol in educational courses in order to accredit their degrees, participants stated that they felt inadequate, and that their abilities and skills were being undermined. Simich et al. (2005) point out that while refugees bring skills and motivation to their resettlement country, they face lower levels of employment opportunities, their foreign qualifications are not recognised, and they are less likely to reach economic achievement than their host society counterparts. All these issues, in addition to discrimination, can have a negative impact on their resettlement experience and their health.

## **Unique Refugee Challenges**

Although the majority of women in this research reported feeling supported by the males in their family (either the father or the husband), two females who did not have family members with them and were relying on themselves at the time of this study, talked about their experiences of isolation and frustration. These two females lived in New Zealand on their own, without the support of extended family, which warrants their unique experiences being reported individually in this study.

Single refugee women, who arrive in a resettlement country with no friends, family or community support, face various challenges and barriers that may hinder their integration, and isolate them from the rest of society (Ager, 1999; Chung & Bemak, 2002; Pavlish, 2007). One of the single women in this study arrived with her husband and was ultimately widowed in New Zealand, and the other arrived by herself from a detention centre after a failed smuggling attempt to join her husband in Australia. What these two women share in common is that they both come from a culture that expects women to be protected, supported and provided for by men. These two women had no kind of support or assistance from either their ethnic community or the host society. The services in New Zealand that would have assisted these women, in addition to community and host society support, include adequate legal and immigration aid, a reliable interpreter, priority in housing, English proficiency assistance, and a culturally appropriate counsellor or therapist

The UNHCR has been a consistent advocate for the protection of refugee women, especially single or widowed women who may have lost their family or husbands during displacement. The UNHCR has called for attention to be paid to the protection of refugee women who are unable to feed, clothe and shelter themselves and their children. These women are considered to be more vulnerable to manipulation and to physical and sexual abuse in order to obtain such necessities (UNHCR, 1991).

Assisting single refugee women requires planning and a great deal of common sense in establishing programmes and enforcing priorities that support their safety and well-being. Single women, and especially those who are the household providers for their family, may require support and assistance from the resettlement country to obtain access to food, shelter, clothing and other necessities, in addition to other support and services that may assist in their adaptation, settlement and integration.

The two single women in this research were each going through unique and difficult experiences that had hindered their resettlement, caused them obvious distress, and isolated them from their host society. This was apparent from the conversation with these two women who, according to one of them, felt distressed because “*they bring you, and then they leave you*” (Zina-Female), which is how she reflected on her isolation and lack of support in New Zealand. It is therefore imperative for resettlement countries to realise that in addition to assisting refugees who arrive as families, it is important to be aware of the adjustment and settlement needs of single refugee women and to improve social support services targeted towards them.

## **Achieving Successful Resettlement**

The findings of this research go in accord with much of the literature on refugee resettlement (eg; Schweitzer et al., 2007; Simich, 2003; Simich et al., 2003, 2006; Stein, 1981; Waxman, 2001), which proposes that successful adjustment of refugees requires adjustment in health, social, and economic dimensions. Waxman (2001) suggested that these three dimensions interrelate and cannot be separated if indeed the successful integration and resettlement of refugees is valued. When it came to participants talking about New Zealand as a resettlement country, the findings of this study suggested that there were mixed views. Despite many of the participants in this research stating that New Zealand was not their initial resettlement destination, the overall perception by the participants was that they were grateful for the fact that they were living in a safe and stable country. Others stated that despite their belief that the country had few resources

and abilities to meet the need of refugees, and although the participants were generally unhappy to be in New Zealand, they were appreciative of whatever minimal resources were provided for their resettlement.

Also, when talking about New Zealand as a resettlement country, several participants compared it to other resettlement countries, such as Australia and Canada, some talked about the flaws they believed existed in the refugee and immigration system in New Zealand, while others mentioned that coming to New Zealand was a grave error which had cost them peace of mind and family. Participants reported feeling unsettled due to their initial reluctance to come to New Zealand and wanting to be reunited with their extended family members who had been resettled in other Western countries such as Canada, USA and Australia. According to Simich et al. (2006), migrants come to resettlement countries expecting a better quality of life for themselves and their family. When these expectations are not met, and they yearn to be reunited with other family members who are living in other resettlement countries and seem to be more adjusted, it may cause distress and unsettlement. Fangen (2006) suggests that when resettled refugees have family or support links in other resettlement countries that are renowned for their long-established ethnic communities, they may decide to relocate. This indicates that an attraction for some ethnic groups is to join a more established ethnic community, even when there is less generous welfare provision in the second resettlement country, rather than relocating for economic benefits. Nevertheless, providing better and more accurate information to refugees prior to resettlement, and more adequate resettlement services, may help alleviate some resettlement distress and increase refugee satisfaction.

As for the issues of integration versus assimilation, it was clear from the findings of this study that most participants wanted to feel a sense of belonging to New Zealand and its society, they were aware that learning English and accrediting their qualification will further enhance their employment chances and economic self-sufficiency and thus they were willing to integrate. On the other hand, assimilation was not a goal, the participants did not want to be in a melting pot, as they were proud of their ethnic and religious heritage which they wanted to pass on to their children and subsequent generations.

Ethnic minorities in New Zealand constitute a large number of diverse groups that are culturally different from one another. Because of the importance of one's own ethnic

identity as a defining characteristic of minority and migrant and refugee group members (Phinney, 1990); pressures to assimilate and give up one's sense of uniqueness may result in negative feelings felt by the ethnic individual towards the host society. Ethnic groups that do not have reliable and adequate support networks and ethnic communities may also face problems of adaptation (Phinney et al., 2001)

The meaning of ethnic identity among immigrants begins with culture, traditions, and practices that are maintained from the homeland. The children become the carriers of this ethnic identity and are expected to maintain, preserve it, and pass it on to their children. Ethnic identity is especially important for immigrants for their continuity and survival in the host land. The children – the second generation – become the critical point in which the process of ethnic identity formation should be examined. Issues of identity, language, beliefs, and customs become essential areas of adaptation for the second generation (Ajrouch, 2000). Literature has suggested that ethnic groups prefer to integrate, that is, retain their ethnic culture while adapting to the new culture. With the increase of immigrants throughout the world, countries need to be concerned about the well-being and adaptation of their newcomers as they become a part of the new society. Therefore, the findings of this research agree with suggestions made by the UNHCR in which it stated that resettlement countries should encourage integration, rather than assimilation of resettled refugees (UNHCR, 2007c). Assimilation may only add to the stress of resettlement. In order for refugees to successfully adjust in their resettlement country, allowing them to maintain their ethnic identity is necessary for their successful adaptation (Gray & Elliot, 2001).

## **Policy Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this research a number of policy recommendations can be made aimed at reducing the resettlement challenges of refugees.

- A primary policy implication of the current research is the need to devote additional funding to programmes and services aimed at assisting refugees with their initial orientation and resettlement. Providing increased funding to programmes aimed at assisting Arab Muslim refugees upon their resettlement would improve the ability of such programmes to better serve Arab Muslims. This would also assist in their overall adjustment to their new environments and subsequently their well-being.

- Refugees would benefit from extensive English language courses that go beyond basic words and terms. However, it is also important to address the language abilities of each individual before assuming that they all require the same level of English language. This will also assist in creating bridging courses that may enhance the refugees' prospects in gaining educational and skill recognition and increasing their employment opportunities.
- Adding to the above point, the devaluing of overseas education, training and work experiences will only prevent refugees from reaching their full potential in the employment market. Thus, governmental accrediting offices should be more flexible in recognising overseas qualifications, and employers need to accept skills and experiences gained and approved overseas. Throughout the refugees' transition and resettlement, career counselling is also recommended. Without such changes, refugees will continue to be unemployed or underemployed, unappreciated, and their skills unrecognised and unutilised.
- Many refugees come as large families, and the heavy financial burden of resettlement and lack of social support, especially to women, may cause refugees to accept low paid jobs and forego English courses. Providing enough home-tutors and child-minders for women who cannot leave their home to learn English may encourage more refugee women to learn English and gain social independence.

Consistent with other research on the mental health and well-being of refugees, the participants in this study reported significant levels of mental and emotional distress such as overall feelings of sadness, isolation, anxiety, and depression, which were linked to their resettlement problems. However, language barriers, lack of trust towards ethnic interpreters, fear that expressing psychological distress may cause community members to gossip (which also may relate to lack of understanding about their privacy and confidentiality rights as patients or clients) and lack of knowledge regarding culturally appropriate services that are available for refugees, are all reasons that refugees may experience health problems that are overlooked and untreated by health professionals. In order to overcome these challenges and minimise health complications, Arab and Muslim communities could be provided with culturally and linguistically appropriate information about mental health issues and available services. Providing training to religious leaders may also be another alternative, especially given that

Muslim people may opt to seek their advice as to how to overcome their emotional and mental health concerns.

## **The Future**

When asked about how they see themselves in a few years time, the participants in this study were torn between wanting to stay in New Zealand, and wanting to reunite with family or to go back to their native countries. Several participants also mentioned that they are planning on leaving New Zealand as soon as they obtain their New Zealand citizenship and passport and are able to travel freely. Those participants who had initially felt reluctant about coming to New Zealand, who had extended family members in other countries, or who had negative encounters in New Zealand that had influenced their resettlement experience, were most likely to suggest that they leave the country after obtaining citizenship. According to Michalski (2001), there are factors that undecided refugees may consider when planning on staying in or leaving the country, such as whether they have found employment, are earning decent wages, and are able to better provide support for their family in the resettlement country or overseas.

Although New Zealand is without doubt a humanitarian country, it is my opinion that the services it provides for Arab Muslim refugees lack efficacy and dependability. The participants in this study also felt that their religious beliefs and practices were not entirely welcome in New Zealand. Kolig (2003) argues that New Zealand Muslims are aware of their differences and need to find a balance by adapting their religious values within a non-Muslim society; however, these experiences can be daunting and challenging. Thus, to some refugees, New Zealand is merely another ‘stop’ along the many stops in their migration journey. Once New Zealand citizenship is obtained, migrants are free to travel to any country, without any travel barriers, and only then can the decision of where to live and how to live be a choice solely made by the refugee.

## **SUMMARY**

This chapter included the discussion and analysis of the research findings, and sought to describe how Arab Muslim refugees experience their refugee journey and resettlement experiences in New Zealand. The interviews provided insight into obstacles and challenges the refugees experienced during resettlement in a largely unknown society, their overall strengths and sources of resilience, and their perspectives on their future in a foreign country. These refugees were given the opportunity to define their own

experiences from displacement to resettlement. As the researcher, I set out to explore the experiences of Arab Muslim refugees living in New Zealand and the effects these experiences had on their resettlement in the country, taking an eclectic approach of thematic analysis and aspects of life story narratives to reveal the essence of their experiences. The findings of this research support and expand on previous literature regarding refugee experiences of resettlement. This study illustrated that there is a significant need to ensure that the resettlement of migrants becomes a positive process. I indicated the importance of looking at the refugee journey from a perspective more relevant to this group. Noteworthy was the way these individuals used their own resources such as religion and previous experiences to manage their resettlement challenges. This study argues that when considering the successful settlement of refugees in New Zealand, we should look at the person's achievements in being an integrated productive citizen, and their economic and social participation, rather than defining settlement based on the length of their residence in the country. The following chapter concludes the study, and recommendations for refugee and resettlement agencies, the limitations of this study, and recommendations for future research are also addressed.

## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION**

This chapter provides a conclusion to this study with regard to the participants' refugee journey and resettlement experiences. Despite various studies that have outlined the needs and challenges of refugees, there is a need to act upon the findings of these studies. This study aimed to find an answer to a significant question which pertains to the adjustment of refugees in a host society and asks: *do (resettled) refugees really resettle?* At the end of this chapter, the answer to this question is addressed.

### **FINAL THOUGHTS: CONCLUSION**

It is now appropriate to provide a clear and concise answer to the question addressed in the introduction to this thesis: do resettled refugees really resettle? Although it was the aim of this research to unravel the refugee journey and explore the resettlement experiences of a relatively small sample of Arab Muslim refugees, it was also my aim to provide some insight into answering the 'resettlement question.' As the interviews progressed, as resettlement experiences were shared, and as themes developed, I came to realise that the refugee experience is not static, but ongoing, and continues for a long period of time. In fact, one cannot pinpoint a specific length of time when refugees stop feeling like 'refugees' and begin to resettle; however, what the findings of this research and of other studies on refugees have clearly shown, is that with the right services and attitudes, refugees can stop feeling like strangers and begin picking up the shattered pieces of their lives and try, with the assistance of the host society, to rebuild a home in a new country.

Various studies on refugees have been done in New Zealand, and despite the availability of certain services such as English language courses, housing assistance, and basic financial and resettlement support, there continues to be a lack of appropriate understanding of refugee needs and a shortage of culturally suitable resettlement services. Fundamentally, the problem is a lack of resources that engage the government, the public sector, and refugee services in the resettlement of refugees in New Zealand.

By allowing the participants to talk about their refugee journey and experiences, this research gave a voice to refugees in New Zealand. It allowed them to express, identify and explore their refugee journey in their own words, to reveal the feelings and concerns that they experienced throughout their refugee journey. It also unveiled the

complexities of the refugee label, their concern over their children's non-Muslim upbringing, and their uncertainties about their future in New Zealand.

There is a need to provide resettlement services for a diverse population rather than to expect that existing services “will just do” for everyone. For the participants in this research, their refugee experience has been not only one of displacement but also distrust, where refugees may be suspicious of authority and dissatisfied with services. The vast majority of participants lived in poverty, in poor housing and in deprived areas. They were likely to be unemployed or under-employed, earning low wages for long hours of work; their access to education is restricted by lack of knowledge of what is available, by the inadequate courses offered and by logistical problems such as lack of childcare, access to transport or fear of travelling to classes. A further restriction on the capacity of refugees to take advantage of what resources are available to them may be the weight of their past and present experiences. Many refugees find it difficult to come to terms with their current situation and may need time and support to accept that while they may be safe, their families and loved ones may continue to be in danger. Mental health problems are widely acknowledged as common among refugee communities and recent research has shown that these problems stem from experiences in the countries of resettlement as well as from experiences in countries of origin (Ghaffarian, 1998; Gorst-Unsworth & Goldenberg, 1998; Tomlinson & Egan, 2002).

The challenges that refugees come across may include those which immigrants go through, such as ethnic identity issues and adaptation difficulties, in addition to other challenges that are not necessarily faced by immigrants. Compared to immigrants, refugees are generally less educated, with no previous exposure to Western culture, and with little knowledge of the English language (Ward et al., 2001). Most importantly, as a result of refugees being forced to flee their country, they may be less willing to readily adapt to the new culture and take on its beliefs, in the hope that they will one day go back to their native country. Barnes (2001) proposed that refugees, who have left their homeland by necessity rather than by choice, will remain loyal to that country, and their allegiance may still remain more with their country of origin than the host society, especially if the refugee group have experienced resettlement difficulties or social exclusion.

Therefore, it is critical for policy makers and resettlement agencies who deal with refugees to be mindful of the “pitfalls of prejudice and short-sighted planning” (Simich,

2003, p. 155). Simich (2003) goes on to explain that in order for us to assist in the positive resettlement of refugees, we have to understand the refugee experience:

In the context of immigration and refugee resettlement studies, as well as planning and policy analysis, little attention has been given to understanding the experiences and priorities from refugees' own perspectives. Such neglect frequently results in ineffective institutional responses not only in settlement, but also in social and health services for newcomers. (p.155)

The findings in this research support current research in which it is suggested that refugees face various resettlement challenges when arriving in new societies, from feeling like strangers in a foreign land and coping with a new language, cultural attitudes, values and beliefs, to lack of employment, personal and financial stress, family conflict and intergenerational problems, and feelings that their 'ethnic uniqueness' is under threat (Dyck & McLaren, 2002). What is more, refugee families that come from traditional countries do not always cope well with the gender role change and identity reconstruction that comes with displacement and resettlement. Males may feel that they no longer have authority or power over the females and family, and females may try and balance two lives, by being independent, working or furthering their education, and by taking care of family and cultural expectations.

Similar to the findings of Hyndman and McLean (2006) and Tomlinson and Egan (2002), the participants experienced their refugeehood as a series of stops and starts. I have argued that the refugee journey can be understood in the form of legs of a journey, with each leg representing particular experiences and challenges. The first leg of the refugee journey includes the refugees' pre-migration experiences and reasons for leaving their homelands, their experiences of becoming a refugee and utilising this humanitarian label, their original resettlement destination, their expectations of New Zealand, and their experiences in the Mangere resettlement centre. The second leg of the refugee journey involves the refugees' adjustment to their 'new' lives after leaving the resettlement centre, their experiences with resettlement agencies that assisted them with housing and welfare, the issue of unemployment and how that impacted on their resettlement, and their concerns over raising their children in a non-Muslim society. The third leg covers the refugees' ongoing resettlement experiences least one year after their initial arrival, including their methods of coping and resilience, perspective on New Zealand as a resettlement country, their future aspirations and their long-term resettlement plans.

The Arab Muslim refugees in this research, whether they had been in New Zealand for one year or eleven, continued to experience resettlement challenges that affected their adjustment to their new life in a new country. These challenges included being misinformed about New Zealand, lacking English, experiencing discrimination because of their ethnic appearance, discomfort when dealing with resettlement agencies and the host society, feeling isolated and having no informal social support network, and the challenge of unemployment. Due to their unsettled situation, many participants in this study reported their eagerness to leave New Zealand once they obtain New Zealand citizenship and reunite with their extended family that may be living in other Western countries. According to Söndergaard et al. (2001), there is a correlation between the events that refugees live through while in the resettlement country and how the refugee perceives the overall refugee and resettlement experience in that particular country.

However, it is suggested that refugees may feel better adjusted and settled if their refugee challenges are adequately addressed and dealt with, by providing them with culturally appropriate services, by understanding their specific needs, and forming a community-government based support service which deals with their growing needs (Beiser, 2006). Therefore, for the growing Arab Muslim refugee community in New Zealand, there is a definite need to provide this group with social, financial, legal, and labour assistance, to allow refugees to become the potential and productive citizens that they desire to be. More appropriate mental health support is also recommended as a method of resettlement support for Arab Muslims. This may be in the form of ethnically or culturally aware mental health practitioners, social workers, and mental health approaches.

Furthermore, the way refugees left their countries may also be a cause of unsettled feelings of 'unfinished business,' such as saying goodbye to friends or loved ones, and leaving personal items or belongings behind. Such events can hinder the process of refugee resettlement. Refugee groups may feel 'threatened' by the new society, its values, and behaviours. Phinney et al. (2001) proposed that migrant parents have a strong desire to maintain their cultural values, beliefs, language, religion, and traditions, and that the roles that each family member plays in the family needs to be continuously maintained and protected (e.g., the father as the household authority and provider, the mother as the child bearer and tradition maintainer, and the children also have gender specific roles).

Nonetheless, for the refugee family, the migration experience in itself may initiate the reconstruction of their lives and the renegotiation of their roles (Camino & Krulfeld, 1994), while maintaining family values and ties are considered an important aspect which ensures that traditions, roles and beliefs are respected and protected (Hattar-Pollara & Meleis, 1995; Joudi, 2002).

Refugees and asylum seekers also need the support of their own ethnic communities in order to be able to re-establish their lives in the new country. Without this support, refugees may feel isolated and alone. On a larger scale, refugees require the support of the wider society itself against racial and ethnic discrimination, religious prejudice, or ignorance (Gray & Elliot, 2001). Negative attitudes towards refugees will no doubt lead to negative stereotypes of ethnic minorities, which in turn may result in refugee groups becoming socially isolated and excluded. As a consequence of this isolation, the refugee group risks being separated from the wider society, rather than being integrated (Joudi, 2002). It is important for us, as a society, to appreciate the refugee experience without worrying about tip-toeing around the topic, however some refugees, when asked where they come from or if they are a refugee or immigrant, may sense an underlying message that is “you do not belong here,” even if the person asking is genuinely interested in a positive way. Therefore, it is significant to build positive and clear communication bridges between the migrant communities, the agencies and the host society. This can be done by organising and supporting awareness seminars or workshops for general members of the host society and individuals who work with refugees. These workshops may provide accurate, up to date background cultural and religious information about the members of the refugee groups that New Zealand will be receiving and those which it has already received and resettled in the country. These workshops can be organised and run by members of the ethnic community in collaboration with governmental and non-governmental agencies.

Also, government funded or free mental health programmes should stimulate these mechanisms of adaptation and foster self-help to minimize helplessness. Programmes should help refugees develop coping mechanisms to replace or restore the lost protective factors offered by social networks, religion, and culture (Chile et al., 2003; Jablensky et al., 1994).

Not only is it important to provide accurate and useful information *to* refugees prior to and after arriving in their resettlement country, but as Robinson (1998) stated, “central to any agenda, there is a need for more and better information *about* refugees, their

characteristics, aspiration and needs, and more effective dissemination of acquired knowledge” (p. 157, emphasis added). This information will assist to better meet the needs and expectations of refugees who arrive in our country. Refugee groups could be involved in making suggestions and requests with regards to their needs and the information that will be beneficial to them. Allowing refugee groups to provide feedback regarding the benefits of resettlement orientation programmes not only encourages the involvement of refugees in their own integration, but it also may assist the agencies in developing more appropriate orientation programmes that fit the needs of refugee groups.

Although Arab Muslim refugees have some sort of responsibility to make their own effort with regards to integrating in the host society, the lack of information, lack of community and ethnic social support assistance, lack of confidence with regards to communicating in English, and overwhelming feelings of disappointment and cultural shock may be reasons why Arab Muslim refugees fail to be able to assist themselves in their resettlement.

This research has shown that despite the increase in the number of Arab Muslim refugees in the last decade, there continues to be little known about this ethnic community or their specific needs as a refugee group. It is my opinion that for refugees to successfully resettle and integrate in New Zealand society, they have to feel a sense of belonging to the host country, be provided with resettlement support, and feel that as an ethnic group they are welcomed by the society. For Arab Muslims, their distinctive culture and religion, and the ongoing “war on terror” ideologies may have made it difficult to integrate in New Zealand. To feel that they are able to belong requires for Arab Muslims to be accepted and recognised by the host society. Research has suggested that Arab Muslim refugees are disadvantaged in several ways: they not only experience disadvantages as non-English speaking refugees, but also as members of a religious minority in New Zealand with strict codes of conduct. In turn this leads to significant and complex issues of isolation and insecurity, which were dominant themes to emerge from the analysis of this qualitative study.

## **Limitations**

It is important to mention that although the sample in this research may not be wholly representative of Arab Muslims in New Zealand, nevertheless the findings provide invaluable insight into the refugee journey and resettlement experience of these Arabic-

speaking Muslim individuals about which little was previously known or documented. The limitations of the current study primarily relate to its sample size. As a result of the difficulties encountered in recruiting refugees, and refugee services being concerned that the refugees not be 'over researched,' this study explored the contextualised stories and experiences of 31 male and female Arab Muslim refugees, and therefore is not generalisable to a larger population of refugees. In addition, the exploratory nature of this study limits how it can be generalised to other ethnic groups. The findings are applicable only to this group of participants with their unique circumstances, capacities, and limitations.

An additional limitation was methodological, in terms of translating the interviews from Arabic to English. Although the utmost effort was exercised to produce accurate English translations of transcripts, some Arabic words did not have an exact literal translation in English, and therefore the Arabic word would be 'described' as accurately as possible in English. My gender, as a female, may have also limited my access to participants (in particular male) and/or the information they had disclosed to me during the interviews. My being a member of the Arab and Muslim community may also have limited the disclosed information from either male or female participants who may have been concerned about issues of privacy and confidentiality. On the other hand, being an Arab Muslim researcher who had contacts and dealings with governmental and non-governmental immigration and refugee agencies may have influenced the way that information was recalled and/or reported in certain contexts in relation to the refugee services and/or incidents that the participants may have experienced in New Zealand. In particular, the participants may have feared that by disclosing personal information, they may lose their government benefits. A final limitation is the strong relationship between participants' nation of origin, years of resettlement, and educational background. This serves to confound each individual variable and renders it more difficult to draw definitive conclusions regarding the relationship between any single variable and the participants' needs.

## **Research**

In order for us, as a society, to understand the needs of refugees and methods of providing adequate support and assistance for them research needs to be done, but, most importantly, research findings and recommendations need to be executed and assessed. Follow-up research on the resettlement of refugees who leave MRRC is necessary in

order for us to identify the methods in which they overcame resettlement challenges, and provide support to help refugees deal with ongoing challenges. Such studies may assist in updating the available services or exploring the possibility of engaging new services to assist in the resettlement of refugees in New Zealand. However, it is also important to coordinate research in order to avoid research fatigue in which refugees become “over researched” while little is done in terms of advancing or providing support for them. Research may assist in investigating how the host society could appreciate and understand the cultures of refugees, and improve society’s attitudes towards refugees.

Ideally, future research would include a longitudinal study to allow the process of resettlement to develop. It may also be valuable to conduct a follow-up or satisfaction survey to evaluate the success and usefulness of the programmes and services provided. This research would help to shed light on common resettlement challenges across refugee groups, the time takes for refugees to experience resettlement challenges, and whether the six-month RMS resettlement support plays a role in diminishing resettlement challenges or there is a need for further follow up services. This type of research needs to be conducted by culturally appropriate researchers, who understand the cultural background of the participants and speak their language, and are funded to be able to travel to various cities in New Zealand to interview participants who in normal circumstances would not be easily reached. This type of research may also help us to understand how differing refugee groups overcome their resettlement issues, and if these skills can be used to assist other refugee groups. The method of collecting data for this research was through individual face-to-face interviews. An interesting future approach could try a focus group interview, although concerns expressed in this study pertaining to personal, cultural, religious or political issues suggested discomfort with a group format. A different approach may be that a focus group interview could be used as a secondary method to discuss the general issues and challenges that arose during the overall research. Additionally, two interviewers, one Arab Muslim and one from a different ethnicity, could be used in order to explore if participants would increase self-disclosure and willingness to talk about further experiences. This alternative may provide information regarding whether what was seen in this study was a use of defence mechanism to protect themselves from painful memories and/or society’s view of refugees and Arab Muslims, or actually a response style specific to an interview by someone of the same ethnic origin.

## Summary

I was privileged to listen to the refugee journey of the individuals who participated in this study as they described their challenges and hardships, their current concerns and future aspirations. Overall, the most important issue that needs to be addressed relates to the services provided to refugees on their arrival in New Zealand and in the following months and years. These programmes and services are a significant element of the refugees' resettlement experience and it is crucial that they are relevant, up to date, and cater for the specific needs of diverse refugee groups. Although all refugees experience trauma and resettlement challenges, Arab Muslim refugees are under-represented in the refugee support community. The lack of culturally and religiously appropriate services for Arab Muslims and the lack of information provided to them during their MRRC stay, makes it difficult for them to adjust in New Zealand and develop a sense of belonging to their new country.

Although this study illustrates that resettlement seems to be hard for Arab Muslim refugees in New Zealand, it is worth noting that for most of these refugees, their experiences do not overshadow the fact that they feel safer in New Zealand than in their homeland, with its political instability, poverty, and continuing violent conflicts. Arab Muslim refugees possess strength despite the obstacles arising from their experiences, hardships, and isolation, and from the attitudes of their host society. This strength will be passed on by these individuals to future generations of Arab Muslims in New Zealand, with the main task being to find ways to better their new lives far away from home.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A: The Political Context of the Refugees' Countries**

People become refugees when there is political or religious instability in their countries. They leave behind status, money, education, family, friends, and familiarity of the life and society they had once been a part of, and now have to escape. These events are important and imprinted in the minds of these individuals and the way they reflect on and talk about their refugee journey. The label of the refugee is more or less forced upon individuals, in order for them to gain safety and stability for themselves and family.

In 2002, there were more than 7 million Muslim refugees worldwide (UNHCR, 2002). By 2006, the main group of refugees under UNHCR's mandate continued to be Afghans (2.1 million), followed by Iraqis (1.5 million), Sudanese (686,000), and Somalis (460,000) (UNHCR, 2007a). In the New Zealand context, between 1980 and 2007 the country resettled 2,605 Iraqi refugees, 1,743 Somalian refugees, 336 Sudanese refugees, 60 Palestinian refugees, 51 Syrian refugees, 20 Kuwaiti refugees, 9 Saudi Arabian refugees, 9 Tunisian refugees, and 8 Libyan refugees (RefNZ, 2007).

When asked about their refugee journey, it was natural for all participants to talk about 'why' they became refugees. The political and religious instability occurring in their countries was the force behind their reluctantly leaving their homelands. Refugees anticipated and expected to reach a better, more peaceful and stable country once they announce their 'refugeeness' to the UNHCR agencies. For all the participants, political instability has always been a part of their lives. Conflicts have been erupting in the Middle East and parts of Africa for decades, leaving thousands dead, and millions homeless and desperate to flee. This section will briefly outline the instability that has been occurring in several countries that the participants originated from, namely Iraq, Kuwait, Sudan, Somalia and Tunisia.

#### **Iraq**

The Middle Eastern country, Iraq, has been riddled by wars and conflict for more than 60 years. Iraq's capital is Baghdad. The country shares borders with several countries, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to the South, Jordan to the West, Syria in the North West, Iran to the East, and Turkey to the North.

On July 16, 1979, Saddam Hussein succeeded President Ahmed Baker. Under Saddam Hussein's rule, Iraq has seen wars, conflicts and instability that has spanned decades, and continues on even after Saddam Hussein's ousting in 2003 by the American "War on Iraq" (Shoeb et al., 2007). A long-standing territorial dispute over control of the Shatt-al-Arab waterway between Iraq and Iran broke into full-scale war on September 20, 1980, when Iraq invaded western Iran (Jamil et al., 2002). The Iraq-Iran War continued for eight years with an estimated 1.5 million people killed.

In 1990, Saddam Hussein asserted territorial claims on Kuwaiti land, and invaded Kuwait in August of that year, for seven months. In 1991, UN forces, under the leadership of the USA, launched the Gulf War (Operation Desert Storm), liberating Kuwait in less than a week. This war resulted in 3 million Iraqi refugees worldwide (Migration Policy Institute, 2003). The UN Security Council imposed sanctions beginning in 1990 that barred Iraq from selling oil except in exchange for food and medicine. The sanctions against Iraq caused the country's infrastructure to collapse, and disease, malnutrition, and infant mortality intensified.

In 2003, another war on Iraq began called Operation Iraqi Freedom; its aim was to free the country from Saddam Hussein's tyranny. However, political instability in Iraq continues to this day as the situation now in Iraq is changing to becoming more of a civil war among Iraqis (Human Rights First, n.d.).

The UNHCR (2008b) estimated that more than 4.2 million Iraqis have left their homes, many in dire need of humanitarian care. Of these, some 2.2 million Iraqis are displaced internally, while more than 2 million have fled to neighbouring states, particularly Syria and Jordan. Many were displaced prior to 2003, but the largest number has fled since. In 2006, Iraqis became the leading nationality seeking asylum in Europe (UNHCR, 2008b).

According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (2002), over the past decade and half, over 2 million Iraqis have fled the country, with most of these displaced people living in neighbouring countries such as Jordan (over 250,000), Iran (200,000), and Syria (40,000). Between 1989 and 2001 more than 277,500 Iraqis had applied for asylum or refuge to Western countries, mainly in Europe. Because the refugees have fled to urban areas, rather than refugee camps, they remain difficult to account for. Hundreds of thousands may have hidden for fear of being deported. In New Zealand, Iraqis constitute one of the most numerous Arab Muslim refugee groups to be

resettled in the country through the UN quota programme. According to RefNZ (2007), from 1988 to 2007, New Zealand has approved the resettlement of more than 2,605 Iraqi quota refugees.

## **Kuwait**

Kuwait is an Arab, predominately Muslim country enclosed by Saudi Arabia to the south and Iraq to the north and west. Kuwait is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system of government and Kuwait City serves as its political and economic capital. According to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), and unlike Iraq, Sudan and Somalia, Kuwait is a highly industrialised and oil rich country; in fact, Kuwait is categorised as the fourth richest country in the world (FCO, 2007). Kuwait gained its independence from the British in 1961.

As for political instability, the country has not been exposed to severe conflict up until 1990 when Kuwait was invaded by its neighbouring country Iraq. This invasion lasted seven months and came to an end after a direct military intervention by American-led forces. Some Kuwaitis accused of being collaborators during the Iraqi occupation, have been sentenced to prison, or in some extreme cases sentenced to death. Hundreds of other “collaborators” have fled to Iraq or neighbouring countries seeking asylum or refuge (New York Times, June 30, 1991).

Kuwait has also had issues with more than 100,000 long-term residents called Bedoon (stateless people), who have been discriminated against by the Kuwaiti government in acquiring nationality, and accessing education, healthcare and adequate housing (FCO, 2007). Despite the Kuwaiti government’s attempting to resolve the Bedoon issue in 2000 by introducing legislation that annually extended citizenship to up to 2,000 Bedoon who met certain citizenship criteria, the limitation on the number of Bedoon who could become citizens each year meant that thousands of others would continue being discriminated against for years (HRW, 2001).

According to Refugees International (RI), Kuwait also shelters more than 13,000 Iraqi refugees who are considered of persons of concern for the UNHCR (RI, 2004). However, the situation of these refugees is unstable, as Kuwait is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention agreement, and does not seem to have the resources or the desire to allow for the resettlement of refugees (RI, 2004). Although the country does not force refugees back to their home country, it takes various measures to ensure the refugees feel uncomfortable and unsettled. According to RI (2004), Kuwait has detained

more than 100 refugees and Bedoon who do not wish to return to their country. Little is known about the Kuwaitis in New Zealand; however RefNZ statistics suggest that between 1980 and 2007, New Zealand has accepted 20 Kuwaiti refugees for resettlement under the UN quota programme.

## **Sudan**

Sudan is the largest country in Africa and tenth largest country in the world by area. It is bordered by Egypt to the north, the Red Sea to the northeast, Eritrea and Ethiopia to the east, Kenya and Uganda to the southeast, Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic to the southwest, Chad to the west and Libya to the northwest. Its capital is Khartoum.

Since being granted its independence from the British in 1956, Sudan has experienced various conflicts and instabilities, beginning with a civil war in 1955, between northern and southern Sudan (Simich et al., 2006). This civil war began a year before Sudan's independence and continued after the country gained its independence, stretching for almost 17 years and half a million people dead, it ended in 1972. A second civil war occurred between 1983 and 2005, claiming over 2 million lives, and displacing more than 4 million people (Schweitzer, Greenslade, & Kagee, 2007). Sudan has also been struck by famines in 1988, 1992, and 1998 (Schweitzer et al., 2007). Although a peace agreement was signed in 2005, officially ending the conflict, fighting continues to the present day, and hundreds of thousands remain internally displaced.

Darfur has been in the heights of conflict from 2003 to this day. The War in Darfur (also referred to as the Darfur Genocide) is a military conflict in the western region of Sudan. Unlike the Second Sudanese Civil War, the current lines of conflict are seen to be ethnic and tribal, rather than religious. The combination of decades of drought, desertification, and overpopulation are among the causes of the Darfur conflict. The UN estimates that the conflict has left as many as 200,000 dead from violence and disease, and as many as 2.5 million are thought to have been displaced as of October 2006 (Simich et al., 2006).

The conflicts in Sudan can be viewed in religious (Muslim vs. Christian) or ethnic (Arab vs. African) terms. But according to Simich et al. (2006), it is more accurate to discuss the conflict in Sudan in terms of unequal distribution of educational, health and economic resources.

Sudan has been ranked as one of the worst countries in the world for producing uprooted people since the 1980s. More than 80 percent of Sudanese people from the south have been displaced since 1983 (Schweitzer, et al., 2007).

New Zealand has accepted 336 Sudanese refugees between 1980 and 2007, in comparison to Australia which between 2000 and 2001 accepted 12,525 Sudanese refugees under the humanitarian programme with the UNHCR (Schweitzer et al., 2007), (RefNZ, 2007).

## **Somalia**

It has been stated by the United Nations that Somalia is one of the poorest countries in the world (Guerin et al., 2003). Somalia is located on the Horn of Africa, bordering on Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya, and its capital is Mogadishu. Somalia gained its independence in 1960. Today's Somalia resulted from the unification of the northern province of British Somaliland and the south-eastern province of Italian Somaliland in 1960. Said Barre<sup>32</sup> seized power over the country in 1969 and proclaimed a Socialist regime, though he ignored the social and political foundations of socialism. Under Barre's government Somalia joined The League of the Arab States.<sup>33</sup> Somalians are not Arab, but many share the religion of Islam.

Somali society is made of clan-families. A clan-family is a group of clans who believe themselves to be linked by descent from a common ancestor. Within each clan-family there is a multitude of clans. A clan is a group of people believed to be descendants through males of a common ancestor. Each clan is then further sub-divided into lineages. Nomads and semi-nomads, who are dependent upon livestock for their livelihood, make up a large portion of the population. During Barre's government he promised to eliminate corruption and clannism, but according to Fangen (2002) it seemed that Barre's government was based on the same things he vowed to get rid of.

There are different accounts of ongoing problems in Somalia. According to the UNHCR (2007c), Somalia's economy deteriorated and inter-clan fighting enveloped the nation, while the common people starved. During the clan warfare an estimated 300,000 people

<sup>32</sup> Said Barre's dictatorship continued till 1991 when the United Somali Congress (USC) pushed Barre out of Mogadishu (Fangen, 2002), causing the country to collapse, and ever since the Republic of Somalia has not been able to be resurrected.

<sup>33</sup> The League of the Arab States is a regional organization of Arab States in the Middle East and North Africa. It was formed in Cairo on March 22, 1945. The Arab League is involved in political, economic, cultural, and social programmes designed to promote the interests of member states. It currently has 22 members, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Palestine, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Bahrain, Qatar, Syria, Lebanon, Sudan, Yemen, Oman, Mauritania, Somalia, Comoros and Djibouti.

died and 1.5 million were forced to flee to refuge in neighbouring areas. In 1991 and 1992, three million people, approximately half of the country's population at the time were displaced (UNHCR, 2007d). Most sought asylum in Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Djibouti and Yemen as a result of generalised armed conflict after the fall of the Said Barre regime. More recently, severe drought, floods, famine and loss of access to traditional grazing grounds and water sources have severely disrupted the already precarious livelihoods of many Somalis, which in turn has exacerbated tribal conflicts over limited resources (UN, 2006).

Fangen (2006) explains that for over 30 years Somalia has been in a state of fluctuating complex emergency. Somalis have fled from war-induced famines and generalized violence, especially fighting between rival factions. According to McMichael and Ahmed (2003), at the height of fighting in 1992 up to 2 million people were displaced, and over 500,000 people had died. More than 900,000 Somalis have fled to neighbouring countries over the years. However, since 1997 a process of voluntary repatriation of refugees to north-western Somalia (Somaliland) has been underway, the only area in Somalia which has remained a haven of stability in the country (Hopkins, 2006). Some 430,000 Somalis now live in refugee camps outside the country, mainly in Kenya, and the remainder in Ethiopia, Djibouti, Yemen, and Tanzania.

Human Rights Watch (1992) stated that the situation in Somalia is one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters. War and civil conflict in Somalia is of course the major contributor to the dislocation of Somalis. According to Amnesty International (2007a), since 2006, more than 700,000 people fled from Mogadishu and other areas affected by the advance of UIC forces and fighting in the latter part of 2006. Many refugees from the Kismayu area entered Kenya and tens of thousands were displaced inside the country.

McMichael and Ahmed (2003) reported that less than one percent of Somali refugees have been accepted for resettlement in countries such as New Zealand, Australia, Denmark, Canada, USA, the UK, Yemen and Egypt. Gurein, Abdi, and Guerin (2003) reported that since 1991, New Zealand has been accepting a steady rate of 150 Somali refugees per year. However, thousands more are stranded in UN camps on the borders of Kenya and Sudan. Many Somalis who live in resettlement countries do not think they can move back to their homeland due to the continuation of localised wars between clans, government instability, lack of employment opportunities in Somalia, and scarcity of food (Fangen, 2006).

## **Tunisia**

Tunisia is a country situated on the coast of North Africa. It is bordered by Algeria to the west and Libya to the southeast. Its capital is Tunis. Tunisia gained its independence from France in 1956. The Tunisian government headed by President Zine EL Abidine Ben Ali has been dominated by a single political party since 1987 (US State Department, 2008).

Although Tunisia may be considered peaceful and safe country, the government imposes significant restrictions on freedom of speech and human rights. As such Tunisians are insecure when discussing political matters (AI, 2007). Underground opposition from Islamic Fundamentalists have an obvious yet shadowy existence in Tunisia (AI, 2007c). The main domestic Islamist group, Hizb al-Nahda (Renaissance Party), was largely suppressed in the early 1990s. The government accused Hizb al-Nahda of plotting to seize power, arresting hundreds of Hizb al-Nahda supporters, while others fled abroad seeking asylum or refuge in foreign countries. According to AI (2007c) around 50 to 100 Tunisian asylum seekers fled to Turkey during this period, many of whom were recognised as refugees by the UNHCR.

Similar to Kuwait, little is known about the Tunisian refugees in Western countries, and especially in New Zealand. Nonetheless, statistics suggest that between 1989 and 1998 New Zealand accepted the resettlement of nine Tunisian refugees. RefNZ (2007) states by 2007, New Zealand had accepted an additional nine Tunisian refugees for resettlement as part of the UN quota refugee programme.

## **Appendix B: Interview Guide and Points**

I will begin my interview with introducing myself. I will remind the participants about their rights, about issues of confidentiality, and anonymity. I will also remind the participant that they have the right to refuse to answer any questions, the choice to speak in Arabic or English. Also we will review the consent form, I will ask the participant to sign it, and I will answer any initial questions which the participant may have about the nature of my research.

### **Demographic Information:**

1. Age/Gender
2. Education (If Applicable)
3. Nationality (If Applicable)
4. Length of residence in New Zealand

### **Interview Points:**

If at any stage there is confusion regarding the question asked, I will provide further explanation or elaboration.

1. Can you tell me about your feelings or aspirations before coming to NZ?
2. What are your feelings at present, now that you have arrived here?
3. Tell me about your first experience of NZ once you arrived here; were there any problems or difficulties you were faced with?
4. Which refugee services did you have access to? Were they helpful and sufficient? What service did you require that they could not give you?
5. What are the main difficulties or problems facing you currently?
6. What is the difference, in your opinion, between an immigrant and a refugee?
7. Does the refugee label trigger any feelings for you?
8. Has your role within your family changed since migrating to NZ?
9. Where do you get your strength to adapt and survive in a foreign society from?  
What support do you get?
10. What are the difficulties (if any) that you face in maintaining your identity, customs, and religious beliefs?
11. What are the difficulties (if any) that you're facing in raising your children here?
12. How are your children coping/adapting here?
13. Can you tell me about your future plans?

## Appendix C: Participant Information Sheet (Arabic)

إستمارة المعلومات للمشارك للمشاركة

عنوان البحث: اللاجئون العرب المسلمون في نيوزيلندة: تجارب التأقلم الثقافي وإعادة التوطين

نبذة عن الباحثة

السلام عليكم، اسمي روز جودي، انا عراقية مسلمة وطالبة دكتوراه في جامعة اوكلاند للتكنولوجيا أود أن أدعوك للمشاركة في دراستي للتحقيق في قضايا التأقلم الثقافي، إعادة التوطين وتجربة الهجرة التي قد يواجهها اللاجئون العرب المسلمون في الغربية.

ما هو الغرض من هذه الدراسة؟

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو التحقيق في تجارب الهجرة والتأقلم الثقافي وإعادة التوطين والمشاكل التي قد يواجهها اللاجئون العرب المسلمون في الغربية، والأستطلاع على تغير القيم الثقافية عبر الأجيال. البحث في هذا المجال سيساعد في فهم العراقيين التي قد يواجهها اللاجئ وعائلته بعد الهجرة إلى المجتمع الغربي.

كيف يتم اختيار المشاركين في هذه الدراسة؟

المدعوون للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة هم اللاجئون من الجالية العربية المسلمة في نيوزيلندة من كلا الجنسين، على شرط أن تتراوح أعمارهم بين 16 إلى 50 سنة، وأن لا تقل مدة إقامتهم في نيوزيلندة عن 6 أشهر.

ماذا يحدث في هذه الدراسة؟

يتم جمع المعلومات من خلال مقابلات شخصية مسجلة (على أفراد) لآتزيد مدتها عن ساعتين. المواضيع المتطرق إليها في المقابلة تستطلع تجارب اللاجئين في الهجرة من حيث التعايش والتأقلم الثقافي وإعادة التوطين عبر الأجيال في المجتمع الغربي. مواضيع المقابلة ستتعال مع تحديات الهجرة، تربية الأجيال العربية المسلمة في المجتمع الغربي، والتغيرات في القيم الثقافية عبر الأجيال التي يمكن ان تحدث نتيجة للهجرة.

ما هي حقوقي كمشارك\مشاركة؟

قضايا الخصوصية الشخصية، والتعامل مع المواضيع الحساسة ستؤخذ بنظر الاعتبار والإحترام. و بالتالي في حالة ان يشعر المشارك بأي تحفظ في أي وقت بسبب الأسئلة فيأمكنه الإمتناع عن الإجابة. بإستطاعة المشارك المشاركة الإنسحاب من المشروع في أي وقت قبل الإنتهاء من جمع المعلومات. في حالة الإنسحاب المدونة سيتم التخلص من جميع الأشرطة والمعلومات.

ما هي الفوائد؟

تعتبر هذه الدراسة فريدة من نوعها، حيث أنها تتطرق لمواضيع لم تبحث من قبل في المجتمع الغربي من قبل باحثة عربية الأصل. تأمل هذه الدراسة أن تصحح الآراء السلبية لدى المجتمع الغربي عن العرب والمسلمين بشكل خاص. الهدف الأساسي من هذه الدراسة هو إعطاء اللاجئين الفرصة للتعبير عن تجاربهم بمنظورهم الخاص في سبيل إعطاء آرائهم ومعتقداتهم حيزاً أكبر في المجتمع.

كيف ستحفظ خصوصيتي؟

كل المعلومات المكتسبة ستكون موفرة للباحثة والمشرفين فقط. قضايا الخصوصية الشخصية ستؤخذ بنظر الاعتبار والإحترام. لن تذكر اسماء المشاركين في المعلومات المدونة أو في مشروع البحث ذاته، وانما ستستبدل بحروف لأسماء وهمية. إذا اراد المشارك الإنسحاب من الدراسة في غضون شهر من تاريخ إجراء المقابلة، يمكنه ان يفعل ذلك وسيتم التخلص من المعلومات.

كيف أشارك في هذه الدراسة؟

عند قبولك للمشاركة في الدراسة بإمكانك الإتصال بالباحثة لتحديد وقت مناسب للمقابلة.

فرصة الحصول على نتائج البحث

بعد أن يتم جمع وتحليل البحث، بإمكان المشارك الحصول على تقرير ملخص متعلق بالبحث ذاته، وذلك من خلال الإتصال بالباحثة للحصول على نسخة إن رغب بذلك.

تحفظات المشارك

بإمكانك تبليغ المشرفة على المشروع بأي تحفظات متعلقة بطبيعة هذه الدراسة، وأما القضايا المتعلقة بطريقة تطبيق المشروع فبإمكانك تبليغها للسكرتيرة التنفيذية مادلين باندا على رقم هاتف 917 9999 وصلة 8044

أو على البريد الإلكتروني

[madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz](mailto:madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz)

معلومات الإتصال بالباحثة:

روز جودي

هاتف: 917 9999 وصلة 8629

[rose.joudi@aut.ac.nz](mailto:rose.joudi@aut.ac.nz)

معلومات الإتصال بالمشرفة الرئيسية:

هذر ديفير

هاتف 917 9999 وصلة 5782

[heather.devere@aut.ac.nz](mailto:heather.devere@aut.ac.nz)

المرشدة الإجتماعية العربية المسلمة:

د. ميادة شريف

هاتف: 639 0200 وصلة 8483

[mayada\\_sharef@yahoo.com](mailto:mayada_sharef@yahoo.com)

معلومات الإتصال بالطبيبة النفسانية:

كارن تنت

هاتف 917 5540 موبايل 021-106-0574

بتاريخ تمت الموافقة من قبل جمعية القيم الإنسانية في جامعة أوكلاند للتكنولوجيا 14<sup>th</sup> March 2005 .... رقم 05/32...

## **Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet (English)**



**Date Information Sheet Produced: 4th April, 2005**

### **Project Title:**

**Arab Muslim Refugees in New Zealand: Their resettlement and cultural adaptation experiences.**

### **Invitation**

Al Salam Alaykum (Peace be upon you). My name is Rose Joudi, I am an Iraqi Muslim PhD student at Auckland University of Technology (AUT). I would like to invite you to participate in my research study which will explore resettlement experiences and cultural adaptation, or cultural resistance issues of Arab Muslim refugees in NZ.

### **What is the purpose of the study?**

It is the aim of this study to investigate issues of resettlement, cultural adaptation, or cultural resistance of male and female Muslim Arab refugees in New Zealand

### **How are people chosen to be asked to be part of the study?**

Participants involved in this study will meet the following criteria: Arab, Muslim refugees of both gender between the ages of 16 – 50 years old, and who have been living in NZ for more than 6 months.

### **What happens in the study?**

Data will be collected through individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Interviews will be audio-taped and will be about 2 hours long. The interview will be held at a location chosen by you. The interviews will be conducted in either Arabic or English, depending on your preference.

### **What are the discomforts and risks?**

There are no risks expected. However, there may possibly be some awkwardness. Participants will be reminded that they have the right to decline answering a question, or to end the interview if they sense any discomfort. However, if you do feel any discomfort, please contact the Arab Muslim counsellor Dr. Mayada Sharef. Her services will be provided to you free of charge.

### **What are the benefits?**

On a general level, this research is unique as it has not been addressed by a researcher from an Arab Muslim background. On a more specific level, as a participant in this study, and as an Arab Muslim refugee you are given an opportunity to voice your issues, and experiences in your own words. Your contribution may assist in the correcting of the negative and misconceived images of Arab and Muslim refugees and migrants living in Western society. It is my hope that this empowerment will help

participants talk about their migration experience and assist them to look at their experience from a different and insightful perspective. Allowing refugees to express, and voice their experiences may give them a feeling of being in control. Empowerment enables refugees to denounce what they had to endure, as well as to educate the world about their experiences.

### **How will my privacy be protected?**

Once participants agree to participate in the research, I will go through the information sheet again to ensure the participants are well aware of their rights to withdraw by an agreed date. Participants will be reminded that to protect their identity pseudonyms will be used within the research, and to respect issues of privacy and confidentiality I will omit any personal information that may identify the person or their family.

### **How do I join the study?**

You can participate in this study by contacting the researcher (Rose Joudi) or her primary supervisor (Dr. Heather Devere) to discuss an appropriate time and place to meet. Their contacts are provided below.

### **How long will the interview take?**

The time spent at your interview will be about 2 hours.

### **Opportunity to receive feedback on results of research**

You will have been given the researcher's contact details in case they have any questions, concerns, or require elaboration with regards to the research or method. A copy of the follow up report can be provided if you require. You also have the opportunity to see the transcripts of the interviews after they have been transcribed.

### **Participant Concerns**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEK, Madeline Banda, [madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz](mailto:madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz) , 917 9999 ext 8044.

### **Researcher Contact Details:**

Rose Joudi

Ph: (09) 917 9999 extension: 8629

E-mail: [rose.joudi@aut.ac.nz](mailto:rose.joudi@aut.ac.nz)

### **Project Supervisor Contact Details:**

Dr. Heather Devere

Ph: (09) 917 9999 extension: 5782

E-mail: heather.devere@aut.ac.nz

**Arab Muslim Counsellor:**

Dr. Mayada Sharef

Ph: (09) 639 0200 extension: 8483

E-mail: mayada\_sharef@yahoo.com

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 14<sup>th</sup>  
March 2005 AUTEK Reference number 05/32**

## استمارة الموافقة على المشاركة في البحث

عنوان البحث: اللاجئين العرب المسلمون في نيوزيلندا: تجارب التأقلم الثقافي وإعادة التوطين  
المشرفون على البحث: د. هنر ديفير ، د. تشارلز كروثرز

الباحثة: روز جودي

- 
- لقد قرأت وفهمت المعلومات الموفرة عن هذا البحث
  - اعطيت الفرصة لطرح الأسئلة وتمت الإجابة عليها
  - لقد فهمت أن المقابلة ستسجل وتدوّن
  - إذا قررت التراجع عن المشاركة في هذا البحث أعلم أن بإستطاعتي الإنسحاب من المشروع في أي وقت قبل الإنتهاء من جمع المعلومات
  - في حالة الإنسحاب، أعلم أن جميع الأشرطة والمعلومات المدونة سيتم التخلص منها
  - اوافق على المشاركة في هذه البحث
  - أود الحصول على نسخة ملخصة من المشروع

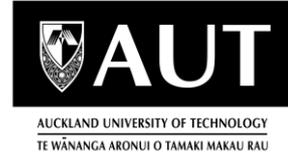
توقيع المشارك\المشاركة

توقيع ولي أمر المشارك\المشاركة (أن كان العمر دون 21 سنة)

التاريخ:

تمت الموافقة من قبل جمعية القيم الإنسانية في جامعة أوكلاند للتكنولوجيا بتاريخ 14<sup>th</sup> March 2005 رقم ...05/32....

## Appendix F: Consent to Participation in Research (English)



**Project title:**

Arab Muslim Refugees in New Zealand: Their resettlement and cultural adaptation experiences.

**Project Supervisor:** Dr. Heather Devere, Prof. Charles Crothers, Dr. Gabriele Shaefer.

**Researcher:** Rose Joudi

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- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project (Information Sheet dated. (Date yet to be confirmed)
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that the interview will be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.

I agree to take part in this research.

I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research.

Participant signature: .....

Participants Guardian/Parent (if the participant is under the age of 21 years old).

.....

Date: .....

## Appendix G: Word and Definition Glossary

|             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A'yb        | Disgraced, disgraceful, or inappropriate behaviour.                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Allah       | Arabic for "God," used by Arabic-speaking Christians and Jews as well as by Muslims.                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Halal       | Arabic/Islamic for lawful, permissible. It is often used in the context of food – especially meat – to indicate that the food has been prepared in accordance with Muslim principles and techniques, and behaviours and values that are deemed religiously acceptable.      |
| Haram       | Arabic/Islamic for a forbidden action. Often used in the context of food – such as eating pork or meat that has not been prepared according to Islamic principles, and behaviours that are deemed religiously inappropriate, such as drinking alcohol, and pre-marital sex. |
| Hijab       | A veil or a scarf that many Muslim women use to cover their hair, in the custom of some Islamic women to dress modestly outside the home.                                                                                                                                   |
| Insha Allah | God Willing.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Islam       | The name of the religion, which is followed by an estimated 300 million people worldwide, initiated by Mohammad early in the 7th century, and which means submission to Allah.                                                                                              |
| Laje'       | Refugee. Literally means to seek shelter/assistance.                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Mohajaba    | A woman who wears Hijab.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Muslim      | Used generally for a follower of the religion of Islam, or a male follower of Islam.                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Muslima     | A female follower of Islam                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Niqaab      | A veil which covers the face but not the eyes, worn by some Muslim women as a part of sartorial hijab. It is popular in the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf but it can also be found in North Africa, Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent.                        |
| (pbuh)      | When referring to or talking about the Muslim Prophet Mohammed, it is appropriate to add (pbuh), which stands for Peace Be Upon Him.                                                                                                                                        |

## **Definitions**

Migrant: A person who leaves his/her country of origin to seek residence in another country. This term can be used to refer to either refugees or immigrants.

Immigrant: Also referred to as “voluntary migrant”; someone who intentionally chooses to leave his/her country, often for economic or financial reasons, to take up permanent residence in another country. Another definition mentioned in Darvishpour (2002) states that an immigrant is someone born overseas (and not in the host country), from parents who are not from the host country.

Refugee: Also referred to as “involuntary migrant” or “forced migrant”; someone who out of desperation is forced to flee his/her country of origin. According to the 1951 UN Convention definition, a refugee is someone who “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of their nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him/herself of the protection of that country.”

Refugeeness: “A construct that constitutes to the experience of being a refugee and universal to only those who experience it” (Lacroix, 2004, p. 148).

Convention refugee: Someone who meets the refugee definition according to the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees.

Refugee claimant: A person who has made a claim for protection as a refugee. This term is more or less equivalent to asylum seeker and is standard in New Zealand, while asylum seeker is the term more often used internationally.

Integration: “A process by which immigrants and refugees engage with, and become part of their resettlement society” (Valtonen, 1998, p. 41).

Resettlement/settlement: Researchers use these terms interchangeably to mean the process refugees experience when establishing a new life after their arrival in their host country (Simich, 2003; Simich et al., 2003, 2006). However, Valtonen (2004) used the term “resettlement” to indicate the process which certain organisations go through in order to select a host country for the refugees, and to organise their transportation to that country. Settlement on the other hand was “the process of becoming established after arrival in the country of settlement” (Valtonen, 2004, p. 70). The term used in this

research is “resettlement,” which refers to the arrival of refugees in their host country, and the reconstruction or re-establishment of their lives. According to Beiser (2003, cited in Simich et al., 2006), “successful resettlement” is a process in which the refugee acquires a sense of self-sufficiency and positive well-being, finds adequate employment, and possesses language proficiency.

Host society: The receiving society that the immigrants enter which has its own established order based on notions of membership identity, and values (Nagel, 2002). The resettlement process introduces different and challenging experiences for immigrants, especially in cases of the host society having a different set of values, customs and traditions from those of the immigrants’ own culture. In most situations, the immigrants would be required to learn a new set of skills, a new language, and to absorb a variety of added roles in order to adapt themselves with adequate ease to the new culture.

Western country/society/culture: A term used to generally refer to most of the cultures of European origin and most of their descendants. It comprises the broad, geographically based heritage of social norms, ethical values, traditional customs (such as religious beliefs) and specific artefacts as shared within the Western sphere of influence.

Arab Muslim refugee: This term refers to involuntary migrants who have fled their country of origin to avoid war and conflict, who identify themselves as Muslim and of Arab heritage or who speak Arabic. This term is used even for those who were not perceived as refugees by the New Zealand system, yet who fled their country in fear of persecution and identified him/herself as a refugee.

Culture: A pattern of values, beliefs and behaviours shared by people with similar ethnic backgrounds, languages, religions, family values and/or life views, which provides them with their identities and a framework for understanding experience.

Ethnicity: A social construction that indicates identification with a particular group, often descended from common ancestors. Members of the group share common cultural traits (such as language, religion, and dress) and are an identifiable minority within the larger nation-state.

Ethnic identity: The degree to which individuals identify with and derive aspects of their self-concept from knowledge with respect to, participation with and attachment to their own group (Phinney, 1990).