

School of Public Health

**“This happiness can be better”: Refugee Women’s Perspectives of
Settlement in Western Australia through Photovoice**

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Doctor of Philosophy
of
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Declaration

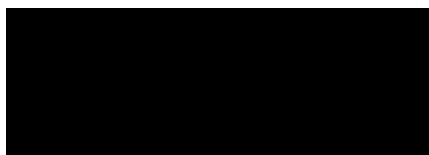
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The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007), updated March 2014. The proposed research study received human research ethics approval from the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00262), Approval Number # RDHS-253-15

Signature:

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Date: 11/12/19

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Abstract

This community based participatory research project used photovoice to explore refugee women's perspectives of settlement in Western Australia, including facilitators and barriers to their successful settlement. The research was grounded in a social determinants of health approach, with a particular focus on the role of structural factors, including public policy, in shaping the conditions of settlement for women. Integration, synonymous with successful settlement in the policy context, was critiqued. The research explored processes of resilience among women and the effectiveness of photovoice as a tool for empowerment.

The research was conducted in partnership with Ishar, a multicultural women's health centre in Perth. 43 women participated and selected topics to photograph which represented their settlement experiences. Using reflective group dialogue, the women reflected on their settlement successes and challenges and provided policy recommendations for improving the settlement process. Eleven women were interviewed for further in-depth reflections and 22 women selected photos and wrote accompanying narratives for a travelling photo exhibition. Eight key informants were also interviewed for their complementary perspectives on supporting women's successful settlement. Thematic framework analysis was employed to analyse the group discussions and interview transcripts, photos and narratives.

The theoretical framework incorporated intersectionality and postcolonial feminist theories. Dominant understandings of integration were also considered, alongside women's narratives and recommendations. Women were from diverse backgrounds and expectations of host nation settlement success, including English language proficiency, education and employment, were influenced by personal factors which often intersected such as age of arrival in Australia, pre-migration English language ability and formal education, race/ethnicity and caring responsibilities. Women's recommendations included access to sustained and tailored English language learning, support to enter employment, access to family reunion, appropriate housing

and social support. Applying a constructionist understanding of social-ecological resilience, women's photographs and narratives highlighted their personal agency, resistance and resilience, in spite of a context which offered limited health sustaining resources.

Photovoice was a valuable participatory research tool which shifted the traditional researcher-researched relationship by its nature of giving participants cameras to decide what to research. Women participants described benefits of taking part which aligned with individual empowerment. Learnings from the participatory research process included the need for an advocacy approach, to be explored in collaboration with participants, that can provide the most leverage for influencing settlement policy making.

As Niloufar, a participant in this research stated "this happiness can be better if Australian people accept us". Policy making reinforces an existing hierarchy of belonging which privileges a white, Anglo-Celtic masculine identity and relegates refugee women to the margins. Facilitating women's successful settlement requires commitment to tackling underlying societal inequalities, using an intersectional lens, which would give women opportunities to pursue their settlement goals and support their meaningful belonging.

Abbreviations

AMEP	Adult Migrant English Program
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CBPR	Community based participatory research
HSP	Humanitarian Settlement Program
SEE	Skills for Education and Employment
SETS	Settlement Engagement and Transition Support
SHP	Special Humanitarian Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Over the past decade, the number of people forcibly displaced worldwide has risen to the highest levels ever recorded. There were 70.8 million people forcibly displaced in 2018, compared with 43.3 million in 2009 (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2019a). Of these, 25.9 million were refugees, almost double the figure of 2012 (UNHCR, 2018). A refugee¹ is defined in the 1951 UN Refugee Convention as:

Any person 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 his/her nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country.

An oft-quoted statistic is that women and girls make up half of the world's refugees (UNHCR, 2018b). Gender plays a significant role in shaping women's experiences of forced migration. Women face exploitation, violence and discrimination while uprooted in local settings such as refugee camps and in countries of temporary asylum (Milner & Wojnarowicz, 2017). They are dependent on actors of the global refugee regime, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and nation states, for their protection and a resolution for their situation (Milner & Wojnarowicz, 2017). Should women be able to access resettlement in a country with a resettlement program such as Australia, they make up just 1% of refugees annually who are given the option to be resettled (Lindsay, 2017).

¹ In this thesis, while I may use the term refugee/s and person/people of refugee background this is with reference to the definition of refugee in the UN Refugee Convention.

Once resettled, women contend with a new set of challenges in establishing a new life. Refugee women are described as marginalised in Australia (Department of Health, 2010; Hashimoto-Govindasamy & Rose, 2011). In a longitudinal study of refugees in Australia, which I discuss in chapter 3, economic and social stressors upon resettlement were shown to be important correlates of mental health, highlighting the crucial importance of post-settlement conditions (Chen, Hall, Ling, & Renzaho, 2017). Public policy is itself a determinant of health (Bernier & Clavier, 2011) and has a role in shaping the conditions that marginalise women. Furthermore, women's voices are often overlooked in the design of policy and programs which aim to support them in resettlement contexts (Arat-Koç, 2012; Goodkind & Deacon, 2004; Hajdukowski-Ahmed, 2008). Women also express agency and resistance in the face of oppressive systems and processes. Organisations such as the UNHCR present the refugee woman as the "voiceless poster child" of forced displacement (Mainwaring, 2016, p. 290). Counter narratives highlighting the diversity of women's experiences and their agency through their self-representation are needed, to challenge dominant, societal narratives that reinforce "stigma and prejudice" (Lenette, Cox, & Brough, 2015, p. 990).

The perspectives of refugee women about settlement in Western Australia, including barriers and facilitators to their successful settlement, is therefore the focus of this research. The community based participatory research (CPBR) was undertaken with the aim of exploring their settlement experiences through the tool of photovoice. Women, as co-researchers, were provided with cameras to capture images on topics selected by them. Through discussion of these images they reflected on their strengths, individual and community issues, and identified actions to ensure policies and programs are responsive in supporting women and their families during the settlement period. The research was grounded in a social determinants of health approach, recognising that the conditions of daily life are shaped by underlying policies, systems and access to resources, which are the most significant determinants of one's health and wellbeing (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2016), and the need for these to be addressed.

In this chapter, the importance of this research is discussed, including the limited research on resettled refugee women and the lack of emphasis on the unique role

gender plays in forced migration, and how refugee women are constructed in policy discourse. My background as researcher and standpoint is articulated and how this shaped the research focus, followed by an outline of the research question, objectives, setting, theoretical framework employed and subsequent chapters.

1.2 Background to the Research

Despite the emphasis by the UNHCR and other agencies on the number of women and girls who are forcibly displaced, research has tended to ignore the role of gender in experiences of forced migration (Loughry, 2008; Shishehgar, Gholizadeh, DiGiacomo, Green, & Davidson, 2017; Young & Chan, 2015). From a global perspective, gender inequality means that women have less social and legal status, and their journeys of forced migration are characterised by a vulnerability to physical harm and violence without legal protections, in addition to economic insecurity, discrimination and marginalisation (Tastsoglou, Abidi, Brigham, & Lange, 2014). This vulnerability arises from circumstances, rather than an inherent quality within women as refugees (Block, Riggs, & Haslam, 2013). Yet, women must contend with this powerful association. Women are often constructed as part of the family unit rather than as individuals, and as apolitical (Kneebone, 2005). Policy makers and international agencies also tend to group women and children together (Bhabha, 2004; Kneebone, 2005; Smith, 2016) and through this association the agency of women is infantilised (Hajdukowski-Ahmed, 2008). The lack of gender disaggregated statistics reflects the disregard for the role gender plays in issues among women related to forced migration (Freedman, 2015b). Yet as Hajdukowski-Ahmed (2008, p. 34) importantly states, “there is no universal ‘refugee woman’”.

An intersectional approach can be used to counter this narrative and address the injustices women face because of structures of oppression, in turn supporting their health and wellbeing. Intersectionality is one of the main theories I draw on for the study. It originates from the work of black feminist Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989). Crenshaw coined the concept in response to the feminist movement, which had failed to consider the role of race in women’s oppression. Intersectionality illuminates how inequalities and oppressions are not purely related to a single aspect of women’s lives, such as gender, but on the intersection of multiple social categories, such as

gender and its intersection with race and migration status. Its application illuminates how people experience privilege and oppression based on these intersections.

While intersectionality originated among black feminist theorists in the United States, it has been adopted in different disciplines for tackling social inequalities. It is becoming increasingly valued in health related research for its attention to the determinants of inequalities in health (Lapalme, Haines-Saah, & Frohlich, 2019). Intersectionality is concerned with interconnecting systems and ‘structures of power,’ including laws, policies, governments and institutions (Hankivsky et al., 2017) and their impacts on social life. As this research sought to critique the societal context of settlement in Australia, intersectionality proved valuable for “critical explorations of policies as a concrete entry point for analysing both structural forces and individual experiences of social inequalities in health” (Lapalme et al., 2019, p. 5). This theory was also important for bringing attention to my own privilege and role in the research process as a white, Australian-born researcher.

Little research has been conducted in an Australian setting to specifically explore experiences of resettlement from the perspective of gender (Curry, Smedley, & Lenette, 2017). Furthermore, there has been limited focus on exploring refugee women’s health from a social determinants of health perspective (Castaneda et al., 2015). Research suggests that the loss of capital, social, cultural and personal resources during forced migration creates unique challenges for women upon resettlement and these difficulties have adverse impacts on their health (Shishehgar et al., 2017). Socioeconomic stressors can include a lack of stable housing and barriers to employment, while women also contend with issues of family separation, discrimination, lack of language proficiency, changing gender roles, culture shock and restrictive immigration policies (Shishehgar et al., 2017; Young & Chan, 2015). In addition to the inclusion of women’s voices in the design of policies and programs related to their welfare, strengths based approaches, which counter the dominant narrative of vulnerability and which focus on women’s agency and resilience, have also been called for in policy and service delivery (De Maio, Silbert, et al., 2017).

1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

The overarching research question for this research was:

What are refugee women's perspectives of the settlement process, including facilitators and barriers to successful settlement in their community in Western Australia?

While there are a range of understandings of 'settlement' outlined in the relevant literature, nation state definitions of settlement are commonly linked to measurable outcomes (Nunn, Gifford, McMichael, & Correa-Velez, 2017). This includes the Australian Government definition of settlement as a period and process where refugees "become active and independent participants in their new country" (Department of Social Services, 2018c, p. 6).

As discussed by Curry et al. (2017), the term 'successful' is subjective and the complexities and fluid nature of the experience makes this difficult to define. Successful settlement is equated with 'integration' by governments. In Australia, integration includes a focus on socioeconomic participation and outcomes, particularly employment (Curry et al., 2017). The Australian Government Department of Social Services, which provides funding to service providers who deliver settlement services, has described the aim of the funding as being to support self-reliance, and the social and economic wellbeing of people while "maximising the productivity of our diversity" (Department of Social Services, 2017b, p. 6). English language proficiency is also strongly emphasised as important for integration (Joint Standing Committee on Migration, 2017; The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia Joint Standing Committee on Migration, 2013). I critique the concept of integration in chapter 2.

From a policy angle, the settlement period is considered to be the first five years in Australia, with the intention of ensuring people become "fully functioning members of society as soon as possible" without long term reliance on social services (Department of Social Services, 2017b, p. 6). In contrast, however, the literature has shown that the process of becoming established in a new country can be much longer

and every settlement journey is different (Babatunde-Sowole, Jackson, Davidson, & Power, 2016; Hashimoto-Govindasamy & Rose, 2011; Versha & Venkatraman, 2010).

Further, a broader understanding of integration is more than that of a unidirectional process in which refugees must contribute to the economic productivity of the host nation (Strang & Ager, 2010). It includes the need for government to address structural barriers to ensure people's economic and social inclusion (Losoncz, 2017b). Others argue that the concept of integration should be abandoned altogether as it enforces racial division and is a neocolonial project that creates an 'us' and an 'other' (Schinkel, 2018).

In this research, the 'top-down' notion of integration as successful settlement was considered alongside the narratives and recommendations made by the participants. An alternative to the dominant approach that characterises settlement policy and programs is suggested. It is informed by women's standpoints and through a critical lens that incorporated intersectionality, postcolonial feminist perspectives and social-ecological resilience theory, to argue for a broader challenge to power relations in Australian society. In this first chapter I touch on this theoretical framework and approach to the research, and expand upon it in subsequent chapters.

1.3.1 Objectives

Eight objectives guided the study. The first five objectives addressed the research question, to explore refugee women's perspectives of the settlement process. They were to:

1. Identify the facilitators and barriers to successful settlement, from the viewpoint of refugee women who identify as having achieved successful settlement outcomes and those who have struggled with settlement;
2. Identify, in collaboration with women participants, personal and systemic responses towards better support for successful settlement;
3. Present women's strategies to service stakeholders and seek their complementary perspectives on supporting the successful settlement of women;
4. Explore resilience processes among women;

5. Critique ‘integration’ as an approach for conceptualising successful settlement.

Photovoice was used as part of a participatory research approach. Three objectives related to the use of photovoice were to:

6. Teach photography to a group of refugee women, to enable them to capture images of their everyday lives;
7. Explore the use of photovoice as a tool for empowerment among participants;
8. Showcase the challenges and strengths of refugee women and engage them as advocates for better settlement policy and advocacy responses, through use of photographs and stories of successful and difficult resettlement

1.4 The Research Setting

Ishar Multicultural Women’s Health Centre was the community partner for this research. Ishar is based in Mirrabooka in Perth, Western Australia, an ethnically diverse northern suburb where a number of services to support refugees are located. Ishar was established in 1992 and operates on a social model of health. Services and programs aim to address lifestyle related issues, emphasising the interconnection of women’s health with personal, social, cultural, economic, race, age and gender related problems (Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Centre, 2018). Ishar receives funding from the WA state and federal governments to run a range of programs for clients, many of whom are women from refugee backgrounds. For a number of years Ishar has been funded to provide the Settlement Grants Program (now Settlement Engagement and Transition Support), to assist refugee women and their families during their first five years in Australia. This includes casework, advocacy, referrals and information sessions. Other programs for newly arrived refugee women include family support and parenting programs as well as access to women’s health services.

This research was funded by Healthway (the Health Promotion Foundation of Western Australia) based on a proposal developed by Professor Jaya Dantas, from the International Health Program, in the Faculty of Health Sciences at Curtin University. Professor Dantas has had an association with Ishar since 2006. In late 2013, she was invited by the then Chair of Ishar to join the board and completed her six-year term as Vice Chair in 2019.

In 2012, as part of a successful Healthway Project Grant, Professor Dantas undertook a pilot photovoice project with young refugee women from Ishar, and Sudanese youth from the wider community. The CEO of Ishar found that the women who participated enjoyed the project and recommended that it be expanded, so that a larger group of refugee women would gain from a participatory photovoice project. This provided the impetus for a Special Initiative Grant for this present research, which was developed by Professor Dantas and supported by Ishar's CEO and project officers. The grant funding commenced in mid-2015 and concluded in November 2017 with a launch of the findings. The launch is reported later in this thesis.

I was invited to undertake my PhD as part of the grant, as the mentoring of PhD students is encouraged by Healthway, the funding body, as part of the grant terms. I was fortunate to be given the opportunity to conduct this research, with initial funding through a Curtin University Postgraduate Scholarship (2015–2016) and a Research Training Program Scholarship in 2017. I project managed the research with support and input from Ishar staff and a Cultural Reference Group. The partnership with Ishar is discussed in greater depth in chapters 5 and 8.

1.5 Situating the Research: My Background and Worldview

I was born in Australia, and am a white woman. Prior to undertaking my PhD I had worked across social research, policy and project management in university, government and community sectors in Australia. Although these roles were important career building experiences I wanted to build my capacity to apply “a critical stance towards social structures and processes that shape individual and collective life” (Charmaz, 2011, p. 359).

In 2014, I enrolled to study a PhD at Curtin University. My intention was to seek a funded opportunity with a focus on gender, refugees and health, with a social justice orientation, stemming from my own interest and involvement in campaigns on human rights issues impacting on asylum seekers and refugees in Australia and overseas. My first experience working with people who had become refugees was almost two decades ago, in 2002, when I volunteered in a town on the Thai-Burma

border as an English teacher with Burmese pro-democracy groups. As urban refugees openly conducting political organising and associated with anti-junta organisations, the people I worked with were at risk of intimidation, arrest, and relocation to a border camp or deportation by the Thai authorities pandering to the wishes of the Burmese regime (Colm, 2004). They lived precariously and had limited opportunities for resettlement (Colm, 2004).

My return to Australia coincided with large protests that were taking place at a former detention centre holding asylum seekers in Woomera, in remote South Australia. A person seeking asylum is someone who is seeking refugee protection, which can be given by a country that is a signatory to the Refugee Convention. I was shocked that people were being detained in remote detention centres and how political leaders represented people seeking asylum as being ‘queue jumpers’ and ‘illegals’ an opinion echoed in sections of the media. This was in contrast to my recent personal experience where the realities of forced displacement meant there was no orderly queue and fair selection process for people seeking resettlement. For people seeking asylum, taking a boat to Australia was an act of exercising agency and desire to survive in a world where for most “mobility, asylum, and rights are increasingly out of reach” (Mainwaring, 2016, p. 292). In Perth, I became involved in the campaign for refugee rights. I visited people in Western Australian detention centres and witnessed the impacts of detention on their mental health. It was clear to me that the government was inflicting harm upon people who were exercising their human right to seek asylum.

These experiences also fuelled my interest in gaining improved skills and knowledge of human rights issues and advocacy. I studied a master’s degree in human rights from 2005 to 2008. My master’s research project examined health and human rights issues in the Indonesian province of Papua (known as West Papua in Australia). Health inequalities exist between people in Papua and other parts of Indonesia (Suparmi, Kusumawardani, Nambiar, Trihono, & Hosseinpoor, 2018). This includes access to quality health care, and Papuans also face a generalised HIV/AIDS epidemic, being twice as likely to have the disease than the rest of the population (Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health, 2018). Through this project I became interested in the potential for a social determinants of health approach in the

promotion of human rights and social justice. A social determinants of health approach enables one “to identify consistent patterns of inequality and their impact on health” (Kenyon, Forman, & Brolan, 2018, p. 8) and is indivisible with human rights, which are underpinned by “dignity and equal worth” (Kenyon et al., 2018, p. 2). I saw a social determinants of health approach as having the potential to provide powerful leverage for social justice.

I am also concerned with how societal structures and processes benefit some groups and oppress others. In the Australian context, the values, norms and practices of white, Australian born, heterosexual, able-bodied and middle class males are privileged and embedded in policies and institutions of power (Bastos, Harnois, & Paradies, 2018). Consequently, groups that do not benefit from existing structures and processes, such as refugee women, are relegated to the societal margins. The marginalisation of refugee women has negative impacts on their health and wellbeing (Rijks et al., 2014). A social determinants of health approach recognises that the “social gradient of health” is “caused by the unequal distribution of power, income, goods, and services” and that “this unequal distribution of health-damaging experiences is not in any sense a ‘natural’ phenomenon but is the result of a toxic combination of poor social policies and programmes, unfair economic arrangements, and bad politics” (World Health Organisation, 2008, p. 1). Drawing on the framework by Schulz and Northridge (2004), at the fundamental (macro) level, systems of inequality are reproduced through factors including ideologies, processes of social and cultural institutions, and the law. These social and economic inequalities have implications for the built and social environment at an intermediate level, in turn influencing health behaviours, relationships and stressors. This then shapes the health and wellbeing of individuals and populations (Schulz and Northridge, 2004).

This understanding of the social determinants of health informed my approach to this research, including the design of the theoretical framework in which I used postcolonial feminist theory and intersectionality (both of which are concerned with power and social transformation) to explore the experiences of refugee women in Australia.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

1.6.1 *A postcolonial feminist perspective*

Postcolonial feminist theory draws attention to how policy making is informed by ideologies, which have been shaped by Australia's historical context as a white settler colonial country, and the implications this has for refugee women who are resettled here. Postcolonial feminism acknowledges that existing policies and structures are informed by not only historically racialised relations, but also gendered and classist relations. Women are denied voice and their representation serves elite interests, which is a form of epistemic violence. This includes the meaning ascribed to the concept of a refugee woman who is othered and essentialised. I elaborate further on this in chapter 2.

Australia purports to be based on values of mutual respect and tolerance, as listed in the Australian Values Statement that newly arrived refugees and migrants must sign as a visa requirement, and which I discuss in more detail in chapter 2. There is strong emphasis in public and political discourse about 'a fair go' and it is indeed described in Australia's Multicultural Statement, where the priorities and strategic directions for multiculturalism are outlined as representing "equality of opportunity" and a foundational value of the nation (Government of Australia, 2017). As I will demonstrate, this 'fair go' is a myth. It reflects a strong attachment to a particular white, Anglo-Celtic identity, arguably stemming from Australia's colonial history. As will be outlined in chapter 6, there is a significant contrast between some of the political and broader public rhetoric about Australian values and the realities of women's experiences in this research. The women described racism as an everyday occurrence, a significant obstacle to a 'fair go'.

In recent years in Australia there has been a rise in far right political parties and openly racist discourse in the public sphere (Losoncz, 2017a). While this reflects a broader pattern across a range of nations, in the Australian case it is arguably one example of various forms of racism that have been part of Australia's history as a colonial nation (Briskman & Latham, 2017). Modern Australia was built on violence and racialisation, and embedded in society is partiality to a white, patriarchal social

order (Baak, 2018; Connell, 2014; Stratton, 2006). Australia's history includes the genocide of the First Peoples of Australia. Colonial practices to the present day have included theft of land, authorised violence, racism and destruction of culture (Klippmark & Crawley, 2018). The White Australia Policy originated in the late nineteenth century, which prohibited non-white immigration (Jordan, 2018). Although it was dismantled in the 1960s and Australia introduced a policy of multiculturalism, and support for ethnic diversity, it was arguably built upon an established foundation of a white, middle class hegemony (Stratton, 2009). Hegemony is defined as "the diffusion of power throughout the social system where multiple groups police one another and suppress one another's dissent" (Collins, 2000, p. 299). Therefore, while power may be concentrated with a particular group/s, it can also be resisted and challenged (Severs, Celis, & Erzeel, 2016).

The attachment to a white, Anglo-Celtic identity in Australian society "contributes to anxieties about loss of homogeneity" (Briskman & Latham, 2017, p. 35). This anxiety is projected towards toward refugees and asylum seekers. It is evident in Australia's treatment of people seeking asylum who arrive by boat, including the punitive policy of offshore mandatory detention with no opportunity for resettlement in Australia, and reflects underlying xenophobic and racist sentiment in society that successive governments have promoted since the early 1990s to justify harsh asylum seeker policies (Minns, Bradley, & Chagas-Bastos, 2018). Through their framing in public discourse, people seeking asylum are denied 'humanness' (Haggis, 2012), which is intrinsic to colonial ideology.

As the example of the Australian Values Statement highlights, governments have also increasingly emphasised that immigrants need to adopt Australian values (Losoncz, 2017b). Australia's multicultural policy statement describes how settlement services offered to new migrants are designed to support them to integrate 'into Australian life' (Government of Australia, 2017). In recent decades, Australian values have also been applied for access to citizenship, through a citizenship test (Fozdar & Spittles, 2009). The potential citizen is tested on their knowledge of Australian values. However, in contrast to such values espoused by successive governments, the values associated with Australian identity among 'average Australians' have been described differently (Austin & Fozdar, 2018a). Research

shows that there are a diverse range of understandings about Australian identity and values among people, for example, from stereotypical values (masculinity and sports) to cosmopolitanism, or—conversely—support for the assimilation of immigrants and economic protectionism (Austin & Fozdar, 2018a).

When compared with other cultures, the cultural values articulated by Australian governments can be seen to be not particularly unique, and neither are they particularly dominant in society. This includes egalitarianism, which is associated with equality and fairness, or ‘a fair go’ (Haslam, 2017). Yet egalitarianism is promoted as particular to Australian culture. The push for adopting such Australian values is arguably a strategy for assimilation. Reflecting the imperative of the coloniser, “assimilation determines conformity to the dominant culture while it erases others” (Haebich, 2016, p. 21).

In relation to the application of postcolonial feminist theory, although ‘post’ is used, this does not mean that colonisation has ceased. Despite the decolonisation of countries across large parts of the world after the Second World War, imperialist powers continue to demonstrate their influence through forms of neocolonial domination (Bhatia & Ram, 2001).

Colonial relations of power continue to be reinforced in Australia, which has never been decolonised. Throughout this thesis I refer to Australia as a ‘settler colonial’ nation. Settler colonialism is increasingly recognised among scholars as a political formation (Strakosch, 2015). It is an enduring “project of empire enabled by white supremacy” whereby “the building of new settlements necessitates the eradication of indigenous populations, the seizure and privatization of their lands, and the exploitation of marginalized peoples in a system of capitalism established by and reinforced through racism” (Bonds & Inwood, 2016, p. 716). As a political formation, settler colonialism seeks to naturalise the eradication and replacement of Indigenous peoples with the colonising population and is embedded in contemporary structures of power (Rowe & Tuck, 2017; Strakosch, 2015).

It is worth here highlighting the relationship between neocolonial domination and the ideology of neoliberalism, which I also critique in this thesis as a system of

oppression. Australian governments have adopted neoliberal policies since the early 1980s, particularly in order to compete in the global economy (Cheshire & Lawrence, 2005). Neoliberalism plays out across ideology as well as institutions and emphasises a free market economy, privatised public services and individual economic self-reliance (Kubota, 2016). Neoliberalism is a tool for enforcing systems of colonial oppression (Bielefeld, 2016). As an example, its influence can be demonstrated in critiquing Australia's multicultural policy. While rhetoric lauds Australia as a multicultural nation, the policy is one of 'neoliberal multiculturalism' where the focus is on individual self-reliance over social equality and tackling structural change (Burke, Thapliyal, & Baker, 2018; Darder, 2012). A hollow multiculturalism exists that serves to keep non-white ethnic groups on the fringes of Australian society (Stratton, 2011). Neoliberalism also shapes settlement policy and services that affect women who settle as refugees in Australia, as will be demonstrated in this thesis.

Postcolonial research is linked to politics, and includes the politics of undertaking research (Macleod & Bhatia, 2008). The values and role of the researcher must be reflected on as well, including an awareness of the power the researcher holds (Dodson, Piatelli, & Schmalzbauer, 2007). As a white, Australian born woman who could be considered 'middle class', I represent a relatively privileged group. Cognisance of representing a privileged race/ethnicity is necessary in working with women labelled as 'marginalised'. Traditionally in qualitative research the researcher has superiority over the research subject, in control of the process of data interpretation and how the subject is represented (Marmo, 2013). With social justice intent, while attempting to disrupt power at the macro level, a power imbalance exists at the site of the research (Block et al., 2013). It is suggested that participatory approaches are a strategy to address this in research with refugees in particular (Block et al., 2013). Chapter 5 includes a comprehensive critique of this research project's methodology. This includes underlying epistemologies and strategies employed to demonstrate reflexivity, that is, how I as the researcher influenced the study and the impacts of this on the reliability of the research (Cooper & Endacott, 2007; Potvin, Bisset, & Walz, 2010).

1.6.2 An intersectional perspective

I also employed intersectionality as a lens to this research. It guided how I considered the background and contextual literature in addition to the interpretation of the results and my positionality as the researcher. Intersectionality is based on an understanding that women are positioned within multiple social categories, for example gender, race, migration and socioeconomic status, and seeks to understand the experiences of women at the intersection of these (Hankivsky et al., 2010). It was while undertaking the research, in particular facilitating photovoice discussions with groups of women from very different backgrounds, that I came to consider the importance of this theory. The women who participated acknowledged the differences among them, and how these impacted on their experiences of starting a new life in Australia. I was also drawn to this theory for its attention to power. It calls for the researcher to critically examine how interlocking oppressions, such as racism and sexism, reflect identities at the micro level, and can be used to inform systemic responses that strive for social justice. As with postcolonial theory, intersectionality—where one can simultaneously experience privilege and oppression—served as an important tool for reflection on the power I have as a white, middle class, able-bodied woman undertaking this research. I acknowledge that this research is grounded in my standpoint. In chapters 5 and 8 I discuss my use of reflexivity.

1.6.3 Integration

I examined the concept of integration, and its relevance to the experience of the women who participated in this research. I identified the refugee settlement policy objectives in Australia based on a review of relevant federal government documents. Informed by the literature, I proposed an outcomes based conceptualisation of integration. I showed how this concept is influenced by systems of oppression I have touched on thus far in this chapter. This was contrasted against the perspectives of women participants. The appropriateness of this host nation approach to integration was critiqued based on the findings of this research. I also drew on a particular framework by Ager and Strang (2008), based on interrelated core domains and widely applied by researchers to explore integration, and compared this with the

women's views and the rhetoric of the Australian government. In doing so, the strengths and limitations of the Ager and Strang framework are highlighted.

1.6.4 Social-ecological resilience theory

I also examined processes of resilience, which is important in countering a dominant construction of women's vulnerability and victimhood (Lenette, Brough and Cox, 2012). As highlighted in the literature review chapter (3) resilience is a growing area of focus among forced migration researchers, as it is recognised as important in helping to deal with the challenges of settlement. Furthermore, a focus on resilience aligns with intersectionality as it looks at women's strengths and capabilities. As a concept increasingly drawn upon in the field of forced migration, particularly for its "strengths based starting point" (Lenette et al., p. 638) to working with refugees, it was a valuable addition to my theoretical framework. To explore resilience I employed social-ecological resilience theory based on the work of Michael Ungar (2008), who stresses the importance of a person-environment understanding, emphasising a facilitative environment as most important to resilience. This was also important to the research because it allows for a critical examination of how broader structures and institutions can support or hinder women's resilience. I considered the significance of resilience in relation to 'successful' settlement. A full discussion on my theoretical framework and its application to this research is provided in chapter 4.

1.7 Structure of this Thesis

Following this introductory chapter, in **chapter 2** I critique the policy context. The ideological underpinnings of approaches to forced migration and the settlement of refugees, at global and national levels are discussed.

Chapter 3 presents the literature review, including a critique of integration as a mechanism to reinforce existing inequalities and the need for alternative conceptualisations. I show how there is limited research in Australia that explores settlement from women's emic perspectives.

Chapter 4 builds upon the findings from the literature with an outline of the theoretical framework that was used, the relevance of the theories and how the framework was applied.

Chapter 5 is a comprehensive discussion of the methodology, including the use of photovoice, its strengths and weaknesses. I discuss how I employed rigour to the research process including reflexivity.

Chapter 6 provides a rich description of the themes that were generated from the analysis, centring women's perspectives, and includes their photographs and written narratives. Complementary perspectives are also provided from service and policy stakeholders on settlement challenges and responses needed to support women to settle in Australia.

Chapter 7 is my discussion chapter, which responds to the main objectives of the research. In this chapter the themes in chapter 5 are critiqued using the theoretical framework.

Chapter 8 examines the use of photovoice as a tool for empowerment. The feedback from the women participants of the benefits of participating are presented, in addition to critical reflection on the research process, limitations and areas for further research.

Chapter 9 is my conclusion chapter. The main findings are revisited and the implications of the research for policy and practice are articulated.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a broad overview of this research, demonstrating the need for research which privileges women's perspectives of settlement in Australia. I showed how the dominant representation of the homogenous 'refugee woman' could be challenged through the objectives of this research. A more nuanced understanding

of the complexities of issues that women face, shaped by broader processes of power, as well as a focus on their strengths and agency, could be used to better inform policy and programs, therefore contributing to addressing the social determinants of women's health (Osypuk, Joshi, Geronimo, & Acevedo-Garcia, 2014). I also discussed the theoretical frameworks that informed this research. This included postcolonial feminist theory and intersectionality, both of which have become increasingly recognised as important for responding to the root determinants of ill-health (Bell, Stahlke, & Richter, 2018; Hankivsky & Christoffersen, 2008; Racine & Petrucka, 2011). Both recognise women's diversity within the broader sociopolitical context and how this results in different experiences of oppression and privilege.

Chapter 2:

Refugee Settlement and the Policy Context

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I provide an overview of the policy context, in particular policy that informs Australia's approach to receiving refugees and the settlement and integration activities that are offered for eligible refugees. In doing so, I provide the reader with a critical understanding of the context in which this research was situated, providing the foreground for the views and recommendations made by women participants in this research and discussed in subsequent chapters in this thesis. I begin with an overview of the global context and the role of nation states and the UNCHR. In dictating the pathways to protection for women who become refugees, these actors impose a specific identity of vulnerability and deny them agency. I then discuss how Australia's colonial history has influenced its refugee policies, and how this also translates to settlement including the delivery of services and programs to support the settlement of women. I draw on tenets of postcolonial feminist and intersectional critiques to explore how power dynamics position refugee women to restrict their agency through the processes of resettlement and as passive recipients of assistance, and situates them as marginalised in a gendered, racial hierarchy.

2.2 The Global Refugee Regime

The global refugee regime was established after the Second World War. As defined by Betts (2015, p. 363), it "encompasses the rules, norms, principles and decision making procedures that govern states' responses to refugees". The key intergovernmental organisation of the international refugee regime, the UNHCR, is guided by the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (commonly referred to as the Refugee Convention). The Convention defines who is a refugee, the rights afforded to refugees and the obligations of nation states.

When it was developed, the Refugee Convention applied only to Europeans who had become refugees as a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951. Gender related persecution was not identified among the five categories of persecution in the

definition. Its design reflected the male dominated perspective and an understanding of the refugee as someone from behind the Iron Curtain during the Cold War (Freedman, 2010). In 1967, the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees removed the limitations of the Convention to include refugees worldwide.

At the end of the Cold War there was a paradigm shift in the regime. Refugees became constructed as ‘Other’ Third World refugees, as discussed by Chimni (1998) on the myth of difference. Chimni described how the characteristics and nature of refugee flows since the 1980s were constructed by powerful Western nation states as being different from those in previous decades following the First World War, as part of a containment agenda. While refugee situations could be linked to international dimensions, including the role of colonisation in crafting the economic and social conditions of forced displacement, as part of the ‘myth of difference’ they have been construed as problems caused by internal factors within post-colonial nations (Chimni, 1998). Western states are the dominant and powerful actors of the international refugee regime (Loescher & Milner, 2011). The worth of refugees is seen mainly in relation to the economies of Western nation states, namely as a “neo-liberal profit–loss calculation” (Yacob-Haliso, 2016, p. 62). The UNHCR, operating within the system of global governance, helps to reinforce this arrangement. Western nations seek to contain refugee flows from the Global South (Goldenziel, 2016; Loescher & Milner, 2011). The refugee subject is “a problem to be managed, not a subject capable of seeking and demanding protection on their own terms” (Behrman, 2018, p. 57).

Within this context, for refugees, resettlement is at the bottom of the hierarchy of durable solutions offered through the UNHCR (Crisp & Long, 2016).

The preferred durable solution is voluntary repatriation, where one chooses to return to their country. The UNHCR promotes voluntary repatriation as being the preferred option of refugees (Hynie, 2018). This arguably reflects the universalising approach of the regime, where a single monologue of returning home is represented, rather than a diversity of needs and worlds (Johnson, 2011). It can also be linked to the interests of the dominant nation states, donors to the UNHCR, who do not wish to share the burden of the economic cost of asylum with the Global South, which hosts most of the world’s refugees (Bradley, 2019; Chimni, 2004; Freedman, 2015a).

People in countries of first asylum in the Global South may also become locally integrated, the second of the three durable solutions. However it is estimated that the number of people locally integrated is even less than those who are resettled (Bradley, 2019).

The third solution, resettlement, is defined 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” (UNHCR, 2011, p. 9). The UNCHR selects ‘the most vulnerable’ who are registered and recognised as refugees. Their applications are referred to nation states participating in the resettlement programme, who may or may not accept them. This route has become less attainable as more countries adopt closed border policies (Johnson, 2011). Of 1.2 million people referred by the UNHCR to participating countries in 2018, 55,692 or 4.7% were resettled (UNHCR, 2019b). Less than 1% of nearly 20 million refugees under the mandate of the UNHCR are ever resettled (UNHCR, 2019a). This is in addition to the fact that tens of millions more people become internally displaced within countries, of which a large majority are women, who are not eligible for protection under the Refugee Convention.

There are a number of ways refugees are denied agency through the resettlement processes of the regime (Lindsay, 2017). They are positioned as dependent on nation states, who may choose to accept them and confer upon them access to rights and citizenship (Barry-Murphy & Stephenson, 2018). When assessed as refugees by the UNHCR, they have little choice regarding their resettlement country. Participating nation states have the power to select refugees based on political and societal interests (Lindsay, 2017) and bypass people recommended for resettlement by the UNHCR (Refugee Council of Australia, 2019c). The Refugee Convention as an international instrument is open to “dynamic interpretation” (McAdam, 2017, p. 2) and is increasingly interpreted in its narrowest sense by signatory nation states in order to limit their obligations (Goldenzel, 2016; McAdam, 2017). For people who are forced, without choice, to flee their home countries, and embark on significantly dangerous journeys to seek protection, the global refugee regime denies them agency and decision making about their lives. They are positioned as passive in waiting for assistance as determined by the powerful actors that govern them.

2.2.1 Refugee women: multiply disadvantaged under the regime

The intersection of the categories of ‘refugee’ and ‘woman’ is linked to oppression and disempowerment for women through processes of the refugee regime. As mentioned, the definition of refugee outlined in the 1951 Refugee Convention was developed without regard to gender related persecution. Up until the 1980s, the specific protection of women was excluded from international refugee law (Edwards, 2010). International actors had previously taken a gender blind view of its role in the refugee experience (Pittaway & Bartolomei, 2001). For example, sexual and gender based violence received scant attention as an issue affecting women (Buscher, 2010). In contrast, a systematic review of studies from 1995 to 2012 showed that at least 1 in 5 women who became refugees or were displaced during complex humanitarian emergencies experienced sexual violence (Vu et al., 2014).

Over time, policy developments and approaches to gender have arguably resulted in the representation of women as a static and homogenous group (Edwards, 2010), with their common attribute being their socially constructed gender roles and a disempowering, victimhood narrative (Smith, 2016). The UNCHR has argued that the 1951 Refugee Convention can be interpreted using a gender-sensitive approach, and that nation states can assess persecution based on gender by classifying women as a ‘particular social group’ under the Convention. In doing so, however, women are constructed as fleeing unconventional forms of persecution, outside of the norm (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2011). Key developments have included adding women to existing frameworks, representing access to durable solutions as equal among women and men, and ignoring women’s disadvantage based on societal gender structures (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2011; Yacob-Haliso, 2016).

The *UNHCR Handbook for Protection of Women and Girls* that guides the work of UNHCR staff arguably depicts a traditional-modern interpretation of gender, whereby gender equality is something delivered by the humanitarian actor to the refugee, who is essentially different, and women are constructed as undertaking domestic roles and mothers, or as vulnerable victims of inferior patriarchies (Olivius, 2016). UNHCR policy in general has failed to address how personal and structural

factors intersectionally disadvantage women in accessing durable solutions (Yacob-Haliso, 2016). For example, it may not be possible to safely integrate into the first country of asylum (local integration) based on factors including gender, age and sexual orientation and the only durable solution may be resettlement in a third country, even though this is not available to the vast majority (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2011).

To counter some of the limitations of the refugee regime's definition of a 'refugee' and who then gets access to durable solutions, the UNHCR Woman at Risk program was established in 1988. This prioritises resettlement as a durable solution for women and their dependents most at risk in countries of first asylum because of their gender and who were without the protection of a male relative. Research has shown that many women at risk have already experienced significant gender based violence before resettlement (Bartolomei, Eckert, & Pittaway, 2014). The intersection of woman and refugee, in the making of the label 'refugee woman', denies women their identities and a status of not being regarded as equal. This label also fails to recognise gender inequality as a cause of violence toward vulnerable and exploitable women who are targets of sexual and gender based violence in refugee camps and across other aspects of their lives (Pittaway & Bartolomei, 2018; Pittaway & Pittaway, 2004)

The UNHCR and other international agencies, in order to fund the policy imperative of containing refugees in the Global South, commonly represent the refugee as that of a vulnerable and victimised Third World refugee woman with children, who is without political agency (Johnson, 2011). This depoliticisation means women are non-threatening, thus encouraging resourcing for aid by nation states to the UNHCR which enables their containment, often in established 'safe zones' within their country of origin (Johnson, 2011). Women and children are used in manufacturing a narrative of pity (Ongenaert & Joye, 2019).

Women have varied backgrounds and life experiences, yet they contend with a specific, universal identity of 'refugee women', and violence, discrimination and disempowerment within a system already disempowering to those it was established to respond to. Within the refugee regime, which reinforces a global patriarchy that

limits women's access to resources and decision making, women find ways to resist and re-claim their agency (Hajdukowski-Ahmed, 2008; Loughry, 2008). This will be demonstrated through the results of this research. I now turn to a discussion on Australia's refugee and humanitarian program, which perpetuates the specific identity of refugee woman. I use principles of intersectional and postcolonial feminist theories in my discussion of issues highlighted in the literature.

2.3 Australia's Approach to Refugee Resettlement

Australia has a history of discriminatory selection and control in its policies towards refugees and immigrants. This approach is informed by a fear of difference which has existed since colonisation, based on attachment to a white, masculine identity. Australia's approach can also be critiqued as insular, and reflects an ignorance of the global dimensions of forced migration (Neumann, 2015). Australia delayed its accession to the Refugee Convention until 1954, three years after it was finalised, due to concerns it would restrict immigration policy freedoms (Palmer, 2009). It acceded with a number of reservations and a view that the Convention would bear little relevance based on Australia's geographical position, situated far from Europe (Stats, 2014). The fear of a loss of white identity and parochial attitudes have been projected towards various waves of refugees received over the decades since ratifying the Refugee Convention (Neumann, 2015). A contemporary example is policy, which discriminates against people exercising their right to seek asylum in accordance with the Refugee Convention, but who arrive by boat to Australia (Gale, 2004). Australia's policies toward people who have taken this route to refuge have included the use of mandatory immigration detention since 1992, offshore processing with no chance for settlement in Australia, boat turn backs and temporary protection visas (Fleay, Cokley, Dodd, Briskman, & Schwartz, 2016).

As one of 37 participating countries in the UNHCR Resettlement Programme, Australia delivers a refugee and humanitarian program. The program comprises a number of categories for people seeking protection in Australia. The government refers to people who are resettled through the program as 'humanitarian entrants' (Department of Social Services, 2018c). The offshore pathway is for people who apply for refugee status outside of Australia and are successful. The onshore

component is for people who arrive in Australia with a valid visa, commonly by plane, and seek asylum. Up until 2013, people who arrived by boat were also considered eligible for protection through the onshore component of the refugee and humanitarian program but under current legislation are excluded from accessing protection. Under the current approach made law in 2014, temporary protection provisions are offered to people who arrived in Australia to seek asylum without a valid visa (Refugee Council of Australia, 2016b). This applies to 30,000 asylum seekers who arrived in Australia prior to the legislation being introduced (Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law, 2019). Specifically, it applies to people who arrived by boat after 13 August 2012 and had not had their protection visa finalised as of 18 September 2013, or arrived after 13 August 2012 and were not sent to offshore detention in Manus Island in Papua New Guinea or Nauru (Hartley, Fleay, Baker, Burke, & Field, 2018).

In line with UNHCR resettlement priorities, in 1989 Australia introduced the Woman at Risk visa, a sub class of the offshore refugee visa category of the refugee and humanitarian program. The visa is for vulnerable women and their dependents, living outside their home country, such as in a refugee camp or country of temporary settlement, at risk of violence or abuse due to their gender, and without the protection of a male relative. Over 20,500 visas have been granted through the Woman at Risk sub class (Department of Home Affairs, 2018a). The current government has also emphasised that in future an increased number of places in the humanitarian program will be allocated to women and children (Coleman, 2019; Greene, 2019). It has not been made clear whether these places would be allocated to the Woman at Risk sub class. It does however indicate a greater acceptance of refugee women and children being allowed to enter Australia than men. From a feminist postcolonial perspective, this reflects that refugee women are gendered and racialised to be seen as vulnerable and in need of ‘saving’ from their oppressive cultures while limiting the “racialized masculine threat” (Gray & Franck, 2019, p. 279).

The humanitarian program also includes a Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) category for offshore applicants who have family or community ties to Australia and have been subjected to human rights violations. This is the main avenue for resettled

refugees to access family reunion arrangements and comprises a limited number of places (Okhovat, Hirsch, Hoang, & Dowd, 2017). Proposers must pay for the travel costs of the applicant if successful and assist with their accommodation and orientation (Department of Home Affairs, 2018c). Under current policy, people found to be refugees who arrived by boat after 13 August 2012 and had not had their protection visa finalised as of 18 September 2013, or arrived after 13 August 2012 and were not sent to offshore detention in Manus Island in Papua New Guinea or Nauru (Hartley, Fleay, Baker, Burke, & Field, 2018) are not eligible to access the SHP. There is stringent consideration of applications against SHP criteria and the lowest processing priority for people who arrived by boat before this date (Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, 2012). In addition to discriminating against this group (Darling, 2015) the SHP has been criticised for being inaccessible due to the limited places available, prohibitive costs and the restrictive definition of family (Okhovat et al., 2017). This definition is based on a Western understanding of a nuclear family within the context of a highly selective process controlled by the Australian Government (Wilmsen, 2011).

In recent years, in response to global conflict, Australia's offshore refugee intake has been particularly focused on the Middle East and South West Asia, including Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan; Myanmar and Bhutan in Asia; and Africa, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Eritrea (Department of Home Affairs, 2018c). Australia committed to an additional 12,000 places for people affected by the conflict in Iraq and Syria over the period of 2015–2019 (Department of Home Affairs, 2019b). Australia's refugee intake for 2018–2019 was set at 18,750 and touted as the largest annual intake in 30 years (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2017). Yet, the policy context is dynamic and ever changing. A 2019 pre-election promise of the Prime Minister, while pledging to offer more places to women and children, was to cap the refugee intake annually at 18,750 places (Greene, 2019).

The rhetoric reflects the power of politicians to use refugees as a political tool to influence voters. It also further highlights the level of power the government has through its decision making to dictate the future of refugees themselves. In recent years, Christian refugees have been prioritised over Muslims through the offshore

humanitarian program. Figures show that the number of Muslim refugees halved from 2013/2014 to 2016/2017 despite a large component of the refugee intake comprising people from predominantly Islamic countries (Le Grand, 2018). When it announced the intake of refugees from Iraq and Syria, the government's emphasis was also on 'women and children' as among the most 'vulnerable' (Department of Home Affairs, 2019b), again drawing on the power of the gendered and racialised narrative of the refugee woman.

2.4 Settlement Policy Objectives

Settlement and immigration policy falls under the jurisdiction of the Federal Government. As discussed in chapter 1, from an Australian policy perspective, the successful settlement of refugees is synonymous with integration (Fozdar & Hartley, 2013; McPherson, 2010). While the language used by the Federal Government frequently refers to supporting refugees/humanitarian entrants to integrate 'into Australian society' (Coleman, 2018; Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a; Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2017; Department of Social Services, 2018c; Government of Australia, 2017), there is no evidence of a clear definition of integration in the settlement policy documents.

The settlement period is recognised as the first five years in Australia. Services are thus funded to support refugees for this period. Integration, therefore, can be interpreted as being an outcome of this finite period. Refugees should become 'active and independent participants' in society (Department of Social Services, 2018c). This participation is measured through outcomes, in particular the achievement of the three E's of English proficiency, education and training, and employment (Department of Social Services, 2018c). These are noted as important for 'productive diversity' or a multicultural workforce and for social and community cohesion in the longer term (Department of Social Services, 2017d). Integration is understood here as the responsibility of new migrants, in contrast to conceptualisations of integration as a two-way process. This bidirectional notion of integration is expanded on in chapter 3 where I look more broadly at the literature on integration, beyond the domestic policy setting.

Recognising intersectional oppression, under current settlement policy people who arrived by boat found to be refugees are treated differently to other refugees (Hankivsky, 2012a). They receive limited support through the Settlement Program (Fozdar & Banki, 2017). For resettled refugees, however, the services and support on offer through the Settlement Program are described as among the best in the world (Fozdar & Hartley, 2013). The exclusion of some from access to the Settlement Program is connected to an underlying ideology of reward for the deserving camp refugee, and punishment for the asylum seeker evading a so-called managed migration system (O'Sullivan, 2016). Government compassion to the camp refugee, in line with colonial thinking, is based on the perception of them as a deserving 'other'. They are not equals but dependents; they are the "deserving sufferers" (Peterie, 2017, p. 362).

A further criticism among researchers of Australian settlement policy objectives is the overemphasis on socioeconomic outcomes and the need to recognise the significance of social connections and inclusion (Correa-Velez, Gifford, & Barnett, 2010; Vromans et al., 2018). Instead of inclusion, policy rhetoric stresses 'social cohesion' as a key outcome of integration in addition to the three E's (Department of Social Services, 2018c). It is important to critique this outcome of integration.

2.5 Social Cohesion

Social cohesion first became a focus internationally in the 1990s in response to globalisation and international acts of terrorism (Fozdar, 2011b; Markus, 2017). It is a social policy goal of many Western ethnically diverse nations (Moran & Mallman, 2019). While there is limited consensus among academic researchers on what social cohesion means (Fonseca, Lukosch, & Brazier, 2019; Schiefer & Noll, 2017), a definition based on a wide review of the literature by Schiefer and Noll (2017, p. 595) outlines social cohesion as "a descriptive, multifaceted and gradual phenomenon attributed to a collective, indicating the quality of collective togetherness". Strong collective togetherness is demonstrated to be important for psychological wellbeing (Delhey & Dragolov, 2016).

In Australia, social cohesion was notably emphasised under multicultural policies released during the government of Prime Minister John Howard, in response to alleged threats of extremism by ethnic minorities, in particular Muslims (Ho, 2013). Like integration, there is an absence of a recognised definition of social cohesion in the Australian policy context. Social cohesion is intertwined with multiculturalism, viewed as necessary for “managing Australia’s diversity” (Australian Multicultural Council, 2013, p. 10). Social cohesion is discussed in Australia’s current multicultural policy statement as being connected to community harmony, through reduced tensions between communities through interfaith and intercultural dialogue and the condemnation of those who incite racial hatred (Government of Australia, 2017). As written in the policy statement, social cohesion is recognised as vital for Australia’s economic prosperity (Government of Australia, 2017). It should be noted that the term is often used interchangeably with ‘community cohesion’ in policy discourse (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2015; Demireva & McNeil, 2017; Department of Social Services, 2018c). In the absence of this distinction I use the term social cohesion in this research.

Definitions of social cohesion often derive from the notion of shared values (Markus & Kirpitchenko, 2007; Schiefer & Noll, 2017). The Australian Values Statement, introduced in 2007, which refugees and other permanent migrants must sign as a visa requirement, is a strategy for social cohesion (Department of Social Services, 2018c). The values identified in the statement include individual freedom, egalitarianism, equality of opportunity and English as the national language (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a) (see Figure 1).

Fozdar (2012, p. 55) importantly observes that while the Australian Values Statement as a condition upon entry may not only be in breach of the UN Refugee Convention, “the question of the morality of requiring those who are fleeing persecution to sign such a declaration, when the alternative is to be denied sanctuary in a country of refuge, is one which has yet to be addressed”. This observation can be linked to an argument from this present research, that a driving impetus of such initiatives stems from the anxiety of the white settler colonial nation, seeking to protect homogeneity (Briskman & Latham, 2017). It is based on a quest to maintain and reinforce the status quo.

Australian values agreed to by permanent visa applicants:

- Australian society values respect for the freedom and dignity of the individual, freedom of religion, commitment to the rule of law, Parliamentary democracy, equality of men and women and a spirit of egalitarianism that embraces mutual respect, tolerance, fair play and compassion for those in need and pursuit of the public good.
- Australian society values equality of opportunity for individuals, regardless of their race, religion or ethnic background
- The English language, as the national language, is an important unifying element of Australian society.

Figure 1. Values listed in the Australian Values Statement.

Commonwealth of Australia (2016a)

Social cohesion, a key outcome expected from the Settlement Program, is often poorly defined by governments (Chan, To, & Chan, 2006; Fenger, 2012; Schiefer & Noll, 2017). Policy makers in white majority cultures frame cohesion from dominant cultural norms, which arguably privileges Whiteness (Lobo, 2011, p. 91). Therefore, there is a need to critique the underlying assumptions inherent in policy agendas that “regulate the boundaries and meanings of ethnicity in ways that reproduce the social and cultural influence of Whiteness” (Lobo, 2011, p. 91). Whiteness is not just skin colour but a system of domination (Schinkel, 2018). Social cohesion serves to locate those on the other side of Whiteness as outsiders (Keddie, 2012; McPherson, 2010; Wille, 2011). This critique can be made in the case of the purpose of the Australian Values Statement. The perspectives of migrants themselves are missing from public debate about how they experience the imposition of the Australian values listed in the statement, which they must embrace (Chisari, 2015).

An instructive critique of social cohesion is also provided in an ethnographic analysis of a social cohesion project with groups of white and non-white youth in two local government areas in Melbourne (Stead, 2017). The social cohesion framework that guided the project was based on an approach of governing diversity, building relationships between groups within a context of “overarching sameness” (Stead, 2017, p. 419) and in doing so depoliticised difference. Problems of socioeconomic

marginalisation among the South Sudanese youth participants, including daily experiences of discrimination and structural barriers to participation, could be seen through a social cohesion lens as a failure to integrate.

These examples illustrate how social cohesion, as conceptualised by government, masks inequalities (Moran & Mallman, 2019) and marginalises non-white groups. I discuss this in relation to the findings of the research, in the discussion chapter (7).

2.5 Multicultural Policy and Its Relationship to Settlement Policy

The provisions of the Settlement Program are espoused as being based on the principles of multiculturalism (Fozdar & Hartley, 2014a). Australia first adopted an official policy of multiculturalism in 1973, following the dismantling of the White Australia Policy. Australia is often described in political and academic circles as a successful multicultural society (Bouma, 2016; Colic-Peisker & Farquharson, 2011). According to the government's multicultural policy statement, Australia is a nation that embraces diversity, is harmonious and egalitarian, and as mentioned in chapter 1, offers a 'fair go' for all (Government of Australia, 2017). Over 28 percent of Australians were born overseas and the percentage of overseas born has increased over the last 10 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

However, policy is informed by ideology and the political environment (Ho, 2013). Multiculturalism is a "collective orientation to diversity" and as such is mouldable to context (Nunn, 2017). Rather than supporting egalitarianism, multicultural policy is used to maintain a white, gendered hierarchy. This is because it positions migrants in relation to the white majority (Liu, 2016; Majavu, 2016; Pruitt, 2015). Furthermore, some migrants are constructed as more problematic than others, depending on their race (Burke, Thapliyal, & Baker, 2018). The hierarchy is never examined critically, however, and a popular discourse of 'mateship' is adopted instead. Mateship overlooks people's life experiences as being influenced by historical and power relations, reinforcing the status quo and Western culture over others (Majavu, 2016). It is also associated with a masculine identity (Moran, 2011). Consequently, issues such as racism in Australia fail to be tackled beyond a surface level or seen as an enduring issue (Collins, 2013; Pruitt, 2015).

Adding weight to the argument that policy making is a tool for reinforcing a power hierarchy, is an overt shift in recent decades from multiculturalism to an assimilationist approach to immigration (Kymlicka, 2018; Tate, 2009) This was explicitly the case in policy making during Australia under Prime Minister John Howard, and has arguably continued under the guise of ‘social cohesion’ (Ho, 2013; Mackenzie, Mwamba, & Mphande, 2017). According to government, social cohesion is assimilation into the hegemonic majority (Yuval-Davis, 2011). As Reid (2018, p.88) describes, what characterises policy in Australia is the “cultural rationale for a unified common culture, combined with the pervasiveness of individualisation and responsibilisation, associated with the construction of the neoliberal citizen” Neoliberal multiculturalism emphasises the economic benefits of multiculturalism, and the cultural dimensions of ethnicity are deemed valuable when they can deliver economic benefits (Roose & Possamai, 2015).

2.5.1 Multiculturalism, citizenship and refugee women

Multiculturalism has become increasingly connected to discourses of citizenship, which is both “pertaining to a legal status and also a set of values and acceptable modes of behaviour” (Reid, 2018, p. 80). Under the Australian model of multiculturalism, citizenship is a marker of inclusion (Tate, 2009). Furthermore, it is a tool for governments to control who does and does not belong to the State (Shachar, 2014; Shohamy, 2009). Under current policy, it is denied to refugees who have arrived by boat and are granted temporary protection visas. Aside from this, citizenship is controlled through a form of testing. A citizenship test was introduced in Australia in 2007 (Levey, 2014). It was one of a suite of changes to move away from the Howard Coalition government’s official policy of multiculturalism.

The introduction of the test was framed in particular as a response to Australian Muslims allegedly being a threat to social cohesion (Fozdar, 2011a; Ho, 2013; Levey, 2014). Citizenship was reinstated as “a thick symbolic bond” of Australianess (Walsh, 2014, p. 291). The content of the test includes Australian history, democratic beliefs and values and Australian government and the law (Department of Home Affairs, 2018b). The test assesses basic English language

ability, with English considered part of the ‘national identity’ (Department of Home Affairs, 2018b). Alongside the introduction of the test were also changes to the time migrants had to wait before applying for citizenship, an increase from two to four years (Haggis & Schech, 2010). As with the decline of multiculturalism, citizenship testing in the nation’s official language has also been adopted by other Western nations as part of social cohesion measures (Shohamy, 2009).

In 2017, under the guise of “putting Australian values first”, further changes were attempted by the government to make attaining citizenship more difficult (Dutton, 2017). Proposed changes included a longer waiting period before one could apply for citizenship, demonstrating integration through volunteering, testing for Australian values and a university level of English language proficiency. Opponents of the changes highlighted the specific disadvantage this would create for women with low English proficiency and who would be marginalised as a result (Refugee Council of Australia, 2017a). This is consistent with research, which has highlighted that it is difficult for women to achieve the literacy levels required to complete the citizenship test in its current form (Hashimoto-Govindasamy & Rose, 2011). It also reflects a broader observation about citizenship testing in the official language where gender bias is unacknowledged and issues including gender, race and class create intersecting barriers to women’s language acquisition (Morrice, 2017). In addition, as Burke et al. (2018, p. 95) explain, “language proficiency is deployed as a substitute measurement of morality and is a powerful means of exclusion for those who do not possess the linguistic capital privileged by the dominant groups in Australian society”.

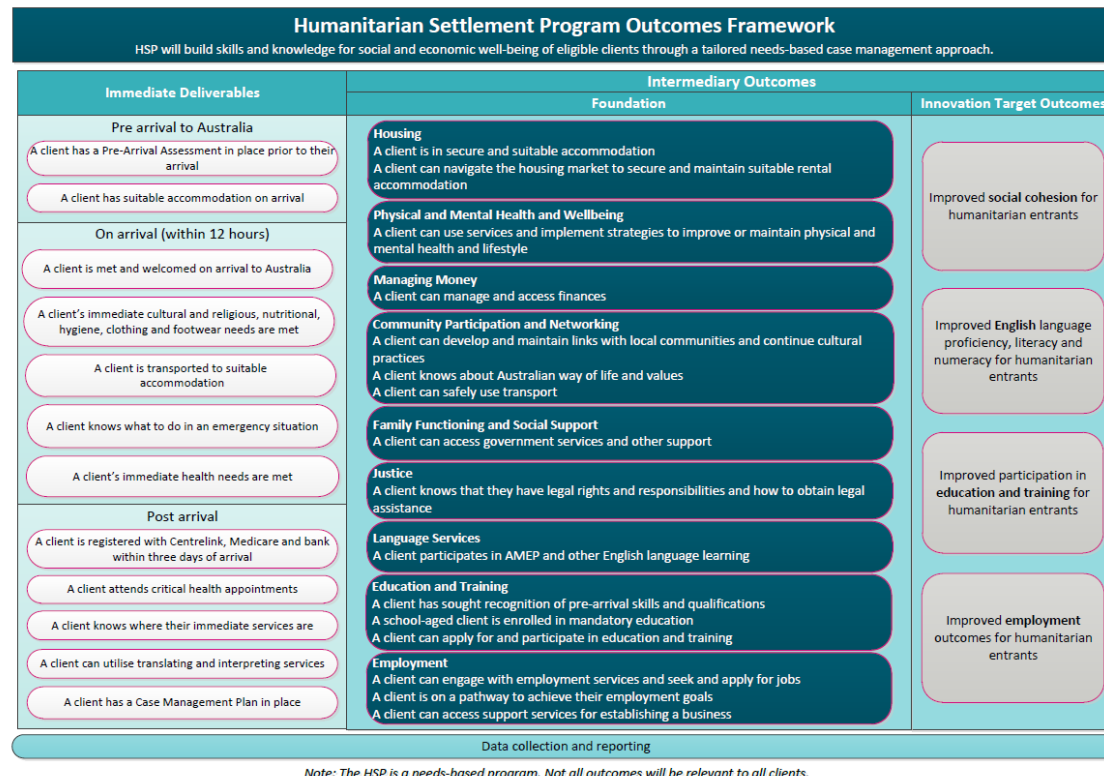
These changes, which were ultimately defeated in Parliament, highlight how citizenship can be used as a tool to control belonging. Conversely, formal citizenship is an important goal for refugees and is recognised as a foundation of integration (Ager & Strang, 2008). Some research has highlighted its importance among refugees in Australia, including being valued as an enabler to inclusion (Haggis & Schech, 2010), ontological security (Nunn, McMichael, Gifford, & Correa-Velez, 2015) and in maintaining transnational relationships through the security of being an Australia citizen (Haggis & Schech, 2010; Nunn et al., 2015). However, others have shown that despite citizenship status, refugee experiences of racism and

discrimination affect their sense of belonging and citizenship (Udah & Singh, 2018). Vasta (2017, p. 44) describes the migrant experience as being in an “ambiguous space of the insider/outsider.” While citizenship helps to constitute insidership, racialisation situates migrants as outsiders, thus serving as a barrier to belonging (Vasta, 2017). The significance of citizenship is revisited in the discussion chapter (7).

2.6 Settlement Services for Eligible Refugees/Humanitarian Entrants

The Federal Government Department of Social Services is the responsible agency for managing settlement services. Settlement services and programs are impacted by policy, which is often shifting, particularly with changes to government following Federal elections held every three years (Fozdar & Banki, 2017). Current arrangements are discussed and critiqued here.

Two tiers of support are offered for eligible refugees/humanitarian entrants, directly related to supporting the settlement process, which I refer to under the banner of the Settlement Program. Firstly, the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) involves individualised case managed support on a needs basis, generally for up to 18 months until a client achieves self-reliance across a range of outcomes, in addition to a specialised and intensive support program for those with complex needs, generally for up to six months (Department of Social Services, 2018c). Recognised as foundations for successful settlement, outcomes are to be achieved across a number of areas: employment; education and training; housing; physical and mental health and wellbeing; managing money; community participation and networking; family functioning and social support; justice; and language services (see Figure 2).



Note: The HSP is a needs-based program. Not all outcomes will be relevant to all clients.

Figure 2. Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) Outcomes Framework.

From “Humanitarian Settlement Program Outcomes Framework,” by Department of Social Services, 2017

(https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:GecLomgovMcJ:https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/11_2017/hsp_outcomes_framework_-_14_september.pdf+%&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=au).

Upon exiting the Humanitarian Support Program, refugees are able to access a range of community programs, the second tier of the Settlement Program. These were previously delivered by organisations funded through the Settlement Grants Program. However, following an evaluation of the Settlement Grants Program in 2017, the program was rebadged as Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) and is comprised of two streams: client services, including case work for support with client issues that arise during the settlement period; and community capacity building grants. Despite these changes, the aims of the program remain the same as the Settlement Grants Program: to foster “social and economic participation, personal wellbeing, independence and community connectedness” (Department of Social Services, 2018a).

2.6.1 Adult Migrant English Program

Complementary to these provisions, the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) offers migrants and refugees/humanitarian entrants, including refugees on temporary protection visas, access to up to 510 hours of English language tuition. The AMEP is managed through the Federal Government using the same funding model as the Settlement Program, delivered by subcontracted providers such as TAFEs and private educational institutions. SETS providers must also build linkages with the AMEP (Department of Social Services, 2018b). The 510 hours must be started within the first 12 months of arrival and completed within five years (Department of Home Affairs, 2019). At a policy level, changes to the program in 2017 are worth noting, which occurred after this research was carried out. These have included an additional 490 hours for clients who have made good progress or attendance but have exhausted their 510 hours and not reached a desired level of proficiency (Joint Standing Committee on Migration, 2017). Participants can also choose from pre-employment or social English, depending on their goals and have access to additional support if needed based on their pre-migration experiences such as limited literacy (Department of Social Services, 2018c). A key concern raised by stakeholders in response to the new model, however, is that the emphasis on employment can undermine the curriculum focus on other aspects of everyday life in Australia (Refugee Council of Australia, 2019d; Scanlon Institute for Applied Social Research, 2019).

This position was also supported in an evaluation on the AMEP business model for the Federal Government, released in 2019. In addition to recommending that the targeted tuition streams be abandoned, among other issues identified was access to child care. Free child care was found to be vital to women's participation, however insufficient funding was given to AMEP providers as part of their contracts to cover the full costs (Tynan et al., 2019). There were limited affordable child care options in some regional locations in particular, which therefore delayed some students' access to AMEP tuition (Tynan et al., 2019).

2.6.2 Employment support

The Jobactive program is promoted by the Federal Government as the main offering to help refugees find work (Department of Social Services, 2018c). Jobactive is a mainstream employment services system delivered by providers contracted by the Australian Government (Department of Jobs and Small Business, 2018). Since 2018, also after this research was conducted, the time period for referrals to Jobactive were increased for newly arrived refugees. Previously, people were referred to Jobactive after 13 weeks of activity tested income support. This was increased to six months as part of budget saving measures in 2018 and in the 2019–2020 budget has been further increased to 12 months. The government has promoted these changes as giving refugees more time to settle in Australia before seeking employment, and has pointed out that they can still access Jobactive voluntarily in the meantime (Department of Employment, 2019). The changes will save the government \$77.9 million over four years (Commonwealth of Australia, 2019). Refugee advocates have criticised the fact that the money will not be redirected toward specialised services to support refugees to enter employment (Refugee Council of Australia, 2019b).

A pilot project was also conducted from 2017 to 2019 to support skilled refugees with good levels of English to get their existing skills and qualifications to Australian standards and find employment that matched their skills set (Department of Social Services, 2018c). The career pathways pilot was funded by the Department of Social Services across six sites including Perth. An evaluation of the pilot commenced in 2019 and at the time of concluding this thesis, no findings had been released. People

looking for full time employment through Jobactive can also be referred to the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program for 500 hours of language, literacy and numeracy training (Department of Skills Small and Family Business, 2019). People from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds reportedly comprise just over two thirds of participants, as well as between 76% and 90% of clients over the age of 30 (ACIL Allen Consulting, 2015).

While the mainstream program is designed for job seekers, it constitutes a large number of participants who have used up their AMEP hours or had not accessed them within the timeframe, an issue that has been raised by the Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA, 2018). ACTA, which represents teachers of English to speakers of other languages, has argued that the SEE program represents the main pathway to further English study for AMEP clients, but as it is for job seekers it includes other groups with different learning needs. They argue that this is creating fragmentation and overlap issues in the delivery of both programs, and that migrants require specialist tuition, whereas SEE should be for job seekers who have been educated in Australia (ACTA, 2018).

Women's Economic Security Statement

In 2018 the Federal Government released an inaugural *Women's Economic Security Statement*, to address barriers to women's financial security based on three pillars: increasing women's workforce participation, supporting economic independence, and improving their earning potential (Commonwealth of Australia, 2018). While separate to settlement program provisions, it is considered a flagship course of action designed to achieve gender equality in Australia. Over four years, \$109 million will go to a range of practical measures across the three areas of focus, such as improved data collection to measure women's use of time, a more flexible parental leave pay scheme, measures to support women leaving situations of family and domestic violence and initiatives to support women's entrepreneurship. However, the statement has been criticised for lacking consideration of the particular barriers that refugee and migrant women face, reflected in their higher rates of unemployment and lower levels of participation in the workforce compared with non-migrant women (Harmony Alliance, 2018). The lack of an intersectional analysis, as argued

by women's organisations in their response to the Women's Economic Security Statement, has meant that it is devoid of initiatives addressing the compounding economic disadvantage experienced by some groups of women (Equality Rights Alliance, 2019).

2.6.3 Community Hubs

The Community Hubs program is funded by the Federal Government and is designed to support refugee and migrant women with young children. Place-based hubs are planned around community needs and exist in areas of high socioeconomic disadvantage, but aim to achieve objectives including improved language, literacy and learning outcomes, as well as improved pathways to employment (Community Hubs Australia, 2017b). The Community Hubs program is underpinned by the policy objective of social cohesion (Department of Social Services, 2018c). While it is separate to the HSP and SETS components of the Settlement Program, it is also linked to settlement policy objectives and championed as an offering to help women successfully settle in Australia (Department of Social Services, 2018c). The Community Hubs program began in 2013 and by 2018 hubs were largely concentrated in schools in the states of Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland. The model has been effective at supporting women to gain skills in English language, literacy and numeracy and for school readiness for families (Community Hubs Australia, 2017a).

2.7 Discussion

A number of key issues can be highlighted about the Australian policy context. In addition to the equity issue discussed earlier, whereby people who have arrived via boat to seek asylum are denied access to the program, the services provided in the Settlement Program are unevenly distributed. This includes the lack of adequate settlement services for people who settle in remote areas (Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, 2015; Fozdar & Banki, 2017) as well as their limited access to the AMEP, if at all (Scanlon Institute for Applied Social Research, 2019).

Another issue is related to the model of governance of the Settlement Program by

which service providers are contracted to deliver the HSP and SETS programs for the government, a neoliberal model, which is widely applied across government service delivery (Kandasamy & Soldatic, 2018). Services that may have traditionally been the role of government are outsourced to service providers who must engage in a competitive tendering process to secure contract based funding for their delivery (Huot, 2013). Although there have been few Australian studies exploring the implications of this model in effectively supporting refugees during the settlement period, research suggests that the model fails to provide adequate support to clients. In one study, Lenette and Ingamells (2014) found that the narrow approach to fulfil basic needs and a neoliberal concept of self-reliance was incongruent with the complexities of refugee women's lives and instead stressed the importance of locality-based and contextual approaches. A small study by Kandasamy and Soldatic (2018) found that the prescriptive model requiring service providers to meet contractual obligations meant that they could not be responsive to the on-the-ground needs of the refugee groups to whom they were delivering settlement services. Similarly, ACTA have highlighted that the model of delivery of the AMEP calls for providers to deliver on dysfunctional key performance indicators, which detracts from the delivery of quality English language education (ACTA, 2018).

The settlement model facilitates the exclusion of those outside the norm of Whiteness. Ramsay, whose ethnographic research aimed to demonstrate how resettled Central African refugee women were racialised and marginalised in Australia, argued that their protection and support through the Settlement Program was conditional, based on compliance with “tacitly reproduced, and implicitly gendered, racial hierarchies” (2017, p. 172). McPherson (2010) argued that this extends to the AMEP where women are taught to be ‘good refugees’ through learning about employment, social participation and citizenship based on patriarchal Anglo-Australian norms (McPherson, 2010). Government attitudes to migration are also a key factor, which has shaped the AMEP further in recent years (Scanlon Institute for Applied Social Research, 2019). The current model prioritises English for employment to the detriment of other topics related to settlement. This reflects the need for immigration to bring economic deliverables but the government's deep wariness of “its perceived cultural impacts” (Scanlon Institute for Applied Social Research, 2019, p. 28). It reflects an increasing policy emphasis on the ‘good

refugee' as an economic contributor over social inclusion and belonging.

Other research has highlighted criticisms among refugees who labelled the settlement model as neocolonial with a focus on assimilation through a service relationship with providers and the need for this to be countered with a community development approach (Westoby, 2008). This would mean a shift to privileging the emic or insider perspectives of refugees, dialogical engagement in a safe space, facilitation and discovery through elicitation, and through accessing people's cultural, community and political resources for recovery, which can be understood as building a new social world upon resettlement (Westoby, 2008).

Service providers can also play an active role in reproducing dominant discourses about the civilising of refugees. In a critique of the delivery of settlement services in the sociopolitical context, Sampson (2016) pointed out that as settlement services are operating in an unfavourable political climate of budget cuts and the space for service delivery has become increasingly contested, those providers justify their funding by constructing refugees as undergoing a process of "transition from the needy refugee to an independent and productive citizen" (p. 112). In positioning refugees as needy, it reinforces refugees as victims, and as active and productive citizens they must conform with neoliberal expectations of settlement in exchange for the generosity of Australia in accepting them (Sampson, 2016).

Through the design of the Settlement Program, inequalities are arguably reinforced based on a prerogative of "the assimilation of newcomers and the maintenance of Anglo-culture hegemony" (Broerse, 2019, p. 246). The maintenance of Anglo-culture hegemony extends to other structures of power. Jakubowicz (2014) writes about this more broadly: "the power hierarchy is dominated by the foundation imperial peoples. Their interests are reflected in the functioning and impact of the institutions that their descendants and those who support them continue to control". Common to the settler colonial society, there is also a resistance to address Australia's "foundational illegitimacy" (Maddison, 2019, p. 182). This resistance is enforced through knowledge construction of an idealised, shared Australian identity (Farrugia, Dzidic, & Roberts, 2018), propagating fallacies of 'mateship' and 'a fair go'. An expectation of economic contribution is urged, yet refugee lives intersect

with these structures, which marginalise those who do not fit with the norms of Whiteness (Ramsay, 2017). The critique of the Women's Economic Security Policy Statement is illustrative of this argument, which fails to address intersecting forms of economic disadvantage for non-white women.

For refugee women, aside from contending with constructed notions of being a victim, vulnerable and lacking agency, in line with settlement objectives they are expected to settle as soon as possible and become active and independent participants in society (Wachter & Snyder, 2018). This equates to economic independence. At the top of the power hierarchy, sexism and processes of gendering are reinforced, however, which marginalises women and serve as a barrier to this independence.

A further example can be explored to illustrate the role of intersecting structural forces that impact on women, related to a Commonwealth inquiry into migrant settlement outcomes, which was initiated by the Federal Government in 2017. A key focus of the inquiry was to address how to improve the settlement outcomes of humanitarian entrants to Australia.

The inquiry itself was criticised for being politically hijacked, reflecting the power of issues of migration and race to sow division. Its relevance was linked by politicians to the need to address gang violence among African youth and a view by the then Minister for Immigration that mistakes were made in the migrant and refugee intake of the 1970s and 1980s, which resulted in descendants becoming foreign fighters in the Middle East (Davidson, 2016). Over 100 submissions were received from agencies and individuals, in addition to the conduct of public hearings across the country.

A number of recommendations for reforming migrant settlement policy and programs were put forward by the Joint Standing Committee on Migration (the Committee) conducting the inquiry. A key finding was that a settlement period of five years disadvantaged women, particularly women with caring responsibilities, which became a competing priority to accessing English language classes (Joint Standing Committee on Migration, 2017). English was identified as key to successful settlement, including as a pathway to employment. It was recommended that the

AMEP include provisions to ensure it was accessible to women, such as an extending the period to enrol from 12 months to 2 years and access to learning for 10 years as opposed to 5 years (Joint Standing Committee on Migration, 2017).

An official response to the recommendations was provided by the Australian Government. While the recommendation regarding English language was supported in-principle, the Australian Government argued that extensions to access were already available under a case-by-case basis, were utilised widely by students and therefore changes were not necessary (Australian Government, 2018).

Approximately 8,800 extensions were granted over the period from 2016 to 2017 (Australian Government, 2018). It is not stated how many of these extensions were granted to women.

The inflexible response reflects the largely blanket approach to services offered through the Settlement Program, which fails to account for the role gender plays in the settlement experience. The inquiry clearly highlighted that more is needed to be done to ensure access to English classes as this is foundational for the successful settlement of women (Joint Standing Committee on Migration, 2017). Yet the AMEP is considered by the government as fit for purpose as currently offered (Australian Government, 2018). This resistance to change suggests that policy decisions are made depending on one's social location. The power hierarchy in place is patriarchal and as such there is little consideration of the needs of women who settle in Australia, and how these might differ among women themselves.

Another recommendation of the inquiry was to expand the existing Community Hubs program for women. This was supported by the Australian Government. However, a critical, intersectionally informed perspective of the Community Hubs program highlights its focus as being on refugee and migrant women who are mothers with children, and the program does not reach Western Australia, which was the setting for this research, but only four of the states and territories. Women who do not fit the demographics or location for the program do not have access. Furthermore, a neoliberal approach to disadvantage is employed, which emphasises individual responsibility to overcome challenges without addressing structural barriers (Stead, 2017).

This highlights the settlement context as not being a fair one for many refugee women. The context is informed by ideologies, including neoliberalism, racism and sexism, which shape policy and programs. The settlement context is built upon a history of colonisation and fear of non-white immigration. Certain expectations are cemented within the current model, most evident being the expectation to become an economic contributor. Meaningful belonging is evidently not an expectation. In addition to contending with these unjust aspects of settlement policy, women must also struggle with the fact that there is no gendered approach to policy making. Furthermore, policy makers do not consider how gender might intersect with other categories such as age and education, and design programs to reflect women's varying needs. Women are multiply marginalised.

2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have critiqued the policy context to demonstrate the ideological underpinnings informing the approach to forced migration and settlement of refugees, from the global to national levels. I have shown how historical factors have influenced the Australian government's approach to the settlement of refugees. Combined with the growth of neoliberalism, the current policy emphasises refugees' economic productivity yet resists the acceptance of those who do not fit a particular Anglo identity. This is reflected in the inadequacies of programs such as the AMEP. In addition, refugee women are relegated further down the racialised hierarchy given it is also patriarchal.

In the next chapter (3) the literature on refugee women's settlement experiences, including barriers and facilitators to successful settlement, is discussed. I present findings from the literature and highlight the gaps to demonstrate the relevance of my research question and approach.

Chapter 3:

The Settlement Experiences of Refugee Women in Australia: A Critique of the Literature

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, literature relevant to the main research question is discussed. Firstly, I discuss *Building a New Life in Australia*, a recent government commissioned longitudinal study that is a key piece of research on humanitarian settlement outcomes with relevance to refugee women. I critique the limitations of this research, including the underlying objective to inform a government policy agenda. The view of successful settlement as integration, discussed in chapters 1 and 2, is then expanded upon and critiqued. I also present an analysis of the literature on challenges facing women who are resettled as refugees, drawing on Australian research, which includes the qualitative perspectives of women. This is followed by an examination of facilitators to successful settlement and the role of resilience. In conclusion, a summary critique is provided, highlighting key findings and gaps.

3.2 Quantitative Research on Refugee Women: What It Does and Doesn't Say About Their Settlement Experiences

A key piece of longitudinal research, the *Building a New Life in Australia* (BNLA) study was commissioned by the Federal Government in 2012 to help inform policy and program development for humanitarian entrants (De Maio, Silbert, Jenkinson, & Smart, 2014; Jenkinson, Silbert, De Maio, & Edwards, 2016). The study has been managed by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS), a Federal Government research body. It has involved the participation of almost 2,400 recently arrived humanitarian entrants to identify factors that help or hinder their “successful settlement” (Jenkinson et al., 2016). The authors of the study recognise successful settlement as a combination of migrant perspectives including “notions of living comfortably, intentions to stay in Australia, personal wellbeing and satisfaction with their life” and the Australian government’s emphasis on “social and economic participation and related outcomes” (De Maio et al., 2014, p. 9). A broad range of

factors were assessed based on this understanding (De Maio et al., 2014). The study involves a survey instrument completed annually, focused on self-reported outcomes across a range of domains (Jenkinson et al., 2016). These include English language proficiency, housing, employment, use of qualifications, income, physical and mental health, community engagement, citizenship and level of satisfaction with life in Australia (De Maio et al., 2014).

Interpreting the results released by the AIFS so far, from the perspective of gender, an evident issue is of gender inequality and its impacts on women's lives. Among participants, three quarters of which come from Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran, women are disadvantaged compared to men across the three E's of English language, education and training, and employment. Women tended to be less formally educated and had lower levels of employment than men prior to migrating to Australia (Smart, De Maio, Rioseco, & Edwards, 2017). Outcomes related to gender over three years showed that women may take up English classes later in their settlement period, due to issues such as child care, health issues and family responsibilities (Smart et al., 2017). In addition, women aged 18–25 are shown to be gaining English proficiency at a slower rate compared to males and adolescents, and targeted support for this group of women has been suggested (Rioseco & Liddy, 2018).

Participation rates in work were also lower among women than men, and women cited family or looking after the home as reasons for not seeking paid employment. Although results were not disaggregated according to gender, people of older age also had poor language skills after three years of living in Australia. In general for new arrivals, having good English skills and higher levels of education pre-migration was shown to be linked to entering paid work earlier upon settlement (Smart et al., 2017). The study also showed that refugees who were recently arrived report high rates of psychological distress compared with the general population, and that women reported higher levels of distress than men (De Maio, Gatina-Bhote, Rioseco, & Edwards, 2017). High psychological distress was also associated with experiences of discrimination. People of older age reported higher distress compared to those who were younger, however data based on gender and age was not presented in the research summary (De Maio, Gatina-Bhote, Rioseco, et al., 2017).

This study is described as the first of its kind to track the settlement outcomes of humanitarian migrants over the long term (Department of Social Services, 2017a). It is considered closely representative of the demographic profile of the population of the Humanitarian Program (De Maio et al., 2014). The dataset is available to external researchers upon request. Analysis of the data by others has shown the importance of: oral English proficiency for more positive experiences of settlement (Blake, Bennetts Kneebone, & McLeod, 2019); the sound psychological adjustment of resettled refugee children and adolescents (Lau et al., 2018); how paid employment prior to migration, study/vocational training, good job searching ability and English language proficiency is associated with a higher likelihood of employment in Australia (Cheng, Wang, & Taksa, 2019); and the significance of post-migration social and economic stressors on mental health (Chen, Hall, et al., 2017).

However, there are also a number of limitations to the BNLA study. Firstly, in order to compare results with the Australian population the study uses Western rating scales and concepts and involves self-reported responses, which are influenced by participant interpretations of these (Chen, Ling, & Renzaho, 2017). Participants had difficulties in understanding the scale of measurement and concepts, as reported by community interviewers conducting the research with participants (De Maio et al., 2014). Concepts of family and household are specific to a Western perspective. Family may have a different meaning for people from non-Western cultures, which are informed by communal values.

Secondly, there is the issue of gender bias. Consent to participate in the BNLA study was sought from principal visa applicants, who became principal survey respondents. Secondary respondents were other family members over 15 years of age. In the first wave of data collection, adult males comprised 70% of principal respondents. Principal applicants completed a longer questionnaire than secondary respondents, which included demographic information about their household. In reporting the results, it was recognised that gender bias may have affected response patterns to questions which were asked only of principal respondents (Department of Social Services, 2017a).

Thirdly, although consultation on the methodology was undertaken with some

humanitarian migrant communities and ethnic associations, and the outcomes may reflect some views of what it means to successfully settle in Australia, which is itself subjective, the research is commissioned by the Federal Government. The government's settlement policy framework informed the outcomes that were selected to be measured (De Maio et al., 2014). The setting of these outcomes is also acknowledged by the study authors, who recognised that the BNLA study was developed "within a policy environment that is dynamic, political and contentious" (De Maio et al., 2014, p. 7).

Therefore the BNLA study, while providing some important information on how women are settling in Australia, is linked to androcentric bias (Gringeri, Wahab, & Anderson-Nathe, 2010) and was designed with the intent of informing a government political agenda. Drawing on feminist, intersectional critique, the BNLA study is not value free and objective, and there are hierarchical power relationships evident in the research process, from design and data collection to the interpretation of results. Information about women is largely presented on the basis of a group without examining personal characteristics, such as age or ethnicity. In contrast, a feminist perspective places women's lived experiences at the centre of the research, and recognises their diversity, as their multiple identities intersect in the context of broader institutions and structures (Im, 2010). It also recognises power relations between the researcher and the researched and demands reflexivity and accountability through critical engagement with one's assumptions and intersectional location in the research process (Davis, 2008). Qualitative methods of research are seen as aligning with these principles by providing a space for women's voices and respecting their values, standpoint and knowledge (O'Shaughnessy & Krogman, 2012). I now shift to a critique of integration, followed by the qualitative literature on refugee women and settlement in Australia.

3.3 Interrogating Integration

Successful settlement can be understood as integration; and integration is a key policy objective of the settlement of refugees in Australia. Yet, as noted, there is no explicit definition or detail on what constitutes 'integration' from an Australian policy perspective. Indeed, researchers exploring refugee issues in Australia have

largely drawn on international definitions of integration in their work (Squires, 2018). In this section, while presenting the main definitions in the literature, I critically examine this concept, using intersectionality and postcolonial feminist critique where relevant.

In examining the main definitions, it is useful to utilise the work of Squires (2018). Squires conducted a scoping review on definitions of integration adopted by scholars in Australia exploring refugee settlement and identified four that were most commonly used. This includes the UNHCR (2002) definition, from the UNHCR's *International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration* of resettled refugees. The UNHCR emphasises integration as being a two-way process which includes how well nations receive and support refugees. It relates "both to the conditions for and actual participation in all aspects of the economic, social, cultural, civil and political life of the country of resettlement as well as to refugees' own perceptions of acceptance by, and membership in, the host society" (UNHCR, 2002). Later publications by the UNHCR on resettlement and integration also draw on this definition (UNHCR, 2013a) or similarly emphasise integration as being multidimensional and two-way (UNHCR, 2011, 2013b).

This two-way approach is adopted in the other commonly used definitions, including Berry, who conceptualised integration as one prong of an acculturation framework, which was understood from a cross-cultural psychological perspective (Berry, 1997). Berry defined acculturation as "the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members" (Berry, 2005). Integration is seen as a successful form of acculturation, whereby one is able to adopt aspects of the new culture while also maintaining their cultural heritage. This can be distinguished from assimilation, whereby a refugee or migrant abandons one's original culture to adjust to the dominant culture; separation, which involves rejecting the dominant culture in favour of one's original culture; and marginalisation, where one does not continue with their original culture, nor adapt to the dominant culture or develop new relationships (Berry, 1997, 2005).

The third definition, widely cited and considered a seminal work, is that developed by Ager and Strang (2008). Ager and Strang's (2008) framework for integration was designed for assessing integration in the United Kingdom. Ager and Strang identified 10 interrelated domains of integration within four categories: education, employment, housing and health, which are means and markers of: integration; social connection processes within and between groups; language, culture, safety and security and the community context as structural barriers to these connections; and the role of citizenship and rights as the foundation of integration. Ager and Strang provided an implicit definition of an integrated individual or group based on the framework, which involves refugees having:

achieved public outcomes within employment, housing, education, health etc. which are equivalent to those achieved within the wider host communities; are socially connected with members of a (national, ethnic, cultural, religious or other) community with which they identify, with members of other communities and with relevant services and functions of the state; and have sufficient linguistic competence and cultural knowledge, and a sufficient sense of security and stability, to confidently engage in that society in a manner consistent with shared notions of nationhood and citizenship. (Ager & Strang, 2004, p. 5)

Finally, as noted by Squires, many scholars have used Valtonen's (2004) conceptualisation of integration, which was developed from the findings of two qualitative studies of refugee integration in Finland. Valtonen argued that integration is not only economic participation, but also social, cultural and political participation while being able to maintain one's original culture and identity. Integration is seen as a process of becoming part of society through cultural, institutional and social structures (Valtonen, 2004).

As also pointed out by Squires (2018), these conceptualisations were internationally situated and therefore may not be suitable for an Australian setting. This is because integration will be individualised to the context in which it is applied (Robinson, in Ager & Strang, 2008). All definitions however present integration as being two-way, which can be considered a strength in that it articulates the responsibility of host

nation states to make efforts to ensure acceptance and membership of people who are resettled. This is becoming less the case as nation states, such as Australia, adopt one-way and assimilationist integration policies (Phillimore, 2012). However, it must be acknowledged that integration is linked to politics and policy, and is based on a normative or common sense understanding of integration by governments, whereby refugees and other ethnic minority migrant groups are a problem to be addressed (Gregurović & Župarić-Iljić, 2018; McPherson, 2010). The language of integration used by receiving nation states places refugees as outside of their societies (Korteweg, 2017). I will now expand on this argument and outline the importance of this critique in influencing the approach I have adopted for this research.

3.3.1 *Why should refugees 'integrate'?*

It cannot be taken for granted that integration is, of itself, a moral imperative. If migrants are guaranteed an effective protection of their civil and other rights including, most pressingly, the right to equality, then arguably there should be no need to 'integrate' them into society. Provided that human rights are respected, what social good does integration serve? (Murphy, 2013, p. 12)

As argued by Murphy (2013), why is integration an expectation of refugees among developed nations such as Australia? Furthermore, why is integration an expectation of refugees and visibly different migrants, but is not commonly associated with people who migrate from Western countries? (Anthias, Morokvasic-Müller, & Kontos, 2013). In response, it can be argued that integration is primarily an expectation of cultural adjustment among people from non-Western cultures to the receiving society as the 'better culture' (Korteweg, 2017). Governments value migration for its economic benefits, which aligns with a neoliberal ideology, but they attempt to regulate the character of migration (Anthias, 2013). This underlies the political process in the development of integration policy. In undertaking scholarly exploration of integration it is imperative to acknowledge that integration is informed by such dominant, normative values (McPherson, 2010).

Considering the push to regulate the character of migration, applying a postcolonial feminist theoretical perspective is useful here, recognising that self and identity is fluid and reconstituted through historical, political and social forces (Bhatia & Ram, 2001). Journeys of integration are not linear and people who do not represent the dominant culture are challenged by power structures that characterise resettlement settings (Bhatia & Ram, 2009). This includes settings which are racialised and patriarchal, such as the Australian example. Refugees are continually negotiating their position in the context of unequal power relations with the host country (Bhatia & Ram, 2001). Integration reversal is also possible (Grzymala-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2018). Changes in migration status or shifting to a different area is shown to impact on the integration process for people who then face a new set of structural barriers (Strang, Baillot, & Mignard, 2018).

Integration constructs a binary of ‘us’ and ‘them.’ Refugees are positioned as outsiders who require adjustment to an imagined monolithic culture, yet rarely examined is what it is they are integrating into (Grzymala-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2018). In contrast to the idea of integration based on well-defined borders and coherent cultural systems, in reality one must recognise the significance of global transnationalism (Grzymala-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2018). Transnationalism is defined as the simultaneous participation across two or more cultures (Myers & Nelson, 2018). A transnational perspective acknowledges categories such as ‘refugee’ as being a product of nation states and politics (Hyndman & Walton-Roberts, 2000), but ignores the fact that people and communities interact across borders. People are able to increasingly maintain strong connections to their former countries, including social ties and remittances, through the aid of new communication technologies. Some scholars have conceived of transnationalism as making integration a three-way process (Garcés-Mascreñas & Penninx, 2016).

The relevance of transnationalism and global social bonds is acknowledged by Anthias (2013) who suggests an approach of ‘solidarity,’ as opposed to integration. Solidarity is the building of a common future regardless of difference and a focus on addressing issues of class and gender as ‘identities of action’ rather than focusing on culture or origin. Solidarity can be achieved through interculturalism, a

transformative and dialogic approach between cultures on equal terms, to address inequalities which are intersectionally produced (Anthias, 2013).

Similarly, Korteweg (2017, p. 440) argues that integration is an “inequality producing social force” and highlights the relevance of intersectionality to examine inequality broadly among all women and barriers to their participation in economic, political and social spheres. The othering of refugees through integration must be challenged through intersectional research, which identifies how cultures of exclusion are perpetuated through the mechanisms of institutions, for broader equality in society (Korteweg, 2017).

These perspectives all contest integration. Integration is a tool for problematising migrants, which can be remedied by challenging state boundaries and difference. Schinkel (2018) presents a further frank critique by calling for researchers to abandon the study of integration, as it is a neocolonialist and racist mode of relating to migrants. Integration, Schinkel writes, “conceives of ‘society’ as an entity with an identity, and as an order with a border” (p. 9) therefore making the researcher complicit in the project of state border control. Schinkel argues that measuring integration has its roots in cultural classification based on race, which was first practiced by colonisers in encountering the ‘other.’ Policy categories that are linked to measuring integration are entangled with state based normative understandings of the ‘other’ and therefore reinforces dominant divisions based on race (Schinkel, 2018). These critiques align with my critical approach to this research and are considered in the discussion of this thesis. Acknowledging the need for alternatives to integration as defined by nation states and other actors of the refugee regime, I now turn to discussion on key literature relevant to the research question.

3.4 Qualitative Research on Refugee Women in Australia: Findings and Gaps

In this section I discuss the main findings from qualitative research and demonstrate the need for research that incorporates a critical approach to issues, based on the societal context of settlement.

3.4.1 Literature review on women and settlement: search strategy

I searched MEDLINE/Ovid, CINAHL, Informat, Scopus, ProQuest, and Web of Science for all studies that were qualitative or incorporated a qualitative component, and explored settlement from the standpoint of women who had been granted refugee protection in Australia. Studies from 1998 to 2018 were considered. Studies which had men and women in the sample were considered if women's voices and issues were distinguished as separate from men's. I specifically sought research that focused on the concept of resettlement experiences in Australia or presented an issue within an examination of this broader context. In addition to a database search, a search was conducted using Google Scholar and the websites of key refugee policy, research and settlement bodies in Australia for grey literature.

Sixteen studies were found that met the literature review criteria, which further showed how refugee women's experiences on settlement in Australia is a neglected area of research. Ten of these studies were focused on women of African heritage. Other ethnicity specific studies focused on Sri Lankan Tamil (Cousens, 2003) and Burmese Karen women (Watkins, Razee, & Richters, 2012) while the remaining included participants of different ethnic backgrounds within their samples. Sample sizes ranged from 4 (Lenette, 2015) to 96 women (Versha & Venkatraman, 2010). In two of the studies it was explicitly stated that participants included people who had arrived via offshore and onshore pathways (Cousens, 2003; Versha & Venkatraman, 2010). One study focused on the experiences of women who had resettled on woman-at-risk visas (Vromans et al., 2018). All were conducted in metropolitan or greater urban areas in Australia. The majority of the studies were purely qualitative, with only one being mixed methods (Liamputtong, Koh, Wollersheim, & Walker, 2015). Two were considered grey literature (Cousens, 2003; Versha & Venkatraman, 2010).

To critique the quality of the studies I used the Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ) checklist. This tool promotes the comprehensive reporting of qualitative studies and aligned with the focus on data predominantly garnered from interviews and focus groups (Tong, Sainsbury, & Craig, 2007). While quality of studies varied, all of the studies were reviewed based on the view that in

an under-researched area these could also provide important insight (Hannes, 2011). I now discuss the main themes identified in the literature.

3.4.2 Women's diversity and their settlement trajectories

Examining the studies, it is evident that differences among women impacted on how they experienced settlement in Australia. Two of the studies from which this can be garnered purported to use an intersectional framework, looking at women's intersecting identities. These studies showed that a one-size-fits-all approach to settlement policy and programs may not address the needs of specific groups of women. Firstly, Lenette (2015) looked at the experiences of 4 African women who resettled in Brisbane as lone parents. Women experienced resettlement differently based on their identities as lone parents, and experienced mistrust based on their marital status among their own ethnic communities, commonly viewed as culturally homogenous and a reliable support source for new migrants. Lenette (2015) found that a critical and nuanced lens is needed to explore settlement processes among refugee women.

In the second study, Vromans et al. (2018) also employed intersectionality to critique the settlement experiences of 10 African and Afghan women in South East Queensland who had been recently resettled on woman-at-risk visas. Vromans et al. reported that pre-migration identities, including experiences of oppression and trauma, intersected with post-migration identities as lone-resettled women, in creating specific experiences of social disconnection and exclusion. Similar to the findings by Lenette (2015), women's lone status also became a source of gossip and distrust in their cultural communities. Targeted programs for woman-at-risk visa recipients were recommended, including settlement service provision access over a longer time period to address issues of social isolation, self-efficacy, financial difficulties and emotional wellbeing (Vromans et al., 2018).

Across the other studies, differences among women influenced their settlement trajectories. This included women's age upon arrival in Australia (Brand, Loh, & Guilfoyle, 2014; Watkins et al., 2012). In one study, for African women who arrived as children or in early adolescence, this was seen as an advantage in facilitating their

acculturation and in learning English (Brand et al., 2014). In another study among women of Karen background, being of an older age upon arrival limited women's learning ability when taking part in English classes (Watkins et al., 2012). Health issues, in particular the psychological impacts of the refugee experience, are also a factor for women. Recovering from experiences such as the death of family members, living through war, human rights abuses including gender based violence, and insecurity in refugee camps or countries of temporary asylum were described as impacting on women's ability to settle (Casimiro, Hancock, & Northcote, 2007; Cousens, 2003; Versha & Venkatraman, 2010; Vromans et al., 2018).

Qualitative studies also show that levels of education and language proficiency prior to coming to Australia was another significant factor that impacted on settlement experiences (Casimiro et al., 2007; Cousens, 2003; Hashimoto-Govindasamy & Rose, 2011; Rung, 2015; Watkins et al., 2012). Disrupted education pre-settlement has a role in determining English language success (Casimiro et al., 2007; Watkins et al., 2012). Watkins et al. (2012) in their study on ethnic Karen women found that many women were not able to access formal education in Burma (Myanmar) and therefore could not read or write in their own language. This impacted on their ability to effectively learn English, in particular their participation in AMEP classes (Watkins et al., 2012). In another study, it was found that women who already had exposure to English were able to settle easier (Casimiro et al., 2007). Watkins et al. (2012) also looked at the role of culture. It was observed that due to cultural customs of respect towards authority in addition to fear of authority stemming from persecution, Karen women were reluctant to express dissatisfaction or distress in the classroom. This meant that their needs were overlooked by educational providers, who did not possess cross-cultural awareness and the authors called for increased cultural competence among providers (Watkins et al., 2012).

3.4.3 Commonalities among women based on the research: settlement challenges

I identified a number of themes related to common settlement challenges among refugee women: English language education; family issues; socioeconomic issues; and racism and discrimination.

English language education

A key issue reported among women in the research was difficulties in learning English. Researchers reported that the universal design of the AMEP was found to be not conducive to women's learning needs (Casimiro et al., 2007; Riggs et al., 2012; Watkins et al., 2012). It did not take into account: the disrupted or minimal education of women pre-settlement and the difficulties that entailed (Casimiro et al., 2007; Watkins et al., 2012); gender roles, including caring for family members; health issues, which prevented women from fully availing of the program (Casimiro et al., 2007; Cousens, 2003; Watkins et al., 2012).

Family issues

Issues impacting on women's family relationships was a significant theme across the literature. This included the impacts of changing gender and family roles. Many women reported coming from patriarchal settings where their pre-migration role included that of the traditional role of caring for children and domestic duties whereas their husbands were the breadwinners (Brand et al., 2014; Cousens, 2003; Fisher, 2013; Khawaja & Milner, 2012; Versha & Venkatraman, 2010; Watkins et al., 2012). Gender inequality, a global issue, was experienced differently pre-settlement, than in the Australian context. In one study, African women described Australian legal and social systems as providing them with a stronger voice and independence (Fisher, 2013). In another study, South Sudanese women found that they had the burden of caring for children and housework as well as employment, which was stressful for them, while men were resistant to changing their roles (Khawaja & Milner, 2012). Men's perceived loss of status in Australia and acculturation difficulties were highlighted as issues among women (Fisher, 2013; Versha & Venkatraman, 2010). Cultural orientation programs that focused on the importance of adjusting to changed gender roles were recommended (Khawaja & Milner, 2012).

Furthermore, isolation and loneliness was linked to family separation and limited social networks (Cousens, 2003; McMichael & Manderson, 2004; Rung, 2015; Versha & Venkatraman, 2010; Vromans et al., 2018). Women reported long years of

separation from family members (Rung, 2015; Versha & Venkatraman, 2010) and adjusting to reunion after many years apart caused strain and breakdown in families (Versha & Venkatraman, 2010).

Family and domestic violence is another issue explicitly explored in two of the articles (Fisher, 2013; Versha & Venkatraman, 2010). In research with Afghan, Tamil Sri Lankan and Sierra Leonean communities, participants expressed concern that family and domestic violence was viewed by broader Australian society as an issue specific to their cultures rather than as a gender based issue (Versha & Venkatraman, 2010). Fisher (2013) and Versha and Venkatraman (2010) reported that men's struggles to find employment and loss of identity and self-esteem in Australia impacted negatively on the family unit, with some women attributing this as being the cause of domestic violence.

Parenting in Australia was also raised as a challenge by women. In research, Sudanese women expressed concern about raising their children in Australian culture, which they perceived as less respectful towards elders (Hebbani, Obijiofor, & Bristed, 2012). For many women, being unable to parent using an authoritarian style they were familiar with was an issue (Babatunde-Sowole, Jackson, et al., 2016; Hebbani et al., 2012; Versha & Venkatraman, 2010). Women also reported that in African, collectivist cultures, they had the support of their neighbours and community in looking after their children (Babatunde-Sowole, Jackson, et al., 2016). For lone mothers, parenting without support and in a new culture was particularly stressful (Vromans et al., 2018).

Socioeconomic issues

Financial hardship is discussed in the literature as an issue impacting on women (Cousens, 2003; McMichael & Manderson, 2004; Rung, 2015; Vromans et al., 2018). In a number of studies women highlighted their struggles to find employment (Casimiro et al., 2007; Cousens, 2003; Hashimoto-Govindasamy & Rose, 2011; Rung, 2015; Versha & Venkatraman, 2010; Wollersheim, Koh, Walker, & Liamputtong, 2013), which was viewed as a way to improve their language skills, wellbeing and financial support of family members (Casimiro et al., 2007; Cousens,

2003). The implications of financial difficulties also included being unable to sponsor family members to come to Australia. As reported by Rung (2015), the financial requirements of family sponsorship were out of reach for African refugee women who were unable to successfully obtain employment. In another study by Cousens (2003) financial difficulties were a barrier in sponsoring Sri Lankan Tamil family members to migrate to Australia. Furthermore, pressure to support family overseas with limited expenses for everyday living was a source of stress (Babatunde-Sowole et al., 2016) and caused family conflict (Khawaja & Milner, 2012; Versha & Venkatraman, 2010).

Difficulties securing suitable housing due to affordability was another issue (Cousens, 2003; Versha & Venkatraman, 2010; Vromans et al., 2018; Wollersheim, Koh, Walker, & Liamputtong, 2013). Affordable options were cramped and inadequate for families (Versha & Venkatraman, 2010; Wollersheim et al., 2013). Women also experienced a lack of access to transport, often linked to being without a car, and located in areas with inadequate public transport, which was a barrier to service access and participation in community activities (Cousens, 2003; Hashimoto-Govindasamy & Rose, 2011; McMichael & Manderson, 2004). Being unable to afford driving lessons was explicitly discussed in one study, yet driving was necessary for employment (Vromans et al., 2018). Welfare payments issued to women and young people contributed to family conflict and were viewed as diminishing to men's status who in their pre-settlement role were the provider for the family (Fisher, 2013; Khawaja & Milner, 2012; Versha & Venkatraman, 2010). Families were given limited information to explain why welfare payments were made to women and children (Fisher, 2013).

Racism and discrimination

Refugee women across different cultural backgrounds reported experiencing racism and discrimination (Babatunde-Sowole, Jackson, et al., 2016; Brand et al., 2014; Casimiro et al., 2007; Hashimoto-Govindasamy & Rose, 2011; Lenette, 2015; McMichael & Manderson, 2004). Babatunde-Sowole, Jackson, et al. (2016) in their study among West African women in Australia found that women perceived racial stereotyping in their use of health care as carriers of disease, thus making them

reluctant to access services. McMichael and Manderson (2004) reported that Somali women experienced hostility from neighbours. Women of Muslim faith who were of visibly different dress have described particular experiences of exclusion. Casimiro et al. (2007) explained that Muslim women participants reported instances of racism in their workplaces or when applying for employment, on public transport, in their neighbourhood or while going about general daily activities. Women felt that their safety was in jeopardy and could not be guaranteed by Australian authorities (Casimiro et al., 2007).

Two studies exploring women's standpoints also highlighted the impacts of discriminatory policy, through the use of temporary protection visas (TPVs) for women who were recognised as refugees but came through the onshore pathway during the period of the Howard Coalition government (Cousens, 2003; Versha & Venkatraman, 2010). Women on TPVs did not have same rights as people accepted through the offshore humanitarian entrant pathway. For example, women were not allowed to access English language classes, and temporary status was also a barrier to housing and employment (Cousens, 2003). TPVs also caused women psychological distress (Versha & Venkatraman, 2010).

3.4.4 Commonalities among women based on the research: settlement facilitators

The research reviewed had a strong focus on the challenges facing women resettled in Australia. It arguably reflects a criticism of existing research as lacking a strengths based approach and focus on resilience factors in overcoming adversity during the settlement period (Babatunde-Sowole, Power, Jackson, Davidson, & DiGiacomo, 2016; Shishehgar et al., 2017). However, it can also be asserted that it reflects the negative social conditions, which are more likely to represent the settlement context for women, that undermine wellbeing and resilience (Hynie, 2017). Recognising this emphasis on settlement challenges in the review of the literature, I identified three themes that were considered significant as facilitators: social support; the role of services; and family reunion.

Social support

Social support is of universal importance to human wellbeing. In the broader research on refugees, it is discussed among researchers as an important resource for coping with stressful situations (Stewart et al., 2010). This includes support from family (Schweitzer, Melville, Steel, & Lacherez, 2006; Simich, Beiser, & Mawani, 2003; Stewart et al., 2010), affirmational support from those who have already successfully adapted to the host country, as well as information, emotional and instrumental support offered by services and through informal channels (Simich et al., 2003; Stewart et al., 2010).

The Australian research literature showed nuances among women's experiences including being rejected or stigmatised by others in their community as single parents (Cousens, 2003; Lenette, 2015), and finding community gossip as a source of stress (Brand et al., 2014; Lenette, 2015; McMichael & Manderson, 2004). However, women's ethnic communities in their place of settlement were also a vital source of social support, particularly in the absence of family, former community and social networks (Cousens, 2003; Lenette, 2015; Rung, 2015; Wollersheim et al., 2013). It was reported that community members assisted women with initial practical aspects of settlement (Cousens, 2003; Lenette, 2015) while formal community associations offered classes in English and vocational skills (Rung, 2015). Social gatherings helped to overcome feelings of loneliness (Cousens, 2003; McMichael & Manderson, 2004). Two of the studies touched on examples of women accessing support from host society members outside their ethnic group. Friendships with people outside one's ethnic community were viewed as important in adapting to life in Australia (Brand et al., 2014; Lenette, 2015). Lenette (2015) explained that this was seen as particularly important for women who were denied intragroup support.

The role of services

Based on the included studies, settlement services and programs were vital in helping women to access housing, employment, language learning and social interactions (Brand et al., 2014; Hashimoto-Govindasamy & Rose, 2011; Liamputtong et al., 2015; Wollersheim et al., 2013). Programs aimed at facilitating social support

through building women's relationships with their peers were shown to benefit them psychosocially through the provision of mutual support and information exchange (Liamputtong et al., 2015; Wollersheim et al., 2013) as well as provide an empowering experience through the training and access to English language practice they provided (Liamputtong et al., 2015). Hashimoto-Govindasamy and Rose (2011) evaluated an exercise program for Sudanese women, and found that women valued not only the social interactions but also the opportunity to access educational information.

Family reunion

Consistent with separation from family being a negative issue, family reunion is identified in the literature as a facilitator to successful settlement (Cousens, 2003; McMichael & Manderson, 2004; Rung, 2015; Versha & Venkatraman, 2010), Family is fundamental in people's lives, and family protection a fundamental human right (Rung, 2015). The UNHCR has encouraged resettlement countries to develop generous reunification programs in recognition of family reunion as a key goal for achieving integration (UNHCR, 2011). In one of the studies, two women discussed their desire to be reunited with immediate family members including their children, but were unable to do so because of complex family reunification requirements (Rung, 2015). A number of researchers have called for accessible family reunion arrangements in the Australian context (Okhovat et al., 2017; Pittaway, Bartolomei, & Doney, 2016; Refugee Council of Australia, 2016a; Wilmsen, 2013).

3.4.5 Facilitators to successful settlement and 'social capital'

The facilitators demonstrate the importance of relationships in women's lives. Social capital theory is commonly used by scholars and policy makers to theorise the importance of these networks of relationships upon resettlement (McMichael & Manderson, 2004; Wollersheim et al., 2013). Different definitions of social capital are provided in the literature. However, three social capital concepts are commonly discussed in relation to refugee settlement and integration: social bonds, social bridges, and social links.

Bonding capital includes support from family, friends and established ethnic communities, or within one's group, and bridging capital is comprised of welcoming neighbourhoods and communities more broadly; both bonding and bridging capitals play a key role in driving integration at a grassroots level (Ager & Strang, 2008; UNHCR, 2013a). Linking capital is also important, as the networks that connect people to nation state structures including settlement services (Ager & Strang, 2008). Social capital is also recognised by some researchers as an important ingredient for social cohesion (Moore & Kawachi, 2017). However, as with social cohesion, social capital theory is often applied without consideration of context, including power and politics (Cheong, Edwards, Goulbourne, & Solomos, 2007). There is a need for approaches that critique the systems that define the boundaries for exploring and measuring social capital, particularly for effectively addressing the determinants of health (Shiell, Hawe, & Kavanagh, 2018).

3.5 Resilience and Refugee Women

One of the research objectives was to explore processes of resilience, based on the standpoint of women participants who discussed their settlement experiences. In this section, I provide a critique of the literature related to resilience and refugee women, demonstrating the relevance of my research objective.

Resilience has become a growing area of focus among forced migration researchers, recognised as important in helping to deal with the challenges of settlement (Denzongpa & Nichols, 2019; Earnest, Mansi, Bayati, Earnest, & Thompson, 2015; Lenette, Brough, & Cox, 2013; Schweitzer, Greenslade, & Kagee, 2007; Shishehgar et al., 2017). It is also relevant to intersectional research on refugee women because it encompasses an approach where women are provided space for showing their strengths and capabilities, alongside a critique of experiences of oppression (Vervliet, De Mol, Broekaert, & Derluyn, 2014).

The research literature highlights resilience processes as best determined by individuals themselves based on the person-environment interaction. For example, Lenette et al. (2013) in examining the narratives of four women from African countries who had resettled in Brisbane and were lone parents, found that resilience

was an everyday, dynamic process as women dealt with shifting challenges in their lives. Resilience represented establishing an everydayness, where women could lead normal and meaningful lives. It was connected to the gendered interactions of women within their homes, families and communities. A person-environment perspective was suggested for informing approaches to harnessing resilience, as resilience is not a static inner trait (Lenette et al., 2013).

Similarly, Pulvirenti and Mason (2011) caution against an understanding of resilience as an ability to bounce back among refugee women. They sought to examine the concept of resilience among resettled refugee women who had experienced domestic violence. Based on interviews with 18 service providers who worked with women in situations of domestic violence, they defined resilience as a process of moving on or personal growth. The authors questioned the notion of bouncing back, when previous experiences included living in refugee camps, crossing borders or sexual violence and exploitation. They also pointed to resilience as a process, which values the role of community, including extended family and social networks and wider community in helping women sustain and develop resilience (Pulvirenti & Mason, 2011). A limitation of that study, however, is that it was based on service provider perspectives and not women with lived experience as refugees.

International research by Pearce, McMurray, Walsh, and Malek (2017) showed the importance of women with lived experience defining their own needs and resilience processes. The researchers conducted a participatory action research study with 8 women in Canada who had resettled as refugees from South Sudan to explore processes of resilience. Employing photovoice and focus group discussions, they found resilience was not linear but often cyclical, as women moved between surviving the past, supporting the present and hoping for the future. As part of this process the participants relied on faith and spirituality, circles of support through giving to others, receiving support including social services, and global community which was a space for cultural expression and connection to their community in Sudan while integrating into Canadian society. In contrast to the observations of Pulvirenti and Mason, they argued that Western notions of resilience as moving on be reevaluated (Pearce et al., 2017).

Resilience was discussed in two of the studies on gendered experiences of settlement in Australia, which I identified and critiqued earlier in this chapter. Resilience and sourcing inner strength were described by women as important in dealing with the challenges of settlement (Brand et al., 2014; Cousens, 2003). Brand et al. (2014) reported that for young African female refugees, focusing on future goals and aspirations was a resilience strategy. In addition to finding strength within themselves, strength from external sources included family, friends, and services as discussed by Cousens (2003). The importance of resilience factors as identified by women themselves to support their wellbeing and settlement experiences was also asserted by Shishehgar et al. (2017). An integrative review of the global literature by Shishehgar et al. (2017) found spirituality, social support from family and ethnic communities, and the unity of family were all factors that helped promote resilience among resettled refugee women.

Babatunde-Sowole, Power, et al. (2016) also undertook an integrative review of the global literature, to examine resilience among African migrant women. Studies they included varied in terms of population, and the limited focus on gender reflected the paucity of research on resilience among West African migrant women, particularly in Australia. They found, however, that key resilience strategies included cognitive strategies, described as reframing the stress of resettlement in relation to a focus on aspirations through achievements in education or employment. Communalism was another important strategy, which facilitated social support from others while adjusting to a new country (Babatunde-Sowole, Power, et al., 2016).

Similarly, coping strategies for refugee women during settlement as described in the global literature, include accessing social support from friends and family (Goodman, Vesely, Letiecq, & Cleaveland, 2017; Sherwood & Liebling-Kalifani, 2012), positive self-talk (Abraham, Lien, & Hanssen, 2018; Sherwood & Liebling-Kalifani, 2012), not focusing on their past experiences (Goodman et al., 2017), a get on with it approach (Whittaker, Hardy, Lewis, & Buchan, 2005) and spirituality (Sossou, Craig, Ogren, & Schnak, 2008). These studies demonstrate the importance of an individual-environment approach, drawing on culturally relevant processes as well as supportive family and communities. The studies support the notion of

recognition of context and resilience research, which ensures women's knowledge of their strengths and resilience processes is a central focus.

In the next chapter where I discuss my theoretical framework, I critique resilience further and outline the definition that I applied to this research.

3.6 Conclusion

There is a paucity of research examining the settlement experiences of refugee women in Australia. In the existing literature, women's experiences were shown to be influenced by factors including age, lone parent status, health, English language proficiency, and formal education upon arrival. Common barriers included difficulties learning English, family issues, family reunion difficulties, financial issues and racism and discrimination. Social support, including support from family and through services, was a common facilitator to settlement. Resilience was also important in establishing a new life. Resilience must be recognised as a process that is informed by the needs of the individual and in relationship with their environment/context.

This chapter has shown the need for more research privileging the emic perspectives of refugee women in Australia. Research that examines how differences among women might influence their experiences of settlement is also valuable and can be considered in relation to current programs and policies designed to support them. Particular areas for future research include looking at the longitudinal experiences of women who are settled in Australia, in order to understand women's needs over time (De Maio et al., 2017; Vromans et al., 2018); exploring settlement experiences according to different cultural backgrounds, particularly for women on woman-at-risk visas (Vromans et al., 2018); and parenting in the settlement context (Babatunde-Sowole et al., 2016; Hebbani et al., 2012).

In this chapter integration was critiqued as a mechanism to reinforce the status quo. Government commissioned research, the BNLA study—which is designed to inform settlement policy and programs—is influenced by this understanding. Research can counter this by favouring women's perspectives over the agenda of government.

These perspectives can also inform current debates on integration and alternative conceptualisations to the dominant approach.

In the next chapter (4) I build upon what I have discussed and present the reader with a clear outline of the theoretical framework I adopted for this research.

Chapter 4:

Theoretical Framework

4.1 Introduction

A theoretical or conceptual framework is the set of theoretical ideas applied to understanding a research phenomenon (Anfara Jr, 2008). Theory is important for “providing the initial arguments for the study, framing its formative conceptual model, and guiding directions in data collection and analysis” (Schensul, 2012). Four theories were drawn upon for the theoretical framework for this research: intersectionality, postcolonial feminist theory, integration, and social-ecological resilience. Their relevance and interplay in guiding the approach to the research question and objectives are discussed in this chapter.

4.2 Intersectionality

The literature review on women’s settlement experiences in Australia showed that the underlying factors linked to women’s social conditions are largely under-explored by researchers. Examining these factors is important to a social determinants of health approach (Castaneda et al., 2015). In two of the studies reviewed, the researchers drew on the on the theory of intersectionality as a lens for examining women’s settlement experiences (Lenette, 2015; Vromans et al., 2018). Intersectionality challenged the reductive representation of the ‘refugee woman’ by considering the multiple dimensions which make up women’s identities and thus crucially allowed for a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of their lives and responses to reestablish their lives in Australia (Ngum Chi Watts, Liamputtong, & McMichael, 2015). Intersectionality is a key component of the theoretical framework I have taken to this research.

Importantly, intersectionality as an approach allows for an exploration of how interlocking forms of privilege and oppression, or macro structural factors, impact on women, reflected through intersecting social categories at the individual, or micro level (Bowleg, 2012). Scholars have called for intersectionality theory to be applied in undertaking women’s health research as a way to illuminate and address health

inequities among different groups of women (Bowleg, 2012; Dhamoon & Hankivsky, 2011; Hankivsky et al., 2010; Price, 2011). In the case of migrant health research, intersectionality guides the researcher to ground the topic in sociohistorical contexts (Viruell-Fuentes, Miranda, & Abdulrahim, 2012). It is of particular relevance to this research, which as I have mentioned is conducted within a policy context that is dynamic, political and contentious (De Maio et al., 2014).

Much of the existing research frames settlement difficulties from an acculturation perspective (Hebbani et al., 2012; Khawaja & Milner, 2012; Liamputtong et al., 2015). However, acculturation tends to emphasise the role of newcomers as agents in integration and in the adoption of cultural norms in their country of resettlement (Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012; Wille, 2011). An intersectional lens can shift this perspective by enabling a critique of Western cultural norms including lifestyles and the privileging of dominant cultures or genders (Rees & Pease, 2007).

Researchers have called for intersectionality to be increasingly applied to understanding how social categories intersect and influence the settlement outcomes of refugees (Cheung & Phillimore, 2017). Comprehensive understanding should stem from critical thinking about how others' experiences are based on "complex marginalised locations" outside Western ways of thinking (Garry, 2011). When examining inequality based on a single category, one fails to understand how multiple social statuses impact on an individual's life (Bastos et al., 2018). A foundational principle of intersectionality is also an analysis of power and oppression. It is a tool in striving for political change and social transformation (Rice, Harrison, & Friedman, 2019).

Intersectionality is also a developing area of scholarship. One of the strongest criticisms of intersectionality is the difficulty in illustrating its intended application among feminist scholars (Carastathis, 2014; Mehrotra, 2010). Therefore, in this section I provide a transparent outline of how I have interpreted and applied the theory to this research. It should be noted that, although often described inconsistently as a paradigm, concept or method (Few-Demo, 2014; Kaushik & Walsh, 2018), I view it as representative of theory for explaining a phenomena, and that can be used to guide the methodology of a study (Few-Demo, 2014; Garry,

2011). It is also a contested and evolving theory (Dhamoon, 2011). As such, there is no unified way for conducting intersectional research (Hankivsky, 2012b).

Intersectionality is an “overarching knowledge project” whereby its “changing contours grow from and respond to social formations of complex social inequalities” (Collins, 2015, p. 5).

4.2.1 Background

Intersectionality was first coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to address the marginalisation of women of colour, and in response to second-wave feminism, which was criticised for a standpoint that privileged white and middle class women (Hankivsky et al., 2010; Shields, 2008). Crenshaw explained that identity politics failed to acknowledge difference between and within groups and how these intersected in the construction of social identities, such as race and gender for black and immigrant women (Crenshaw, 1991). As outlined by Kaushik and Walsh (2018), there are three underlying tenets of an intersectional theoretical framework. The first is that of multiple systems of social stratification. Groups are not homogeneous, but made up of individuals who each experience reality in their own way (Kaushik & Walsh, 2018). Secondly, these systems of social stratification are interlocked. As members of more than one group, women can also simultaneously experience discrimination and privilege (Hankivsky, Cormier, & De Merich, 2009). For example, as a white woman I may be oppressed based on gender, but privileged in terms of race/ethnicity. Experiences of oppression also shift. For example, as described by Patricia Hill Collins (2000), the seminal intersectionality theorist who has applied the approach extensively to the oppression of black women in the USA:

Her gender may be more prominent when she becomes a mother, her race when she searches for housing, her social class when she applies for credit, her sexual orientation when she is walking with her lover, and her citizenship status when she applies for a job. In all of these contexts, her position in relation to and within intersecting oppressions shifts. (p. 274-5)

This example links to the third tenet of standpoint epistemology, where one’s

perspective is shaped by their standpoint in the matrix of domination. One can be situated simultaneously within systems of social stratification (for example, race, class and gender) and an analysis must consider where their standpoint sits in the matrix (Kaushik & Walsh, 2018). The matrix of domination, also known as the matrix of oppression, was coined by Collins (2000) as related to the interlocking oppressions of race, class and gender but has since expanded to include other categories. The matrix of domination is the organisation of these oppressions (Collins, 2000). Matrices of domination/oppression are specific to their setting, including the sociopolitical context (Alinia, 2015). The state as a supporting institution can either reinforce the systems of domination (such as racism, classism and sexism) or curtail their most harmful effects (Dupuis-Déri, 2016). Power is an intangible entity (Collins, in Alinia, 2015).

4.2.2 My interpretation of intersectionality

In a contested area of scholarship, it is important to discuss the broad approaches employed by scholars, the interpretation that I have drawn on and its relevance to my research topic. Dhamoon (2011) identified four main areas of the study of life that are the focus of intersectional scholars. The first is of the identities of individuals or social groups that are deemed different, such as Muslim women, emphasising the voices of those traditionally marginalised, and highlighting their nuanced identities. A limitation of this approach is that it risks essentialising individuals or groups, when there is no ideal way of living an identity. It assumes that differences can be neatly sorted into various categories. It can also lead to reinforcing existing norms as it adopts the language of the existing hegemony (Dhamoon, 2011).

The second focus is on social categories of difference, such as race, gender and ethnicity. Work by McCall (2005), who developed a methodological approach to the study of categories, is commonly applied by scholars. Based on a review of existing literature, McCall (2005) identified three approaches to the objective of intersectionality to tackle the complexity of analysis of multiple social categories. At one end of the continuum is anticategorical complexity, which is the deconstruction of social categories. This is based on the premise that social life cannot be simplified into fixed categories, as it is “too irreducibly complex – overflowing with multiple

and fluid determinations of subject and structures” (McCall, 2005, p. 1773). Social categories are avoided as a way to eliminate social inequalities, as categorising legitimatises inequalities (Kaushik & Walsh, 2018).

Deconstructing categories is a way of deconstructing inequalities by critiquing the normative assumptions about race, class, sexuality, gender etc. (McCall, 2005). While fluidity and diversity is prioritised, on a practical level analysis using this approach can be difficult (Walby, Armstrong, & Strid, 2012). At the other end of the continuum is intercategory complexity, adopting existing categories to explore “relationships of inequality among social groups and changing configurations of inequality along multiple and conflicting dimensions” (McCall, 2005, p. 1773). Categories are used to explore inequalities and the changes in these over time (Kaushik & Walsh, 2018). This is often associated with quantitative approaches to analysing difference (Bauer & Scheim, 2019; Caiola, Docherty, Relf, & Barroso, 2014; Mehrotra, 2010).

At the mid-point is intracategory complexity, which interrogates the use of categories but acknowledges the role of categories at a given point in time (McCall, 2005). Intracategory complexity is a useful approach for exploring the complexity of lived experience of particular social groups (McCall, 2005) while also highlighting the dangers of categorisation by showing how they create exclusion through experiences of those who are multiply marginalised (Nash, 2008). However, as argued by others, any categorisation also runs the same risks as the study of identities, of essentialism and reinforcing dominant, hegemonic discourses (Dhamoon, 2011).

Dhamoon identifies two other intersectional types of analysis. These are an analysis of the processes that produce subjectivities and social differences, for example racialization and gendering, and an analysis of systems of domination, also referred to as systems of oppression, which are historically constituted; for example racism, colonialism and sexism. For a critical edge to intersectionality as a research paradigm, of that which draws attention to power, identities or categories of difference must be examined by “contextualising the processes and systems that constitute, govern, and counter difference” (Dhamoon, 2011, p. 234). Importantly,

this attention to processes and systems of domination counters the weaknesses of the other approaches by bringing to the forefront issues of power through “a critique of social production and organisation of relations of othering and normalisation” (Dhamoon, 2011, p. 235).

For this research, while I considered socially constructed categories that reflected participant characteristics in my analysis (Hankivsky et al., 2009), I applied an intracategorical approach. This is because I recognised the relevance of social categories in relation to broader forces that inform immigration and settlement policy. However, I also acknowledge that social categories are not fixed or essentialist but should be seen as “problematized and critically examined conceptions” (Windsong, 2018, p. 139). Privilege and disadvantage is time and place dependent (Hulko, 2009). Intersectionality allows for an analysis of differences and inequalities through processes of power, which shape hierarchies across time and context (Anthias, 2012a). Processes of differentiation and systems of domination were therefore emphasised to confront issues of power and oppression (Dhamoon, 2011; Hankivsky, 2012b). To summarise, my approach to the use of intersectionality, as defined by Rice et al. (2019, p. 1), is the study of the ways social categories are mutually shaped and interrelated through broader forces “to produce shifting relations of power and oppression.”

4.3 Postcolonial Feminist Theory

I also considered a postcolonial feminist perspective. This involved a critical interpretation of how colonialism has moulded policy and public responses to the settlement of refugee women in Australia. Postcolonial feminist theory provides a relevant perspective for examining Australia’s history as a white settler colonial nation and the ways in which this has structured the conditions of settlement for women. It is also a useful approach for critiquing the dominant representation of refugee women, as discussed in previous chapters. Intersectionality and postcolonial feminist theory are recognised as complementary to each other as approaches (Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Kerner, 2016) and—when taken together— “acknowledges the way patriarchy and racialised processes are consistently bound in a postcolonial genealogy that embeds race and gender ideologies within nation building” (Mollett

& Faria, 2012, p. 120). Both theories have also been drawn on in unison to explore the health of refugee women resettled in other developed nations, to illuminate underlying social justice issues contributing to their marginalisation (Clark, 2018).

Postcolonial feminist theorist, Chandra Mohanty, argues that systemic analyses of power and domination are vital to feminist research in a context where neoliberalism has been normalised. Mohanty (2013, p. 971) writes: “If all experience is merely individual, and the social is always collapsed into the personal, feminist critique and radical theory appear irrelevant—unless they confront these discursive shifts.” I align with this perspective, which is critical to my theoretical framework. Similarly to intersectionality, a postcolonial feminist perspective recognises that a dominant Western feminist understanding is that men are the primary oppressor, whereas women experience multiple forms of oppression not just related to gender (McEwan, 2001).

However, postcolonial feminism builds on intersectionality’s focus on race, class and gender by attending explicitly to the role of national and global power in relation to these categories (Parameswaran, 2008). The lack of critical attention to the emergence of nation and transnational processes has been criticised as a weakness of intersectional research, and instead one needs to recognise the production of categories that are “mutually constituted, formed, and transformed within transnational power-laden processes such as European imperialism and colonialism, neoliberal globalisation, and so on” (Patil, 2013, p. 848). Importantly, it recognises history in relation to the sociopolitical context (Liu, 2018).

Postcolonial feminist theory also critiques the othering of non-Western women, based on essentialism and stereotypes (Parameswaran, 2008). It challenges the homogeneousness of identity as an ideological project of the settler colonial nation state, which includes the notion of a homogenous identity of the settler society itself (Clark, de Costa, & Maddison, 2017). As asserted by Kapur (2010, p. 20) postcolonial theory “draws attention to how Eurocentric social theory is based on otherness and difference, which it needs to assert its own centrality”. Discourses on gender from the colonial era continue to be a dominant feature in postcolonial contexts (Rosser, 2012). From a postcolonial feminist perspective these discourses

must not be taken for granted but be seen as informed by historical processes (Parameswaran, 2008). In health related research, patriarchy is not only a source of oppression, but it is also recognised that “social inequalities are inscribed within a historical, political, social, cultural, and economic context that influences health” (Kynclová & Knotková-Capková, 2017, p. 18). Furthermore, social inequalities are reinforced through broader institutions such as health care. These institutions have sociopolitical and economic agendas, which are derived from taken for granted norms (O’Mahony & Truong Donnelly, 2010).

4.3.1 Women, subjectivity and the subaltern

Feminist theory takes a critical approach to subjectivity by denaturalising “the entire process of becoming a subject who is endowed with a given set of interests, preferences, and choice matrices” (Smith, 2015, p. 956). A challenge in writing about women’s lives based on subjective experiences is overcoming representations that reproduce the power hierarchy, as women’s actions and ways of thinking are influenced by hegemonic narratives (Smith, 2015). Individual subjectivities are not neutral, but must be considered in relation to oppressions, in constituting them as subjects (Anderson, 2004; Racine, 2003). Postcolonial feminism is useful for centring the subjectivities of refugee women while also bringing attention to the positionality of the researcher in knowledge production (Wachter and Snyder, 2018).

The subaltern subjects are the colonised who were denied representation in the history of the colonial nation, including their stories of anti-colonial struggle as they become spoken for by the coloniser (Nayar, 2015). Spivak, in the classic work, *Can the subaltern speak* (1988), demonstrates how women’s voices in postcolonial settings have been silenced through knowledge production that supports elite Western interests. This is a form of epistemic violence. Women are constructed as the subaltern, or the oppressed (O’Mahony & Truong Donnelly, 2010). Giving voice becomes a form of ventriloquism, where Western academics impose their Orientalist views of the subaltern woman, represented as suppressed and the Other; consequently the woman is never known on her own terms (Mendoza, 2015). Giving voice is based on an assumption of cultural solidarity among people who are not homogenous; and involves speaking for rather than allowing people to speak for

themselves (Spivak, in Bracke, 2016).

4.3.2 Applying postcolonial feminist theory

In applying postcolonial feminist theory, the marginalised knowledge of women, based on their multiple subjectivities (locations) was made known against a critique of a white, patriarchal order which the settler colonial nation state serves to protect (Kynclová & Knotková-Capková, 2017; Wachter & Snyder, 2018). Using postcolonial feminist theory, I focused on women's agency at the micro level within the context of structural policies and practices stemming from dominant ideologies in Australia informed by historically racialised and gendered relations (Clark, 2018). Giving voice can be challenged through expressions of agency, where women shift from being socially positioned as subaltern. The researcher/academic should make recognisable women's resistance and agency through the recovery of their voices (Bracke, 2016). I attempted this through the design of the research, using photovoice as well as attending to reflexivity, and this is discussed in chapter 5. I also explored agency and resilience in my interpretation of the results in chapter 7.

4.4 Applying a Postcolonial Feminist, Intersectional Approach

Through an intracategorical approach, I looked at the experiences of women who participated in this research within the constructed category of 'refugee' (Carastathis, 2014). I examined the intersection of refugee and gender with other categories that reflected personal factors (Hankivsky et al., 2009) and were discussed by women as being relevant to their experiences. I examined women's social locations/positions within a matrix of domination, to critique power and its impacts on women's lives (Dhamoon & Hankivsky, 2011). While the terms identities and social location/s are used interchangeably in the literature, I distinguish here my use of the term social location or position (Bauer, 2014). This is because women's identities are dynamic and not fixed (Hulko, 2009) and the research focus was on multiple social locations as part of a critique of structural factors. I considered the intersections of social locations at the micro or everyday level, while critically recognising the broader contexts of privilege and oppression (Etherington & Baker, 2016) including the historical context of forced migration in Australia (Kaushik & Walsh, 2018) and the construction of the category of 'refugee', as has been discussed in chapter 2. The

social categories of women's lives I have highlighted (for example, ethnicity, and age) are considered in relation to power structures in the quest for "counter-hegemonic knowledge production" (Rice et al., 2019, p. 4).

4.4.1 Systems of oppression

An intersectional framework enables an analysis of oppression and privilege at the micro and macro social levels (Bilge, 2010b). As mentioned, macro level, social-structural factors (systems of oppression) are interrelated to social categories at the micro level, which reinforces inequalities across and within groups in a hierarchy. An exploration was made of four systems of domination that aligned with the findings of this research of the challenges experienced among refugee women participants resettling in Australia. These were: sexism, neoliberalism, racism and ageism. These are identified in the literature on intersectionality as shaping individual and group inequities (Kapilashrami & Hankivsky, 2018). In discussing each of these, I also considered a postcolonial feminist perspective, in particular recognising how Whiteness is bound up in each of these systems of domination, as these systems are historically constituted and informed by white settler colonialism.

It should be noted that they are not representative of the full range of processes and systems that create oppression and are part of the matrix of domination in Australia, including ableism and heterosexism, but relate to specific issues identified from women's discussions of their lived experiences and that require examining as part of a clear overview of my theoretical framework. Further, while each issue is presented separately, they create interconnecting structural level inequalities for women (Bowleg, 2012). Being interlocked, these systems of oppression need each other to function (Dhamoon, 2011). Furthermore, the privilege of one group means that there will be oppression of another (McCall, 2005). I connect each of these systems to health, while recognising that the interconnecting structural level inequalities are linked to social locations of marginalisation, itself a health determinant (Lynam & Cowley, 2007).

Gender, gendering and sexism

Sex is defined as biological difference, while gender is a social construct. A definition of gender provided by the World Health Organisation (2018a), is the “socially constructed characteristics of women and men – such as norms, roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men”. Gendering is a process that creates and sustains division between groups (Hawkesworth & Disch, 2015). Gendering reinforces unequal power relations. When one is gendered, they become socially positioned in a hierarchy (Jones, 2014). Patriarchy is recognised as a system of domination in the work of intersectional researchers (Liu, 2018; Patil, 2013). Under patriarchy, “dominance in power and authority have been male-centered, primarily expressed in female sex-gender control” (Cashmore, 1996, p. 267). Patriarchy and sexism are often used interchangeably by researchers. I recognise a distinction between the two concepts. I refer to (white) patriarchy as a foundational element of settler colonial Australia and which constitutes the contemporary social system. Sexism is “an institutional and ideological system that prescribes division by gender, differentiates the social roles attributed to women and men, and ranks them in a hierarchy” (Gianettoni & Roux, 2010, p. 375). I therefore discuss sexism as a system of oppression that reinforces patriarchy. Sexism attempts to justify men as naturally superior to women, idealising “this hierarchical distinction in support of a patriarchal gender order” (Richardson-Self, 2018, p. 261).

Studies show that sexism legitimises and increases gender inequality in societies (Brandt, 2011). Strategies for gender equality have been called for in order to improve women’s health globally (Grown, Gupta, & Pande, 2005) and in Australia (VicHealth, 2017). Significant concerns for women broadly include gender stereotyping, violence, economic disadvantage, insecure employment and barriers to career progression (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2017). Building on this recognition of gender inequality as a pervading issue, employing intersectionality, gender intersects with other categories, including race and class, in a hierarchical organisation of society, with some groups within the category of gender experiencing greater dominance over others (Thurston & Vissandjée, 2005). One of the personal factors considered in this research, and which can be linked to sexism and gender, is the category of family. As highlighted in chapter 2 there may be issues particular to

women who come to Australia as lone parents or without close family members. Furthermore the nuclear family is prioritised and valued by the State (Grace, 2018).

Individualism and neoliberalism

Individualism is an ideology of neoliberalism (Jones & Calafell, 2012), which champions the productivity and success of the entrepreneurial and free individual, with minimal State support (Wachter & Snyder, 2018). Personal independence is valued under neoliberalism, based on a belief that “human beings will always try to favour themselves” (McGregor, 2001, p. 83) and this can be contrasted with collectivism, which emphasises duty to one’s group, harmony and relatedness (Shulruf et al., 2011). By emphasising personal responsibility for success, neoliberalism disregards the role of systemic forces such as racism in society, which impact on an individual’s life experiences and opportunities (Jones & Calafell, 2012). Neoliberalism stresses “individualized merit and ability in the name of racelessness” (Goldberg, 2009, p. 331).

Classical liberalism became the dominant political philosophy of the settler colonisers of the West (Strakosch, 2015), in conjunction with “the titanic growth of industrial capitalism” (Lloyd & Wolfe, 2016). Federated Australia was the “white man's welfare state, designed to integrate a male dominated industrial working class into colonial capitalism” (Connell, 2014, p. 222). The trend towards neoliberalism, of minimal involvement of the State in the economy and social life, began in the 1970s in Australia (Bray & Underhill, 2009). Practices and processes of white settler colonialism continue within the context of neoliberalism as a system of oppression (Preston, 2013). As noted by Strakosch (2015, p.20), both forces “coexist and thrive”.

Taking a global perspective, neoliberalism is the ideology of the dominant class across North and South, with public policies design to benefit this class over others, and has led to increased inequalities, including inequalities in health (Navarro, 2009). Furthermore, a “neoliberal ideology emphasising individualism, economic rationalism and efficiency over equity” is shown to be an impediment in Australia and other countries to the adoption of policies that take a social determinants of

health approach to health inequities (Baker et al., 2017, p. 108).

White, Australian born, middle class, able-bodied, heterosexual men represent the privileged class in Australia (Bastos et al., 2018). This is arguably reflected in their enjoyment of greater economic and social wellbeing compared to other groups (Mark & Wojtek, 2016). Australia also has a concerning level of economic inequality, and figures show that income of the highest 20% of households is five times that of the lowest 20% (Australian Council of Social Service and University of New South Wales, 2018). People born overseas from non-English speaking backgrounds are also among those more likely to be ranked among the lowest 20% (Australian Council of Social Service and University of New South Wales, 2018).

In the case of migration, colonial relations of power are implemented through a form of authoritarian neoliberalism whereby immigration is controlled to give priority to those who will bring benefit to the needs of capital, including skilled and unskilled workers (Smith, 2018). Intensified border securitisation and militarisation is essential to demarcate between the desirable/undesirable in order to ensure the need for capital and reproduction of neoliberalism (Smith, 2018). Similarly, as noted by Lloyd and Wolfe (2016), the settler colony is a site of military occupation and for the protection of territory a strategy is the containment and warehousing of unwanted groups in the regulation and quest for the accumulation of capital. It should also be noted that border securitisation has become increasingly adopted by other nation states of the Global North to keep out asylum seekers and migrants. Therefore, worth juxtaposing here in relation to neoliberalism as a system of oppression, is migration status as a social category to be explored using intersectionality (Ngum Chi Watts et al., 2015). While all participants in this present research have permanent status, participants were asked whether they sought refugee status in Australia through the offshore or onshore programme, and this was considered in the analysis.

A further category to be considered in relation to neoliberalism is class, or what can also be termed as one's socioeconomic position in society (Hankivsky et al., 2009). Class is commonly discussed as part of a triple oppression, alongside gender and race, in intersectionality research. Class shapes people's access to resources and opportunities (Mark & Wojtek, 2016). For this research, the socioeconomic situation

of women was more broadly acknowledged as an issue, as inferred from discussions based on financial difficulties, including those related to employment, as no specific data was collected from women on their incomes or wealth. It is noted that newly arrived refugee women may experience low socioeconomic status (Marshall, 2015), thereby limiting their access to power and resources (Gazard, Frissa, Nellums, Hotopf, & Hatch, 2015) that favour others situated higher in the social hierarchy. Closely related to class is education, defined as formal instruction at educational institutions (Hankivsky et al., 2009). Women's formal educational backgrounds were also considered in this research.

Race, racialisation and racism

Race is a construct and its meaning is dependent on its use across historical, social and political contexts (Garner, 2010). It is often used interchangeably with ethnicity (Bhopal, 2014; Gianettoni & Roux, 2010). Race reifies difference based on skin colour, and observable physical characteristics or culture (Isoke, 2015). In order to understand the social processes through which race is given meaning in a specific context, the term racialisation is applied by scholars (Garner, 2010). From a critical feminist perspective, racialisation is the use of policies and practices of the State to marginalise and exclude some groups and privilege the dominance of others, emphasising the role of the State in this process (Isoke, 2015). Racialisation and colonisation are also interlinked. For example, postcolonial theorist Frantz Fanon (1967) defined racialisation as a tool of the coloniser to dehumanise the colonised. Race was used as a way to divide humanity in order for the coloniser to dominate over Indigenous peoples (O'Mahony & Truong Donnelly, 2010). Racialisation divided Europeans and non-Europeans and legitimised European invasion and domination across the world (Lentin, 2018).

However racialisation also can be used by groups of people oppressed based on their social location for collective resistance (Garner, 2010). Spivak coined the term, strategic essentialism, to define how marginalised groups adopt essentialism for collective political identity and to achieve political objectives (Spivak, 1990).

In addition to the racialisation of specific groups, and acknowledging that processes

of racialisation may be experienced differently depending on one's cultural background (Matthews, 2019) the resettlement of refugees occurs within a context of racism in Australia (Ramsay, 2016). Racism is a determinant of health, contributing in particular to poorer mental health (Paradies et al., 2015). Research has shown that repeated experiences of racism impact on the mental health of people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds (Ferdinand, Paradies, & Kelaher, 2015). At the micro or everyday level of experience, racism is a social stressor and impacts on the health of the individual, while through macro level processes its impacts can include lower quality health care and social and economic disadvantage (Bastos et al., 2018).

Some scholars argue that 'Old racism', which is the belief in a racial hierarchy, separatism and ethnic inferiority, and considered a minority view in Australian society, has been superseded by 'new racisms'. New racisms include "cultural intolerance, denial of Anglo-privilege and narrow constructions of nation" (Dunn, Forrest, Burnley, & McDonald, 2004, p. 410). However, race is often theorised by those with privilege and without firsthand covert and overt experiences (Seet & Paradies, 2018). Racism exists in many forms. There can be no definitive definition (Anthias, 2010; Lentin, 2018). As Seet and Paradies (2018) stress, the focus should be on representing people's experiences and addressing underlying contributing factors.

Racism is a significant issue in Australia. This includes its open adoption in public debate among politicians, from far right members of Parliament to those of the governing Coalition, as well as public incidents of racial violence reported in the media, through to proposed legislative changes to accessing citizenship, which disadvantage people of non-English speaking background (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2018). As scholars have discussed, racism, discrimination and 'Otherness' in Australia experienced by non-whites stems from the ideology of Whiteness which is embedded in institutions and society including the everyday actions of white Australians, mostly unaware of their privilege (Baak, 2018; Gulson & Webb, 2013; Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama, 2018; Mapedzahama, Rudge, West, & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2018).

Related to racism and ethno-nationalism (Fozdar, Spittles, & Hartley, 2015) is a form of exclusionary nationalism in Australia, based on pride for one's country at the exclusion and derogation of others, including minorities (Fozdar et al., 2015). It is argued that around a quarter of Australians subscribe to ethno-nationalism, that is of Australia as racially and culturally homogenous, stemming from values inherent in the White Australia Policy (Austin & Fozdar, 2018b). This nationalism can be linked to Australia's refugee policy, in particular the desire to control Australia's borders and regressive approach to people seeking asylum (George, 2010; Lueck, Due, & Augoustinos, 2015).

In unpacking racism as a system of oppression and processes of racialisation, Islamophobia must also be emphasised as a significant issue in Australia. Islamophobia is also a form of racism (Beck, Charania, Abed-Rabo Al-Issa, & Wahab, 2017). Two prominent discourses are the Muslim terrorist and oppressed Muslim woman and "these interlinking foundations segue into defining, shaming and criminalising Muslims, who are depicted as a threat to Australian society" (Briskman & Latham, 2017, p. 34). From 2016-17 there were 349 verified incidents of Islamophobia documented by the Islamophobia Register Australia, which collects information on incidents of "the perpetration of verbal and physical anti-Muslim abuse together with denigration of Muslim identity" (Iner, 2018, p. 3). According to a report on these incidents over the two year period, 72% of the victims were women and 71% of perpetrators were men, predominantly white Anglo-Celtic (Iner, 2018). A number of scholars have also commented on the impacts of the growth of Islamophobia in recent years, commenting on the normalisation of negative attitudes by politicians and others in the public arena towards Islam (Akbarzadeh, 2016; Poynting & Briskman, 2018). Islamophobia is also a transnational phenomenon across Western nations. An international systematic review of studies in Australia and other Western countries on the health impacts of Islamophobia found discrimination to be negatively associated with mental health, indicators of physical health, and access to health care (Samari, Alcala, & Sharif, 2018).

For refugees, racism is a barrier to successfully establishing a new life in Australia (Casimiro et al., 2007). It entrenches disadvantage and lack of access to social and economic opportunities (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2012). Within this

and other interlocking systems of oppression, refugee women may experience multiple forms of discrimination based on their gender and race/ethnicity. For example, a survey of 371 migrant and refugee women conducted in 2018 found that for 32 per cent of respondents discrimination was a significant issue of concern, regardless of the amount of time women had spent in Australia (Harmony Alliance, 2018b). Women reported discrimination in the workplace in particular or in using social services such as Centrelink (Harmony Alliance, 2018b). For this research I have examined race within the context of racism and its intersection with gender and refugee.

Worth discussing under this broader system is language, as it is a powerful tool for exclusion in a unilingual society (Hankivsky et al., 2009). English language education in Australia is underpinned “by the ever-present spectre of Post-colonialism and ‘otherness’,” (Oliver, Rochecouste, & Nguyen, 2017, p. 20) and “driven by a view that problematic refugees must be ‘fixed’” (McPherson, 2010, p. 555). Having limited English language knowledge is also a significant barrier to successful settlement (Cheung & Phillimore, 2017), with poor proficiency linked to difficulties finding housing, employment, building social relationships and knowledge of Australian ways, as well as being a source of stress (Blake et al., 2019).

Age and ageism

A useful explanation of ageing in relation to intersectionality is provided by Calasanti and Giles (2017, p. 73) who discuss the intersection of age with other axes over time, and old age in itself, which more broadly results in social exclusion in many Western societies:

Age is an axis of inequality, and that old age is a disadvantaged position, that in itself is sufficient to deny individuals social participation. Further, age is dynamic, and people shift from a privileged to a disadvantaged status gradually, creating a complex identity based on other intersectional locations. The most privileged among us will eventually experience old-age oppression, if long-lived

enough.

Processes of othering occur as people grow older (van Dyk, 2016). Inequalities exist based on the intersection of age and gender broadly in society, particularly in relation to women's financial status in later life compared to men (Patterson, 2018). Younger women may also be privileged over older women in relation to accessing employment (Calasanti & Giles, 2017). Older women are more likely to be discriminated against in employment based on gender and age compared to older men (McGann et al., 2016).

For this research, age was considered as a category as it was reflected upon by some older women in relation to settlement. Ageism, which is discrimination based on age, may serve as a barrier to service access and community participation (Hankivsky et al., 2009). This was discussed in the literature review chapter. For older refugee women who are resettled, language difficulties, marginalisation and isolation are significant issues (Dubus, 2018; Gautam, Mawn, & Beehler, 2018). Refugee status and older age are also mutually constitutive in facilitating social exclusion (Dolberg, Sigurðardóttir, & Trummer, 2018).

The matrix of domination and resistance

As individuals and groups are positioned differently, a matrix of domination or oppression emphasises “implications for how we experience society including what we know and can imagine” (Collins & Chepp, 2013). The matrix is tied to intersectionality theory in particular (Dhamoon, 2011). One's worldview is shaped based on their standpoint in the matrix (Kaushik & Walsh, 2018). It is also a useful theory for considering agency and resistance. Collins describes four domains in which the matrix of domination functions: structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains. Power is an “intangible entity” which circulates in the matrix through these domains (Collins, 2000, p. 274). The structural domain relates to subordination through social structures, for example educational institutions, law and citizenship rights, economy and labour market (Alinia, 2015; Comerford, 2010). Through the structural domain, subordination is reproduced over time (Connor, 2006). The management of oppression is through the disciplinary domain, including

bureaucratic institutions, and hides the effects of racism and sexism “with arguments of efficiency, rationality, and equal treatment” (Comerford, 2010). It is not the explicit application of racist and sexist policies as such, but the way of ruling and how power relations are governed (Collins, 2000). The hegemonic domain supports the other domains, and consists of people’s values, thoughts and beliefs (Comerford, 2010). It is where culture and ideology is manipulated (Collins, 2000). At the level of the hegemonic domain, “ideologies that justify oppression can be internalised by people and be seen as systems of ‘common sense’ ideas” (Alinia, 2015, p. 2335). These ideologies are reinforced at the macro level in economic and political arenas (Ramsay, 2014) and through the media (Collins, 2000). The fourth domain, the interpersonal, is everyday life including personal relationships and resulting individual consciousness (Collins, 2000).

Among the four domains, the hegemonic and the individual are most amenable to resistance by non-dominant groups. The systems of oppression I have discussed in this chapter are hegemonic in themselves when they are “uncritically embedded in the rules and regulations of normal society” (Collins, 2017, p. 1464). As pointed out by Collins (2000, p. 284) “racist and sexist ideologies, if they are disbelieved, lose their impact”. In the hegemonic domain, strategies involve group based critical consciousness to unpack existing hegemonies and construct new knowledge (Collins, 2000, p. 286). The interpersonal level is the domain of everyday resistance, undertaking acts that resist systems of oppression at the everyday level. It also involves awareness of one’s own privilege and how thoughts and actions subordinate others (Collins, 2000, p. 287). Both are examples of complementary dialectical approaches to agency and empowerment. This theory, in particular the role of microsocial processes at the interpersonal and hegemonic domains, was considered in interpreting the results of the research, and is drawn upon in my critique of policy.

4.5 Integration

For this present research I also critiqued the concept of integration which is equated with successful settlement. I considered the conceptual framework proposed by Ager and Strang (2008), which, as I have highlighted, is widely drawn on by scholars as a framework for assessing integration based on norms about what integration

comprises. An overview and critique of the Ager and Strang framework is provided here.

4.5.1 Ager and Strang's framework for integration

The framework for integration was developed as a result of a study commissioned by the United Kingdom government to develop a coherent approach to integration based on the UK context, and for use in the planning and evaluation of services for refugees by policy makers and at a local level (Ager & Strang, 2004). The methodology of the researchers included: a literature review and documentary analysis; fieldwork including interviews with refugees and non-refugee residents in settings of refugee settlement in the UK; secondary analysis of cross-sectional survey data from a parallel study on indication integrators; and verification with policy makers and practitioners who would potentially use the framework. The framework they proposed resulting from their research is detailed in two main outputs. The first of these is a research report in 2004, which included proposed policy and practice indicators for stakeholders to measure integration. The authors of that report also outlined their work in a scholarly article (2008), which has been a seminal contribution to scholarly discourse on refugee integration (Darrow, 2018). As shown in Figure 3, Ager and Strang (2008) identified 10 interrelated domains of integration within four categories: education, employment, housing and health which are means and markers of integration; social connection processes within and between groups; and language, culture, safety and security and the community context as structural barriers to these connections; and the role of citizenship and rights as the foundation of integration.



Figure 3. Ager and Strang's Framework for Integration (2008).

Reprinted from "Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework" by A. Ager & A. Strang, 2008, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21(2), p. 170. Copyright [2008] by The Author.

For the first category of markers and means, employment, housing, education and health are indicative of integration as well as important pathways for integration to be achieved. Employment is key to economic independence. A barrier articulated by Ager and Strang (2008) among refugees was lack of previous work experience or non-recognition of overseas qualifications. Underemployment in lower skilled roles that did not reflect people's pre-migration training and experience was an issue; and the importance of vocational education and training for entering the workforce was also emphasised (Ager and Strang, 2008).

Housing measures to assess refugee integration included size and quality, affordability based on financial security of tenants and ownership. Ager and Strang (2008) reported their fieldwork also showed that many refugees and non-refugees valued the development of neighbourhood relationships, and feeling safe.

Education was seen as important for employment in addition to the role of schools for parents and children as important places for connecting to the host community and building relationships through school based activities (Ager & Strang, 2008).

Children experienced a number of issues in terms of lack of adequate support to learn the host language, isolation and bullying (Ager and Strang, 2008).

Being in good health was vital to being able to actively participate in a new society and being able to access health services was an indicator of effective engagement with the service system. Ager and Strang (2008) noted that language issues can be a barrier to service engagement, with poor information available about services and lack of gendered and culturally sensitive approaches.

Ager and Strang (2008) also posed the necessary question: when measuring successful integration across these domains however, how does one decide on what the expectation of successful should be? They linked this to rights and citizenship, the foundational domain that establishes the expectations and obligations for the process of integration (Ager & Strang, 2004). Entitlement to equal rights is essential to harmonious living between non-refugees and refugees (Ager & Strang, 2008). Perceptions of rights and citizenship shape attitudes of host nation citizens towards refugees, and how refugees perceive integration (Ager & Strang, 2004). An analysis of rights and citizenship should also be linked to policy regarding citizenship education (Ager & Strang, 2004) and in recognising policy assumptions and principles about integration (Ager & Strang, 2008).

Ager and Strang (2008) described social connections and facilitators as the connective tissue between citizenship and rights, and integration means and markers. They drew on the theory of social capital, including social bonds, social bridges and social links to explain integration at a local level. In relation to social bonds, refugees expressed the importance of family and being close to family members. The importance of refugee community organisations was also stressed and relationships with people of like ethnic background was beneficial to health and wellbeing (Ager and Strang, 2008).

Social bridges included relationships with host community members and daily friendliness. Participation in shared community activities such as religious worship, sports or political groups was seen as indicative of integration. Ager and Strang (2008) reported that bridging capital may be of more significance in supporting

integration through the opportunities it brings such as access to employment. Social links are links with services that provide “the connection between individuals and structures of the state” (Ager and Strang, 2008, p. 181). The importance of services to effectively deal with the needs of resettled refugees was stressed. This included the need for services to be culturally competent and inclusive provide access to aids such as interpreters.

Language and cultural knowledge and safety and security are the two domains which comprise the category of facilitators. Ager and Strang (2008) saw these as areas where the state had responsibility to action the removal of barriers to these, thus supporting integration. As a two-way domain, host nation language competence was not only identified as essential for refugees, but services also had a role to address language barriers through actions such as interpreter services and translated information. In addition, cultural knowledge included refugees having both knowledge of local customs and cultural expectations. It was found that non-refugee knowledge of the cultures and experiences of refugees was seen as important though “to a lesser extent” (Ager and Strang, 2008, p. 182) and perceptions of the contributions of refugee cultures differed among community settings.

Safety and stability was a significant issue identified in the research to feeling settled in a community for refugees (Ager and Strang, 2008). Feeling safe in one’s community related not only to feeling safe from violence but also verbal intimidation or general perceptions about their locality. Experiences of harassment were detrimental to wellbeing. Positive relationships with neighbours were undermined by refugees being in transitional housing, thus impacting on the sense of community stability.

Ager and Strang (2008, p. 167) described the conceptual framework as ‘middle range’ theory, because it aims “to provide a coherent conceptual structure for considering, from a normative perspective, what constitutes the key components of integration.” The framework was not intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of the range of factors which might influence the integration process. The framework has a particular focus on outcomes as these are outward focused and measurable, however the domains are interdependent and bidirectional, thus being

“processes that may facilitate integration” (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 185). It is argued by the authors that there is a need for greater understanding as to how the domains support each other. It can be contrasted to Australian policy, which is particularly focused on the top layer of markers and means (Fozdar, 2013). Further, the two-way role that host nations play in supporting integration was considered in the development of the framework and in the measures proposed.

Critiques of the framework for integration

Some important criticisms of the framework should also be noted. Phillimore and Goodson (2008) discussed the effectiveness of the theory in evaluating integration progress among refugees in the West Midlands in the UK. Based on household survey data, in-depth interviews and focus groups, they looked at the means and markers of employment, housing, education and health. As functional indicators they provided an understanding of how refugees are integrating at a functional level (Phillimore & Goodson, 2008, p. 321). The researchers stressed the link between domains as important—for example health issues will impact on one’s ability to be employed—and stressed a shift from gathering statistical data to the inclusion of qualitative approaches in order to provide a greater understanding of experiences of integration and its complexities from the perspective of refugees. They also argued the need to consider issues by age, ethnicity and gender and greater emphasis on the role of institutions and host communities in adapting their attitudes to refugees (Phillimore & Goodson, 2008).

Pittaway, Muli, and Shteir (2009) also used the theory to frame their research on the settlement experiences of refugees in New South Wales who were from the Horn of Africa. Based on community consultations and interviews with 83 participants they found that, while the framework was useful for highlighting gaps to be addressed in service provision across all of the domains, a limitation was it did not consider the role of pre-settlement experiences on one’s ability to settle successfully. They recommended this be included in an expanded model (Pittaway et al., 2009).

McPherson (2010) critiqued the dominant discourse on integration using research that involved interviews with 9 refugee women in Melbourne on how they viewed

the role of education in their lives. McPherson argued that as the indicators proposed are based on a normative or common sense perspective it therefore reinforced a dominant host nation view of migrants as problematic. Women's narratives about education showed their agency and potential, and the role of education for self-development, as opposed to the view of settlement education to teach refugees how to conform to the pedagogy of nation (McPherson, 2010, p. 554). McPherson (2010, p. 565) argued that "only in stepping 'outside' the discursive norms of policy, might we find some new and different ways of conceptualizing answers to pressing social issues".

Squires (2018) conducted a scoping review on studies of refugee integration in the Australian research. The inclusion criteria identified 35 studies for the review, which examined how integration is defined by Australian researchers. The Ager and Strang theory was found to be one of the frameworks referenced heavily by scholars in defining integration. Squires (2018) argued that reliance on such international understandings of integration may not account for the specific cultural, political and economic context of Australia, and called for more localised conceptualisations. Indeed, although the developers of the framework stated that it can be applied in other settings as it is focused on the communities in which refugees settle (Ager & Strang, 2004), in discussing its relevance they also point out that its "wider utility and explanatory value now needs to be tested in diverse contexts to gauge whether the proposed structure captures key elements of stakeholder perceptions of what constitutes integration in an appropriately broad range of settings and timeframes" (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 185).

UK Home Office Indicators of Integration Framework

In 2019, the UK Home Office released an updated version of the Ager and Strang framework, which was designed by a group of UK based academics (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019). As the earlier framework had been widely applied in contexts beyond what it was originally intended for, the revised indicators of integration framework was designed for "the measurement of the experiences of any group of people whose integration into communities or society is of concern" (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019, p. 13) in the UK context. While much of the original framework was the same, there

were some additions to the domains and accompanying indicators to reflect societal changes. For example, digital skills was included as a facilitator to acknowledge that “access to people, services and rights are now either dependent on, or facilitated by, technology” (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019, p. 17).

Leisure was included as a marker and means of integration, stressing the importance of activities such as sports or social groups for learning about the host nation culture and building social connections. Furthermore, a key principle underpinning the updated framework was emphasis on a shared responsibility for integration. This includes the role of immigration policy to facilitate integration, through access to citizenship and family reunion (Phillimore, 2019). A comprehensive toolkit accompanies the framework to assist policy makers and practitioners to implement and evaluate integration projects at local and national levels in the UK.

The original framework proposed by Ager and Strang was tested in this present research as the revised framework was released after the bulk of this present study had been completed. Acknowledging it as a key contribution to conceptualising refugee integration as a two-way approach, and its broad adoption beyond settings in the UK, it was considered as part of deductive coding. I selected this theory over the others due to its utility for measuring integration and comprehensiveness. I also critique its utility in chapter 7. The 2019 Framework is discussed briefly in the concluding chapter (9) in light of findings of this present research.

4.6 Resilience Theory

As mentioned in chapter 1, this research also explored processes of resilience. Further, in the literature review chapter (3) I discussed the growth of resilience in the study of refugee women’s health and wellbeing. A resilience lens provides a useful approach for examining how people cope with adversity (Seymour, 2012). Yet, as other researchers have acknowledged, in many studies of resilience the subjects of these studies are people marginalised within a matrix of domination (Liebenberg & Ungar, 2000). Resilience is based on Eurocentric ways of knowing (Ungar, 2008). Resilience can be examined further and its application to this research discussed.

4.6.1 Resilience: common definition and approaches

An examination of the literature shows a lack of a coherent definition of resilience (Liu, Reed, & Girard, 2017). In the health context, resilience has commonly been defined as a process, of bouncing back upon experiencing adversity (Ayed, Toner, & Priebe, 2018; Netuveli, Wiggins, Montgomery, Hildon, & Blane, 2008; Silverman, Verrall, Alschuler, Smith, & Ehde, 2017). It is also discussed in relation to coping but is best understood as processes that individuals use to cope during adversity (Liu et al., 2017; Ungar, 2012a). Resilience is dynamic and relational; it is a process and not a personality trait (Schoon, 2012).

Resilience research originated in relation to psychological resilience among children, and much of the Australian research on refugees also relates to resilience among children and youth (Copolov, Knowles, & Meyer, 2018; Earnest et al., 2015; Hanes, Sung, Mutch, & Cherian, 2017; Khawaja, Ibrahim, & Schweitzer, 2017; Tahereh, Helena de, Georgia, Peter, & Michael, 2012; Tozer, Khawaja, & Schweitzer, 2018). However, there is a gap in the research on resilience in adulthood (Pickren, 2014). Resilience was initially focused on disposition at the level of the individual. It has since been recognised that resilience is significantly shaped by external factors at the levels of family, community and culture (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008). Rutter (2012, 2013), who is a major contributor to resilience theory, asserts that the huge heterogeneity of responses to stress and adversity should be noted. Rutter discusses resilience in relation to risk as “reduced vulnerability to environmental risk experiences, the overcoming of a stress or adversity, or a relatively good outcome despite risk experiences” (2006, in Rutter, 2012, p. 336). Risk factors include “acute hardship (e.g. victimization) or forms of sustained stress (e.g. poverty, historical trauma, discrimination) that have been associated with “poor” behavioral or health outcomes; resilience is then defined by those who defy the odds and show “positive” outcomes” (Wexler, DiFluvio, & Burke, 2009, p. 566). To reiterate, resilience can be viewed as context specific and based on dynamic interactions between the individual and their environment (Goodman et al., 2017; Sleijpen, Mooren, Kleber, & Boeije, 2017). Immigration researchers have argued that despite traumatic experiences, refugees draw on inner and external sources of resilience, which help them to successfully acculturate, or adjust to a new culture (Sossou et al., 2008).

A social-ecological or environmental approach is promoted as a way of attending to the inner and external factors including cultural factors in resilience processes (DeJonckheere, Vaughn, & Jacquez, 2014). Ecological models have been a popular tool for exploring health issues among researchers since the 1980s, resulting from an increased recognition of the role of social inequalities in health and the social environment in influencing health outcomes (McLaren & Hawe, 2005; Richard, Gauvin, & Raine, 2011).

4.6.2 Critiques of resilience

Research on resilience has proliferated in recent decades and is considered important in addressing health inequities based on an assets or strengths based approach to health (Aranda, Zeeman, Scholes, & Morales, 2012; Panter-Brick, 2014). The benefits of an asset based approach include harnessing the capacities existing within individuals and communities (Allmark, Bhanbhro, & Chrisp, 2014). However, as asserted by Liebenberg and Ungar (2000, p. 6) “research into something as challenging to define as resilience must necessarily attend to the complexity of *who* is defining positive outcomes and who has the power to say *what* a sign of health is”. This requirement is commonly lacking in much of the literature on resilience (Aranda et al., 2012). A social-ecological approach, common to resilience research, is shaped by human values and historical perspectives of what is “desirable” resilience (Armitage, Béné, Charles, Johnson, & Allison, 2012).

In addition, arguably an implicit underlying assumption is that individuals are responsible for overcoming adversity, rather than the structural issues that result in their disadvantage needing to be addressed (Garrett, 2016; Hart et al., 2016; Pulvirenti & Mason, 2011). Resilience is conceived as self-sufficiency, being responsible for one’s own fate, which reflects the dominant ideology of neoliberalism (Pulvirenti & Mason, 2011; Ryan, 2015). Lacking in the research is recognition of the role of power and politics in understanding resilience, and the use of resilience to reinforce dominant political ideologies (Cretney, 2014).

Resilience research can ignore issues including poverty and racism, under the guise

of labels such as low socioeconomic status or race (Bottrell, 2009). For example, a positive outcome among young people, based on dominant social norms, may be graduating from high school, where for others school represents assimilation with the dominant culture or an unsafe environment (Wexler et al., 2009). Conversely, leaving school for someone may be an act of agency in response to issues of homophobia or racism. In the case of the school environment, it is “the meanings these experiences hold for the individual and the particular group to which they belong that shape how “resilient” school outcomes are” (Wexler et al., 2009, p. 567). Resilience research is also often based on Western cultural notions of resilience, as “theorisations of the resilience construct have yet to sufficiently extend beyond the scope of privilege based on race/ethnicity, class, sex/gender, and concomitant factors such as educational opportunity” (Ramirez & Hammack, 2014). There is a tendency to measure resilience using white, Western norms (Lenette, 2011). Lenette (2011) argues that an emic perspective is needed as “it is essential to look at constructs of resilience as they emerge from individuals’ distinct realities”. This approach, which includes the role of sociopolitical factors in people’s lives (Lenette, 2011), is acknowledged as important to this present research.

4.6.3 Resilience, resistance and agency

Acknowledging these critiques, resilience and its importance for wellbeing can also be considered from an intersectional perspective. Rosenthal (2016) discusses how, through its activist roots, intersectionality encourages resistance as a form of resilience and how “attending to resistance can help us to better understand individuals and communities as actors responding to (and not just passively receiving) experiences of oppression, inequality, and stigma” (p. 486). The foundational roots of resistance can be traced to the social sciences, as interpersonal and collective responses to oppression (Turner & Simmons, 2006). Importantly, resistance involves engagement and alliances with others who are experiencing similar adversity (VanderPlaat, 2015).

Resistance as resilience is seen as a “creative expression of power” for engaging with life after experiences of trauma, as described by Harms (2015, p. 148). Drawing on Foucauldian analysis, power is an inherent strategy in all relationships and can be

positive or negative (Harms, 2015). Resilience is power and control: “the capacity to exert productive and constructive power within our own relational and structural contexts in order to mobilise our access to resources” (Harms, 2015, p. 149). Furthermore, resistance puts lived experience at the centre of the research (Bottrell, 2009). In doing so, prosocial standardised outcomes of resilience are challenged (Bottrell, 2009). As Bottrell (2009, p. 335) explains, “resistances represent not only individuals negotiating their way but indicate consequences of economic and policy effects in structuring individual experience and differentiating social conditions for identifiable groups” (Bottrell, 2009, p. 335). Resistance is a common framing of women’s issues in postcolonial feminist (Bilge, 2010a) and intersectional research (Collins, 2000).

This conceptualisation of resistance as resilience can also be linked to agency. Agency is used alongside and often interchangeably with resilience, although it has a different meaning (Nahar & van der Geest, 2014). Agency is also a contested concept in the literature (McNay, 2015) and used without critical consideration of the meaning of the term (Bilge, 2010a). From a feminist, intersectional perspective, it is defined as “an individual or social group’s will to be self-defining and self-determining” (Collins, 2000, p. 298) which Bilge (2010a) describes as a liberal/humanist interpretation and as being foundational to feminist and anti-colonial movements. What must be acknowledged is that agency occurs within existing social and political structures (Nayar, 2015). The role of social structures and their related privileges (Kapilashrami & Hankivsky, 2018) means that the social location of some individuals and groups may result in them facing greater challenges in their capacity for accessing agency than others, making it—as acknowledged by McNay (2015)—inseparable from a critique of issues of power. These observations about agency and power can be linked to a definition of resilience proposed by Michael Ungar, which I will now discuss.

4.6.4 Ungar’s definition of resilience

Recognising the inadequacies in current definitions of resilience, including the need to recognise resistance as resilience, Ungar (2008) proposed a constructionist definition of social-ecological resilience, designed to be applicable to different

cultures and contexts. A constructionist understanding can be contrasted with that of ecological models of resilience situated within a positivist paradigm, which offers “arbitrary distinctions of what are to be accepted as evidences of healthy functioning” (Ungar, 2004, p. 345). Ungar states that:

In the context of exposure to significant adversity, whether psychological, environmental, or both resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to health-sustaining resources, including opportunities to experience feelings of wellbeing, and a condition of the individual’s family, community and culture to provide these health resources and experiences in culturally meaningful ways. (Ungar, 2008, p. 225)

As explained by Ungar, navigation and negotiation are important dual processes. At the individual level, agency represents a component of navigating one’s way to psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources for wellbeing, yet the person’s environment, comprised of families, communities and governments are also responsible for making the “resources available in culturally meaningful ways that reflect the preferences of those who need them” (Ungar, 2012b, p. 17). The provision of these resources from one’s environment based on a person’s preferences is also defined as agency: it is not just a component pertaining to the individual, and therefore “there is always a negotiation between what a population under stress requires for wellbeing and what policy makers and those intervening provide” (Ungar, 2012a, p. 388). Therefore, the individual is decentered in this approach, as a facilitative environment outweighs personal motivation to adapt in the face of risk factors (Ungar, 2013).

Furthermore, there has been a shift from agency as resistance to resilience whereby for the subaltern, resilience has become a cultivation of a sense of preparedness for what might happen (Bracke, 2016). In doing so, the “developing of skills of imagining otherwise” is thwarted, and “it cuts the lines of mobility to other worlds possible” (Bracke, 2016, p. 853). Bracke (2016) argues that the promotion of resilience is in the interests of the global hegemon which seeks to create subalternity. This argument can be extended to the refugee regime, dominated by Western nation states in conjunction with the UNHCR. Resilience is constitutive of the good subject,

and agency becomes “individual elasticity, rebounding, and adaptation” (Bracke, 2016, p. 851). These understandings of resilience and agency are used to maintain the status quo, including the containment of refugees, and for the transfer of good productive citizens if people are selected for integration by Western nations. Or alternatively, women become portrayed by powerful regime actors as victims without agency, men as possessing dangerous agency as potential terrorists, or asylum seekers as having immoral agency (Mainwaring, 2016).

Acknowledging these challenges and limitations and an underlying focus on addressing structural factors impacting on women’s settlement experiences, for this research I employed a social-ecological approach to resilience. Although focused primarily on children and youth, Ungar’s approach has been used by researchers working with adults, including refugee women (see Lenette et al., 2013). The theory was deemed the best fit in relation to the research, because it recognises the interrelationship between the individual and their social and political surroundings (Yotebieng, Syvertsen, & Awah, 2018). As emphasised by Lenette et al. (2013, p. 640) a person-environment approach challenges “the individualization and de-politicization of social problems” of resilience research, which is in turn congruent with both intersectional and postcolonial feminist theories for framing issues of social justice.

Ungar’s definition of resilience also recognises that mediating factors intersect with personal agency (Bottrell & Armstrong, 2012). Agency is an enabler of resilience (Haffejee & Theron, 2019) but must be considered in relationship to the agency of one’s environment in facilitating the resources needed for supporting wellbeing. It also privileges the knowledge of the person and groups themselves on processes for enhancing wellbeing (Ungar, 2008). Furthermore, as Ungar (2008) argues, despite resilience research being grounded in Eurocentric epistemology, associated concepts such as social justice, self-efficacy and social support are of universal relevance across cultures. Similar themes also resonated in my review of the literature on resilience among refugee women. I also recognise, however, as Ungar (2013, p. 263) explains

it is unlikely we will ever identify a single measure of resilience that is

appropriate across all contexts and at all levels of exposure to trauma. Broader discussion of what resilience looks like in different cultures and contexts is showing many different ways that people cope with traumatic events.

The nature of the present research design and focus, conducted with women from varied cultural background and life experiences, limits the exploration of resilience. In line with the broader focus on structural issues impacting on successful settlement I have examined in particular the importance of the agency of women's surrounding environments in facilitating their wellbeing. This is also compatible with a social determinants of health approach, as it is acknowledged that determinants are important sources of resilience (Boyce & Olster, 2011; Khanlou & Wray, 2014). In summary, for this research I drew on social-ecological resilience theory to critically examine processes of resilience within the broader context of forced migration and resettlement, as life changing adversity.

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I provided an outline of the theoretical framework employed for this research. In addition to employing normative understandings of integration as a lens to responding to the research question, and a social-ecological conceptualisation of resilience to explore processes of resilience, I discussed how I used intersectionality and postcolonial feminist theories as overarching perspectives to the interpretation of women's experiences.

For this research I looked at the experiences of women who participated within the constructed social category of refugee and the intersection of refugee and gender with others that were relevant to participants. These included family composition, socioeconomic situation including employment status, formal education, race/ethnicity, English language proficiency and age.

Principles of the theoretical framework were also employed in my conduct as a researcher, in addition to my research design and analysis, which I discuss in the next chapter (5).

Chapter 5:

Methodology

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I outline the research methodology, the “assumptions, postulates, rules, and methods—the blueprint or roadmap” (Schensul, 2012, p. 516) of one’s research project. I begin with discussion on the assumptions which informed the research approach, including underlying research paradigms and how these can be linked to use of community based participatory research (CBPR) as an approach, drawing on relevant critiques. I discuss the use of photovoice as the main tool or method used for data collection, its strengths and limitations broadly as highlighted in the literature. An outline of the research process is provided, from establishing a research agreement with the community partner, Ishar Multicultural Women’s Health Centre, to recruitment, the photovoice sessions, followed by interviews with women about their participation in photovoice. The research process also included the development of a photovoice exhibition and knowledge translation strategies. I discuss the use of triangulation through seeking the perspectives of key informants and other strategies I employed to ensure rigour. The data analysis approach is outlined followed by limitations to the methodology.

5.2 Research Approach

In qualitative research, demonstrating epistemological awareness is central to a justified and well-informed research project (Koro-Ljungberg, Yendol-Hoppey, Smith, & Hayes, 2009). Paradigms, or ways of seeing the world, highlight the philosophical assumptions that shape all aspects of the research (Mertens, 2015). My theoretical framework, in particular intersectionality and postcolonial feminist theories, have shaped how I approached the topic of the research and the interpretation of findings. For this participatory research I also drew on two paradigms linked to participatory methodologies (Baum, MacDougall, & Smith, 2006).

The first is interpretivism, also known as constructivism and which is commonly

associated with qualitative research. It relates to the importance of recognising perceptions of reality as understood by individuals (Mantoura & Potvin, 2012). From an axiological perspective, I value multiple perspectives of understandings of the social world (Humphrey, 2013). Through this research, I sought insider or 'emic' perspectives for a more holistic picture of women's social realities (Fetterman, 2008; Humphrey, 2013). The second paradigm I employed is the critical or transformative paradigm which has a strong emancipatory intent (Mertens, 2015). A range of theories sit under the umbrella of the critical paradigm, which is based on an ontological view of socially and historically situated power relations (Farias, Rudman, Magalhães, & Gastaldo, 2017).

Axiologically, based on an underpinning social justice intent, a value I brought to this research was respect for other cultures and norms; ontologically I sought to apply critique to issues based on power relations, and my epistemological assumptions were that of questioning and reflecting on the relationships between myself as the researcher and those that I worked with from communities (Mertens, 2012). Participatory forms of research are commonly linked to the critical or transformative paradigm (Romm, 2015). Furthermore, I argue that research which aims to address inequalities in health must include a critical epistemological perspective in order to address underlying social-structural inequities (Bowleg, 2017).

5.2.1 Community based participatory research

Building upon constructivist and critical paradigmatic assumptions, community based participatory research (CBPR) was employed as a research approach. CBPR is recognised as more of an orientation to research than a methodology itself (Sandy, Samed, Naiema, & V., 2015; Stanton, 2014; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). CBPR stems from critical Freirean and action research approaches (Wilson, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2018). Through the Freirean influence, and particularly in ethical response to the exploitation of communities in the past through research (Blumenthal, 2011), it is not just the study of others but involves people as participants in the process. The approach acknowledges that reality is not objective but should be understood based on how people perceive facts (Freire, in Wallerstein

& Duran, 2008). Also significant in informing CPBR is Paulo Freire's focus on liberation (Wilson et al., 2018). Action research emphasises cycles of reflection and action, and through these approaches CBPR aims to combine knowledge with action for social change (Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). Participation and partnership are at the core of the CPBR approach. It is seen as a commitment to a collaborative and equitable relationship between the researcher/s and community partners, seeking to ensure community participation in all parts of the research effort, from design to data collection as well as local understandings of issues and solutions (Cacari-Stone, Wallerstein, Garcia, & Minkler, 2014; Sandy et al., 2015; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006).

Empowerment is also an underpinning pillar of CBPR (Blumenthal, 2011). Empowerment is fostered through the opportunities that participation provides to partners (Stack & McDonald, 2018; Wallerstein, 2002; Woodall, Raine, South, & Warwick-Booth, 2010). In chapter 8 I examine the concept of empowerment and discuss the effectiveness of this research in facilitating empowerment of the participating community. In recognition of the political and social complexities of public health issues and the need for more comprehensive approaches to address these, CBPR has grown in popularity among health researchers (Israel, Eng, Schulz, & Parker, 2005). It has become widely seen as an important approach for addressing ethnic and racial health inequities (Coombe et al., 2018). It also involves translating research to practice and outcomes through its explicit recognition of action for social justice (Wallerstein & Duran, 2010).

The emphasis on participation aligns with this recognition in key health agreements, such as the Alma Ata Declaration of 1978, as being crucial to improving health. These elements made it a particularly relevant approach for this research. As an orientation, CPBR aligned with my worldview and values discussed, and has been employed by other researchers for addressing the social determinants of health, in particular research seeking to influence policy (Freudenberg & Tsui, 2014). While the characteristics of CPBR demonstrate that it was a good fit for the research, which aimed to gain insider perspectives of women of their settlement experiences and foster empowerment including social justice, CBPR is not without its limitations. Some important critiques should also be highlighted.

Critiquing CBPR

As mentioned, at the core of CBPR is participation through equitable partnerships. CBPR projects where participation has been at its greatest have been positively linked to improved health impacts. Participatory strategies have included ensuring the voice of the participating community in the design of the research, genuine sharing of power, co-learning between the researcher and participants and adequate assessment of community needs (Cyril, Smith, Possamai-Inesedy, & Renzaho, 2015). However critiques of studies claiming to use CBPR have also found significant variability in participation, with community control and equal partnership being less common than researcher control but with aspects of community participation (Banks et al., 2013; Spears Johnson, Kraemer Diaz, & Arcury, 2016). CBPR has espoused a value-driven rhetoric of participation, yet researchers have only recently turned to critiquing whether the rhetoric reflects the reality (Wallerstein & Duran, 2008). Participation is not static but fluid, and may shift over the course of the stages of a project (Banks et al., 2013). In responding to this issue, scholars have argued that equitable participation is not necessarily realistic in the case of CBPR but should be seen as a goal to attain (Blumenthal, 2011).

While meaningful participation is not something that can easily be achieved due to its dynamic nature, more importantly participation is influenced by the social and historical context of the research setting, which includes embedded power relations between researchers and community members (Muhammad et al., 2015; Wallerstein & Duran, 2008). This includes the context of the partnering institution, for example the university, and power relations within participating communities (Rose, 2018). Sharing power is the key to effective CBPR between academic institutions and the community, yet this remains a challenge, with limited attention given to the identity and intersectional positionality of the researcher (Muhammad et al., 2015). I discuss how I approached this later in this chapter, under reflexivity.

Critical approaches such as postcolonial and feminist theories are also important here as they recognise power dynamics and have been important contributions to advancing the effectiveness of CBPR (Wallerstein & Duran, 2008). Drawing from these, as an outside researcher, an important part of my role in partnering with the

women participants was to “weaken the power of dominant culture explanations and create spaces for competing community ideas and practices to emerge” (Wallerstein & Duran, 2008, p. 36). I sought to include the multiple perspectives of women shaped by their social locations, which is demonstrated in the themes chapter (6).

Applying CBPR to this research

A number of CBPR principles have been identified to guide researchers in undertaking CPBR projects (Israel et al., 2005; Israel et al., 2008). Not all of these will be relevant however, as it depends on the nature of the partnership (Collins et al., 2018; Israel et al., 2008). In this chapter, I point out the principles drawn from the literature that were relevant to this research, as I discuss the method and research process.

The photovoice method

I used photovoice as a method for this CPBR oriented research (Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Hergenrather, Rhodes, Cowan, Bardhoshi, & Pula, 2009; McMorrow & Saksena, 2017; Wilson et al., 2018). While sometimes described as a methodology (Bowleg, 2017; Higgins, 2016), I consider it as part of a qualitative, participatory methodology (Sanon, Evans-Agnew, & Boutain, 2014), which was informed by constructivist and critical epistemological orientations. Photovoice is defined as “a process by which people can identify, represent, and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique” (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 369). The photovoice method emerged in the 1990s through the work of Wang and Burris with women in rural China to address reproductive health issues (Wang & Burris, 1994). Wang and Burris (1997) identified three main goals of photovoice: giving people cameras to capture and reflect on community strengths and issues; promoting critical dialogue about issues through group discussions of photographs, and reaching policy makers through participant images and messages.

Photovoice is also informed by three theories: feminist theory, as it recognises that communities have knowledge and insight into their issues and the camera enables understanding through their eyes; Freire’s theory of critical consciousness whereby

photos provide a tool for critical reflection and education; and participatory documentary photography, but instead of being represented as passive subjects of others' images, people at the grassroots are enabled through picture taking and critical dialogue to identify issues and strengths in their own communities (Wang & Burris, 1997). This also reflects a key principle of CBPR, which is promoting community strengths, as community members are valued co-researchers (Collins et al., 2018; Israel et al., 2005).

Photovoice has become a popular tool in health research with marginalised groups (Baker & Wang, 2006; Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Dassah, Aldersey, & Norman, 2017; Davtyan, Farmer, Brown, Sami, & Frederick, 2016; McMorrow & Saksena, 2017; Poudrier & Mac-Lean, 2009; Strack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004; Teti, Pichon, Kabel, Farnan, & Binson, 2013; Thompson et al., 2008). Marginalisation is defined as relegation to the fringes of society, or social exclusion, and with limited access to resources and opportunities for full community participation (Cruwys et al., 2013). Marginalisation is also a determinant of health (Lynam & Cowley, 2007).

Photovoice has been used widely in international health research with different groups of women, including women from refugee backgrounds. For example, Pearce et al. (2017) used photovoice with 8 women of South Sudanese refugee background in Canada to explore resilience, while McMorrow and Saksena (2017) also looked at perceptions of health care among 16 women from the Democratic Republic of Congo who had been resettled in the United States. Some examples from the research are instructive of the impacts that photovoice research has had on women's lives. For instance, Valera, Gallin, Schuk, and Davis (2009) conducted research with nine low income women in New York City, in the US to identify barriers to healthy eating. Using photovoice, women were able to identify the structural barriers they faced, such as the high cost of nutritious food. They became change agents through writing letters about the findings to their local politicians and presenting at a conference on health disparities (Valera et al., 2009).

In another example, Kingery, Naanyu, Allen, and Patel (2015) undertook a photovoice project with 13 women in a rural community in Kenya to identify factors that impact on people's health status. Participants identified and ranked their

concerns which stemmed from their photos. Women's main priorities related to social determinants of health, including the cost of schooling, water, the cost of health care and sanitation among others. The women who took part established a community based organisation and used the research findings to lobby their local government to provide financial support for projects related to these issues (Kingery et al., 2015).

A photovoice project with seven migrant women from Nicaragua in Costa Rica, living in conditions of poverty, enabled them to document community strengths in their "fight to survive" (Morgan et al., 2010). The process of dialogue helped them build connections with others and come to new ways of thinking about their lives (Morgan et al., 2010). Women were interviewed about the project for a local newspaper, giving them "the opportunity to share the strengths and challenges of their community with the outside world" (Morgan et al., 2010, p. 42).

In a disadvantaged region of West Bengal in India, Ghosh, Bose, Bramhachari, and Mandal (2016) used photovoice with 22 mothers of young children to explore child health issues. These included their daily struggles to access safe drinking water, access to health services, climatic events and social issues. The issues the women identified also reflected differences in caste, educational background and economic status. Women engaged with decision makers in their community using their photographs and with key messages, which also challenged gender norms about the discussion of community issues. Women described taking part in the project as confidence boosting (Ghosh et al., 2016).

As these examples demonstrate, photovoice can be an effective strategy for empowerment. The process enables participants to create new ways of thinking through reflection and critical dialogue (Morgan, 2010). Community empowerment is intended through access to networks, including peers, as well as decision makers through the sharing of findings (Liebenberg, 2018).

Critiquing photovoice

In a discrete chapter (8) on the strengths and challenges of photovoice as a form of

CBPR, I critique its claims of empowerment based on the literature, informed by the research findings and process. Here I consider photovoice more broadly, its limitations, and how I attempted to address these in undertaking the research. Research that is rooted in Western ways of knowing can be a tool for reinforcing the effects of colonialism. The dominant culture is privileged and knowledge produced by this group is seen as the norm but Indigenous and non-Western knowing is not (Liamputtong, 2010). Decolonising approaches privilege those who have been historically marginalised (Barnes, 2018; Grant & Luxford, 2009). Photovoice is seen as a tool for decolonising research, by engaging the expertise and agency of communities (Racine & Petrucka, 2011).

However, as argued by Higgins (2016), photovoice is espoused as giving voice to participants, which has patriarchal and colonial undercurrents because it positions them as being powerless; the researcher bestows upon the participants the opportunity for their voice. Higgins suggests adopting the argument of feminist theorist, bell hooks (1989), of coming to voice. Coming to voice is a demand to be heard, as opposed of giving voice, in recognition that people taking part in photovoice already show voice and agency in their daily lives, but they are not heard by policy makers (Higgins, 2016).

In agreement with hooks and Higgins, I also argue for coming to voice in approaching the use of photovoice. Based on my lens which uses the concept of a matrix of oppression, it is recognised that refugee women's voices are often ignored in the broader public sphere, including in the development of policies related to their welfare. Furthermore, Higgins argues that a participant standpoint is something that one does not simply have or occupy, but is "an act of intersubjective knowledge production" whereby "the negotiations, relationships and modes through which knowledge are produced are as important as the knowledge itself" (p. 679). This must be recognised and articulated by the researcher involved in knowledge production. Higgins (2016) suggests how this can be achieved:

For example, as what counts as knowledge within each and every community of knowers is developed intersubjectively within and for that particular community, what would it mean to consider the collective and differential

epistemologies as an integral part of what is said, what can(not) be said, as well as how it is said? How does the web of relationships between participants as well as between participant(s) and researcher intersubjectively shape what is articulated and articulable? How does this play out within both terms of photographic visuals, how they are and can be framed, as well as the discussion around them? (p. 680)

The dynamic that exists between the researcher and the participants, and among participants, must be considered. Furthermore, as the researcher my role is to shape knowledge production to achieve the objectives of my research. I respond to this critique by Higgins directly in Chapter 8. However, I do acknowledge that an in-depth consideration of what was said, not said and how, to be a limitation of this research, which sought the perspectives of a women from multiple backgrounds, from different language groups. I discuss this in more detail later in this chapter, under reflexivity.

Another common critique of photovoice is that despite its claims, it fails to deliver in terms of social justice impact (Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Hergenrather et al., 2009; Sanon et al., 2014). As a form of CBPR, the participation involved is not often detailed across the stages of projects (Catalani & Minkler, 2010). Again, this is something I attend to in chapter 8. I now discuss the research process, with reference to its alignment with principles of CBPR.

5.3 Research process

The Photovoice Project was conducted in partnership with community organisation Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Centre. Ishar delivers a range of programs and services that are designed to support and empower CALD women, including women of refugee background. Ishar receives funding through the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support Program (formerly the Settlement Grants Program) to deliver support specifically to refugee women in their first five years of settlement, including information sessions and advice on settlement issues, casework and advocacy.

The impetus for the research stemmed from discussions by Professor Jaya Dantas, a

member of Ishar's board, with fellow board members and Ishar's Executive Officer. This long standing relationship between Ishar and Curtin University, through Professor Dantas, had included a previous photovoice project with refugee youth (Earnest et al., 2015) and was an important component in supporting the groundwork for this project as CBPR (Freeman, Brugge, Bennett-Bradley, Levy, & Carrasco, 2006). A principle of CBPR is community being a unit of entity where people share a common characteristic (Israel et al., 2005). The community in this case included women who had been through forced migration and resettlement in Australia, and the organisation established to support their health needs.

A joint project proposal was developed and funding received through a research grant from *Healthway: The Health Promotion Foundation of Western Australia*. A research agreement was established between the university and Ishar, with agreed upon roles for carrying out the research. While I managed the project as part of my doctoral research, I was provided with the support of a research assistant at Curtin University, under the leadership of Professor Dantas. Two of Ishar's project officers were assigned to the project. The research setting was at Ishar's premises in Mirrabooka, Perth, Western Australia. As such, it provided a space where participants, many who were regular users of the centre, would likely feel comfortable and at ease to participate (Tong et al., 2007). The project officers provided guidance on the format and timing of sessions, managed the recruitment of participants, access to female interpreters, organised a crèche for women participants who had young children and provided catering and audiovisual equipment needed to run the photovoice sessions.

A professional photographer with community education experience was recruited to help deliver the photovoice sessions, including input into their design, and to provide photography instruction. The delivery of skills to participants is an important outcome of CBPR (Castleden, Garvin, & First Nation, 2008). Sessions were designed to include practice in photography techniques alongside group discussions where possible.

5.3.1 Participant recruitment

Purposive sampling, the deliberate selection of cases to provide rich information on a topic (Liamputtong, 2013) was the main method used to recruit women who had entered Australia through the refugee and humanitarian program. A recruitment flyer was developed and displayed at Ishar, and distributed electronically by Ishar staff to other service stakeholders who worked with refugee women. Ishar clients who had participated in other programs run by the organisation were recruited, including the Settlement Grants Program, and programs for mothers, senior women and carers. Snowball sampling, where participants identify others who fit the inclusion criteria, was also used. Of 46 participants recruited, 43 women met the criteria for the research. Five of the refugee background participants who were also support workers and interpreters employed by Ishar were asked to take part by the organisation. These participants are referred to as interpreter-participants in this research.

5.3.2 Ethical issues

The research was undertaken in accordance with guidelines for the ethical conduct of research (NHMRC Guidelines) (National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council, & Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, 2007). Ethical approval was obtained from the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (RDHS-253-15, Appendix A).

Refugees have lived through forced displacement and may carry the impacts of the refugee journey. Therefore, researchers need to be particularly cognisant of ethical issues. Block et al. (2013) discuss three issues of particular concern when conducting research with refugees, which are echoed in the NHMRC Guidelines. The first issue is of vulnerability. Some people may have decreased capacity to provide informed consent or are more likely to be coerced into research. Power is another important theme, related to disparities in power that exist between the researcher and the researched. The third issue relates to research and advocacy. Research, while being methodologically rigorous, should have an impact on people's lives at a systemic level (Block et al., 2013).

A trauma-informed approach should also be adopted when working with people who

have experienced forced migration. In a research context this involves ensuring space for people to narrate experiences of trauma on their own terms, at their own pace, if they choose to do so (Lenette, 2019, p. 15). Trauma-informed practice requires the researcher to demonstrate sensitivity, build trust with participants and allow for flexibility in the research process (Lenette, 2019).

Participatory research, which embodies an active collaboration between researchers and participants as partners to identify issues and strive for social justice, was therefore a suitable approach for addressing these ethical concerns (Block et al., 2013; Bowen & Murshid, 2016; Kindon, 2010). The outset of the study involved dialogue and a partnership with the community stakeholders, Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Centre (Hugman, Pittaway, & Bartolomei, 2011). The research method was also an inclusive tool for working with people from different language groups, because of its emphasis on images to support storytelling (Bonevski et al., 2014) and has been recommended for trauma-informed practice (Bowen & Murshid, 2016; Christensen, 2018). A number of strategies for advocacy were undertaken, which are discussed under the heading of knowledge translation in this chapter. However, there were also ethical complexities which arose through the process of co-construction of knowledge, which are discussed further in the section on reflexivity and in greater detail in chapter 8.

There were a number of strategies that were outlined in the approved ethics application for the project to address the notion of vulnerability. This included ensuring participants' informed consent throughout the project (National Health and Medical Research Council et al., 2007). Women were provided with an interpreter at all stages of the research. This included the five interpreter-participants and interpreters from the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI). During the first session, the information sheets (Appendix B), and consent forms (Appendices C and D) were read in women's languages by the interpreters. A registration form was also completed with interpreter assistance in addition to interpretation of the presentation provided by the research team. Participants were informed in their own language that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage if they wished to do so. One woman chose not to take part at the end of the first session. Women who agreed to take part signed written

consent forms. Later in this chapter, under limitations I discuss some of the challenges in undertaking the photovoice sessions with multiple language groups and interpreters.

For participating in the six sessions women received three \$30 gift vouchers, a certificate of participation, a scrapbook of their photographs, and were able to keep the camera they used. The women signed an agreement that stated they would be able to keep the camera if they participated in all the photovoice sessions, or advised staff at Ishar or myself in advance if they were not able to take part in a session due to illness or a conflicting appointment etc.

Ishar provides psychological services and this was communicated to participants, in case they wished to seek support at any stage of the project. Women with children also had full access to a free crèche at Ishar's premises to enable them to participate.

All materials were stored in a secure electronic folder created specifically as part of the university's research data management process. A folder of hard copy materials was kept in a locked cupboard on the university premises. Women's identities were protected. Pseudonyms used for the research were either chosen by the women when they selected their photographs for exhibition, or if not provided were selected by myself. Some of the women who took part chose to identify themselves by selecting photographs in which they featured for public display. While they are identifiable in the photographs their names were protected through the use of pseudonyms.

Women were required to seek permission from others for their photo to be taken and obtain their written consent (Appendix E). This was discussed with participants in the second photovoice session in particular. I collected signed consent forms from the women. Written consent was not sought from children of pre-school and school age but their parent/carer. The majority of these were the women participants who took photos of their children and other family members.

5.3.3 Cultural Reference Group

A Cultural Reference Group was also established, in line with a CBPR principle

whereby community advisory groups are part of the project, in order to represent the community taking part (Blumenthal, 2011). Its aims were to: provide guidance over the course of the project, and provide input into themes/findings from the photovoice research to ensure that cultural understandings and meanings were accurately interpreted. It was intended that the group be comprised of three representatives from Ishar and three participants. The Cultural Reference Group met three times over the course of the project. However, due to issues including illness and competing work priorities, only one of the participants and one Ishar staff member was able to attend each of the meetings. Key learnings from the project and comments on emergent themes were recorded in meeting minutes and considered as part of the data analysis as well as the critique of the project presented in chapter 8.

5.4 Data Collection

5.4.1 The photovoice sessions

Six photovoice sessions were conducted with four groups of women, on Mondays and Wednesdays, weekly to fortnightly, over the course of the second school term of 2016. Each session ran for two hours. While the groups were led by myself as the researcher, the research assistant participated in a support role and the lead investigator assisted with facilitation of one of the groups held on a Monday morning and co-facilitated sessions 1 and 6. The photographer also provided facilitation support. All groups were well attended. The format of the sessions is presented in Figure 4.

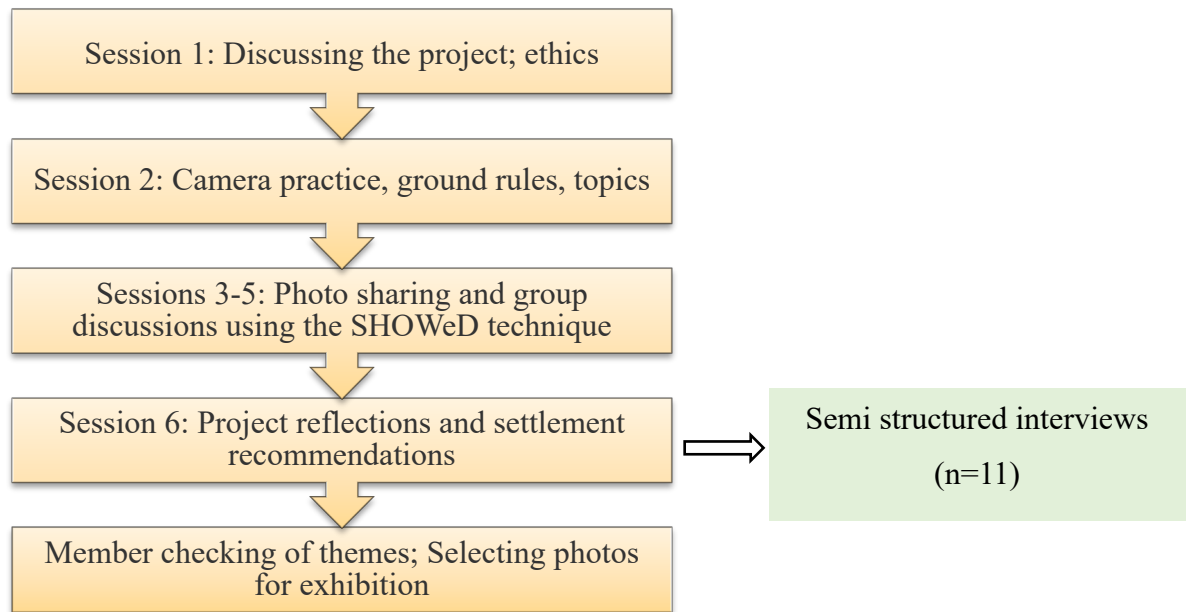


Figure 4. Steps involved in data collection.

Session 1 provided an introduction to the project and sought women’s informed consent to take part. They were provided with a registration form, a participant information sheet, a research consent form and consent form for the use of images they selected to be displayed in an exhibition, report and other materials. The women participants were also provided with a camera and a form explaining that the camera would be given to them at the end of the project if they participated in all of the photovoice sessions. Interpreters sat with individual participants who had identified their need for one, and read the materials to them in their own language. The registration form also sought demographic information which interpreters helped women to complete if required.

A presentation was delivered by the photographer, myself and the lead investigator and simultaneously interpreted by interpreters for 23 participants who requested interpreter access. It included an icebreaker activity conducted with participants by the photographer. An overview of the project was given, describing the objectives and the steps involved in photovoice. The project was highlighted as a partnership between Ishar, the participants and the researchers. The project stages from the photovoice component to the exhibition and the benefits of taking part were outlined. The voluntary nature of participation was highlighted. The role of the Cultural Reference Group was also explained and three volunteers were sought. Across the

sessions, one person chose not to take part in the project, while all others provided their informed consent.

The second session focused on revisiting the project objectives, establishing group rules, familiarisation with the camera, the ethics of photographing others and choosing topics they wished to photograph. A discussion was held about how the group can best work together, and key points (e.g., listening to others, punctuality) were written up on a large poster with symbols/images representing the meaning of each word to address language use issues, and the poster was displayed during subsequent sessions. The photographer conducted a photo walk activity with the women and they practiced using the camera with guidance on the principles of photography. The women were given simple handouts with tips on camera use. The objectives of the project were discussed and women brainstormed topics that they could photograph.

Sessions 3 to 5 focused on women showing their photographs and critical discussion. The women's selection of topics and photos to focus on day-to-day experiences as a way of exploring the complexities of significant intersections was important (Hunting, 2014). Upon arrival, participants provided their photos to the photographer to be downloaded onto her laptop, and they selected one or two photos that were important to them or which they liked best (Wang, 2006). Participants in the largest Monday morning group (n = 17) broke into two smaller groups with 8 to 9 participants, each with a main facilitator (myself and lead investigator) and research assistant. This was done to make the discussions more manageable with more fruitful and conducive interaction. Groups were formed on the basis of language and available interpreters. I led the other three groups as the main facilitator, with support from the photographer and research assistant.

In sessions 3 to 5 the project objectives were discussed and the SHOWED technique was introduced, a form of reflective questioning used in photovoice which enables people to delve into deeper group discussion on issues of concern based on their photographs. The word SHOWED is an acronym for questions which are posed to participants, and can be modified to suit the project context (Teti et al., 2013). Within their groups and as part of a flexible approach to format as directed by participants

(Green, 2016) the SHOWED questions were used as a guide to explore settlement issues through photos displayed via projector screen (see Figure 5). Many researchers have adapted the “E” from SHOWED to stand for empowerment of participants (Liebenberg, 2018). For this present project, the empowerment question was explored in the final session and during participant interviews, through indirect questions about their experience of participating including use of photovoice, the discussions and benefits and challenges of the project.

S – What do you see here?

H – What is really happening here? [Prompt: *What do you think this picture shows about settling in Australia?*]

O – How does this relate to our lives and community?

W – Why does this (situation, problem or strength) exist for women who have settled in Australia?

E – How are we empowered from this project?

D – What can we do about it?

Figure 5. The SHOWED technique.

(Shaffer, 1985; Stracke et al., 2004; Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988)

The final session focused on women’s reflections on the project and their recommendations. The photos they had shown in previous weeks were displayed in a PowerPoint presentation. The women were asked what recommendations they would like to make for supporting women to settle successfully in Australia, thus focusing specifically on the ‘D’ in SHOWED. Sessions 3 to 6 were audio recorded and notes taken by the research team. I transcribed the photovoice discussions.

5.4.2 Scrapbooking session

In addition to the formal photovoice component, a photo scrapbooking event was held the month following the photovoice sessions. The scrapbooking activity was offered as an additional strategy for beneficence and as an informal social event and craft based activity. Photos for scrapbooking selected by the women in session 6

were printed prior to the session. A morning and afternoon session was held to correspond with women's availability and a lunch was provided. Women were provided with scrapbooking materials. Women received a certificate of participation in recognition of taking part in the Photovoice Project. Thirty three women participated. This event was also attended by the lead investigator, research assistant and photographer.

5.4.3 Interviews

The women were invited to take part in a semi-structured interview upon completing the photovoice sessions. Eleven women agreed to participate and interviews were arranged at a time convenient to them. Seven of the women were interviewed at Ishar's offices and four at a nearby recreation centre where Ishar conducted some of its programs. The length of interviews ranged from 30 minutes to an hour and interpreters were used when requested. I sought information from participants in relation to three areas of focus (see Appendix F). The first part of the interview focused on demographical and background information on women's journeys of resettlement. I then asked the participant about their experience of using photovoice, and questions sought their views on the benefits and challenges. The third component of the interview looked at their perspectives on the challenges that face women who settle in Australia, and recommendations to government for supporting women to settle successfully. All of the interviews were audio recorded and I also took notes during the interviews. The interviews were transcribed using a professional transcription service.

5.4.4 Key informant interviews

Key informants can provide rich information on the topic of focus (Payne & Payne, 2004). Interviews with 8 key informants from policy and advocacy, and government and community organisations providing services to refugees were undertaken for their complementary perspectives on supporting the successful settlement of refugee women. Key informants were identified based on knowledge of the refugee sector by the lead investigator and myself. The informants were invited by email to take part. A participant information sheet (Appendix G) and an overview of the project

findings from the photovoice research with the women (Appendix H) were included in the correspondence. Key informants who agreed to take part signed a consent form (Appendix I) and were interviewed at their place of work or via telephone, whichever was most convenient for them. A semi structured interview guide included questions on their role within the organisation and its services for refugees, their perspectives on the challenges facing women and policy and service recommendations (see Appendix J). On average, interviews were of 45 to 60 minutes duration. I conducted three of the interviews, while the others were conducted by the lead investigator. Interviews were also audio recorded and transcribed using a professional transcription service. The themes generated from the interviews are discussed in chapter 6.

5.4.5 Exhibition banners and booklet of images

An exhibition planning day was held in December, 2016, at Ishar. I presented on the themes that were identified through the analysis for women's further input. Participants chose up to four photographs they felt most clearly represented their settlement experiences. Participants wrote a short summary in English of the meaning of the photographs, with the help of translators, myself, the research assistant and photographer where necessary. The final photographs for a travelling exhibition were chosen from this collection of photographs. I worked with Ishar staff and fellow research team members to develop six exhibition banners. A booklet version of the exhibition was created which included all of the women's selected photographs². Twenty two women selected photos to be exhibited in the wider community and provided consent for the photographs to be displayed. Two of these women who had not been able to attend the planning day met with me separately for member checking of themes and to select their photographs. The 22 women who participated were also later given a copy of the booklet of exhibition images when printed.

² The booklet of images from the Photovoice Project is available for download from the Ishar web site: <https://www.ishar.org.au/photovoice-project>

5.4.6 *Knowledge translation plan*

A well-developed knowledge translation plan is central to intersectional research to ensure the translation of knowledge to action, and should involve all stakeholders in its development (Hankivsky et al., 2009). This mutual involvement and action is also important to CBPR (Carranza, 2017). A community exhibition, report and promotion of research findings were all strategies that were identified in the development of the project plan prior to undertaking this research at the grant writing stage, and was discussed with Ishar, the community partner, as a knowledge translation requirement of the funding body. The launch of the exhibition banners and their display was discussed with the Cultural Reference Group. It was agreed with the Cultural Reference Group that a launch be held at Ishar during Refugee Week 2017, a national activity that aims to raise awareness about refugee issues and contributions. They were displayed following the launch for two subsequent weeks in the Ishar foyer and at a stakeholder event celebrating 30 years of the organisation. A formal launch was also held at Curtin University in November 2017. The banners were then exhibited at 14 public libraries in 2018 and 2019 and also displayed at conferences nationally and internationally (see Appendix K).

A project report was developed for key stakeholders and shared with Ishar and community groups across Perth. In August 2017, I developed a joint letter with Ishar highlighting the results of the research to Federal crossbench and opposition Senators, in response to proposed government changes to attaining citizenship, which would require a higher level of English proficiency. The letter highlighted English language proficiency as a significant settlement challenge facing women and the potential for changes to act as a barrier to citizenship. Responses were received from nine Senators, which outlined their party's concerns and/or opposition to the proposed changes and the research was referenced in the Federal Opposition Party's dissenting report in relation to the Bill (Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee Secretariat, 2017). The proposed changes failed to pass the Senate.

The findings of the research were also summarised in an article for the *Refugee Research Online Blog*, which is hosted by the University of Melbourne. In addition, an article was written for *The Conversation*, a not-for-profit online media outlet that

uses content sourced from academics and researchers who write reflections and research reports on issues of topical wider interest.

5.5 Rigour

In qualitative inquiry, rigour refers to the thoroughness and appropriateness of the research methods employed (Kitto, Chesters, & Grbich, 2008). Saumure and Given (2008) describe the dimensions of rigour in qualitative research as transparency, credibility, dependability, comparativeness, and reflexivity. Transparency or clarity includes the use of an audit trail (Saumure & Given, 2008). An audit trail also ensures that the study can be replicated by other researchers (Patton, 2015). This chapter of the thesis provides a clear and detailed description of the methodology as part of the events, influences and actions that occurred during the research (Koch, 2006). During the research, an outline or schedule for each of six photovoice sessions was developed and saved in an electronic folder. Furthermore, field notes and reflections were also recorded. As mentioned, all group discussions and interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, and minutes were also recorded from the Cultural Reference Group meetings.

The credibility of qualitative research refers to providing a “true” picture of the phenomenon being studied (Letts et al., 2007, p. 9). The views of women from diverse demographics were sought, using group discussions and interviews over a period of three months. Women’s selected photographs and accompanying narratives were also included. The perspectives of key informants were garnered through semi-structured interviews. Triangulation of multiple data collection methods allowed for cross-validation of the data, thereby reducing the possibility of bias and increasing the richness of the data obtained (Charmaz, 2006). I also sought the inclusion of multiple perspectives to illustrate themes in the presentation of results (Tong et al., 2007) as well as negative cases (Saumure & Given, 2008). Member checking was also employed, with presentation of emergent themes to participants and the Cultural Reference Group (Letts et al., 2007).

Dependability is the maximal reliability of the study (Saumure & Given, 2008). The process of research from data collection to its analysis is provided in this chapter, to

demonstrate the consistency between the data and the findings of the research (Letts et al., 2007). Comparativeness was conducted through comparison of the experiences of women in the analysis and presentation of themes, capturing their varied voices to build a picture that allows the reader to gain greater insight into how settlement is experienced by refugee women in Australia. The research is also comparable (or transferable), as the findings can be compared to other studies with women of refugee background in Australia.

Bochner (2017) views the conceptualisation of rigour in qualitative research as too closely linked to the scientific method, which can therefore limit the underlying aims of qualitative research, which is “practical and dialogic; its truths are partial, situated, relational, and incomplete” (Bochner, 2017, p. 360). More importantly, it is stressed that qualitative research should be “putting meanings into motion” to “bring readers into encounter with the otherness of others” (Bochner, 2017, p. 366) and striving for a socially just society. This represented my intent in undertaking this research. In working with the women as co-researchers my focus was on photovoicing with them through the research process (Higgins, 2016). I used the narrative element of cameos or brief summaries in my presentation of themes from the data analysis in chapter 6. I provided context surrounding individual quotes where relevant to ensure that meaning was demonstrated (McAlpine, 2016). This is also important to a postcolonial feminist research approach (Muhammad et al., 2015).

5.5.1 Reflexivity

Much of the intersectional research has been conducted by women who are positioned as privileged, such as myself: white, well educated, able, straight and gender conformative, yet often lacking in this research is a demonstration of interrogating one’s own social locations (Hulko, 2009). Critical self-reflexivity is key in accounting for how researcher positionalities shape knowledge production and representation of social realities (Rice et al., 2019). As the researcher I must ask myself: “What do I recognise, and not recognise, because of the positions I occupy?” (Rice et al., 2019, p. 7). Through this, how do I shape the research process? Here I respond to these questions in a reflexivity statement.

Rice (2019) calls for the researcher to interrogate their own history as part of this approach. My history is one of relative privilege. I am from a white family, with two parents. I am able-bodied, English speaking and had full access to education. Growing up, we were a single income family of lower middle socioeconomic status. I grew up in a majority white suburb. Settler colonial Australia is a nation of immigrants. To provide some context to my family's history, while my father's family had been in Australia for a few generations, my mother's background is Italian-Australian and her parents (my grandparents) were among those who migrated to Australia from Italy prior to World War II.

My grandmother experienced racism as a young woman in Australia; she did not speak the language, was from a village background in Italy and had hip dysplasia, all of which intersected in barriers to social participation and inclusion, including amongst other Italian immigrants. Her experiences led her to resist teaching the Italian language to her own children as she wanted them to be accepted growing up in Australia. For both my grandmother and mother, gender role expectations were also different to mine, based on the intersection of their gender and ethnicity, and located in a specific time where sexism was more oppressive and legitimated through law and institutions. I am cognisant of this. Potentially these have all shaped my thinking about difference and belonging, and the lack of power women contend with, as part of my life history, which has informed the assumptions I bring with me as a researcher to knowledge projects. I have not had these experiences of exclusion.

Collins (2000) writes that "each individual derives varying amounts of penalty and privilege from the multiple systems of oppression which frame everyone's lives". Furthermore, I acknowledge my role that my privilege brings as part of white hegemony, having grown up a subject of a nation where I have benefitted from colonisation, including a school education that failed to fully acknowledge the history of violence upon which contemporary Australia was founded (Moore, 2017), and where governments resisted until the last decade in offering a formal apology, and continue to deny further concessions which the First Peoples have called for. My motivation is challenging the status quo but I can do so from a position of relative privilege. As a woman I know oppression in the matrix of domination based on my gender and yet I do not know oppression based on its intersection with other

categories such as race, socioeconomic and migration status. Not having the lived experience of the women participants of this research is therefore a limitation I bring to the research process, as an outsider interpreting the views and lives of others.

Over the course of the project, I also undertook reflective debriefing with the research assistant and photographer. I wrote notes after each photovoice session about key concerns and highlights. Some of these are relevant to reflexivity, which can be discussed further. At the beginning of the project, I was very aware that I have a completely different life history to the women participants. I also questioned my own ability to effectively manage the research based on my difference. I felt this sense of self doubt reinforced, when I provided women with cameras in the project in the first week. In one of the groups, I decided with the research assistant to give women their cameras at the very beginning of the registration process, before we did the formal introduction to the session, as women were entering the room. Once registered, women were also exiting the room as they waited for others to arrive, and for the session to begin. One of the Ishar staff, separate to the project officers assigned to assist with this project, approached me to complain about this. She had found a camera in the Ishar kitchen left by one of the participants and emphasised that I needed multicultural education. I felt acutely aware of my inexperience working in a cross-cultural context. I also questioned myself for making such a decision when the format we had used in the previous session had been fine.

In the third photovoice session we began discussing photographs. As I discuss later in this thesis, in one of the first of the group discussions I facilitated, one of the women became extremely distressed when a photograph another participant showed to the group triggered her grief. She had only recently arrived in Australia from Syria and had been through terrible tragedy, having lost very close family members. During the break in the session I spoke with her through an interpreter-participant about what I could do to help, and the woman responded by distraughtly explaining to me a little more about what she had been through. Concerned for her, following this session I discussed what happened with one of the Ishar project staff who highlighted to me that this was probably the first time for her to speak about the loss, which was a good thing. This reinforced for me the differing perspectives that people have based on their positionality. In this case, the Ishar representative had worked for

many years in this field and with women who had experienced huge loss and trauma. The staff member's response could be seen as reflecting a trauma informed approach, where she saw that the woman was sharing her experience on her own terms. Whereas, from my perspective, an outsider coming into the context of Ishar, I felt distressed for the woman but also concerned about the woman's need for ongoing support and that I had put her in psychological danger. While my view may also be valid, I also saw how the Ishar representative's differing perspective could be true and it made me question my assumptions. Personally, I recognised that the experience had also triggered some of my own grief for a recent loss which I sought counselling support for as a result of this incident.

Over the course of the project I was able to build relationships with many of the participants and I personally felt a shift from stranger to feeling at home at Ishar. I felt this when I entered the Ishar offices and, before the sessions, chatted with participants, who were very welcoming towards me. I felt that in two of the groups the dynamics between participants worked well and discussions flowed very easily, and this was in part due to their smaller size. I felt very comfortable in these groups.

However, the photographer, research assistant and I felt that there was a sense of heaviness among the members in one of the other afternoon groups. Based on this perception we would check in with the group about the progress of the sessions and how they were feeling. We attempted to include more photography practice as a couple of women had asked for this. Yet, I noted that despite all this, both the photographer and I left feeling very flat following the last photovoice session. Critically reflecting on this, I acknowledge positionality felt a barrier to connecting with the group to what I perceived as some underlying dynamics or issues, that were not communicated. While we did have good discussions and women took part fairly equitably I felt concerned we were forcing discussion among them at times. While there may have been a range of contributing factors to the dynamics of the group, my positionality informed how I perceived the situation and the approach I took to build group rapport.

5.6 Data Analysis

Thematic framework analysis was used to analyse the data from the photovoice sessions, interviews with women and photographs (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid, & Redwood, 2013). Thematic framework analysis, which originated in social policy research and has been in use for over two decades, is increasingly popular in the field of health research for its systematic approach to data management and analysis, and transparent audit trail (Gale et al., 2013; Smith & Firth, 2011). These components informed my decision to use this approach over others, for example, the thematic analysis approach of Braun and Clarke (2006). I followed the approach to thematic framework analysis discussed by Gale et al. (2013) who outline a pragmatic process of organising and analysing qualitative data, which is lacking in other thematic analysis approaches (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017).

Firstly, I reviewed the transcripts multiple times alongside notes written during the data collection process. In congruence with intracategorical complexity, through inductive reading I identified from emergent themes the social categories aforementioned in this chapter, based on women's self-positioning (Bilge, 2009; Winker & Degele, 2011).

Secondly, coding of a sample of the transcripts was conducted and discussed with the lead investigator and research assistant for their feedback. Deductive as well as inductive coding was applied, allowing space for participant issues and meanings to be identified in relation to settlement in Australia (Gale et al., 2013). For deductive coding, as I applied an intersectional lens (Shields, 2008), categories of difference were incorporated. In addition, as a key objective of the research is on barriers and facilitators to successful settlement, integration theory including Ager and Strang's (2008) framework for integration, was also drawn upon. I also drew on my understanding of resilience as the research aimed to explore resilience processes.

A working analytical framework, a set of codes that are organised under categories, was developed. This included the domains of Ager and Strang's integration framework, resilience and noted categories of difference, including age, education, English language proficiency, employment/financial status, cultural

background/ethnicity, mode of arrival to Australia and family composition, based on women's perspectives. The data was entered into *NVivo for Qualitative Analysis*, which made it more accessible for coding and analysis (Gale et al., 2013).

The data was then charted using an Excel spread sheet and 11 analytic memos were written based on the framework, as part of the process of data interpretation (Gale et al., 2013). To ensure reliability, the memos were reviewed by the lead investigator and the research assistant. This included a memo to identify how the category of 'refugee,' intersected with 'gender' and others to create particular experiences of settlement as described by the women participants (Hankivsky, 2012b). Of these memos, six emergent themes were identified in relation to women's settlement experiences. These draft themes comprised of pre-arrival experiences; the importance of family; safety and stability in Australia; Australian systems that are important in women's settlement; the role of English language and culture; and the importance of social connections and links.

The emergent themes were discussed with the women who took part in the selection of exhibition photographs for member checking. Through the process of member checking with 22 of the women, they agreed with these themes. In discussion with them, they also reiterated the need to address particular issues that fitted under these broader themes. These included: employment, the importance of programs and support for women in dealing with the stress of settlement, family reunion, responses to domestic and family violence, racism, and cultural adjustment.

Their feedback was incorporated as part of the analysis process. As per the constant comparison method, women's photographs and narratives from the exhibition planning session were also compared against the existing findings (Parry, 2004). Peer review of the themes were conducted by the research assistant for validation. They were refined into five broad themes, which include the issues identified by the women as sub themes. The broad themes were: pre-settlement experiences, the importance of family, settlement challenges, support and community, and positive context of settlement. The themes and sub themes are discussed in chapter 6.

Key informant interviews were also analysed using the same principles of thematic

framework analysis, with a peer review provided by the research assistant. Based on the analysis of the key informant interviews, the perspectives supported those of the women participants, which added credibility to the findings. Quotes from key informants are presented alongside the main themes. In addition, a further thematic category was identified based on service provider perspectives, on the role of services in facilitating settlement.

5.7 Limitations

There were a number of important limitations to the research process. Firstly, the principles of the CBPR project are commonly discussed with the partnering community or organisation and agreed upon prior to the project initiation (Israel et al., 2008). However due to the nature of this research, which I undertook with an established research agreement, working relationship and project in place, I was not a part of this process. The research was initiated, however, on the basis of a well-established relationship between Ishar and Professor Dantas, the lead investigator. I discuss this further in chapter 8.

Although women selected photographs for the exhibition and wrote accompanying narratives, they were not involved in the graphic design of the banners and booklet and the writing of additional text. They were not involved in the knowledge translation and dissemination, which is recognised as a limitation common to photovoice projects with women (Coemans, Raymakers, Vandenabeele, & Hannes, 2017). This relates to an important learning from this research which I also attend to in chapter 8.

Women from multiple language groups were involved in the group discussions. As an English speaking person I relied on multiple interpreters. Furthermore, while for some groups these included external interpreters organised by Ishar, five interpreters were also support workers at Ishar; they were familiar with many of the women in the groups, and took part in the research themselves. As with the researcher, the interpreter is not an invisible part of the research process (Squires, 2009). Therefore, it is possible that these relationships may have influenced what women discussed, and is a limitation of this research.

The two-hour timeframe for photovoice sessions was also an issue. The presentation of a photo would often result in lengthy discussions on particular issues. Sometimes discussions would go a little off track and I had to learn to effectively steer these to ensure the conversations remained relevant to the research. As the person directing this, I was in a position of power in the group, which could also be a limitation, as I held power to shape the research process. I also had to account for what each woman was saying to be interpreted to other participants across a number of languages, which took time. Due to time constraints women were not able to comprehensively discuss all of the photos that they brought to the group. We would, therefore, focus on one of their photographs for an in-depth discussion. I had to interrupt them as they were speaking, to pause while their words were interpreted to others. Some participants were also more dominant than others in the groups, or would interrupt or talk over others. We often struggled to start sessions on time as women were late to arrive. I had attempted to counter issues of lateness and respect for others through the group rules that the women had decided upon and remind participants of these. However, these issues represent potential limitations as they influenced how the sessions played out.

Furthermore, transcripts of group discussions and interviews were not given to participants to review. A major barrier to the feasibility of member checking of transcripts was the lack of resourcing to translate transcripts to women's first languages. Interpreters were not given the transcripts to check either. I was also aware that this required additional resources to involve interpreters, including those who were externally recruited with time bound schedules. A learning from this project, however, is to identify in advance of research with multiple language groups, strategies that could involve participants and interpreters in transcript checking, which would in turn enhance the reliability of the research. This could include a quick turnaround of transcriptions shortly after interviews or discussions take place, to then be reviewed by interpreters and participants (Suurmond, Woudstra, & Essink-Bot, 2016).

A further criticism of photovoice is that research reports tend to give weight to the narratives over the actual photos being featured, with the visual content "often

treated as an accessory” (Coemans et al., 2017, p. 53). While I attempted to counter this with relevant photos and captions by women that conveyed a theme or sub theme, the theme of settlement challenges in chapter 6 in particular, contains few photos. One reason for this is because some photographs were discussed in the groups but were not chosen by women to be displayed publicly. Where this is the case, I have described the photograph that was shown and what was talked about in the group. Sometimes photos also served as a trigger for deep discussion on an issue that did not immediately reflect the image being shown to the group. In the sixth photovoice session, a specific discussion was held on recommendations to support the successful settlement of women and this did not involve showing of photographs. During this session women highlighted settlement challenges, which were also considered in the data analysis.

In addition to the 43 women who took part in this research, there were a further three women who did not meet the criteria as they were not refugees, but had been admitted during the recruitment process. This recruitment error was not identified by the research team until toward the end of the photovoice sessions. Their points of view, then, have not been included in the analysis of the discussion transcripts.

The interviews with 11 women were also conducted following the photovoice component, and before the women were involved in selecting their photos for an exhibition, which was held some months later. Therefore, their feedback related specifically to the photovoice training and group discussions; there was no assessment of taking part in the exhibition as a strategy for community empowerment, yet an objective of this research was to explore photovoice as a tool for empowerment.

Finally and importantly, as the person who conducted the photovoice sessions and then sought women’s reflections on this, I must reiterate my role as a researcher and how this would have influenced their responses. This includes my relationship with the topic and participants (Roulston & Shelton, 2015). I was a mediator in the process of knowledge construction (Coemans et al., 2017).

5.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I provided a comprehensive outline of the research process as well as the complexities and limitations of CPBR and photovoice. CBPR is a valuable approach to working with marginalised groups. Photovoice also has the potential to deliver empowerment benefits for marginalised individuals and communities. The solid partnership with Ishar was vital to the effective roll out of this CBPR project with marginalised women. This included Ishar's role in recruiting participants and hosting the photovoice discussions on their premises, with interpreters and crèche facilities provided. The assigned project officers and Ishar support workers provided valuable guidance and assistance throughout the undertaking of the project.

There are limitations to this research process, however, including the power dynamics of the research setting that were highlighted in this chapter. I brought critical attention to my role in intersubjective knowledge production, and recognised my positionality as an outsider representing an academic institution. This critical acknowledgement is fundamental to rigorous qualitative research.

Chapter 6:

“The Future Is the Way”: Photovoicing With Women

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I outlined the use of a qualitative, participatory methodology, employing the principles of CBPR to this research. In this chapter I respond to the objective of exploring women’s perspectives on settlement in their community, including barriers and facilitators to successful settlement. Themes from the analysis of photovoice discussions, interviews and photographs are presented. I also present the themes from the complementary perspectives of key informants. The chapter begins with an overview of the demographic characteristics of the women participants. The themes and sub themes are then discussed with reference to literature aligning with my theoretical framework. The chapter includes quotes, photos and narratives from women participants which relate to the themes and sub themes.

Recognising the importance of postcolonial feminist theory to challenge the homogeneity representation and othering of women, women participants’ views and their photographs are the central focus of this section. Drawing on intersectionality, I distinguish differences that exist between women, to demonstrate how these shape their articulated experiences. I also incorporate supporting literature to illuminate principles of intersectionality and how I have used these to interpret the material and themes. The themes that I generated are also discussed in terms of integration concepts. I have used the Ager and Strang framework as a guide for grouping many of the themes, as part of the deductive coding process. I refer to Australian policy where relevant. Finally, informed by social-ecological resilience theory I highlight perspectives that align with this approach, in particular women’s approaches to seeking resources for their health and wellbeing.

6.2 Who Were the Participants?

A diverse range of women took part in the project. This is important to an intersectionality informed approach for an in-depth understanding of the

phenomenon of settlement in Australia, to recognise complexities and differences in experiences (Hunting, 2014). Of 43 participants of refugee background, over a third (16 people, or 37%) were from Iraq. The other women originated from Iran (6), Afghanistan (5), Syria (4), Vietnam (4), and South Sudan (2), as well as individual women each from Eritrea, Somalia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Lebanon and El Salvador. Most women (39 women, 90%) arrived in Australia through the offshore component of the refugee and humanitarian program. This included four women who identified themselves as being of refugee-like background³, but had entered Australia on spousal visas after their husbands had received refugee status in Australia. Their participation in the photovoice project was supported by Ishar project officers, who felt they met the criteria for taking part. Of four women who had entered Australia through the onshore pathway, two women reported they had arrived by boat in the early 2000s.

6.2.1 Length of time in Australia

The time the women had lived in Australia ranged from less than 6 months for three women who had recently arrived from Syria, to more than 10 years for just under half of the participants (21 women, 48%).

6.2.2 Age

Women also ranged from their twenties to being of mature age. Over half of the women were aged in their thirties and forties (24, or 55%). Three women were aged 60 and over and seven were aged from 50 to 59. Seven women were also aged from 20 to 30 years.

6.2.3 Family

Over three quarters of the women indicated they were married or with a partner (34, 79%). Four women identified as widowed and two women as divorced. Most women

³ The term 'refugee-like background' refers to people who have had a refugee experience, as defined in the Refugee Convention, but have entered Australia on another visa, such as a spousal visa (Victoria Department of Health, 2014).

(38, 88%) had children. Of these over a quarter (11, 28%) had five or more children, indicating larger families.

6.2.4 *Interpreter access*

Of the 23 women who required access to interpreters most were in Arabic (16); others were Dari (3), Vietnamese (2), Farsi (1) and Spanish (1). Of these women, 8 had been in Australia for more than 10 years. This included women from El Salvador, Vietnam, Iraq and Iran. Five of the women who took part were interpreter-participants. They were of refugee background and also provided interpreting and acted as support workers to other women in the group.

6.3 Key Informants

Eight key informants (KI) were interviewed from organisations that delivered services or programs to humanitarian entrants, or undertook policy and advocacy work representing the needs of people of refugee background. The key informants represented a policy and advocacy organization, 2 vocational educational providers, a consumer organization, 3 settlement services providers, and a community legal service (1).

6.4 Themes and Subthemes

Five overarching themes were generated from the thematic framework analysis of the photovoice sessions, interviews and photos (Table 1). A further theme on the role of services in facilitating settlement is also discussed separately following the section on the main themes.

Table 1. Themes and subthemes

Theme	Subtheme
1. Pre-settlement experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The refugee journey • Women’s backgrounds • Looking forward
2. The importance of family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family separation • Strength through family • Family issues
3. Settlement challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English language • Transport • Settlement means and markers • Racism and discrimination • Overcoming challenges
4. Support and community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal support • Role of a women’s support service
5. Positive context of settlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety and opportunity • Multiculturalism and diversity • Maintaining and celebrating culture
6. <i>Additional key informant theme:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The role of the host nation as a facilitator to successful settlement</i>

6.4.1 Theme One: Pre-settlement experiences

Pre-settlement experiences include those prior to forced migration, as well as in-transit or during temporary settlement, for example in refugee camps or in countries of asylum that are not signatories to the Refugee Convention. Women have varied experiences and reasons for fleeing their original homes (Shishehgar et al., 2017). Consistent with an intersectional approach, it is important that these experiences are not generalised and differences are acknowledged (Perera et al., 2013) as women face differing privileges and oppressions within different nation states. Pre- and post-migration social positions also intersect during settlement to create multiple challenges (Wachter, Heffron, Snyder, Nsonwu, & Busch-Armendariz, 2016). The diversity of pre-settlement experiences needs to be recognised for an improved

understanding of the settlement process (Platts-Fowler & Robinson, 2015). Women reflected on their pre-settlement experiences.

The refugee journey

Trauma is an overused term in research, which pathologises human suffering (Halilovich, 2013). From a postcolonial feminist perspective, trauma results from the impacts of systems of oppression (Clark, 2016). Acknowledging this, some women reflected on the emotional and psychological impacts of experiencing war and displacement, and recounted their lives and the dangers they faced during their journeys to safety.

Lan recounted in detail her escape from Vietnam to Cambodia and then to the Thai border during the Vietnam War, travelling as a young woman with her two brothers. They faced the danger of land mines and had to bribe officials when crossing borders. Lan talked about being lucky to escape being raped and killed, and the fear of dying on her journey:

So when you leave your home, I don't know, it doesn't matter whether I live or not, because on the road the chance of living is fifty-fifty ... At that time I don't know whether I can get to a freedom country ... I never think that I can find freedom in another country. It just was scary at that time. (Lan)

Women also discussed daily survival in refugee camps as well as in countries of temporary asylum, where they reported being treated differently to the local population and had limited rights including limited freedom of movement:

Although we were okay staying there (in Iran), the problem was we couldn't buy a house, we couldn't buy a car, we couldn't get a nationality or even a passport. (Zeba)

I went to Egypt and stayed there for four years. And it was not my country, it was very hard you know They look at you different you know. (Gabriella)

There was a view that women who were recently resettled from Middle Eastern countries including Iraq and Syria had been through particularly distressing experiences. The loss of close family was shared in one of the photovoice sessions by Wera, who had experienced the war in Syria and had been in Australia for less than six months. Another participant who shared a photograph taken in the park triggered this sharing of her loss. The immense grief was shared and felt by the other women and researchers in the group. Some women participants who had come from this part of the world discussed recovering from experiences of displacement and violence as challenges while trying to settle in a new country and culture. Alma, who had been settled in Australia since 2001, described being impacted for decades by the difficulties of living in Iraq through war and instability:

For 20 years, and since I came to this country I was so stressed out from the lack of electricity. (Alma)



Photograph 1. Alarming

This time of the day is the time to remember the past, the childhood, the missing ones and wait for this time to pass. (Sofia)



Photograph 2. Light

Light makes me feel safe. War took all the light from our lives. We used this light to survive and hold us together. (Alma)

Women's backgrounds

Women's demographical differences were highlighted in their discussions, and intersecting categories of difference shaped how they experienced migration, across (re)racialised, (re)classed, and (re)gendered contexts (Wachter & Snyder, 2018, p. 403). Some women articulated their experiences of discrimination, unequal opportunity and gender role expectations of women in their former countries. Bahia, who had obtained primary level schooling and had spent 10 years in Jordan before being accepted as a refugee to Australia, described family expectations as a barrier for her participating in study and employment in Iraq, highlighting the intersection of race, class and gender in her social location (Anthias, 2012b):

In Iraq we can't study, we can't work. In Iraq there's a set age for women to stop studying. Not that the government stops the woman from studying. It's actually the family that stops the woman from finishing her studies. (Bahia)

Aliya who had recently arrived in Australia as a refugee from Syria expressed determination to have similar life opportunities post-settlement:

When I was in Syria I was married, had children and I used to work. When I come to Lebanon the same, I studied and I worked. In Australia I will do the same. I am looking for job and I want to study. (Aliya)

Previous experiences of gender rights was described as an important experience in shaping an approach to pursuing goals for Nwe Nwe, another of the participants. Nwe Nwe had grown up in a refugee camp on the Thai-Burma border. She was able to attain a high school level of education. Nwe Nwe was involved in a women's rights organisation and received training in leadership and some English language prior to coming to Australia:

When I work in a women's right organisation I feel like, I can decide for myself, you feel more confident. You believe in yourself, oh I can do it, I can do it, yes. (Nwe Nwe)

Nwe Nwe, who had been in Australia for four years, had completed Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) study and was employed, expressed that a confident attitude was important in navigating Australian systems and culture and in establishing a new life:

If you want to improve yourself, if you want to challenge yourself you can go and find out and yeah looking for the help and here is lots of organisation can help you ... Open your eyes and come in and have a look, see what that culture are doing, what they are doing, what people doing and just yeah go with them. Get into it, don't be shy, and don't be afraid. (Nwe Nwe)

In contrast to this perspective, a few women strongly suggested that settlement challenges were dependent on personal characteristics, such as age:

I think it is affecting the self-esteem for people when they are coming and they are assuming or the expectation given is that they can do anything and everything. Yes you can, but there is hurdles in your way, in which age you are coming to the country. (Linda, interpreter-participant)

I can't speak English and I can't have work because my age now 70 something. (Asma, arrived in Australia aged in her 60s)

Adele, who had a particularly difficult experience settling in Australia because of not having her family with her, as well as restrictive gender role expectations in her family and isolation, acknowledged that some settlement difficulties depended on women's circumstances and background:

Yeah the life is difficult; depend with the woman you know. (Adele, interpreter-participant)

Looking forward

While women acknowledged difficult journeys pre-settlement in Australia, alongside

this they expressed the importance of a focus on the present, a positive outlook and being involved in meaningful activities such as employment, which can be framed as navigating their way towards health towards health-sustaining resources (Ungar, 2008). Some women expressed moving on from past experiences (Savic, Chur-Hansen, Mahmood, & Moore, 2015; Whittaker et al., 2005). This was often shared when women touched on difficult past experiences in their group discussions:

Don't think about the sad things, just reminding that the past is gone, the future is the way. We all should be life in the moment. In the moment enjoy your life. (Esther)

It's very important when we are here, we lost some bad memory but we learn here when we have stress and we got upset, we go, we don't think too much about that. We try to distance ourselves from it. For example go outside working, anything which gets confidence to us, or relax. (Noushin)

Try to look forward and not get stuck in the problem itself but try to look at the future and see there is a brighter side. (Suzette)

Lan, who had been settled in Australia for many decades, shared that the family demands of the present meant it was not helpful for her to focus on her past:

As a refugee you travel through a lot of problem. But that problem sometimes you need to forget and move on. Because if I keep thinking about all my problem while I am here, I have a child that's not healthy. If I keep thinking about that I can't function, I can't look after him.



Photograph 3. Blossoming future

I have a bright and colourful future to look forward to. It gives me strength. (Phuong Loan)

6.4.2 *Theme Two: The importance of family*

Discussions and photographs related to family were prominent in photovoice sessions, highlighting the fundamental importance of family in women's lives and how it was impacted by forced migration. Within the overarching theme of family, three main concepts were discussed: being separated from family and its impacts; strength through family; and family issues.

Family separation

Being separated from family who were an important support, and feeling socially isolated, was a settlement challenge identified by a number of women. Maintaining family connections and reunion was important and discussed across all four groups of participants:

If I decide go to holiday somewhere my husband say go to America, go to Thailand, go to Vietnam or somewhere, I am thinking no, I will go my country, I will visit my family. That one important to me. When I see them I am happy.
(Shirin, interpreter-participant)

My heart is in America, Canada, Jordan and Syria. It is a gift that we have technology to be able to talk to each other. (Sulaf)

Dealing with ongoing concerns about family members living in conflict was also expressed. In one of the sessions Lina chose to show a photograph of a family relative from Iraq who was recently killed. She shared how this loss and the ongoing worry about loved ones impacted on women:

These poor young men, what a pity that they die. Although we are happy here, we are joyful, settled, it's peaceful but our heart is not here ... our happiness here is not complete, it is always lacking something. (Lina)

A number of the Iraqi women who took part spoke of the distress of being without family and the difficulty of successfully bringing family members to Australia.

Barriers they highlighted included the costs involved for family to visit and they were unable to obtain visas for close family members, such as parents:

In my country the women have support from her family. But here no family, the woman feels more stronger in her country. (Adele, interpreter-participant)

I wish they bring my family, I don't have anyone. (Yasmin)



Photograph 4. Party

Family is important. Arab people love to be together but unfortunately my mum is not here because it is so hard to get a visa for her. (Alma)

Key informant perspectives

The difficulties in achieving family reunion was also discussed by key informants. Family reunion was seen as having both humanitarian and broader benefits, as family could potentially provide support with the gendered role of caring responsibilities so women could enter employment:

In terms of getting your family into Australia, really very, very difficult, and it's becoming more and more difficult as people, as policies become more and more draconian. (KI3)

If people's families are here then they, especially those older generations then become the built in carers for the younger generations while the adult aged parents can go to work. (KI1)

Strength through family

Women's photos and stories spoke of the importance and meaning of life with their family in Australia. This was a significant sub theme from the research and was reflected in many of the photographs women discussed in their groups and chose to

be exhibited. The importance of family included strength in their role as carers to other family members and valuing the support they were provided from their family. Coming to Australia with family was seen as important in helping to settle:

I think I was lucky when we came overseas, coming from Eastern culture that you are not living by yourself unless you are married. So that was the case when I came here. I came with my immediate family, my parents. (Linda, interpreter-participant)

It doesn't matter what happened, when you look at it whether you have difficulty, problem, whatever, you always have your parents, always by your side to help you. (Phuong Loan, interpreter-participant)

Elicited through their photographs was the significance of family relationships including the support their children provided, from the young to adult aged children in their lives. Their narratives reflected the universal importance of family and challenges the notion of othering the lives of refugees, distancing their needs as different from non-refugees (Lenette et al., 2013):

When I am tired about my problems, my issues, when I see my son's smile, I forget everything and I find myself between happiness, with many good things. (Niloufar)



Photograph 5. Love

This presents my hope in future. He cleans up my daily problems and keeps me going. (Zahra)



Photograph 6. Felicity

This is the first photo taken by me when the project started. I used to feel lonely as I didn't have anyone here in Australia. Now that I have my children, I no longer feel lonely. They fill my heart with love. When I look at him in this picture (him jumping up), I think of birds flying. (Halia)



Photograph 7. Hope continues

Looking after children all my life and now they have children to raise. This plant is my new child that I raise and seeing it thriving makes me happy and fulfilling. My role as a giver as a mum is still going on. (Farida)

Family issues

Family issues such as problems in marital relationships and parenting were also part of discussions, framed as a result of a new culture and values that differed from their original countries. This was often described as dealing with a shift in changing gender roles and opportunities for women in Australia compared with women and men in their former cultures. Some women perceived the change as a shift in power, with women having increased freedom and rights, and these rights affected men. This issue was identified among women from countries in Asia, The Middle East and Africa.

Some Iraqi women discussed in detail the difficulties for men and women of changing gender roles. Negotiating new identities in Australia based on different cultural values can be a complex process, as women and their families will often

have had little exposure to another way of life from Muslim Arabic culture, which differs significantly, and this may include less status among women (Shwayli & Barnes, 2018). Women described men as perceiving themselves as having reduced status and the enormity and difficulties of adjustment to this:

They (men) make the assumption that when you go and live in a Western country then you have no right as a male. It is a woman's country, you know. So I think that idea in itself is shattering one. They are looking at the safety of the family but at the cost of what. (Linda, interpreter-participant)

I've been here 15 years now, just now my husband start recognising that driving is essential for me. The second thing the finance, I have to wait for him, if you want to go to the shops because he has the control of the budget, so he has all the money coming to him and if I want to buy something I have to go and wait for him. I said this is not going to work because sometimes I have to come back and wait for you to go there because I don't have the money in my hand. So this is, I just faced him now and I said this is not going to work. (Alma)

Ok now I come to Australia, I be change, not very change, like I driving now. In my country I can't drive. I can go and study, I come here, I going shopping. See many things I done, in my culture I can't do this one. Just like with the husband, you can't change it. (Halia)

In contrast, Nwe Nwe, who was from a different cultural background but had also expressed gender inequality as an issue where she had come from, described her experience as different with her husband. She attributed this to their previous life experiences, such as work in human rights organisations before coming to Australia and understanding of gender rights. She described shared responsibilities of their child:

It's like we're sharing the jobs. Like my husband took him (my son) to school, if I have free time I took him to school, we share. (Nwe Nwe)

For others, men's struggles with adjusting to Australian culture had impacts on their family relationships, creating stress for women:

So I want my husband to be with me, we go out, have fun. He doesn't want that.
(Bahia)

They (men) feel there is no use for them in the society. (Linda, interpreter-participant)

More effective responses were expressed as a need to address the issue of adjustment among men. Domestic violence was also raised as a universal issue affecting women, regardless of background. Adele witnessed the issue impacting on women across cultures and described it as a hidden problem:

I think domestic violence is still here, but no one talk. (Adele, interpreter-participant)

Some women reported that issues they were aware of in their communities included the threat of women being returned to their country, particularly for women who had come to Australia on spousal visas. It was felt that there was inadequate support available and more effective responses were needed which recognised the particular challenges for women from refugee backgrounds, including lack of knowledge about their rights:

No one help. Some people come from Canberra here for domestic violence for women, but no one do anything. Just listen and go again. (Adele, interpreter-participant)

Parenting issues were also discussed and some women expressed how they were unable to raise their children using an authoritarian approach with which they were familiar in their original culture. This was perceived as a threat to maintaining parental control and their children's long term wellbeing and was described as a big issue among women from varied cultural backgrounds. The role of child protection authorities was discussed:

I think domestic rules for refugees are harsher than the domestic rules for locals here. That's a big difference already. So when you try to raise your children in your home, the way that you raised them back in their own country and then they go out in the Australia society here, it's totally different. So the two cultures kind of clash in a way. (Rukia)

As parents we have to treat our children in the way that they know what is good from the wrong way, when they are still young. But they say don't do that, don't touch, don't say, don't this. Even in the school they give them numbers that if your parents or your family or your mother is doing this call the police, or call someone on this number. Then they will take the child away, the child is completely spoilt and then they bring the child back to you. (Anna)

Shifting from parenting in an interdependent societal context to an individualistic culture without support from extended networks was a challenge, as described by Anna:

I think we as migrants or refugees from our country depend on ourselves. Because back where we have been is the government and community together. For example, she knows me and she knows my children, and when my children run away or somewhere, she will tell them. (Anna)

It was discussed that in women's ethnic communities, the immense difficulties and stress of dealing with family issues in the Australian context were significantly impacting on their ability to successfully settle:

Some people who went back to country again, say oh my country more safer than Australia, I am looking after my kids, nobody is coming to me every week saying you have domestic violence with your child, or your husband domestic violence with wife. (Adele, interpreter-participant)

Key informant perspectives

Family and domestic violence was seen by key informants as complex, because intersecting factors such as lack of family support, isolation, and being unaware of their rights, laws and services available, made women vulnerable to being trapped in abusive relationships:

Women not knowing their rights, not being able to escape abusive relationships ... And because you know they're isolated in the communities in that they don't really know that they can get out of it, or they have the opportunity to escape. (KI5)

They were not exposed to campaigns that we had in Australia about you know what's right and what's not right, what's illegal and what supports can you get. (KI2)

Key informant perspectives reflected the views of the women who took part in the Photovoice Project in terms of inadequate responses that had the potential to worsen the situation for women. Culturally sensitive approaches at a community level were recommended, which aligns with principles of an intersectional, social justice oriented approach, respecting the expertise and experience of community members and supporting their leadership in violence prevention strategies (Chen, 2017):

From the women who've been victims of family and domestic violence, there's a lot of anger about the way it's managed and handled by the police and by services, and they feel you know, because of the law etc., the husband gets taken away or whatever, all of a sudden their situation gets a whole lot worse, not necessarily better. (KI3)

The challenge of adjusting as a family in an Australian context was discussed, in particular the difficulties of parenting children who tended to learn English quickly and adopt aspects of Western culture, and women felt the threat of losing their parental authority:

The power relationship between the family structure gets turned around and that can be awful for parents and women. (KI2)

A strengths based approach to supporting parents to parent in an Australian context was recommended, as described by one key informant:

Now these are people who've you know maybe traversed hundreds of kilometres to get themselves and their four kids under the age of eight into a refugee camp or something and then kept them alive and have somehow managed to survive, and yet when they come to Australia they're told they're not good parents ... It's more about you know, how do you talk to people about what can happen, what's acceptable in Australia, without actually discounting the fact that they do have knowledge, they do have experience, they do have wisdom around these things, and I think that's often what services lack. (KI3)

Key informants observed that for many women there was a large cultural gap between their original culture and Australia and they had come from countries where more traditional gender roles were the norm. Settlement was not linear but often a difficult and long term process:

Many of them are unprepared to live in a Western culture, that's not been their experience. (KI3)

The challenges are not just restricted to the first few years. (KI6)

6.4.3 Theme Three: Settlement challenges

During the photovoice sessions and interviews a number of challenges facing women were discussed that are related to Australian Humanitarian Settlement Program outcomes (Department of Social Services, 2017c, n.d.) and the integration framework (Ager & Strang, 2008). These included English language, transport, settlement means and markers (housing, health, education and employment), and racism and discrimination.

English language

Competency in English was viewed as vital among women to successful settlement in Australia, congruent with the host country emphasis. However, many women reported challenges in participation in the 510 hours of English tuition available to new refugees. Over half of women who participated in this research required an interpreter. Of those who did not require an interpreter, four had arrived in Australia as children or young adults and it was also noted that having learnt English before coming to Australia was advantageous. Gender roles, in particular caring for children and other family members was a priority for women over attending English classes:

I used to go to English classes but since my kids go to school it's you know, pick up and drop off and I can't make it. (Fahzi, less than five years in Australia)

Before I was studying at TAFE and then because of pregnancy I was stopping (learning English). (Kamela, one year in Australia)

Women who had struggled to attend classes also cited health issues and the stress of adjustment on themselves and their family:

With the issues and problems at home, then I wasted those hours and I am regretful ... I go the class but they are calling my (name, name) but I don't respond because my mind is not here with the studies. (Bahia)

If you have something making you sad, you can no concentration and no learn something, always your brain is busy and worry, you know. Very hard to learn. (Shirin, interpreter-participant)

Women were of the view that design of the AMEP was not always adequate based on women's backgrounds and needs and the hours provided should be increased. Applying an intersectional perspective, while women from African countries may have different educational needs based on a range of factors including their ethnicity, culture and language (Matthews, 2008), limited or disrupted education due to

gendered refugee experiences was viewed as impacting on their ability to gain a functional level of English, making them multiply disadvantaged, as described by Anna:

For us women in Africa, most of the women they don't go to school... It is just good that when the women or the people from Africa arrived in Australia they are given the course, the 510 hours, but for some who have not gone to school, not even a single day, I think 510 is not enough. (Anna)

Access to home tutoring options was also recommended, as well as tailored programs offered to older women coming to Australia who wished to learn English for every day, practical use as an alternative to the AMEP format:

Maybe volunteers come and teach English at home. I know there are some people, some volunteers are still coming and teach because I know one of my friends she was from Burma, she got two kids and she can't go out so volunteers come in. (Nafeesa)

Especially for older lady. Difficult for them understand the alphabet ... Give them a small class for English, easy for them. How you go to the doctor? How ask for the bus? (Adele, interpreter-participant)

The impacts of low English proficiency and learning challenges included sense of wellbeing, ability to find work, access to services and relationships with children and grandchildren growing up in Australia.

They (our children) need us, but we can't help them, and we try to ask them for help. Because of the language. (Alma)

Rukia, who had come to Australia as a child with her parents and siblings, reported that the next generation of her family who were born in Australia did not all speak Vietnamese, and therefore her mother could not communicate with them, which reinforced her feelings of isolation:

The (grand) children all speak English and so mum doesn't get to really communicate. So she is lonely in that sense too. She's living in her family but she's also feeling lonely because of the language. (Rukia, speaking about her mother's experience)

Despite experiencing difficulties, participants were determined to learn English to facilitate their settlement and participation in life in Australia:

I want to learn English ... I want to become part of the Australian community. (Farida)

I am teacher for young kids. But when I come to Australia I can't get some work like teacher, but now I am study English. Important, language English. Because I hope to go for work. (Nadia)

Key informant perspectives

Learning English was a challenge identified by all key informants, particularly for those who had no prior English and low literacy levels, and where long term study was required. Language was viewed as essential for employment:

Many migrant students will take years of study to acquire skills to be developed to an Australian level. (KI7)

Language is very critical to people gaining and retaining employment because, well, it's a vehicle for communicating through. (KI4)

The intersections of limited English language and exposure to Western education, and gender roles meant that for some women the barriers to learning were significant. It was recommended that the AMEP program for new arrivals be designed to accommodate women who had caring needs, also echoed in the literature on the need for flexible delivery options and access to child care as critical to maintaining women's participation (Dallimore, 2018; Hayat Burhani, Sayid, Block, van Kooy, & Edwards, 2017; Women's Health West, 2016):

You really need to be speaking it more frequently and learning it more frequently, but they don't always have anyone to look after their children while they go to English language classes. So there are multiple barriers quite often for women learning English in the first place and also if they've not had a formal education history it can be difficult for them also to learn how to learn if you like, for want of a better way of putting it particularly in a sort of formal structured way. (KI4)

Even things as simple as having child care facilities onsite for the AMEP classes, you know, that's something that wasn't available, and it depends on the place ... if you have young children, what are you supposed to do with your young child while you're supposed to go to your 510 hours. (KI1)

Transport

Transport, which is a facilitator of integration, is an aspect of practical living (Ager & Strang, 2004) and one of the priority areas for service providers supporting new arrivals to settle (Government of Australia, 2016). Some women highlighted that this was their first opportunity to drive. Women expressed how being able to drive enabled independence and participation in study, employment and day-to-day activities:

If we don't have driving licence we cannot do nothing... with license, I can take my son to school, to his class, to shop. It's very important. I can go to shop. It is very easier with life in this country. (Noushin)

Adele described the positive experience of successfully gaining her driver's permit:

I just straightaway I go to with this friend, I go to the police station, I have test, and passed. So straight away I'm passed, just my first time I passed and that time I feel I'm flying. I'm walking in the air, I'm very happy at that time. (Adele, interpreter-participant)

Participants also discussed barriers including the expense of obtaining a licence, a daunting and challenging learning process, particularly for older women, and gender expectations and family relationships:

And for us women, at another age there, you start to be very scared of things. Then you not understand properly. They tell you this, now you forget. Especially with driving. Because when you reach a certain age they take you to test you for your driving again and again. (Anna)



Photograph 8. Finally I can drive

I love this photo because I got licence. I feel confident when I drive not like before when I had [L] just I feel depend on myself. (Basima)

Key informant perspectives

Being able to drive was seen as by key informants as a new and necessary skill for women in order to access services and take children to school. The lack of access to transport for some women was linked to isolation, particularly for families located in remote suburbs where there were fewer services available:

If people are being moved to different suburbs then perhaps ones where there is good access to regular public transport. (KI4)

Settlement means and markers

Housing, health, education and employment are seen as both a means to support women's integration as well as markers (Ager & Strang, 2008). Women discussed these topics during the photovoice sessions and interviews.

Housing

Appropriate housing as a means for integration, is important for physical and emotional wellbeing (Ager & Strang, 2008). Appropriate housing is important to a sense of ontological security, which is a sense of security within oneself and one's identity, and factors which support a positive housing experience include being located close to support networks, stability of tenure, affordability and housing being appropriate to family size (Fozdar & Hartley, 2014b). Access to suitable and affordable housing was explicitly discussed among five women. Lack of housing for women escaping situations of domestic violence was seen as an issue, also highlighted in the research on intersectional discrimination among refugee and immigrant women facing family violence (Vaughan et al., 2016). Women also discussed waiting lists for public housing, being housed in an area far from friends and services and lack of affordable and personalised accommodation for families:

Now I have house after waiting 7 years for Homeswest, last year they give me house. Take long time. (Yasmin)

I know we were big family when we came here, it was five of us and my parents. It was difficult to find a house because we were a big family. Now that in itself, is it our fault that we are a big family? (Linda, interpreter-participant)

Linda described her experience of secondary homelessness whereby she had to rely on family for accommodation after having to leave her relationship and stressed the lack of options for sole female parents as a significant issue:

Housing yes, good you can apply but it's the waiting list. My personal example, I went back to my parent's house and were 10 people at that moment, I had to go back with my kids live there, and we're not talking about 6 bedroom, we are talking about 3 bedroom house. My brother had to sleep in the shed. Now imagine that was the case, but if even I hadn't had my family where would I go with my kids. (Linda, interpreter-participant)

Photos also showed being at home and women's home and garden activities. Jamila had settled in Australia as a youth and had married, but her husband had passed away

and she was raising her five children alone. While she had difficulties with finding public housing that was suitable for her and her children, she also chose during one of the photovoice session to share a photo of her lounge room and her description emphasised the importance of secure housing for wellbeing:

I love the style here, just sitting, I don't want to go outside, relax, with the flowers here. The colours are very nice and match with each other. I feel settled in this room. (Jamila)

Farida described growing up in house with a large garden, which she had fond memories of. She chose to share a photograph of her enjoyment of growing her plants as she moved homes in Australia, now living alone as her children had left home:

I love gardening and I love sitting and working in the garden. Because now I moved houses and I start living on my own. So with my little garden the new one I start creating all these things. If you look at the ceramic pot, I have four of them. The picture maybe doesn't cover all the background around, but this one is very special to me. I brought it from the previous property to the new one because I love this one. And what I do I take part of this plant and plant it somewhere else, so it keeps growing everywhere. (Farida)

Key informant perspectives

Security of housing was acknowledged as foundational for successful settlement. Affordability and location of housing in particular was seen as a challenge:

It's tenancy, because you've got to have a stable house, you've got to kind of have that otherwise everything else. You've got to have that roof over your head. (KI5)

The housing cost and the way we've seen that manifest itself is refugee individuals and families having to move to very, to the outskirts of metropolitan areas where there are fewer services and access to public transport. (KI1)

Health

Managing mental health difficulties, sadness and stress were also shared among some of the participants. There was a view that mental health struggles were related to a lack of support and isolation. Women also had to manage the health issues of other family members and support them in their adjustment to a new life. Farida showed a picture of her granddaughter who had a number of serious health issues and expressed her concerns with the health of a number of members of her family:

We are thankful to God but there is no one that is physically well. (Farida)

Similar to research by Vromans et al. (2018) with women resettled in Australia through the Woman at Risk program and the impacts on emotional wellbeing for women, Lina, who was resettled with her two children, described the challenges as significant on her mental health. Lina was accessing psychological support through Ishar:

I came with my daughters and it was a struggle, to the extent that I got depression. My husband passed away and my daughter has a disability. So I live by myself. (Lina)

Some positive examples of using health care services included the practice of using an independent interpreter and not a family member during consultations as an improvement from past experiences. The provision of women's health, maternity care and psychological health services offered through Ishar was seen as valued. The issue of help-seeking has also been reported in the research on Iraqi men in Australia including their poor uptake of mental health support (Uribe Guajardo et al., 2018) and this was also identified as an issue among men that needed to be addressed:

They don't really want to come, they just surround themselves in a shell and work and then wife and that's it. (Bahia)



Photograph 9. Canaries in a cage

The voices are very nice in the morning. My husband is happy when he hears them. We get happier when we hear them. We take good care of them in hot weather, they are like our children. Taking care of the canaries keeps my husband busy, which gives him purpose, because he cannot work. (Noushin)

Key informant perspectives

Two key informants highlighted the need for improved cultural competency among mainstream health services. Refugees were reporting to settlement services providers that in cases they were not still being given access to an interpreter at hospitals or by GPs. Recommendations by the key informants to enhance the capacity of mainstream providers to work effectively with humanitarian entrants supported the research (Renzaho, 2008; Truong, Gibbs, Paradies, & Priest, 2017):

Use interpreters, not only from a safety perspective and a legal perspective but how do you actually communicate with somebody if you and they can't, don't share a language. How do you set up any sort of trust? (KI4)

Education

Education was expressed as important to women and their children, which is also demonstrated in statistics that indicate high participation rates in education among young adults of refugee background (Hugo, 2011). In one of the sessions, Nwe Nwe shared a photograph of a friend studying at a library, which she described as a quiet place for self-study without the distractions of responsibilities at home. The photograph triggered a discussion on the value of educational opportunities in Australia for women:

When I came to Australia there are so many opportunities for study. You can study to improve your life. (Esther)

I think education is very important to all the woman in the world. This is number one. Because you will know the difference. But then if you know, if you didn't go to school, you can't change anything. You can get a good job, even if you come from a different country, and then you come here, you go to school, you learn. You can get a job that you can't do even in your country. And you support yourself, you learn, is good. (Gabriella)

However, the challenges of attempting vocational or university study while fulfilling gender roles and without family support was highlighted, in addition to the perceived difficulties of learning as an adult with previous limited education, also supported in the research (Hatoss & Huijser, 2010):

Sometimes with the Arabic ladies, if she is married, she have kids. She is looking for kids and husbands at home. But when she thought about study it is different, there is no one look after her kids. And here in Australia, like me I finish programme computer in my country, when I come here and straight away I thought I go to uni, I am study more than I have in my country. But when I come here, I am pregnant, I have child, it is hard to leave my child. I am waiting she is grows up. (Adele, interpreter-participant)

I think for the education part, if you don't know something like from when you are still in Africa, when you are still a child, you start to go to school here, you can't know more. (Anna)

Key informant perspectives

Key informants also identified gender roles as a barrier to accessing education, and the multiple disadvantage based on pre-migration oppression and the challenges of establishing a new life in a settlement context where formal support is time bound:

While of course we want people to be able to support themselves and to build their lives in Australia, what we hear is that for women, most of their caring responsibility falls to them. (KI1)

There's no equality, you don't have equal chances even just by the very fact that I told you it takes 10 years to get a qualification in Australia when you're growing up here. And when you're 25 when you come out (to Australia) or you're 30, you add another 10 years. You need 10 years to try and get in optimal conditions, to get established, so where's your opportunity then. Therefore you need more support and more help during that time but the contrary is true, you get less support. (KI6)

Employment

According to the host nation view, improved employment outcomes among humanitarian entrants is anticipated as an outcome of integration through strategies including access to employment services and with the capacity to apply for employment or start a business (Government of Australia, 2016).

A number of women expressed their desire to be in paid employment. Poor English language skills, gender roles, not having a driver's licence, lack of Australian experience, employer attitudes, difficulties with using job search technologies and inadequate employment support were described as barriers to employment among eight women. Farah, who had a Master's degree and had been employed in Pakistan, was not able to find employment in Australia using her skills:

But I have difficulty with finding office work, because I have been working in offices when I was in Pakistan. Like as office manager, HR consultant, this and that. But here I applied in so many places but I couldn't get a job. (Farah)

Bahia felt that she was not given appropriate support through the employment support agency in looking for work:

Job Network offices - when I tell her that you know yes I keen to work, she said go and search on the computer She doesn't know that you know if you're not skilled enough to access the computer and look there, there's something they should look for you and help you doing it, instead of letting you go and search on the computer. (Bahia)

Nafeesa described the need for greater education for employers on cultural diversity and inclusiveness in the workplace as a strategy to help increase access to employment among migrants:

Some people they prefer to employ if you are, how do I say, Australian, they don't like much immigrants to employ. (Nafeesa)

Job application support and prioritising roles where English was not a necessity was suggested:

I think they need a sort of program to teach them how to look for job. Because now everything is Internet, all technology. (Phuong Loan, interpreter-participant)

Where you know you don't need a high command of English, leave these jobs for us. And in this case we can contribute to the economy in the country, we can be in the workforce. (Bahia)

Key informant perspectives

The mainstream system for supporting job seekers was viewed among key informants as not suitable to refugee background clients with low-level English proficiency and who may not have the IT literacy to perform job searches online and write resumes. This is affirmed in the research on the Jobactive program, the Federal Government employment support service, where it was found that there was limited support for refugee clients with job seeking, including resume writing, interview skills and use of technology (Tahiri, 2017). Also highlighted were broader issues of de-skilling, lack of opportunities for gaining work experience in Australia and difficulties in getting prior qualifications and skills recognised (Tahiri, 2017). Similarly, key informants stated that women found themselves working in casual and low skilled positions, despite having significant skills and experience:

They become victims of highly casualised jobs that are not predictable. (KI6)

Women have ended up working in places like the chicken factory where they're basically cleaning chickens ready for the table and some of them have got degrees. (KI4)

Initiatives were needed to support women to meaningfully participate in the workforce, where their skills, experience and qualifications could be harnessed:

If we want a community of people who are able to contribute and contribute well as they want to, we actually need to support them in order to achieve that. (KI4)

Racism and discrimination

Racism and discrimination was discussed by 10 women from a range of cultural backgrounds, including Middle Eastern, African and Vietnamese women. Racism was described as a barrier to settlement and a common experience:

We have lived here for 30 years plus but we still get racist remarks and stuff. Basically they just see if you are not blonde, fair skinned, blue eyed or whatever they make racist comments. It happened to me just last week and I thought why do I have to put up with this? So basically we are not really being accepted. Even though we are trying to settle in, there are still individuals who don't accept us and it's not very nice. (Rukia)

Like three weeks ago, somebody said, 'oh, back to your country'. (Noor, interpreter-participant)

Women discussed racism and discrimination in the workplace, at schools and using social services such as Centrelink. Further, they expressed the view that their children's exposure to racism may impact on their long term settlement success. This was pointed out by Niloufar, triggered by sharing a photo of her son at a playgroup:

You know part of me says, he [my son] is happy so I am happy. But other part

says this happiness can be better if Australian people accept us, and don't be racist. (Niloufar)

While racism was seen as affecting women regardless of background, there was also discussion about issues that were particular to Muslim women of visibly different dress. One woman, Halia, commented that racism was experienced every day. Three women talked about the role of the media in influencing racist attitudes in the community. Lilian also highlighted how she felt fearful to practice her faith in public, while Bahia felt she was treated as different at her child's school:

The thing these days about stuff on TV about Islam. I don't know about you guys but it's harder to be Muslim in public. Like praying you feel like someone's going to attack you or harass you. (Lilian)

I am the only one who is covered up, wearing scarf and the people, the other parents they look at me with a different look. Even the teachers. (Bahia)

Bahia perceived discrimination as being more noticeable recently, in accessing social services:

I went to Centrelink but there is discrimination and it is very obvious. I didn't used to feel it but now I feel it. (Bahia)

When asked about what issues need to be addressed in order to support women to settle in Australia, Rukia expressed that being accepted and not discriminated against would help migrants, and this was often demonstrated:

For me I think it is being accepted in most places without being discriminated. So that's one thing that is very important for us as migrants. I mean there are some places and situations where we are still being discriminated but in general most places and most situations we are accepted so it's a good thing. (Rukia)

Key informant perspectives

One key informant linked anti-immigration rhetoric by the government to racism and discrimination experienced by the women. This key informant reported that periods of negative coverage about asylum seekers resulted in increased reports of harassment among clients, in particular Muslim women. The harassment had a huge impact on people, including a noticeable spike in those requiring access to psychological support at times of intense political debate:

It would really help if the government stopped whistleblowing about refugees and asylum seekers too, that really does have an impact on people ... harassment issues, particularly women who are more visibly obvious, Muslim women, you know who are more visibly obvious. People would get a sense that they can call people names and scream at them out the car window or stuff and you know, I don't think people really understand how much of an impact that does have. (KI3)

Action was recommended at a leadership level to address Australian attitudes towards refugees:

It's also Australians learning that there's nothing to be scared about these people, you know they're just people who've been through some horrendous experience and we should embrace them rather than vilify them. (KI2)

Overcoming challenges

Women also discussed examples of overcoming obstacles. These can be interpreted as microsocial acts of resistance and agency. Simple acts of getting out in their community including their local environment and taking part in activities, could be seen as examples of everyday resilience (Lenette et al., 2013):

*You have to speak out, you have to go to school, you have to talk to people.
(Gabriella)*

When I feel I want to go out, at that time. I want to forget what happened in my country. That is I have relax, when I am back. I feel different when I go out, than when I am back. (Rosarita)

Women also discussed the importance of time in establishing their lives and taking things one step at a time. Upon reflection it was acknowledged that some challenges could be put behind them:

In the beginning the language is a big barrier and knowing the places, where to go, your directions. Knowing the law and knowing everything about the country or finding your way. Driving, this all difficult. And slowly, slowly you start knowing things from friends or trying to you know, settle. (Yasmin)



Photograph 10. Shadows

Adjusting in other country or culture is a hard process but once the process is over those hard moments become shadows (memories). (Farah)

6.4.4 Theme Four: Support and community

Informal support

The importance of social bonds through informal support, including friendships with people from like-ethnic groups, religious organisations and ethnic associations was highlighted. The support received and being part of a community was likened by a few women to familial relationships, or as support in the absence of family in Australia. Informal supports were particularly important for those who had limited access to formal settlement services when they arrived in Australia. Ethnic

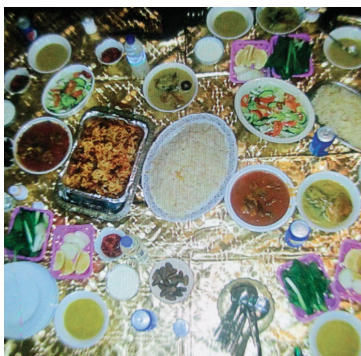
organisations helped with accessing employment opportunities and information about Australian systems. Support from migrants who were already settled was recommended as a strategy to help those who were newly arrived.

Sulaf, who had been living in Australia for four years, shared a photograph of a friend from a like cultural background who had been settled for decades in Australia. Her friend was an important support and guide to living in Australia:

She is about 25 years living in Australia. She is Arabic, from the Middle East. She is always reminding me and emphasising on the fact that Australia is a peaceful country and you will be ok with your family here. I always trust what she is saying. Whenever I see her she gives me some sort of peace and calmness And I get a lot of advice from her too. (Sulaf)

Wera also showed a photograph of herself at her local church and highlighted the significance of belonging her church community provided:

When I go to the church I feel very happy and very honest with the people in the church. I feel with my family, with God, I feel close to the people in the church. (Wera)



Photograph 11. Food and happiness

Making and cooking food and inviting friends because I am alone, I don't have my family with me. That makes me happy and not alone. (Yasmin)



Photograph 12. Party

This photo reminds me when I see a lot of cups together is not alone, the candle is a good sign for life and with small things we can make people happy. (Shirin, interpreter-participant)

For Yasmin and Zeba, who had come to Australia by boat in the early 2000s and spent time in immigration detention, settlement support through friends and community groups was vital. They reported limited formal settlement support at the time of their arrival in Australia:

The government maybe have programs for helping people but I didn't know.
(Yasmin, arrived in 2001)

There was no one to guide us and tell us what's out there, and what the best is for us. (Zeba, arrived in 2002)

Zeba had serious health issues upon coming to Australia and was transferred from Nauru detention centre for medical attention. She was allowed to live in the community for two years before receiving a visa but was not given access to formal services or social security benefits. She and her family relied on support from a church community for food, the costs of medical care, education including the costs of attending English classes and support for her children:

Seeing my situation they were very helpful, even they going to the extent of taking my two year old to day care. (Zeba)

Informal support was also accessed among women who had arrived during the early 1980s, as Vietnamese refugees when support services were limited:

You know at the time that I came there was not a lot of support. Because it's new, new to Australia. We got no support. (Phuong Loan, interpreter-participant)

Women also talked about the importance of supporting others and helping in their community. Their stories reflect the findings of other research on the role of altruism among resettled refugees (Puvimanasinghe, Denson, Augoustinos, & Somasundaram, 2014):

And sometimes with the new arrival coming, new one, maybe is doesn't have

anything. And we help that people a little bit, if they didn't have job, we find a job. You know if someone need the help and I will go. Not necessarily community tell me, because I am human, I know is that person is coming new and need the help, we will go and help. (Shirin, interpreter-participant)

You know, it's good to always be other people help. Because everyone is different. And sometimes if you come from other countries to Australia here, everybody like to have, how do you call, to help somebody else, like we all have responsibility for care of duty. We all have duty of care for others. (Gabriella)



Photograph 13. Others' happiness is my happiness
My daughter turned 9 in October. She received a lot of money as a present at the celebration. She decided to donate all the money to those in need. She wanted the other kids to be as happy as she is. (Halia)

Role of a women's support service

As a formal support service, many women discussed the valued role of Ishar in their lives, in particular as a means to social support, through access to information, services and the opportunity to meet other women. Health services and information sessions related to settlement issues were valued. The importance of resourcing for agencies such as Ishar for settlement support was also stressed. Ishar was also described as a home and as a family. It was perceived as being culturally acceptable as a women's only service and as playing a significant support function during the process of settlement:

When I came here, I had problems with my family. But I found that here is an extended family. (Sulaf)

Their support is a very good thing for people who are here in Australia and having problems, health problems and other problems. The support is needed for anyone who enters Australia as a migrant or as a refugee. (Farah)



Photograph 14. Two ladies

Coming to Ishar is like my second home. My family situation means we don't have many opportunities for fun. However Ishar gives me this chance. It also gives me the chance to make new friends, get counselling and get some financial help. Some years I couldn't come to Ishar as I had a driving issue, but now I come often and enjoy getting information on different topics that help in my life. For example, legal services, multicultural services etc. It gives me a better life. I love Ishar, it is fantastic! (Noushin)

The range of activities offered at Ishar contributed to some women overcoming isolation and feeling stronger. Some highlighted Ishar's programs and activities, which provided their primary opportunity to participate in the broader community where they were able to meet others. The experience of sharing with other women helped overcome settlement difficulties and feel a sense of belonging:

*When I going to Ishar I feel I'm in Australia now because I saw people, I talk with the people, I understand what is good for me, what not good for me.
(Adele, interpreter-participant)*

So this is learning journey and coming here to Ishar I've been engaged now for 2 years. I feel that you see people, you share, everyone tells you know what they know and they start bringing you know like presentations, people come and tell us about the law, about our rights. So I found that it's making me stronger now and I know things and I do mix and leave the house. (Yasmin)



Photograph 15. Ishar: my second home

I feel like when I come here, it is a second home to me. I feel very relaxed here and I talk to people. I feel like Ishar is like a mother, a sister and a friend to me. Before we were scared of anything, but now we are not. I feel strong. I feel that I can do anything. (Halia)



Photograph 16. Colourful autumn

When refugees are connected to support services life becomes colourful. Spring in Autumn. Settlement process makes life easier. (Farah)

6.4.5 Theme Five: Positive context of settlement

The safety and opportunity Australia offered, multiculturalism and diversity, and being able to maintain and celebrate one's own culture, were identified as forming part of a perceived positive context of settlement, where refugees are welcomed with opportunities for integration. Experiences of the local context will differ depending on women's intersecting social categories, and therefore researchers emphasise the importance of exploring individual experiences, or how context is perceived (Schwartz et al., 2014). This theme highlights commonalities among women's perceptions of a positive context of settlement.

Safety and opportunity

Similar to the recent research with resettled women in Australia (Vromans et al., 2018), women expressed their deep gratitude at being given refuge and the opportunities for the future for themselves and their families. For women with children and grandchildren, Australia was viewed as a safe place for them to grow up, compared to where they had come from. A number of women, in sharing photographs of their children and grandchildren, talked of their hopes for them to belong and succeed:

Thank God for Australia, I am safe. (Wera)

I feel peace here in Australia, my kids feel safe here. We have a life starting again. (Aliya)

Australia do provide, regardless of your age or background, they provide the good environment for people to live and succeed. So that's why when we look at [my grandson] we wish him a better future for his life, better than what we've seen. He's a continuation of us, the generations to come. (Sulaf)



Photograph 17. Happy time

My son is going to the library. It is important to me because in my country it was not possible for children to go safely to the library or school. In Australia, my children can have the opportunity to be educated, which is something I did not have. I enjoy being part of my son's school. (Gabriella)

Linda, who shared a photograph in one of the groups which showed her passport, discussed living in insecurity in Iran and Pakistan for a number of years with her family. She described how important it was to be given the security of refuge in

Australia:

For me, living as a refugee is really, really important having a passport. Having a passport is like having an identity ... (Before) we were like in a jail, but it's not a jail in some sense. So coming here that was one of the best things, having a passport and having citizenship and being able to call Australia home. (Linda, interpreter-participant)



Photograph 18. Big strong tree

From my first look I saw a very big, strong tree. I drew strength from this one. I saw the branches as different opportunities and pathways for me. (Aliya)

Multiculturalism and diversity

Multiculturalism was perceived as contributing to a diversity of different cultures due to increased immigration intake over time, which helped with feeling accepted and welcomed by others. Promoting multiculturalism through education was valued. There was also a view that Australia's diversity of cultures allowed women to keep their own culture while learning about Australia as well:

Australia a very good country, free country and everybody friendly, because really multicultural. Every people is come around the world. (Shirin, interpreter-participant)

I just want to say that we have achieved one thing from the government specifically and that's improving the diversity in the schools and emphasising on we are all different, but we are one. Because our children growing up in this country I think it will become a healthier nation, a healthier Australia. (Linda, interpreter-participant)

Because we are all from different country, different culture, in Australia you know it gives people good opportunity for everyone. So is that you can change yourself. You can still keep your culture but you learn about other people.

(Gabriella)

The behaviour of others was critical to whether the women felt welcomed or isolated, especially when they appeared as visibly ethnically different in a group. Phuong Loan shared a photograph of a restaurant she had visited with friends, which led to discussion about feeling included. Welcoming behaviour was described as facilitating acceptance:

If for me if I go into somewhere, a party or wedding and if I am different, I am one of the odd one out, ok everyone else look got same colour, same skin and I am the odd one out, then I feel very uncomfortable because I don't speak the language and I look lost. But if the people there talk to me, welcome me as a friend then I'll be ok. (Phuong Loan, interpreter-participant)

The value of religious tolerance and freedom of religion was considered significant and expressed in discussions:

It is beautiful in Australia because there is no discrimination between Islam and other religions. It all falls under the umbrella of the Australian community. I am from Syria. Australia is bringing a lot of refugees from Syria, Christians and Muslims. We live in this country where there is freedom of religion, freedom of individuality. (Sulaf)

Maintaining culture

Being able to continue one's cultural practices is identified in settlement policy as important in supporting refugees' social wellbeing (Department of Social Services, 2017c). Women discussed their ability to adjust to Australian culture while keeping their own culture and traditions that were important to them. They shared photographs that celebrated their food, culture and religion, such as religious ceremonies, and involvement in cultural groups. They described the strength that was

drawn from this. Rukia who shared a photograph of her dance group, described the empowerment she felt through participating:

It's funny I have got stage fright. If someone ask me to go on stage, even at school and stuff where you stand up to do a presentation I get so scared. But when I am up there to me everything is shut off and it's like I am dancing my culture away. I feel good about it. So my stage fright disappears. (Rukia)



Photograph 19. Freedom of expression

Keeping up with my traditional values as I am proud to be a Vietnamese with an Australian citizenship. (Rukia)



Photograph 20. Traditional food

I enjoy baking and cooking traditional food for my family because my family like the food I cook that reminds them about our country. (Asma)

Women also stressed that it was important for their children to have a connection to their original culture and language:

Absolutely your children to learn English. But your culture, your language is very important. And your children to learn. Because if your children are distanced, is not good for their education or anything. (Noushin)

Before I not study, my kids can study. Before I can't drive, my kids can drive.

You see like this, we change, just not all change. Must be something be memory, become to for all our grand kids, where from come. (Esther)

Based on the integration framework, cultural knowledge includes refugees sharing their culture with the host community as a way of contribution (Ager & Strang, 2008). Women from Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Afghanistan and Syria talked about positive relationships with neighbours and people in their local community, often through cultural exchange which helped to create informal bonds:

When I made something I show my neighbour from Australia what I cook. She's my friend, she shows me what she cooks, and that is good for her and for me. I learn and she is learning too. (Nadia)

The neighbour, Philippine lady, she had a new baby. I made (the food) for her. And my daughter bring for the neighbour. She enjoyed it. (Zahra)

6.4.6 Additional key informant theme: the role of the host nation as a facilitator to successful settlement

Key informants discussed how settlement and mainstream services needed to be able to support the successful settlement of refugee women. Intensive support on arrival was seen as essential. The importance of this initial support, for example with housing, was stressed as important in helping people through the challenges of starting a new life in Australia. A recent change to the humanitarian settlement services model was viewed favourably in that it extended the timeframe for intensive support to new arrivals if needed:

From the beginning, the actual, the basic stuff of being, from the day they arrive of having all of the basic stuff sorted out and being assisted through that whole process. (KI3)

I'm glad that the government now realised that immediate settlement journey, what is to be provided though the settlement services, it's not going to be the same period of time for everybody. (KI2)

However there was also a view that the Humanitarian Settlement Program needed a more long term, sustainable focus and that there was a disconnect at the policy making level of the experiences and needs of refugees. Better engagement with women and communities was suggested, and programs for learning the English language that are tailored to their circumstances, rather than a blanket approach:

Nobody talks to any of the women about their long term. It's always short-term, short-term so the services are not coordinated towards that long term settlement and that's why you see women even 10 years later, often who have not had that support in the initial years still stuck. (KI6)

Governments and organisations providing direct services really need to try to find ways to speak to women and find flexibility in how they approach it. (KI1)

It was also recommended that mainstream services needed to be culturally sensitive, ensure access to interpreters and awareness of the needs of people of refugee background and how these might differ from other service users:

I think services in general should be much more culturally competent. (KI3)

Increase the education and the preventive model and bearing in mind that people come from backgrounds where they don't have this and there are language and cultural things they have to overcome. (KI5)

Aligning with a critical perspective, it was suggested that change should involve the sharing of political power to people of non-white backgrounds in order to address underlying inequalities (Walsh, 2018):

Particular parties need to actively engage and have members, you know their membership of the political parties need to comprise people from all different ethnicities. They need to come out and actively engage with people, encourage people to be part of their office bearing positions, decision makers. Encourage, groom, guide, mentor people into taking up leadership roles. And only then

would there be you know true change in policy at that level because when you're in a decision making position, your entire life experience guides your decisions (KI6).

6.5 Conclusion

The main themes from the research were presented in this chapter. The focus on the positive aspects of life in Australia was evident in their chosen photographs and narratives. Women expressed the importance of moving forward and making the most of their new lives. From a social-ecological resilience perspective, the opportunities for women are also health-sustaining resources. They are sources of positive development in overcoming the adversity of forced migration and resettlement (Ungar, 2013).

Settlement experiences were influenced by intersecting factors, such as English language, education, gender roles and family support. For example, although English language learning was the most commonly identified settlement challenge, women's experiences of access to and uptake of English language education depended on a range of factors, including gender roles, pre-migration proficiency, formal education experience, health issues, or age. Women recommended tailored responses for English language learning, depending on personal circumstances, for example having children and other family members to care for, which was a gendered priority over attending classes.

Key informants affirmed this, acknowledging the multiple barriers facing women and recommending more flexible approaches to delivery of the AMEP. There was also a shared view among key informants that policy making was disconnected from the lived experience of refugee women and their families. I consider these insights further, drawing on the theoretical framework, in chapter 7.

Chapter 7:

***“This happiness can be better”*: challenging the power hierarchy which marginalises women in Australia**

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I draw on the results to revisit the overarching question and objectives of my research. I examine barriers and facilitators to successful settlement, based on the standpoint of women, and processes of resilience. I critically interpret the results, based on my framework, which incorporates integration theory, intersectionality, postcolonial feminist theory and social-ecological resilience theory.

I begin by juxtaposing two differing micro accounts of settlement in Australia. The differing accounts respond to the objective of examining narratives of women’s success alongside those of women who have struggled with the process of settlement. The accounts demonstrate the complexities of settlement based on personal and systemic factors. Using the theoretical framework, I then examine commonalities among women and articulate the barriers and facilitators to successful settlement more broadly, bringing broader critique to the discourse on integration.

7.2 Revisiting ‘Successful Settlement’

Before embarking on this discussion, it is worth returning once more to the notion of successful settlement, as the discussion of the research results are considered in relation to this. From the host nation perspective, successful settlement is integration, and integration encompasses specific outcomes, including English language proficiency, education, employment and social cohesion. These represent the outcomes of the two-tiered Settlement Program, discussed in chapter 2. The first tier is the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP), which offers individualised case managed support on a needs basis, generally for up to 18 months in Australia until a client achieves self-reliance across a range of areas. Also offered is a specialised and intensive support program for those with complex needs, generally for up to six months (Department of Social Services, 2018c). The second tier is the Settlement

Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program, which is comprised of case work and community capacity building initiatives. Another key offering is 510 hours of English language instruction through the AMEP. Other mainstream and discrete program initiatives are also designed to align with settlement program outcomes.

I have argued that underpinning the host nation understanding of integration—and therefore informing policy—is intent to preserve a white, patriarchal hierarchy, while maximizing the productivity of diversity by creating economically productive citizens. An alternative conceptualisation, put forward by Ager and Strang, is based on integration as a two-way process, and can be measured through multiple interdependent domains of a framework. This framework was informed by the literature, fieldwork including interviews with refugees and verification of its relevance from policy makers. However it is still based on a notion of judgment, of what integration ought to be, and ultimately in relation to the interests and values of the host nation towards refugees.

Alternatively, other scholars (for example Anthias, 2013; Korteweg, 2017; Schinkel, 2018) have taken a more radical approach and have called for integration to be critiqued as inequality producing, or abandoned altogether. Notably, integration only applies to some migrant groups, and reinforces their othering and divisions based on race. An alternative approach could instead involve tackling broader inequalities in society. This aligns with the importance of addressing the social determinants of health, which underpins this research. Addressing underlying policies, systems and access to resources is key to supporting women's health and wellbeing, thus supporting their settlement in Australia. At the end of this chapter I call for such an approach to women's successful settlement.

However, from the individual perspective, what makes settlement successful is subjective, depending on the person, including their pre-migration life experiences, goals and stage of life upon resettlement. Often the work of scholars on conceptualising integration and settlement is not based on their own lived experience of forced migration, myself included. Feminist research approaches attempt to address this by recognising women's lived experiences, and the 'coming to' voice over 'giving voice'. Importantly, a feminist approach notes that women's

subjectivities are not neutral but constituted through power relations. They are produced by processes and practices, such as gendering and racialisation, among others (Dhamoon, 2011). Therefore, in this discussion I consider women's perspectives on barriers and facilitators in relation to the dominant discourse of integration, as that which has become naturalised, while also presenting a critical exploration of the results through discussion of the role of power and oppressions as they shape women's subjectivities.

7.3 Personal Accounts of Settlement and Contrasting Trajectories

As discussed in earlier chapters, a term used among intersectional scholars in relation to issues of power is the matrix of domination, whereby one can be situated simultaneously within systems of social stratification, experiencing both privilege and oppression based on their location. This location is created through processes of power (Anthias, 2012a). Hierarchies of power also shift as they are time and place dependent. Refugee women may experience multiple disadvantage through the intertwining of personal and structural factors (Yacob-Haliso, 2016).

Intersectionality involves an analysis on a number of levels (Seng, Lopez, Sperlich, Hamama, & Reed Meldrum, 2012), from societal structures at the macro level to the micro level of social practices (Hankivsky, 2012a; Winker & Degele, 2011).

Experiences of individuals relevant to their multiple social statuses at the micro level reflect interlocking macro level social-structural factors (Bowleg, 2013).

These assertions can be considered through exploring two accounts of settlement in Australia by women participants in this research, Nwe Nwe and Bahia. Both women participated in interviews after completing the photovoice sessions. Their narratives included in excerpts in chapter 6 are interpreted further here. I have included some additional quotes from the women that did not feature in the previous chapter, to illustrate in greater depth the arguments made. In presenting their accounts, and based on a normative perspective of integration, Nwe Nwe could be considered as having settlement success. Bahia, however, expresses a different experience. Her struggles in adjusting to a life in Australia had not ticked the integration boxes based on the host nation's understanding, in particular English language, education and employment. The women's pre- and post-migration experiences can also be

considered in relation to the notion of barriers and facilitators to successful settlement.

7.3.1 Nwe Nwe's story

When I work in a women's right organisation I feel like, I can decide for myself, you feel more confident. You believe in yourself, oh I can do it, I can do it, yes. (Nwe Nwe)

Nwe Nwe was a few months old when her family fled Burma. She grew up in a refugee camp on the Thai-Burma border. She reported that in the refugee camp she was able to access a level of high school education. She was also involved in an ethnic women's rights organisation. She had access to leadership training and English language learning delivered by Western volunteers. Despite being structurally multiply disadvantaged based on macro factors, including being a refugee with long term confinement in a camp and the challenges this presented, at the micro level she was involved in efforts of resistance and mobilisation of women. Other research has reported on this resistance among people in refugee camps on the Thai-Burma border, which contrasts to the notion of passive victims governed by powerful actors of the refugee regime (Olivius, 2017). She was arguably able to navigate her way to some resources for health and wellbeing, offered to her within the camp environment.

Life in Australia

You feel safe, yeah. You go around open your mind, open your eyes and come in and have a look, see what that culture are doing, what they are doing, what people are doing and just go with them. Get into it, don't be shy, don't be afraid. If you ask you will get answer.

Nwe Nwe was in her mid-twenties and had been settled in Australia for four years. She lived with her husband and child. In Australia Nwe Nwe expressed her use of agency in challenging processes of gendering and marginalisation. She expressed her confidence in navigating Australian systems and seeking support for her needs, as

reflected in her quote above. Her motivated account of settlement included completion of English language studies, further study and subsequent employment within five years of settlement in Australia:

Before I came here I just know only a little bit of English and then I thought oh might be better if I go to school maybe I can get more confidence, maybe improve more English so then find a job later, and then I went to school, went to AMEP class.

She expressed how she and her husband shared caring responsibilities for their child and that she was not tied down by gender role expectations. She perceived that other women may be more confined to these roles, whereas this was different for her because of her life experiences:

People who used to work in a community services like women rights, like in human rights or like in NGOs yeah, that's women when they came here and they is like going to studying, improve themselves, get a job, doesn't want to stay home.

She also expressed that she had made a choice: to have fewer children, because the responsibility of multiple children would be disadvantageous for her:

For me I decide two is enough because you have to look at yourself and you have to look at your kids, but you have to compare them. Do you have enough time to look after your kids, or do you have enough time for yourself? You have to help yourself as well.

When asked about what recommendations could be made to improve the settlement experiences of women, Nwe Nwe argued that it was also the responsibility of people to participate in English classes and programs offered to them. She was of the view that people were not participating to their detriment:

Lots of people they not going to (English) class, even the government did it but they're not going to class. So I would say government can help people only helping themselves.

From an intersectional perspective, over the course of her life, Nwe Nwe's experiences included empowerment at the level of the hegemonic domain, through involvement in an ethnic women's rights organisation in Thailand. She also demonstrated interpersonal resistance through her acts of agency in attempting to build a life for herself in Australia and not be defined by gender roles which she saw as restrictive. Arguably she had strong knowledge of her rights and, comparing this to the Ager and Strang framework for integration, her account reflected positive outcomes across many of the domains.

7.3.2 Bahia's story

In Iraq we can't study, we can't work. In Iraq there's a set age for women to stop studying. Not that the government stops the woman from studying. It's actually the family that stops the woman from finishing her studies. (Bahia)

Bahia's pre-settlement experiences had included a primary school level of formal education, restrictive gender roles and inequality, a large gap between her culture and Australia, and little exposure to English language. She spent 10 years in Jordan with her family waiting for resettlement through the UNHCR.

Life in Australia

Very difficult in the beginning, especially we arrived at night time. The worker waited for us, he took us and put us in a property in Balga and for us we can't talk or speak the language, we don't know the places. I felt as if I'm blind person. I was even concerned to leave the house and just walk outside, I might not be able to come back because all the houses they look alike and all the streets are alike. So they're all nice and clean but the problem is not knowing your areas and your places and the language, the language. Until now the language is quite difficult.

Bahia had been settled in Australia for 10 years with her husband and five children. Bahia described the impacts of adjustment to a completely different culture, including differing gender roles as the main challenge for her family. Bahia described how adjustment issues affected her ability to complete English language classes:

Because when I came to the country it was start of my problem with my husband. So I was going there but not learning anything. And obviously with the issues and problems at home, then I wasted those hours and I am regretful.

Bahia described the issue of adjusting to a new culture as persistent for her spouse who had difficulty adjusting to different gender roles for men and women in Australia:

As a man he thinks his rights should come to him, not go and look for his rights. For us (women in Iraq) our rights were gone and we were not looking. I have the right to go and learn something. He wants someone to come to him to teach him how to drive. We go and access those rights, but he doesn't.

Illustrative of Bahia's experience, Shwayli and Barnes (2018) discuss the culture shock that many Iraqis face when coming to Australia. In Iraq, Islam governs social norms and life. This is also common to countries surrounding Iraq. Consequently "the "Arabness" of Iraqi society is strong and therefore many Iraqis have little understanding of, and exposure to, a different way of life" (Shwayli & Barnes, 2018, p. 97). This way of life includes a patriarchal family structure. Generally, women are traditionally more subordinate and have fewer avenues for expression of their ideas compared to men (Shwayli & Barnes, 2018). As Linda, another of the participants described in her response to Bahia's point about her spouse in the group discussion: "It's totally different from what they have been raised. They feel that there is no use for them in the society."

Adjustment issues that impacted on her settlement experiences demonstrates the relevance of social bonds as connective tissue, a part of the framework for integration discussed by Ager and Strang, recognising the role of family in people's lives and its interrelationship to other domains like English language. Her experience also illustrates the difficulty of having a limited time period in which resettled refugee women have to enrol in and begin English language classes when they face competing settlement issues. This is an issue highlighted by many stakeholders in the refugee sector (Joint Standing Committee on Migration, 2017).

Bahia discussed her desire to find employment, but described being limited by barriers including poor English as well as inadequate employment support:

Job Network offices - when I tell her that you know yes I keen to work, she said go and search on the computer She doesn't know that you know if you're not skilled enough to access the computer and look there, there's something they should look for you and help you doing it, instead of letting you go and search on the computer.

Although Bahia had been settled in Australia for a decade, she had required an interpreter to participate in this research. She also articulated her experiences of racism as a Muslim woman of visibly different dress and the fact that she had noticed discrimination more recently in navigating Australian systems:

I went to Centrelink but there is discrimination and it is very obvious. I didn't used to feel it but now I feel it.

7.3.3 Contrasting settlement trajectories

If examining both accounts of women's lives through the lens of a matrix of oppression, Nwe Nwe upon resettlement is positioned advantageously compared to Bahia, in relation to accessing the opportunities that are offered through the Settlement Program. Bahia's choices were much more restricted. These contrasting accounts show that upon arrival in Australia, women's diversity means they are positioned differently in their potential for successfully accessing and undertaking

opportunities for English language, education and training and employment facilitated through the Settlement Program (Yacob-Haliso, 2016).

Further, these contrasting experiences not only show that settlement journeys vary among women, but also that—from a normative perspective of successful settlement—trajectories will be shaped by forces of power, and such forces will vary depending on time and place (Dhamoon, 2011). For Bahia, her location in relation to patriarchy and processes of gendering meant that she was limited in her access to the right to education, pre-migration, as reflected in one of her quotes. Post-migration she was also denied English language education due to personal factors and underlying processes, which have informed the AMEP design, including a restrictive time period for enrolling in the program, alongside other factors, which I will discuss later in this chapter. Considering a social-ecological understanding of resilience, Bahia could also be considered as having limited access to the resources for health and wellbeing drawn from her surrounding ecology, including family and broader support.

In addition, Bahia's observation about discrimination being more prominent more recently in her life, and its link to increased Islamophobia in Australia, reflects the notion that settlement is non-linear. Racism and discrimination is a barrier to settlement, and may be more pervading at times in society over others. This is because nation states, including governments and supporting institutions as part of structural and institutional domains of the matrix of oppression, can either reinforce or challenge these forces (Dupuis-Déri, 2016). Islamophobia has become increasingly normalised through the rhetoric of political figures and in media discourse.

In contrast, Nwe Nwe was an example of settlement success when framed from a host nation perspective, as she demonstrated economic participation within the settlement period of five years. Nwe Nwe's knowledge of English language intersects with her education, relatively young age, family composition and less restrictive gender role expectations, to privilege her in the matrix of oppression compared to Bahia. Based on Nwe Nwe's social location, opportunities were easily accessible to her and informed her perspective on the ease of settlement, stressing the

importance of personal responsibility to actively participate in life in Australia. Her quotes reflect her capacity to navigate to opportunities; she demonstrates agency and interpersonal resistance.

However, as mentioned, Nwe Nwe and Bahia were not on equal footing when they began the process of settlement in Australia. The intersection of gender, refugee, ethnicity, language and family resulted in challenges for Bahia. From an integration perspective her journey might be deemed as less successful. Their accounts demonstrate that settlement experiences are influenced by the inseparability of micro and macro factors. Their social locations are shaped by interlocking systems of oppression, including neoliberalism, racism, sexism and ageism. Under the dominant ideology of neoliberalism, economic integration is emphasised among refugees. Women are encouraged to avail of the opportunities offered to facilitate their economic integration yet contend with sexism, racism and discrimination, including targeted racism based on ethnicity or culture. These forms of oppression work together to help to validate the existing gendered, racial hierarchy.

Having explored these accounts, I now look at the common themes that were generated from the research in examining barriers and facilitators to women's successful settlement and resilience processes. Drawing on my theoretical framework, I will demonstrate the argument for challenging integration as the goal of refugee settlement, and the need for an alternative approach that is focused on addressing the social determinants of health, for women's successful settlement.

7.4 Macro Barriers to Successful Settlement: The Power of Policy Making

In the previous chapter I discussed the theme of settlement challenges including English language, transport, settlement means and markers and racism and discrimination. I also presented issues women raised related to family and social support. In this section I argue that underlying these issues is the role of broader processes of power which serve to maintain the existing hegemony, and is a barrier to women's successful settlement. This argument can be explained by commonalities of experience among women participants at the micro level, as identified through their emic perspectives. Further, this is confirmed by the perspectives of key

informants who highlighted the disconnect between policy making and the lived experiences of women establishing a new life in Australia. I will now demonstrate this in relation to each of these challenges, beginning with the three E's of integration.

7.4.1 *English language, education and employment*

I want to learn English ... I want to become part of the Australian community.
(Farida)

It was common for many of the women who took part in the research who had children, to describe caring responsibilities as a powerful factor in shaping their priorities upon resettlement. In particular, caring responsibilities had a significant impact on their participation in English language classes provided through the AMEP. Women recognised that a foundation of successful settlement was English, as indicated by Farida above, and their difficulties accessing sustained English education impacted on other aspects of their lives, not only through the obvious link to employment but in family relationships, including with children and grandchildren.

As mentioned also in the example provided of Bahia, this reflects an interdependent understanding of the various domains of integration as theorised by Ager and Strang (2008). Women's views reflected the host nation focus on the importance of English language. However, through their accounts they showed its link not only to employment, but also to other domains of the integration framework, including family relationships. It also confirms what was highlighted in the literature review of this thesis, and also affirmed by key informants, of the need for English language programs to be flexible to the gendered needs of women learners (De Maio, Silbert, et al., 2017; Riggs et al., 2012). Furthermore, as this research has shown, programs need to be tailored to the different needs of women, beyond a one-size-fits-all approach (Hewagodage & O'Neill, 2010). As discussed by women, age and life priorities, education and literacy on arrival were all factors that needed to be taken into account in the design of language education. From the perspective of resilience, language barriers impacted on women's participation in Australian life, therefore

perpetuating their marginalisation (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012). As a marginalised group, women's voices have not been privileged in the design of a program that matters so significantly to their resilience (Ungar, 2012a).

As discussed in chapter 2, changes to the AMEP in 2017 included an additional 490 hours for clients who have made good progress or attendance, but have exhausted their 510 hours and not reached a desired level of proficiency (Joint Standing Committee on Migration, 2017). They have access to additional support if needed based on their pre-migration experiences, such as limited literacy (Department of Social Services, 2018c), a move which has been commended by refugee advocacy groups (Refugee Council of Australia & Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, 2016). However, as noted in chapter 2, the government has resisted making changes to the design of the AMEP that would increase women's access in particular, by providing a longer period to enrol and complete their 510 hours. A Community Hubs program for mothers, operating in select states and territories—but not Western Australia—has been cited as an effective response to the issue of increasing access to English language education (Australian Government, 2018). The government response can be considered from intersectional and postcolonial feminist perspectives.

Firstly at the macro level is the influence of white settler colonialism. For people who are accepted to Australia as refugees, (and provided they arrive through the 'proper channels', not by boat) they are positioned as deserving others. Their acceptance into Australia for resettlement is also labelled as a privilege when one examines policy discourse on resettling in Australia (Australian Government, 2018). This reflects the settler colonial approach of management of the territory and keeping out unwanted groups in the effort to regulate inflows of capital, as a form of authoritarian neoliberalism.

For refugees privileged to be accepted into Australia, the Settlement Program emphasises the 'three Es' as a strategy of neo-assimilation, because their broader value is seen as an economic contributor to society, the productive citizen (Reid, 2018). Reid (2018) argues that an ideological homogeneity is sought in Australia, an inclusion of the Other, which is in essence apolitical and benign, and this is in part

influenced by processes of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism assumes objectivism and the denial of racialisation and racism, under the banner of celebrating cultural diversity. Yet the race of the refugee is a problem for the white settler colonial state. Therefore, policy is also based on measuring the refugee in relation to patriarchal, white Australian culture (Reid, 2018). Refugees contend more broadly with “formal institutional structures, public attitudes, and political representations” that are “grounded in implicit logics in which the authority of Whiteness is naturalised and the inferiority of being non-white is assumed” (Ramsay, 2017, p. 184).

This is arguably evident in examining the underpinning approach to English language education through the AMEP. From the government perspective, a long term outcome of successful settlement is that of improved English language proficiency, literacy and numeracy for refugee/humanitarian entrants through their participation in English language programs (Department of Social Services, 2017c). In recognition of this priority it increased the budget for the AMEP from \$257 million to \$303 million in 2018-2019 (Refugee Council of Australia, 2018a). However, such policy making is failing to meet the needs of women because arguably it is shaped by oppressive forms of power including racism, sexism and neoliberalism, which are influenced by settler colonialism, embedded in the domains of the matrix. Sexism intersects with processes of neoliberalism and racism, and is informed by an underlying colonial imaginary of the refugee woman as inferior and primitive (Ramsay, 2017). Through these processes, policies position women as being domestically bound and as mothers (Olivius, 2016). Therefore, policy responses will be inadequate for women’s varied needs.

To demonstrate, the government has asserted that current arrangements for AMEP access are sufficient despite advocacy attempts to change this. Nor do language classes meet the settlement needs of older women. The principle of economic efficiency also means that there is inadequacy of the funding for child care, with AMEP providers having to help cover these costs (Refugee Council of Australia, 2019d; Tynan et al., 2019).

In addition, a Community Hubs program that targets mothers of young children in select regions is promoted as a flagship settlement initiative when there are other

groups of women without children, which this program does not cater for. In particular, this program does not cater for women in Western Australia. An intersectional based analysis acknowledges that women's social locations are inseparable from and influenced by the social processes and structures discussed, and illuminates issues of equity of access (Hankivsky et al., 2014). It also shows how processes of marginalisation are continued.

My argument that intersecting oppressions serve to maintain a power hierarchy can be extended to the areas of education and employment. Women in this research also expressed the importance of education, and their children's access to schooling and further education. Similar to English language, and at the micro level, intersecting personal barriers limited their ability to access and participate, despite expressing their motivation for learning; this is also demonstrated in other research (Harris, Spark, & Watts, 2014; Hatoss & Huijser, 2010). Researchers have also reported on the impact of disrupted education among African women resettled in Australia and for service design that enables their increased access (Hatoss & Huijser, 2010; Rung, 2015). That recommendation has been extended to women from other cultural backgrounds (De Maio, Silbert, et al., 2017).

Similarly, a targeted approach to supporting women to enter employment was also recommended, also supported in the literature (Harmony Alliance, 2019; Tahiri, 2017). As highlighted by the research participants, refugee women face multiple and intersecting barriers to entering the workforce, such as limited English language skills, gender roles, not having a driver's licence, lack of Australian experience, employer attitudes, difficulties with using job search technologies and inadequate employment support. Yet these barriers continue to be overlooked in policy making.

For example, as outlined in chapter 2, in 2018 a Federal Government policy statement was released that was aimed at addressing barriers to the economic security of women in Australia. However it takes a one-size-fits-all approach to addressing issues impacting on women by failing to account for intersectional disadvantage beyond gender, which is considered as a single axis of oppression (Equality Rights Alliance, 2019). Similarly, the SEE program, designed to provide

language, literacy and numeracy training for job seekers does not provide childcare for participants (Scanlon Institute for Applied Social Research, 2019).

From a historical perspective, economic development in Australia has been a racial project, which began with processes of economic exclusion of Aboriginal people as one aspect of white colonisation and domination (Hewitson, 2013). Symbolic and material power today is largely concentrated amongst the descendants of European settlers (Ramsay, 2017). Structural inequalities continue to be reinforced. Secure employment is a strategy for improving women's economic status. Therefore, structural responses to challenge women's marginalisation at the level of the structural and disciplinary domains are needed. For example, this could include laws and policies to increase the employment of refugee women, such as mandatory goal setting for the hiring of refugee women and ensuring that this is enforced (Triggs, 2013).

7.4.2 Housing

I know we were big family when we came here, it was five of us and my parents. It was difficult to find a house because we were a big family. Now that in itself, is it our fault that we are a big family? (Linda, interpreter-participant)

Women discussed barriers to appropriate housing over the course of their lives in Australia, both upon arrival and after some years of settlement. The issue of housing was also highlighted by key informants. As highlighted in the previous chapter, issues included finding appropriate housing for larger families (as Linda outlines above), location, affordability and access for women leaving relationships including situations of family and domestic violence. An expected short term outcome of the HSP includes secure and suitable housing and the ability to navigate the housing market to maintain suitable rental accommodation, to be achieved within the first 12 months of settlement (Joint Standing Committee on Migration, 2017). It is also connected to a societal outcome of social cohesion (Flatau, Colic-Peisker, Bauskis, Maginn, & Buergelt, 2014). However, Ager and Strang's theory shows how housing is more broadly interconnected to wellbeing, and the importance of feeling at home, which was highlighted in the photovoice discussions.

Addressing barriers to secure and suitable housing has also been stressed by service providers working in the settlement sector. Housing issues were reported in submissions by service providers and advocacy groups as part of the 2017 national inquiry into migration settlement outcomes. Housing affordability was noted in particular as an issue by the committee conducting the inquiry (Joint Standing Committee on Migration, 2017). Housing outcomes examined as part of the *BNLA* longitudinal study on humanitarian entrants found that while people were able to attain short term accommodation provided through the HSP in seeking secure, long term housing, many reported that this was a challenge, with affordability being the most significant issue reported among participants (De Maio, Gatina-Bhote, Hoang, & Rioseco, 2017). Further research has demonstrated that the high cost of private rentals, which is the main source of accommodation for new arrivals, is an issue (Flatau et al., 2015).

Contextualising this issue, based on a history of colonisation, racism and the White Australia policy, in modern Australia today, “narrow constructions of the nation have continued to be spatialised through anxieties about borders, and concerns about the changing look of suburbs” (Dunn, Blair, Bliuc, & Kamp, 2018, p. 468). Researchers have discussed the non-white occupation of space as a perceived threat to the white spatial order with an attachment to a colonial heritage and denial of the original Aboriginal presence (Al-Natour, 2017; Dunn et al., 2018). Access to better housing is one socio-spatial component that also comes with white power and privilege (Lobo, 2011), where the bulk of material wealth is concentrated. Homeownership, the great Australian dream, is also the most common way of accumulating wealth in Australia over the course of the life cycle (Barrett, Cigdem, Whelan, & Wood, 2015; Hassan, 2011). Among migrant groups in Australia, refugees have the lowest incomes and it is the majority of low income earners who are missing out on the Australian dream (Community Affairs References Committee, 2014).

In addition, neoliberal public policy has minimised the role of governments in the provision of housing in Australia. The influence of neoliberalism is shown through the decline of Commonwealth public housing stock, which began in the late 1980s and accelerated under the Howard Coalition government (Morris, 2013). Private

rentals as the main source of housing for refugees must be sourced in a competitive housing market and within the context of the growing issue of housing affordability more broadly (Easthope, Stone, & Cheshire, 2017) As discussed by women and key informants in this research, in finding accommodation it may not be their desired choice and is often located on the suburban fringe, with fewer facilities and access to transport (Easthope et al., 2017).

The links between secure housing and health are well cited in the literature (Ziersch, Walsh, Due, & Duivesteyn, 2017). For low income groups, being in unaffordable housing is also connected to poor mental health (Baker, Mason, Bentley, & Mallett, 2014). The significance of ontological security, which is provided through secure housing, overrides any discussion on resilience, on the role of individual agency and navigation toward health-sustaining resources, if women do not have access to secure housing in the first instance as a basic need and human right.

Yet it should also be noted that housing issues and the impacts on refugees who are resettled remains an under researched area (Forrest, Hermes, Johnston, & Poulsen, 2013; Ziersch et al., 2017). Policy responses to address housing affordability for refugees have been called for (Flatau et al., 2015). There is limited research on resettled refugee women that specifically explores their housing experiences in Australia from an intersectional perspective. Canadian research has examined the intersection of migration status, gender and health in housing insecurity among women (Hanley, Ives, Lenet, Walsh, & Este, 2019). Research has also employed intersectionality in relation to access to housing for women escaping abuse, in particular immigrant women (Little, 2015), an issue importantly highlighted by women in this research. However, as the intersections of refugee, gender, race and class are reinforced at the micro level, thereby positioning women on the margins, they receive limited attention in the policy making sphere. The focus on housing is also in the short term, which contrasts with the evidence of settlement as a non-linear process.

7.4.3 Transport

If we don't have driving licence we cannot do nothing... with license, I can take

my son to school, to his class, to shop. It's very important. I can go to shop. It is very easier with life in this country. (Noushin)

Transport was a further challenge that can be connected to housing, as having a driver's licence and a car is important for community participation when located in outer suburbs in particular (Riggs, Block, Mhlanga, Rush, & Burley, 2014). This is particularly the case for Perth's expansive northern suburbs, the setting for this research, where there is often poor access to public transport (Infrastructure Australia, 2018). For women, a car was vital to daily activities, as Noushin describes in her quote, and to accessing education and employment. Obtaining a drivers licence was an act of agency in the face of structural barriers to its attainment. The findings on the importance of having a drivers licence and car reflects the notion of transport as a facilitator to integration (Ager & Strang, 2004). It is also mentioned in settlement policy (Government of Australia, 2016). While access to transport was mentioned in the literature review chapter (3) and importantly its relationship to social exclusion and isolation, there is scarce research looking specifically at the experiences of refugee women and mobility, including barriers they experience and how these can be addressed (Riggs et al., 2014). Targeted programs for refugees tend to be volunteer run (Refugee Council of Australia, 2017b; Riggs et al., 2014) and funded through the private sector (Riga, 2018) or settlement agencies, previously through the Settlement Grants Program (Government of Australia, 2016) as part of the model of neoliberal governance. Further research is warranted that privileges women's perspectives on this challenge, but with attention to underlying processes of power and broader policy critique.

7.4.4 Health

I came with my daughters and it was a struggle, to the extent that I got depression. My husband passed away and my daughter has a disability. So I live by myself. (Lina)

In the discussion, women often framed health issues beyond their own experiences as extending to other family members and their concern for them. The difficulties facing women who are resettled as lone parents with limited support was expressed

as shown in the quote from Lina, who was accessing support from Ishar. Some women discussed the impacts of family adjustment on their mental health, and the importance of family wellbeing. I explore the intersection of family with settlement later in this chapter. Here my focus is to draw on my theoretical framework to interpret the results, which showed women's valuing and use of Ishar's psychological and other health services, barriers to mental health help-seeking among men, alongside the importance of culturally competent services as a concept raised in particular by key informants.

Being able to use health services is a required outcome that to be achieved by refugee/humanitarian entrants participating in the HSP (Department of Social Services, 2017c). It is also important for social cohesion through the connections and trust built with providers (Maleku, Kim, & Lee, 2018). This present research showed that women valued a specialist women's only service for health issues and support and this can be noted in relation to other research that shows low uptake of mainstream health services among refugee women (Clark, Gilbert, Rao, & Kerr, 2014; Drummond, Mizan, Brocx, & Wright, 2011). The issue of men's help-seeking reflects research, which shows that immigrant, non-English speaking background men in Australia, who are at higher risk of mental health issues than Australian born men, are less likely to access treatment (Straiton, Grant, Winefield, & Taylor, 2014).

While noting some improvements to mainstream services, participants in this research raised the issue of services needing to be linguistically accessible. This issue continues to be reported in other research (Clark et al., 2014; Wesp et al., 2018). The ability to provide interpreters among services as a social link is a measure for assessing the effectiveness of the host nation in supporting the integration of refugees (Ager & Strang, 2004). The use of interpreters also demonstrates cultural competence of the service provider in working with refugees (Mollah, Antoniadis, Lafeer, & Brijnath, 2018). As health services have an important role to provide culturally meaningful experiences for users, cultural competence is therefore a way of supporting the resilience of refugees (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012). Cultural competence aims to improve equity of access to healthcare among different groups and earlier help-seeking (Stewart, 2006). Yet its value has been questioned by scholars (Truong et al., 2017). The issues discussed in this present research can be considered

in relation to the argument that it is potentially worth jettisoning (Pon, 2009). I will now critique the concept further.

There is no agreed definition of cultural competence. The NHMRC (2006) has developed a guide for health policy makers and planners for cultural competence applied across systemic, organisational, professional and individual domains. To define cultural competence NHMRC (2006) employs a well-used definition by Cross, Bazron, Dennis and Isaacs (1989) of “a set of congruent behaviours, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professions to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.” However, a criticism made of cultural competence is that it presents Whiteness as dominant and others those who are members of non-dominant groups (Pon, 2009).

The dominant culture, through institutions including healthcare, “regulates what sorts of problems are recognised and what kinds of social or cultural differences are viewed as worthy of attention” (Kirmayer, 2012, p. 149). In Australia, some research has shown that while health care providers associated the concept with awareness and respect towards others, culture was seen as static and something that belonged to the client, and that awareness pertained to the values and beliefs of the client and not their own (Truong et al., 2017). This also reflects the arguments of critics of cultural competence as a form of new racism (Pon, 2009). Culture is associated with a non-white racial identity (Fisher-Borne, Cain, & Martin, 2015) which is defined by the dominant culture, where power resides. The approach also fails to account for the intersections of the categories of race, gender and sexuality, amongst others, in accounting for differences among people (Fisher-Borne et al., 2015)

Healthcare is a social institution and site of power (Tang, Browne, Mussell, Smye, & Rodney, 2015). As Pon (2009, p. 69) argues, in postcolonial healthcare settings, one needs to question how knowledge about others is constructed, and this process calls for attention to history and power, resisting the dominant and “exclusionary ideas of race, nation, and belonging” (p. 68), which are reproduced by a cultural competency approach. Alternatively, an intersectional approach would consider how an individual service user might be marginalised based on multiple processes of power;

as well as critically examining processes of power within one's own workplace/institution as the disciplinary domain of the matrix of oppression, where dominant ideologies are reinforced (Wesp et al., 2018).

Neoliberal policy shapes inequitable access to health resources (Clark, 2018). Further, racism is “manifested in societies through the unequal distribution of power (resources, opportunities, benefits, capacities etc.)” (Paradies, in Bastos et al., 2018, p. 210). Consequently, mainstream services are well funded relative to specialist services supporting multicultural women, such as Ishar. Yet research has found that more specialist services have been called for in order to respond to complex health needs, because mainstream providers have limited knowledge of the health needs of newly resettled refugees (Johnson, Ziersch, & Burgess, 2008). Mainstream services for CALD women are found to be not culturally responsive (Mengesha, Perz, Dune, & Ussher, 2017). Drawing from the findings of research by Floyd and Sakellariou (2017) who examined resettled refugee women's access to healthcare in Canada, mainstream health services are socially structured for the English speaking population. Specialist refugee services, poorly funded, provide comprehensive care, yet the failure of mainstream health services to provide full access to women is an issue of social injustice (Floyd & Sakellariou, 2017). What is needed is a shift from an interpersonal focus on cultural competence to addressing structural racism and other marginalising forces that reduce access to care, and which can effectively respond to the varied needs of women and their families as they would to dominant groups (Pauly, MacKinnon, & Varcoe, 2009).

7.4.5 Racism and discrimination

We have lived here for 30 years plus but we still get racist remarks and stuff. Basically they just see if you are not blonde, fair skinned, blue eyed or whatever they make racist comments. It happened to me just last week and I thought why do I have to put up with this? So basically we are not really being accepted. Even though we are trying to settle in, there are still individuals who don't accept us and it's not very nice. (Rukia)

As expressed by Rukia, racism and discrimination was a key settlement challenge, discussed by many women. This finding adds to the existing literature on racism and discrimination as a pervasive challenge for refugee women resettled in Australia. As discussed in earlier chapters, racism is also a social determinant of health. Based on a social-ecological model of resilience, racism is a risk factor that intersects with forced migration and resettlement in a new country.

Racism and discrimination can be considered in relation to the Federal Government's response to the issue as a barrier to refugee integration. In settlement policy documents the Australian Government has cited its National Anti-Racism Strategy as a way of supporting social cohesion and addressing racism and discrimination towards refugees (Department of Social Services, 2018c). The strategy aims to deliver "a clear understanding in the Australian community of what racism is, and how it can be prevented and reduced" (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2012, p. 2). It was originally for the period 2012 to 2015, but was extended until 2018, and is still cited as a major response at the federal level. It largely represents a focus on individual and community action (Nelson & Dunn, 2016).

Informed by an underlying ideology of neoliberalism, which emphasises localised governance, the strategy fails to engage with the structural issues of "Islamophobia, colonialism, anti-asylum seeker sentiment, and entrenched white privilege" (Nelson & Dunn, 2016). It fails to recognise the intersection of racism with other systems of oppression, including gender, and how this socially locates different groups of women. It represents a component of the broad approach to social cohesion that involves managing diversity by the descendants of the foundation imperial people who dominate the power hierarchy (Jakubowicz, 2014). The political elite, who fail to recognise their privilege and power, instead employ racist sentiment by blaming individuals and minority communities for a failure to integrate and for not adopting Australian values (Losoncz, 2017a). Anti-refugee and divisive sentiment among politicians arguably influences citizens' views towards a reduced immigration intake (Martinez I Coma & Smith, 2018). Through these actions, racism is reinforced in the hegemonic domain of the matrix of oppression.

Ager and Strang's indicators of integration framework groups racism under the facilitator of safety and stability; they suggest potential practice and policy integration indicators could be the number of racial incidents reported to the police (Ager & Strang, 2004). However, this does not reflect the forms and complexities of racism experienced everyday by refugee women, including a sense of being treated differently, because they looked visibly different to non-white women, and forms of verbal abuse that go unreported. The women's experiences demonstrate the relevance of the critique by Phillimore and Goodson (2008), for greater emphasis on emic perspectives to inform integration frameworks, based on different demographical factors including gender. Furthermore, it shows how in applying a normative host nation perspective, where refugees are othered, issues are decided on the basis of the problematic migrant (McPherson, 2010). Thus, racism fails to be challenged as a system of oppression, which reinforces the existing power hierarchy.

7.4.6 The intersection of family with settlement

A common challenge identified by participants in this research related to family issues. The themes can be discussed using the theoretical framework, looking specifically at: maintaining family relationships across borders, family functioning in a new society, and family and domestic violence.

Maintaining family relationships across borders—reunification for resilience

In my country the women have support from her family. But here no family, the woman feels more stronger in her country. (Adele, interpreter-participant)

Arriving with family in Australia was recognised by women participants as vital in helping with the process of establishing a new life. Women without family navigated to access informal support from others and community resources such as Ishaar. These acts represent processes of resilience. Women also maintained transnational family relationships as discussed in other research on connection to family abroad as significant for wellbeing and resilience (Pearce et al., 2017). The denial of family members to enter Australia and ongoing separation, as expressed by some women and shown in their photos and accompanying narratives, impacted on their

wellbeing. Applying a social-ecological notion of resilience, Australian policy that restricts family reunion is a barrier to women's capacity for agency. It prevents access to family support, as a resource for wellbeing. The societal context lacks the resilience to negotiate with women to provide this resource (Ungar, 2008).

Examining this issue from an understanding of integration that reflects the approach to the settlement of refugees, family reunion has not been emphasised in Australian settlement policy. For example, it is not identified as contributing to the outcome of social cohesion. It is however, a significant issue for refugees, as supported in the research (Wilmsen, 2013). Further, Ager and Strang's work on integration (2004) links family reunion provisions to their foundational domain of rights and citizenship, with access to family reunion being one way in which rights and citizenship can be measured. They argue that family relationships are an important social bond and their significance in supporting integration cannot be understated (Strang & Ager, 2010). Arriving with family and the support it provides for immigrants more broadly has been linked to improved settlement outcomes (Root, Gates-Gasse, Shields, & Bauder, 2014). In addition to the Australian research, international research has also shown how refugee integration is hampered by restrictive family reunion policies in other countries of resettlement (Beaton, Musgrave, & Leibl, 2018). Changes to policies are needed to enable resettled refugee women to reunite with family members, which would facilitate the integration process.

For participants in this research, the fragmentation of family and community intersected with other areas of settlement, and this is also discussed in the broader research (Choumanivong, Poole, & Cooper, 2014; Doney & Pittaway, 2010). Considering gender, in the absence of family support women who were mothers had caring responsibilities of children, and caring responsibilities were important priorities than English language, education and employment. Broadly speaking, and based on the narratives of some of the Iraqi women participants, the intersection of gender with refugee, race and class also resulted in particular experiences of marginalisation and isolation, being without family and access to reunion arrangements in a new society.

As argued in the existing research there is a need to extend the definition of family in reunification policy (Wilmsen, 2011). Under current arrangements, reunion is an option for immediate family members who are a spouse or de facto partner, dependent child or a proposer's parent, if the proposer is under 18 years of age (Department of Home Affairs, n.d.). This contradicts the position of the UNHCR, which calls for recognition of other relatives and dependent family members (Okhovat et al., 2017); such recognition would benefit some of the women in this research who discussed their desire to be reunited with parents and other family in Australia.

Employing a critical lens and drawing on postcolonial feminist theory in particular, the normative conceptualisation of family can also be critiqued, that is the dominant ideology of the conventional nuclear family, steeped in power relations (McEwen, 2017). The conventional nuclear family is a social construct. It was historically a privileged position conferred on members in colonial societies (Phillips, 2009). With European colonisation the original inhabitants were expected to become civilised “through absorption into the European race, which meant the adoption of a European economic subjectivity and the breadwinning family form, or they would become extinct” (Hewitson, 2013). In settler colonial Australia, the white nuclear family, based on heterosexual and gendered relationships was naturalised. It is linked to discourses on economic development and progress over the course of Australia's colonial history (Hewitson, 2013). As asserted by McEwen (2017, p. 738), “while a diversity of kinship systems certainly has existed throughout history and across the globe, it is the nuclear family model which has achieved privilege status in modern social imaginaries”. Consequently, the nuclear family characterises a common sense belief of the hegemonic domain and has been reinforced through the structural domain in particular, through laws and institutions. The family is used as a strategy “in the reaffirmation of the good white nation” (Kevin, 2017).

Intersecting with the dominant ideology of the settler colonial construct of family are structures of neoliberalism, racism and sexism. Since the mid 1980s the numbers of people successfully accessing family migration has not been relative to the intake of refugees, demonstrating that it is not a priority for government (Taylor, 2018). Significantly in the mid 1990s, policy changes by the then Howard government,

informed by a political-economic agenda to stem immigration, included reducing the number of visas available for family reunion by linking these with the number of visas for people arriving onshore by boat (Walsh, 2014). A points based skilled migration stream system was also emphasised in order to encourage a desirable migrant who was likely to integrate and socioeconomically contribute (Walsh, 2014). As a neoliberal state, immigration is driven by the economic imperative that refugees are a burden on the taxpayer (van Kooy & Bowman, 2019). Women also typically take on unpaid work as carers, which is not a contribution of value to the neoliberal host nation (Bragg & Wong, 2016). Border control is the priority of the state (Taylor, 2018) and refugees are constructed as an undesirable other (Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012).

The notion of transnational intersectionality relates to how macro processes of power and dominance impact on microsocial processes across geographic locations (Gangamma & Shipman, 2018). It critically attends to how international and domestic policies may prevent family reunification, based on decision making by governments and international bodies where power and resources lie (Gangamma & Shipman, 2018). These decisions have a direct impact on people's lives at the micro level. For this research, women's lives based on intersecting personal factors were influenced by the broader systems of oppression I have discussed. Some authors have discussed gendered resilience among refugee and migrant women, as inclusive of strength gained from relationships with extended family (Yakushko & Morgan-Consoli, 2014), which was also shown in this present research. Family reunification is therefore arguably a strategy for the provision of contextually and culturally meaningful health resources in supporting women's social-ecological resilience.

Family functioning and the stress of adjustment

I've been here 15 years now, just now my husband start recognising that driving is essential for me. The second thing the finance, I have to wait for him, if you want to go to the shops because he has the control of the budget, so he has all the money coming to him and if I want to buy something I have to go and wait for him. I said this is not going to work because sometimes I have to come back and wait for you to go there because I don't have the money in my

hand. So this is, I just faced him now and I said this is not going to work.
(Alma)

Family functioning and support was raised as an issue among women and key informants. The main issues of concern they expressed included tackling changed gender roles, as expressed in Alma's quote, and parenting in a new culture. While women expressed their ability to navigate these issues by drawing on resources including peers and Ishar, they were also a source of stress. Their concerns can be considered in relation to resilience. Ungar (2012a) highlights how parental wellbeing under situations of stress is important to overall family functioning. However, Western research on resilience is inherently biased towards individual understandings of coping (Ungar, 2013). The importance of supporting the family unit and recognising how change affects all of its members is called for in promoting resilience upon resettlement (Pejic, Hess, Miller, & Wille, 2016). This includes a focus on building on the strengths and knowledge that families bring with them to Australia. Other research has found the need for education and support on adjusting to gender role differences (Khawaja & Milner, 2012) in addition to parenting in an Australian context, using a strengths based approach and acknowledging that settlement is a huge adjustment for families (McMichael, Gifford, & Correa-Velez, 2011).

Further, as framed from a family systems-ecological perspective (Pejic et al., 2016) concerns about men's inability to use services and implement strategies to manage stress were raised and these issues impacted on women's lives, as demonstrated in Bahia's narrative in particular. Some research suggests that service improvements, for example training community based settlement workers to identify symptoms of mental health problems among recently resettled Iraqi men, is a positive strategy for increasing their access (Uribe Guajardo et al., 2018). However, addressing structural barriers at the macrosystemic level to social inclusion, including discrimination and economic participation, would help address stress among families (Correa-Velez, Spaaij, & Upham, 2013; Forget, Correa-Velez, & Dee, 2018; Saunders, Roche, McArthur, & Barry, 2017).

From the host nation perspective, family functioning is linked to the long term outcome of social cohesion. Newly settled refugees are initially supported to access mainstream family support services through the HSP (Department of Social Services, 2017c) and research has indicated their use of mainstream services decreases over time (Saunders et al., 2017). The women participants discussed their access to support, predominantly through Ishar, as a specialist multicultural women's health service. Barriers to mainstream access for family support also aligns with the perspectives of key informants in this research. They highlighted the capacity of mainstream services to support women and their families as an area to be addressed, similar to the health service issue raised earlier in this discussion.

Family functioning, considered against the Ager and Strang framework, demonstrates the interdependence of the domains, including health with employment and family as well as cultural knowledge, in particular the importance of services that are accessible to people who do not speak English. Cultural knowledge as a facilitator to settlement relates to refugees having knowledge of local customs and cultural expectations, yet the issues raised in this research extended beyond knowledge, to taking on new gender roles. Ager and Strang (2008, p. 178) also noted in their research how familiar family relationships were akin to feeling settled, which was reflected in this research through the importance of family relationships.

However, using a more critical approach, and based on women's recommendations, there is a need to address men's marginalisation, as I have mentioned. Other research has also explored the experiences of refugee men within the social hierarchy in Australia, demonstrating how this impacts on their sense of belonging (Andreasson, 2016). The research showed that participants felt "as men from refugee backgrounds, they are not on par with other social groups in society" and existing challenges such as finding employment or experiences of racism, perpetuated a sense of limited agency and reduced status (Andreasson, 2016, p. 210).

Women's experiences can also be considered in light of research by Ramsay (2016, p. 320) who employs the Foucauldian expression of governmentality, to argue how the Australian nation has "a distinct history of racialised governmentalities enacted through state control over intimacies of family life". Ramsay (2016, 2017) who

explored African refugee women's experiences in Australia of the child welfare system and their racialisation uses the concept of white neoliberal motherhood to refer to the "normative framework through which maternal fitness is tested and played out" (2016, p. 320). White neoliberal motherhood aligns with an idealised citizen, whereas "the dangerous non-white mother is a trope that manifests across broad colonial contexts" (Ramsay, 2017, p. 180). Social welfare institutions built on a history of settler colonialism, problematise non-whites, and women are made to feel as bad parents (Ramsay, 2017). This sentiment was shared by one of the African participants in particular, Anna, who described the disregard for parenting she and others perceived from institutions.

Family and domestic violence

Some people who went back to country again, say oh my country more safer than Australia, I am looking after my kids, nobody is coming to me every week saying you have domestic violence with your child, or your husband domestic violence with wife. (Adele, interpreter-participant)

The results from this research affirms the need for effective responses to family and domestic violence. Family and domestic violence is a universal issue and researchers suggest that refugee women report similar levels of domestic violence to women from non-immigrant backgrounds (Vaughan et al., 2016). Research on resilience among non-immigrant women escaping violence has shown that resilience involves a combination of individual agency and social-ecological support. This includes supportive family, community and importantly, appropriate accommodation such as refuges and the formal support attached to this (Gopal & Nunlall, 2017). For refugee women, gender intersects with the individual, social and immigration context (Vaughan et al., 2016).

Compounding factors that can increase the risk of violence, which exacerbates the stress of adjusting to a new culture, include dealing with trauma, changing gender and family roles, unemployment, financial difficulties and limited access to education. (Ewings, 2017; Rees & Pease, 2007). Therefore, from a social-ecological perspective, domestic violence and its intersection with the stressors highlighted, and

are common to many women's experiences as discussed in this present research, represents a significant adversity to be overcome. As illustrated in the quote from Adele, some women found the stress of domestic violence so much that they would consider returning to their former countries, reflecting the seriousness of this issue. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of societies to address violence and abuse (Gopal & Nunlall, 2017). Solutions do not rest with the abilities of women to break away and recover from violent experiences (Franzway, Moulding, Wendt, Zufferey, & Chung, 2019). A critical critique here, therefore, focuses on the issue of violence against refugee women.

The integration rhetoric of government identifies family and domestic violence in refugee families as a barrier to social cohesion (Department of Social Services, 2018c). As part of a national Third Action Plan to address violence against women, efforts include supporting CALD women to lead initiatives to reduce violence in their communities as well as improve service access (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016b). As part of efforts to improve the quality and accessibility of services for CALD women, a recovery focused activity titled the *Three E's to Freedom* aims to empower refugee women who have experienced violence, through employment and education focused skills (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016b; Department of Social Services, 2018c). Families also receive a family safety pack on arrival in Australia that includes fact sheets on family and domestic violence (Department of Social Services, 2018c). However, these represent localised and ideologically informed responses, arguably failing to address the root causes of violence, which stem from the white male dominated gender regime (Franzway et al., 2019, p. 3).

The Ager and Strang framework can be critiqued in relation to family and domestic violence. The framework acknowledges the role of social bonds through the importance of family. However, as it fails to consider the role of gender in integration, among other categories, gendered issues that impact on settlement are not explicitly identified. This represents a weakness of the theory.

Gender inequality intersects with other forms of oppression in driving violence against women. As Montesanti and Thurston (2015) explain, "policies and interventions to prevent and address incidences of interpersonal violence, therefore,

need to understand the ‘causes of the causes’ that create and maintain gender inequities and gender domination, which put women at a greater risk of violence, abuse or harm”. The macro (including gender, race) intersects with the meso, or the interplay between family and other aspects of life such as work, peer relationships and services, and these systems are embodied by the woman at the micro level (Montesanti & Thurston, 2015). Therefore, the causes of causes, which marginalise women and their families, as I have discussed throughout this chapter, must be addressed as part of a meaningful response.

7.4.7 Denial of settlement support = denial of rights = denial of humanness

There was no one to guide us and tell us what’s out there, and what the best is for us. (Zeba, arrived by boat in 2002)

Two of the women who had arrived by boat to Australia in the early 2000s described how they received limited formal support, which has effectively denied their rights and humanness. Zeba, in particular, discussed her reliance on informal support in the absence of this. Zeba had been in offshore detention but was able to live in the community due to significant health issues for which she received treatment in Australia. She waited for two years with her family before receiving a visa, without access to income support. She reported relying on support from a church community for food, the costs of medical care, education including the costs of attending English classes, and care for her children.

The lack of formal support reported by both women shows a lack of equal rights to host country citizens. Equal rights are foundational for integration, a process that begins upon arrival in the host country (Ager & Strang, 2008). This issue of inequitable access has continued and characterises current policy for people seeking asylum who are living in the community. At the macro level, a form of authoritarian neoliberalism, interlocking with sexism and racism, informs policy making. At the micro level, migration status intersects with gender, race and other personal factors to contribute to significant disadvantage for women who seek asylum by boat. This extends to the violation of international human rights conventions. The denial of

equal rights is part of the project of denial of humanness of the person seeking asylum, by the possessive white settler colonial state (Haggis, 2012).

To conclude my argument that policy making supports the status quo, I return to the notion of resilience. Social and political processes at the macrosystemic level impact on the individual in their recovery from adversity (Ungar, 2013), which is considered here as forced migration and resettlement in a new society, but it is acknowledged that experiences differ. As Ungar (2013, p. 258) states, “the more the environments make available and accessible the resources that promote wellbeing, the more likely the individuals are to engage in processes associated with positive development”. Challenging existing policies that are failing to meet the needs of refugee women can also be framed as a negotiation with what resources policy makers are willing to provide for their wellbeing (Ungar, 2012a). However, policies are based on the notion that “settlement is conditional” and women must know their place within the existing hierarchy of belonging (Ramsay, 2017, p. 172). On the basis of Collins’ (2000) matrix of oppression it is this domain of power that is difficult to challenge. Lived refugee experience is lacking at the political and policy making level, where power resides. Change is most possible in the interpersonal and hegemonic domains of the matrix of oppression, as Collins argues. This is an argument I now expand on in my discussion of settlement facilitators.

7.5 Facilitators to Successful Settlement: Resistance, Agency and Resilience

In this research women’s perspectives aligned with the host nation focus on English language, education and training and employment as important to their successful settlement in Australia. Their perspectives showed how interrelated these goals were and their connection to other aspects of their lives, including core relationships. I showed how the Ager and Strang framework highlighted interconnectedness of host nation expectations, and the importance of a foundation of equal rights for all, in spite of some limitations with the theory. The importance of social support was highlighted, and indeed the findings of previous research are supported in this research.

While recognising these, in this next section I present a different angle, using the tenets of intersectionality, postcolonial feminist theory and social-ecological resilience theory, through a framing of women's acts of resistance and agency. Examining the settlement of refugee women in relation to hegemony, or how power is distributed and managed to privilege some over others, I here bring examples of interpersonal and hegemonic resistance and resilience, based on the notion that successful settlement requires a shift in broader power relations in Australia. As is, women experience structural constraints, and therefore, as Grant and Guerin (2018) explain, recognition of agentic acts and the acquiring of social capital cannot be separated from the role of broader social inequities in women's lives. In this section I discuss interpersonal and hegemonic resistance in relation to structural factors, looking at the themes in the previous chapter of support and community (theme 4) and a positive context of reception (theme 5).

7.5.1 *Ishar, resistance and resilience*

When I going to Ishar I feel I'm in Australia now because I saw people, I talk with the people, I understand what is good for me, what not good for me.

(Adele, interpreter-participant)

The importance of Ishar as a support service, its access to health care, information, knowledge and conduit to other services as social links (Ager & Strang, 2008) as well as relationships, was a clear finding from this research. Ishar was described as a second home; for some women Ishar had been life changing in facilitating access to opportunities and new relationships, which they described as helping them feel settled. Ishar is arguably a site for resistance, in that it brings women together to exert their productive and constructive power, where women feel mobilised to access resources to support their health and wellbeing (Harms, 2015). It is the only health centre for CALD women in Western Australia and believes in a holistic approach to women's health. The perspectives of the women attest to the success of this model and

the significance of Ishar's work is further emphasised in light of my earlier discussion of the barriers to mainstream service access.

Yet Ishar runs on a modest pool of perennial funding from the State and Federal Governments. As it must retender for programs every few years, Ishar operates in a climate of uncertainty and instability (Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Centre, 2016). The organisation reported in 2018 that despite lobbying it had not received renewed funding for its domestic violence support program, and was continuing to provide the service through its limited reserves (Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Centre, 2018). While funding was reinstated in 2019 for the program, Ishar had previously lost a significant amount of funding in 2015. In a submission to the government on changes to Commonwealth community services tendering processes, and in response to this loss of key programs, Ishar's submission, employing strategic essentialism, highlighted the impact of the loss of funding on vulnerable women's lives. The CEO of Ishar wrote

There was no collaboration or consultation as to the activities of the organisation or the positive difference it is able to make in the local community. It is Ishar's sense that these funding decisions were made in Canberra, with limited or no knowledge about the regional areas and locally based organisations involved. (Creado, 2015)

The favouring of larger organisations over smaller, specialist agencies for funding was also pointed out in the submission. In support of this argument, one can only consider the federally funded Community Hubs, which have been operating in the eastern states of Australia for a particular group of women, but play a similar role to Ishar in terms of soft entry by running playgroups and group classes such as exercise or sewing (Community Hubs Australia, 2017b).

Ishar is an enabler of interpersonal resistance and a conduit to resources for supporting resilience among refugee women. The forces of neoliberalism, racism, and gender/sexism, which inform 'social cohesion' as an outcome of migration, are managed at the disciplinary domain in the matrix of oppression,

through notions of efficiency of service delivery (Collins, 2000). Women's resistance and resilience through organisations such as Ishar, which some women in this research described as a key role in their wellbeing, takes place within this broader act of loss of resourcing as hegemonic oppression.

7.5.2 Social support

You know, it's good to always be other people help. Because everyone is different. And sometimes if you come from other countries to Australia here, everybody like to have, how do you call, to help somebody else, like we all have responsibility for care of duty. We all have duty of care for others.
(Gabriella)

Supporting others was important to many women, as expressed by Gabriella. The provision of social support can also be framed as resistance as resilience. It can be understood as a creative expression of power and engagement with others who have similarly experienced adversity in their lives.

The women participants' willingness to give back and support others should also be considered in light of critique that gratitude is also an expectation of the host nation for accepting them. Fozdar (2012, p. 60) observes that for refugees "their humanity is apparently insufficient grounds for sanctuary" as in Australia "we appear to be at pains to demonstrate their contribution; our responsibility appears to be tied to an expectation of reciprocity. It provides a limited and contingent humanitarian response that expects both gratitude and assimilation" (Fozdar, 2012, p. 60). Fozdar argues that this is problematic in that it impacts on refugees' ontological security and sense of control over their lives. This argument is important from a critical perspective, as it highlights the underlying structural forces, which could potentially shape women's expressions, and the impacts of a dominant 'demonstration of worthiness' narrative on people's lives. One needs to be cognisant of not reinforcing this. A resistance reframing is a counter approach, by seeing women's generosity as an act of interpersonal strength.

Women's views in this research are similar to research by Puvimanasinghe et al. (2014) who describe altruism as a counter narrative to the trauma narrative, which is common to refugee research. Among resettled refugees in South Australia they found that a combination of pre- and post-migration life experiences combined with empathy and gratitude resulted in helping others, in particular other refugees arriving after them who were starting a new life. Altruism helped with coping and making sense of past experiences (Puvimanasinghe et al., 2014). Similarly, the lived experience of adversity and sanctuary in Australia among the women participants could be seen as a pertinent driver in helping others. Moreover, women themselves become a resource for future arrivals who are resettled, supporting their resilience, within the context of broader settlement service provision that has faced budget cuts to meet ideologically driven objectives that may not reflect the on-the-ground needs of women and their families. Indeed, a recommendation from some was for more migrants who were already settled to help new arrivals.

7.5.3 *Maintaining culture*

Absolutely your children to learn English. But your culture, your language is very important. And your children to learn. Because if your children are distanced, is not good for their education or anything. (Noushin)

Settlement in a new society includes a process of cultural relocation, which demands significant energy (Fozdar & Hartley, 2013). This includes negotiating the shift from living in collectivist cultures to a highly individualist one (Rees & Pease, 2007). Cultural goals of Australia imposed on refugees include economic participation (Losoncz, 2017b) as part of conformance to white neoliberalism (Reid, 2018). Reid uses the argument of boutique multiculturalism by Fish (1997, in Reid, 2018) to articulate how the culture of the Other is dealt with by the white neoliberal state:

The promise of cultural inclusion – made by the host state to minority communities – is reduced to displays of non-contentious diversity: food festivals and national day celebrations, often portrayed in celebratory media representation. For the multicultural subject this representation sets the

perimeters for inclusion and affirms their position as additional, rather than central, to the workings of society. (p. 82)

A strong message from the women who participated in this research through their discussions, selected photos and accompanying narratives was the meaning of maintaining important cultural practices and traditions and to pass on these to family members growing up in Australia. Sharing culture through food and language was also a way of connecting with other people in their local communities, including neighbours. Positioned as multicultural subjects who are additional to the workings of society, here the practice of culture is an expression of power. Ungar (2012a), in discussing the role of culture for facilitating resilience, highlights the decreased risk of poor mental health in studies of adult immigrants who resist cultural homogenisation or develop a bicultural identity. Culture as resistance is a facilitator to successful settlement, acknowledging that for women settlement is regulated by systems of oppression and processes of differentiation that attempt to socially locate them on the margins of society.

Culture as resistance can be connected to the importance of multiculturalism. In contrast to the critiques of multiculturalism, which I have presented in this thesis, women identified multiculturalism as being important, which they associated with cultural diversity, freedom of religion and culture and equality. It was valued as an important part of the education curriculum for the future of Australian society. The comments reflect the outward rhetoric of multiculturalism. Women's views can be considered in relation to the everyday multiculturalism perspective which "explores how cultural diversity is experienced and negotiated on the ground in everyday situations" (Wise & Velayutham, 2009, p. 2).

Wise and Velayutham (2009, p. 3) explain that an everyday multiculturalism approach aims to understand how wider social, cultural and political processes "filter through to the realm of everyday practice, exchange and meaning making, and vice versa". Everyday practice is the frame of reference for people who are establishing themselves in a new society (Voloder, 2011). One of the benefits of multiculturalism is cultural and language rights, as opposed to Australia's assimilationist past (Voloder, 2011) and this reflected many women participants' experiences in the

everyday. Similarly, other recent research with migrants to Australia showed how multiculturalism was seen as positive, as meanings are “constantly remade” in the everyday worlds of people (Edensor & Sumartojo, 2018). However, also attached to the everyday was the importance of feeling accepted by others from the white majority, which can be attributed to the importance of a sense of belonging more broadly. As Fozdar and Hartley (2014a, p. 127) explain:

Definitions of settlement often do not acknowledge explicitly that it requires the development of a sense of belonging, or emotional connection, to the nation state and its people, nor do they recognize the challenges of ensuring that a sense of belonging is developed among refugees who may be quite different culturally from the majority population of the countries in which they find themselves.

Fozdar and Hartley (2014a) distinguish between civic belonging, which is a belonging to the nation state, and ethno belonging which is a more emotional and cultural connection. While the participants expressed attachment to the rights and freedoms afforded to them in Australia, under the umbrella of the Australian community, there was also an expression of the importance of being accepted by others who were white Australians, of ethno belonging. The pervasiveness of the systems of oppression I have discussed and which have characterised Australia as a nation state are barriers to this belonging. The integration outcome of social cohesion, which emphasises community harmony and shared values, does not provide the pathway for meaningful belonging.

Further demonstrating this was the importance of citizenship as expressed by some participants. The impacts of lack of citizenship and freedom of movement pre-settlement were discussed, as well as the importance of formal Australian citizenship, which is also shown in the research as an important goal for resettled refugees (Nunn et al., 2015). Women’s narratives reflected the Australian values that humanitarian visa holders must sign up to, which are seen as important for social cohesion and integration, such as respect for others, freedom of religion and compassion for those in need. Citizenship, however, requires an Australian values test, which is English language based. This sends a clear message to women about who can belong, and this belonging is controlled by the nation state.

7.6 Challenging Integration

Having discussed barriers and facilitators to women's successful settlement, I return to the notion of integration as successful settlement and its need to be abandoned, and affirm my argument that successful settlement involves challenging the existing status quo in Australia.

Integration is unidirectional in Australia, where the expectation is on the migrant to integrate into Australian life. The emphasis is on socioeconomic participation and social cohesion. Broadly speaking—and accounting for differences among women, such as stage of life—it was clear that women's perspectives aligned with the host nation focus on the three E's as being important to their successful settlement in Australia, although for the host nation this is driven by an economic imperative. English language was most important of the three E's among women, however what women needed did not align with the provision of English language education offered through the AMEP. Furthermore, initiatives for social cohesion, with assimilationist undertones, were incongruent with the needs of women. For women, the importance of family and the settlement challenges they discussed could be more broadly related to the integration framework described by Ager and Strang (2008), with key strengths of this model being the interdependence of the domains and integration as a two-way approach. As I have shown, the Australian government offers a settlement program based on conditional support and ultimately there is the need to maintain a racial, gendered hierarchy of belonging. The Ager and Strang framework challenges this by emphasising the importance of the host nation to provide the conditions for refugees to settle successfully, based on a foundation of equal citizenship and rights.

However, as a framework that applies a normative approach to integration (informed by nation state based understandings), there are issues with this middle range theory. Those that I have discussed already include the omission of gender and other intersecting factors, which this research has brought to the forefront through the use of intersectionality. For example, age influenced settlement experiences, and other international literature on resettled refugee women, suggests that integration

indicators and a normative framework may not relate to the experiences of older women who are resettled, and the focus could instead be on strengths and life experiences to develop settlement responses with the intention of supporting their wellbeing and resilience (Dubus, 2018). This argument could be extended to other groups of women also. As part of a conditional approach to being accepted to Australia, women are dictated an expectation of what settlement should entail, without being given the opportunity to identify for themselves what is most important, such as deciding their immediate versus longer term settlement priorities. Pertinently, as Collins (2015, p. 14) writes, “individuals and groups differentially placed within intersecting systems of power have different points of view on their own and others’ experiences with complex social inequalities, typically advancing knowledge projects that reflect their social locations within power relations”. This is evident in the production and content of policy and discourse on immigration, settlement and multiculturalism in Australia. The present research has attempted to challenge this through engaging with women who have lived refugee experience for their varying perspectives.

Furthermore, intersectionality and postcolonial feminist theories highlight how processes of power influence settlement trajectories. Ultimately, the use of a normative framework of integration puts “emphasis on the problematic subject” rather than women’s potential (McPherson 2010, p. 566). In this research, many women expressed the desire to access and apply this potential. For example:

When I came to Australia there are so many opportunities for study. You can study to improve your life. (Esther)

On the other hand, as shown in the case studies of Bahia and Nwe Nwe, some women were privileged over others in obtaining opportunities such as education, depending on their social location. Women’s pre-migration locations were also important here, where a challenge to accessing education was a previous low level of formal education. As Anna stated:

I think for the education part, if you don’t know something like from when you are still in Africa, when you are still a child, you start to go to school

here, you can't know more.

The lack of recognition of intersecting factors to influence how settlement is experienced, and evaluated against a framework informed by a state based or normative understanding, is a further limitation of Ager and Strang's theory. From a social-ecological resilience perspective, the opportunities women saw in Australia are also health-sustaining resources. For many women who were denied access to settlement program provisions due to the interlocking oppressions I have discussed, Ishar played an important role in supporting their agency in seeking culturally meaningful resources for their health and wellbeing.

The concentration of resources and power at the macro level lies with a particular group who makes decisions based on their social location. This is reflected by one of the key informants on the lack of diversity among political decision makers:

Particular parties need to actively engage and have members, you know their membership of the political parties need to comprise people from all different ethnicities. They need to come out and actively engage with people, encourage people to be part of their office bearing positions, decision makers. Encourage, groom, guide, mentor people into taking up leadership roles. And only then would there be you know true change in policy at that level because when you're in a decision making position, your entire life experience guides your decisions (KI6).

The quote sits under the theme of the role of the host nation as a facilitator of women's successful settlement, and it is the host nation's role that is most significant as an enabler to establishing a new life in Australia. While women demonstrated resistance, agency and resilience in their settlement journeys, and cited facilitators, women are constrained by a power hierarchy, some more so than others. The context of settlement is not facilitative to the equitable access of health-sustaining resources, which women need for their resilience. Women's successful settlement requires a host nation commitment to tackling underlying societal inequalities, which would give women opportunities to pursue settlement goals and support their ethno belonging and health and wellbeing. This argument will be expanded upon and its

implications for policy and practice outlined in the final chapter (9).

7.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated that integration, when framed from a policy perspective, does not necessarily reflect the settlement priorities of women. Integration is informed by ideologies that serve to maintain the power hierarchy of the white settler colonial state. By juxtaposing an example of success versus integration difficulties, based on a judgement of what normative success looks like, integration is an unjust expectation of refugee women. Building on this by exploring broader barriers to integration and acts of resistance as resilience, my critique has shown the need for critical introspection of the host nation to address the causes of societal inequalities.

Chapter 8:

Photovoice, Community Based Participatory Research and empowerment

It's challenging, because they don't know what you are expecting. And forgetting that actually it was about them and not you. (Linda, interpreter-participant)

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter I respond to the research objective of exploring photovoice as a method for empowerment. The photovoice method was employed as part of a community based participatory research (CBPR) approach, which is linked to empowerment benefits to research participants, in particular through the research process. My critique is based on CBPR more broadly, reflecting on its strengths and limitations. The claims that both photovoice and CBPR empower research participants are particularly critiqued, based on my theoretical lens.

Women's perspectives on taking part in the research are presented according to the main themes, and the findings are evaluated against the literature. I provide critical reflection on the participation and community empowerment aspects of the research project.

Employing reflexivity, I highlight some of the issues that characterised the delivery of the research project. I demonstrate the difficulties of community empowerment by drawing on additional theory by Summers-Effler (2002) on barriers to social change among women, based on the role of emotional processes in interactions and relationships with others, as a subordinately positioned group in society. Applying this theory to the perspectives outlined by the women who participated in this research demonstrates the difficulty of achieving change when women's emotional energy is consumed by daily struggles. I expand on this theory and its relevance and highlight issues related to the ethics of the research, and the implications for empowerment. In conclusion, the strengths of the research, limitations and potential

to effect social change are summarised.

8.2 What Is Empowerment?

Empowerment is a term often used loosely in research without making explicit the underlying theory that informs the researcher's understanding of the concept (Cross, Woodall, & Warwick-Booth, 2017). It is therefore important that I make explicit how underlying theoretical and epistemological assumptions have informed my approach to empowerment (Williams, 2017). This research was situated in the health field with a focus on addressing the social determinants of refugee women's health. Powerlessness is a core social determinant of health, a result of physical and social disadvantage, including "being low in the hierarchy" (Wallerstein, 2002, p. 73). Empowerment is therefore a way to combat powerlessness, in turn reducing health disparities (Wallerstein, 2002).

The significance of empowerment in impacting on health is recognised in key health agreements. Its role to address the social and economic determinants of health is highlighted in the 1986 Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, the key global agreement to achieve Health for All (McPhail-Bell, Fredericks, & Brough, 2013). Health promotion, as defined by the World Health Organisation (2018b), is the process of giving people increased control over their lives, through community and environmental interventions to improve their health, and this research was an example of a community intervention. It is evident, then, that empowerment, as increased power over one's life and health, is central to health promotion (Spencer, 2015; Turner & Maschi, 2015; Woodall et al., 2010).

Wallerstein (2002, p. 74) also asserts that in order to implement empowerment interventions, power itself "must be dissected to be understood". My understanding of power is drawn from the theory of intersectionality, based on the work of Patricia Hill Collins (2000). Collins, in the context of African American women's oppression, described power as a synthesis of two approaches. Firstly, a dialectical approach recognises that while "change results from human agency" there is no "simple model of permanent oppressors and perpetual victims", but rather competing groups who may conflict and oppress one another in a social hierarchy (Collins,

2000, p, 274). Secondly, power is intangible and “circulates within a particular matrix of domination and to which individuals stand in varying relationships” (Collins, 2000, p, 274).

In relation to this understanding of power, Collins (2000, p. 286), defined empowerment as being two fold, both “gaining the critical consciousness to unpack hegemonic ideologies” as well as the constructing of new knowledge within the hegemonic domain of power. As discussed in this thesis, the hegemonic domain is a form of social organisation where ideologies consisting of people’s values, thoughts, and beliefs are normalised (Comerford, 2010). It is “where multiple groups police one another and suppress one another’s dissent” (Collins, 2000, p. 299). The notion of critical consciousness is similar to that of Paulo Freire, whose work on the liberation of the oppressed through education is largely considered to be where empowerment theory originated (Hur, 2006; Woodall, Warwick-Booth, & Cross, 2012).

Freire’s text the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) is itself “a core text for intersectionality” (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Freire (1972) argued that conscientisation, or intensive self-reflection of one’s life in relation to broader society, is foundational for effecting social change. Freire proposed a three-stage group process that involved listening, dialogue and action. The group-dialogue process facilitates critical consciousness, which is central to empowerment. Community empowerment, comprised of individual and community change “starts when people listen to each other, engage in participatory/liberatory dialogue, identify their commonalities, and construct new strategies for change” (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1994).

However, while seeing the value in these conceptualisations, particularly the importance of critical consciousness for the construction of new knowledge, I also recognise that understandings of empowerment are shaped by historical, social and political contexts and differ across cultures. For example, in non-Western cultures empowerment at a group level may be linked to family and kinship ties (Laverack, 2004). A postcolonial feminist perspective, while focused on the transformational, offers a more nuanced consideration, recognising differences and inequalities among group members in the process of conscientisation, leading to which Sardenberg

(2008, p. 24) calls liberating empowerment:

The empowerment process is about a change in the structuring of these relations, in an individual as well as a group level, and thus cannot proceed without conflict. Indeed, conflict and coalition must be considered as part of the process of liberating empowerment, particularly when thinking in terms of 'women's empowerment.'

Individual empowerment is the first step in the empowerment process (Wiggins, 2011). However, the radical underpinnings of empowerment have been diluted in the neoliberal context, shifting greater emphasis to the individual, self-empowerment perspective, over community mobilisation and action in health promotion programs and policy (Christens, 2013; Woodall et al., 2012). Empowerment has become a buzzword (Tengland, 2007; Woodall et al., 2012) without critical attention to how interventions empower at a broader level. Much of the research has focused on assessing empowerment interventions at the level of the individual (Cross et al., 2017).

Woodall et al. (2010) identified five main individual empowerment outcomes based on an evidence review of health research: improved self-efficacy and self-esteem; improved sense of control of one's life; increased knowledge and awareness; behaviour change; and an improved sense of community, social networks and social support. Self-efficacy relates to self-confidence in handling situations and problems (Tengland, 2007), while self-esteem is important for mental wellbeing and adjustment (Mann, Hosman, Schaalma, & De Vries, 2004). However there is no agreed upon definition of wellbeing (Dodge, Daly, Huyton & Sanders, 2012) as wellbeing is subjective, based on one's own assessment which is derived from their own criteria for health (Baird, 2012). Wellbeing is also a process and changes over time (Baird, 2012). A perceived sense of control over one's life is also connected to positive emotional wellbeing and a health promoting lifestyle (Gillebaart & De Ridder, 2019). Increased knowledge and awareness are vital for health promoting behaviour change (Wiggins, 2011). Social relationships and health are interconnected, with social support being well recognised in particular as connected to enhanced mental and physical health (Umberson & Montez, 2010).

A criticism of this emphasis on individual empowerment is that as it puts the onus on individuals to have control over their health, detracting from the role of governments to address structural issues to improve health outcomes (Chiapperino & Tengland, 2016). Empowerment has been depoliticised in favour of this new wave of empowerment (Chiapperino & Tengland, 2016) and ignores broader power relations (Sardenberg, 2008).

Furthermore, the construction of empowerment in the discipline of health promotion can be critiqued as privileging Western-centric worldviews (McPhail-Bell et al., 2013; Williams, 2017). This is demonstrated in global agreements such as the Ottawa Charter, which arguably promotes a Western, neoliberal (individual) assumption of health (McPhail-Bell et al., 2013; Williamson & Carr, 2009). Critical awareness of the continuing influence of colonialism when undertaking empowerment interventions in health promotion practice is needed (Chandanabhumma & Narasimhan, 2019). Empowerment is usually defined by the researcher and not the community being empowered (McConnell et al., 2019). In addition, “the practice of empowering marginalised peoples assumes that the health researcher has the ability to exercise power over the marginalised—s/he is able to empower these individuals” (Darroch & Giles, 2014, p. 27). It is here that a postcolonial feminist approach to empowerment is particularly useful, which stresses reflexivity, constantly examining and re-evaluating how one’s power impacts on a research process (Darroch & Giles, 2014; Ozkazanc-Pan, 2012). My use of reflexive practice and the implications for assessing whether this research was empowering is discussed later in this chapter. Furthermore, through this practice I acknowledge there are differences among women based on intersecting identities, and empowerment must be explored within this context (Sardenberg, 2008).

8.3 Empowerment and Photovoice

As mentioned, empowerment is claimed to be part of the process of engaging in photovoice for participants. Wang and Burris (1994), the developers of photovoice, describe empowerment through the use of photovoice as being power to, power with and power over. This is discussed further as affirmative power to accomplish things,

power with as including the ability to work with others, and power over as the ability to influence others and the material environment (Wang & Burris, 1994, p. 174).

Drawing on the principles of Paulo Freire, photos serve as a code that mirror participants' daily realities, and through conscientisation their experiences are contextualised within broader social and political conditions (Wang & Burris, 1994). Participants come to new ways of thinking about their lives (Morgan et al., 2010). This consciousness raising is seen as central by theorists to the empowerment process (Carr, 2003; Wong, Zimmerman, & Parker, 2010). However, it also represents just one part of the empowerment process (Liebenberg, 2018). Empowerment also relates to increased access to knowledge through the process of photo taking and critical discussion, as well as knowledge in the conduct and sharing of the research findings; access to decisions about the research process alongside a voice to influence policy; access to networks established through the research and to organisations, which are a form of social capital and can influence social change; and access to resources including strategic partnerships, which can support the sustainability of projects, dissemination and change resources (Liebenberg, 2018; Wang & Burris, 1994). Change is arguably initiated through the subsequent action raised from achieving critical consciousness (Wong et al., 2010). This is community empowerment.

8.3.1 Critiquing photovoice as an empowerment pathway

Photovoice can be a tool for decolonising health research through the co-construction of knowledge between participants and researchers, with the agency and knowledge of individuals drawn on through their participation (Racine & Petrucka, 2011). However, much of the research on the empowerment benefits of photovoice reflects the dominant Western discourse of individual empowerment. Although a literature search did not find any peer reviewed research specifically exploring empowerment among women of refugee background who have taken part in photovoice research, three studies—conducted with women from other marginalised groups—were identified. These predominantly focused on reported individual empowerment benefits, which also aligned with the findings of the broader empowerment research, including increased self-esteem, sense of control over one's life and knowledge and

skills (Budig et al., 2018; Duffy, 2011; Teti et al., 2013), as well as relationships with co-participants and reaching out to others outside their communities through sharing of the research findings (Budig et al., 2018; Duffy, 2011).

The lack of studies reporting on community empowerment outcomes of photovoice is a limitation in demonstrating its effectiveness as a tool for empowerment (Liebenberg, 2018). The challenge of photovoice to achieve meaningful social change is also noted by others (Budig et al., 2018). For example, Denov, Doucet, and Kamara (2012) used photovoice with youth in Sierra Leone who had been former child soldiers, to explore their reintegration experiences. They found that while policy makers were engaged with the findings through the showing of photographs by participants, this did not influence change in their lives and a learning from the project was that a clear strategy was needed for ongoing advocacy (Denov et al., 2012). This was also echoed in the findings of a literature review on photovoice by Sanon et al. (2014), who found that strategies for system level change and improved health outcomes for target populations needed to be incorporated into photovoice projects.

Further, Johnston (2016) importantly argues that photovoice can set up false hopes for change among participants, and instead should be a tool for informing policy, rather than changing policy, as a number of external factors are also significant to achieving social change. Johnston (2016, p. 208) pointedly argues that the strength of photovoice is the shift in power with participants taking on the role as co-researchers, to be “recognised as a shift in viewpoint and authority in the image-making process without the unnecessary leap to responsibility to enact meaningful yet sometimes complicated social and policy change”. This is because photovoice should be “a tool for policy informing rather than changing” (Johnston, 2016). Social change is complex and difficult to achieve. Others have also asserted that indeed photovoice will not lead to a complete state of empowerment, and in the case of specific populations such as marginalised youth who are in the process of identity formation, the emphasis should be on their individual empowerment (Strack et al., 2004). Such critiques are important caveats in proclaiming photovoice as a pathway to meaningful social change.

8.4 Empowerment Through the CBPR Process

As discussed in the methodology chapter (5), CBPR was employed as a research approach. CBPR emphasises the relationship between the researcher and participants, as partners and co-researchers. This relationship is intended to be empowering because it involves “the equitable sharing of knowledge and resources” (Paradiso de Sayu & Chanmugam, 2016, p. 105). This equitable sharing of power is part of participation, yet as I discussed in chapter 5, meaningful participation remains a challenge among researchers who employ CBPR. Similar to empowerment, participation has its roots in radical social change movements (Alejandro Leal, 2007). It has become a poorly defined concept and a multitude of approaches have emerged and evolved over time (George, Mehra, Scott, & Sriram, 2015; Van de Velde et al., 2016). CBPR may be understood as empowering to the extent that it includes the participation of the partnering community in decision making regarding the research and the resources and opportunities it provides (Stack & McDonald, 2018). There has been limited work evaluating the level of empowerment experienced by the partnering community (Salimi et al., 2012).

To assess participation in this research as empowerment, in this chapter I consider the concept of the ladder of participation (Arnstein, 1969). It ranks participation along a continuum based on the power conferred to community members (Spears Johnson et al., 2016; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). It recognises the role of participation as power and as “an object of struggle” (Carpentier, 2016, p. 73). Arnstein proposed eight rungs to demonstrate the varied levels of power which can be conferred to citizens in relation to a plan or program (see Figure 6). At the lowest rungs of the ladder are manipulation (1) and therapy (2), which Arnstein described as educating or curing participants and essentially represents their non-participation. At the top of the ladder is citizen control (8) where they have full managerial control of an initiative (Arnstein, 1969).

The ladder is deliberately simplistic to highlight the difference in power between the haves and have-nots, whereby “in most cases the have-nots really do perceive the powerful as a monolithic "system," and power holders actually do view the have-nots as a sea of "those people," with little comprehension of the class and caste

differences among them” (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217). It is also noted that community participation and control does not exist as a static level over the course of an initiative (Funk et al., 2012; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). Citizen control is associated with the greatest level of power through the research process. I draw on this concept in my discussion on women’s participation in the Photovoice Project.

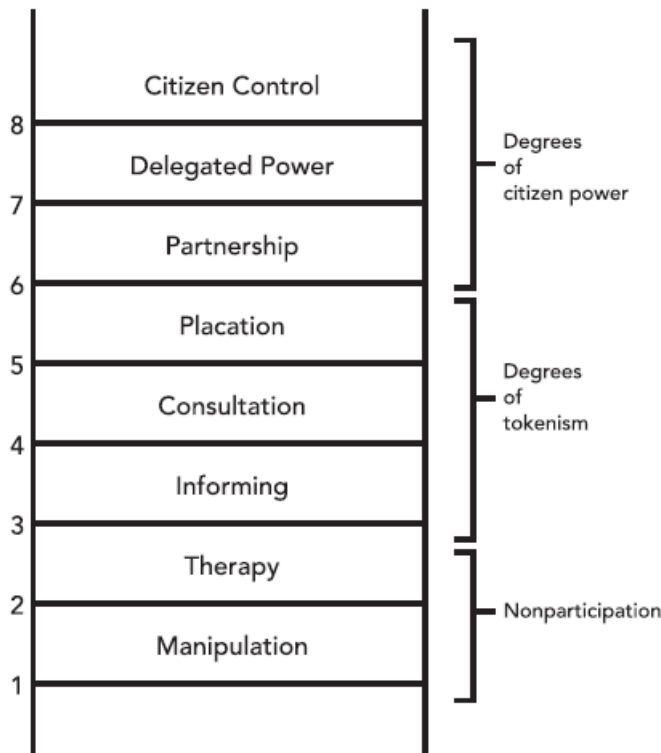


Figure 6. Arnstein’s ladder of citizen participation.

From “A ladder of citizen participation”, by S. Arnstein, 2019, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 85(1), p. 26. Copyright 2019 by the American Planning Association.

8.5 Women’s Perspectives on the Photovoice Project

Over the course of the research I sought from the women their perspectives on the photovoice method and research process, the benefits and challenges. During the photovoice group sessions, some women reflected on the process through our conversations and these reflections were recorded. The final photovoice group session included specific questioning on how they felt about taking part in the photovoice sessions. Women were also invited to participate in a semi-structured

interview with me. Eleven women agreed to take part in an interview. Guiding questions asked were:

- How would you describe the project to family and friends?
- What were the benefits of taking part in the project?
- What have been the challenges/difficulties?
- How would you describe the experiences of watching other people view your photos?
- Thinking back, what has changed for you as a result of taking part in this project?
- What are your reflections on sharing your stories?

These questions did not explicitly address community empowerment, a limitation which was also mentioned in the methodology chapter (5). I employed thematic framework analysis to identify the main themes from the group feedback and individual interviews; the themes were discussed with participants as part of the member checking of the themes. While the process of analysis was inductive, I was informed by an understanding of the empowerment benefits of photovoice as discussed in the literature. Four main themes were generated from the analysis of the transcripts from the photovoice sessions and interviews. These were: 1) knowledge and skills; 2) reflective group process 3) wellbeing and 4) relationships.

8.5.1 Knowledge and skills

Reflecting the notion of empowerment as access to skills and knowledge (Budig et al., 2018; Higgins, 2016; Woodall et al., 2010), many of the women reported knowledge and skills gained from taking part. One of the most common observations was new knowledge about other women's cultures and experiences. Some women talked about comparing their own lives to others, and the differences in their experiences and challenges:

Like I learn different cultures, they talk about their, like they don't have many chance to come, going in and out ... they're more isolated. (Nwe Nwe)

Yes when I heard them (the other women) talking I said, oh what I have been through is nothing compared to them... (Bahia)

Information about services and support available, or how to address issues women were experiencing were highlighted as a benefit of the groups:

*With the issue brought up so many people just give me some ideas; you can contact your local council. You know, like they giving me some advice.
(Nafeesa)*

I heard about different problem in here, and how to fix it. (Ariana)

Noushin and Adele, who had been settled for over 10 years in Australia, described how the group sessions also allowed women to discuss their settlement experiences and share their knowledge with others who may be more recently arrived, and offer their support:

Actually when everybody from other country, they come to this new country, absolutely a lot of things that is strange or new. And we don't know. That's why it is good this class, they do it like this class, a lot of people they share their experience, it is very important. They share their experience and other people they learn a lot of things from it. For example, for driving, for a lot of things. (Noushin)

When the woman talk problem with her, same here. Same, I remember my life here. But I want to tell her about what I have experienced here, maybe take care of life easy; not now she feel life is hard. (Adele, interpreter-participant)

Many women found that a benefit for them of taking part was being given a camera they could keep, and the training in photography. They expressed how useful it was having a professional photographer who provided basic instruction in photography skills:

I liked that project very much and I describe it as a learning point for

everybody, learning techniques of photography taking, taking photographs and little bit of camera techniques. (Farah)

We never thought that the skills we are getting, we can use them. But we are happy that we have been able to use them. (Sulaf)

Some women also expressed their desire for further training and resources in photography:

I hope so learning more than this project, learn how to do wedding to which, professional photos. (Aliya)

There should be a photovoice two ... that can be the advanced level of learning (photography). (Farah)

Similar to findings by other researchers (Duffy, 2011) women described taking part in the project as a positive experience for enhancing personal skills, including speaking in front of a group:

Normally I'm a very shy person so in this I also find that I gain a bit of confident, you know talking as a group. (Nafeesa)

I think it built confidence and it enhances the self-esteem. (Alma)

Like you, when you present something or you have talk about yourself, it's like you share your story, yeah it's like make you, you feel like you more confidence to talking in front of the people. (Nwe Nwe)

Linda, the interpreter-participant and experienced in community work, was the only participant who explicitly expressed in her interview that one of the benefits was the knowledge that the project aimed to share with the wider community, and its potential for influencing policy making. While recognising change may be difficult, Linda saw the photo exhibition as an opportunity to inform the community who were not aware of the challenges women faced:

I think I am exactly empowered because of it hopefully helping others in future or just people understanding, not necessarily, I don't know for improvement, to which extent it'll go to improve the situation, but for people to know what's happening. It's not like people are coming here and they have it easy and this and that. You know just, just for others to relate to from the wider society and understand actually it's not that easy. (Linda, interpreter-participant)

Linda's unique perspective, which differed from others in relation to the benefits of the project, also reflects the fact that researchers and community members bring their own agendas to the CBPR process, as discussed by Wallerstein and Duran (2008). I elaborate on this further in the discussion section of this chapter.

8.5.2 Reflective group process

For a number of women, using their photos as a catalyst for discussion and the subsequent reflective group dialogue was valued. This theme is also evident in other photovoice research on benefits of the group process (Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Foster-Fishman, Nowell, Deacon, Nievar, & McCann, 2005). The format, through photos as a talking point, allowed a unique way of sharing experiences and being understood by others. The group interaction reflects the importance of the empowerment process as understanding and relating to the social context (Coemans et al., 2017). Some women reported that initially it was challenging to talk through their photographs to their group, but this became easier with practice. Their comments demonstrate that engaging in reflective dialogue can be an empowering process:

So we got the chance to voice our opinion of that photo. So it was a good feeling to share with everyone, to have them understand what you wanted them to understand. (Rukia)

I felt good about it and my explanation was also been appreciated by the teachers and the participants as well, so it was a very nice thing to choose these photos and explain them. (Lan)

I should mention I have my children and I have my family members at home and I am not alone, but this type of conversation we didn't have it, so this sharing, this conversation to be honest, I am really enjoying it. (Sulaf)

Sulaf spoke specifically about the usefulness of the reflective dialogue during one of the photovoice sessions:

It was like a reflection of what's going on in your own life, presenting this photo you present a part of your life. Something affects my life, I reflect, and I use it in my life. (Sulaf)

Alma reflected on the deliberate selection of a photograph she shared with the group and the consideration she put into it, to ensure that others in her group understood what the image meant to her:

If you look at mine (photo), because when I used to be in Iraq the power was cut off most of the time and that was a scary issue for me. So when you look at the photo of the torch and the torch is with me all the time. I keep it all the time just in case, because darkness does terrify me. So that's why when you put the photo maybe you saw that, I put the torch or the candle....Especially if you want to express certain feelings or certain issue within you and you wanted this picture to talk about it, you want this picture to present it. (Alma)

Four women acknowledged the significance of a safe space provided in allowing them to share, including the rapport they developed with myself and my colleagues who helped support the facilitation of the groups. Importantly however, some challenges were involved with the SHOWED technique of questioning used in the sessions, as well as the session design requiring critical reflection. It was noted that the capacity to explore some topics in depth was limited, because there was not enough time to discuss some of the topics; in some cases groups were larger because women could participate only at that time of the day. . Linda also made an observation about the expectations of the SHOWED technique. She perceived seeking women's views on addressing systemic issues as challenging when women

were already managing multiple responsibilities in their lives and negotiating the everyday was their focus:

I think it's not easy to ask somebody who has extreme issues to solve a mathematical problem and that's how I felt at times for some of them ... I don't think there was a few that actually reflected about it you know, it's just because of the experiences they've had and the challenges they are facing daily. (Linda, interpreter-participant)

8.5.3 Wellbeing through expression

Wellbeing benefits included providing an avenue for emotional expression, through both verbalising in a group setting as well as the creative experience of taking photographs, which is also discussed in other photovoice research with women for supporting their wellbeing (Teti, French, Kabel, & Farnan, 2017). This was particularly expressed by two women who had discussed their personal experiences of managing stressful family situations:

This experience took us away from depression and feeling sad and all that.
(Lina)

It is like hobby and it de-stress me. (Lan)

The process of sharing triggered emotions was both positive and at times difficult as women discussed loss and grief. Stories of loss affected other women who were visibly upset, as well as myself as a co-researcher. A specific example of this was when a woman shared her loss of close family members (already discussed in chapters 5 and 6). Strategies for support included the support workers who were interpreter-participants and access to the Ishar psychologist. However at a Cultural Reference Group meeting held after the photovoice component, it was recognised by one of the co-researchers (Rukia) and Ishar's project officer as an important learning from the research, that more was needed to support women who may have felt the discussions brought up difficult emotions, a point I return to later in this chapter. Alma reflected in her interview on the challenge of bringing up past experiences:

You feel that something was hidden inside. Yeah it's quite, quite difficult. See how many years had passed, but still the effect is there. (Alma)

Yet Alma also framed this positively, as therapeutic:

I felt like it was a way to express myself and taking away some of the pain that is inside me by sharing the photos with others, talking about that. (Alma)

8.5.4 Relationships

A further benefit identified was the friendships and connections made with others, reflecting empowerment as improved access to social networks and support (Budig et al., 2018; Woodall et al., 2010). Some women discussed the importance of the project in addressing feelings of isolation and the building of relationships:

I found a few new relationships, like friendships and other people experience and know about how they feel and how they experience the life when they came here. (Farah)

The sharing you know, like we shared and you think oh yeah, I'm not alone because people start sharing their past together. (Yasmin)

The project represented one of the important functions of Ishar for women, providing access to peer support through its programs. The women's' comments reflect the literature on the value of community programs and community based organisations generally for women as access to social support (Bloemraad & Terriquez, 2016; Liamputtong et al., 2015):

You need help and this is helping for woman, and talk and laugh and have a good time. (Adele, interpreter-participant)

It was good to have something to do rather than sitting at home. To come and see other people, talk to other people, get out of the house. (Lilian)

When asked about the benefits of taking part, some women specifically linked the project to their participation in Ishar more broadly. For example, Lan discussed how her daughter was happy for her to take part, as she was concerned about her mother's stress levels with managing caring responsibilities for another family member:

This is the second year that I have been to Ishar and actually get out of the house to take part in something so my daughter very happy that I actually get out of the house, learn something new, do this and do that, instead of at home and stressed. (Lan)

8.6 Discussion

The analysis of the women's discussion on the impacts of the Photovoice Project showed that for many the benefits of participating aligned with individual empowerment. They reported gains in skills and knowledge, the dialogue with others was valued, and the knowledge and awareness that they gained through their experience could be used. It was also an opportunity to participate in an Ishar activity and build relationships with other women. For the majority of the women, based on their responses, their frame of reference did not align with the systemic objectives of this research. However, before providing a full critique of these results, I will provide some further context and reflections regarding the participatory underpinnings of this research, in recognition of participation as an empowerment strategy.

8.6.2 My power and privilege

The observations made by interpreter-participant Linda regarding participants' perceptions of me as the researcher, as expecting something from them and the project not being about them as such, illustrates the power relations of the research setting. It represents a challenge of CBPR, which is embedded in social and historical contexts (Wallerstein & Duran, 2008). As the white, Australian born researcher/outsider working with women in which the matrix of oppression positions them as low in the hierarchy I represent a more powerful group, despite attempts to challenge traditional researcher-researched relationships and democratise knowledge

production (Groot et al., 2019).

A learning from this research is to ensure greater self-reflection on my identity and positionality at the outset of the project, through consistent debriefing with Ishar and university co-researchers about this, as well as at the outset embedding strategies that can ensure trust, and challenge power relations through greater shared ownership of the process of research and the outputs. Yet, as Murray and Nash (2016, p. 928) point out for genuine participatory research, participants as co-researchers “have a role in project design and composing research questions. However, in reality, researchers who have the time and skills to focus on a particular issue often initiate participatory research”. Furthermore, the more participatory the research, the greater the time and resources required of the participants (Murray & Nash, 2016). The tension between the ideals of CBPR and the realities of undertaking research when working within the university context can be a source of stress. I felt this at times when I perceived differing levels of engagement with the objectives, as well as limited participation in the reference group and involvement in the action planning aspect of the project.

8.6.1 On reflexivity, empowerment and women’s participation

Reflexivity is central to effective CBPR, in particular the role of the researcher to continually evaluate their positionality in seeking to challenge power relationships inherent in research. At the micro level, one way in which I sought to address this was ensuring women’s participation in aspects of the research through decision making where possible (Liebenberg, 2018). The objectives of the project had been already established in collaboration with Ishar executive staff, and were the basis on which the project was funded; therefore the objectives were not an aspect of participation, being higher up on Arnstein’s ladder of participation for the women. However, the research question was broad, which included seeking women’s perspectives on the settlement process in Australia. I strived to ensure participation at the level of partnership throughout, which is the redistribution of power between citizens and power holders through negotiation of planning and decision making responsibilities (Arnstein, 1969). The participants had co-control over the format of the sessions, in the spirit of CBPR and photovoice as a collaborative process, and

engaging them as co-researchers.

The women identified in their groups the topics they wished to photograph and chose a photo/s for each session in which they wished to share. The formats of the sessions were flexible, responsive to the women's preferences for discussion, breaks and photography practice. As a facilitator, I would often check in with them at points through the sessions to ask how they were finding the discussions and how they might like to proceed. I would also revisit the objectives of the project in the photovoice sessions with the women as part of informed participation. In ensuring empowerment as access to the research process, women were invited to take part in the Cultural Reference Group. However, as mentioned, levels of understanding of the broader objectives varied. This was also observed by the photographer and research assistant who assisted with the sessions.

The majority of the participants had attended Ishar activities in the past or were attending other activities provided by the organisation. For some, the photovoice activity was offered to them as an option to the regular program they attended, if they wished to take part. Learning to take photographs with a professional photographer was something many women expressed as valued when their feedback was sought on the project. In some groups, we attempted to include more time for photo taking practice where possible, as women stated that they wished to have more time doing so. Women were compensated for their participation with three gift vouchers, but if they wanted to keep their camera they also had to participate in the photovoice component of the research and commit to attending the six sessions. Although all sessions were well attended, when it came to choosing their photos for an exhibition, half of the women participated. While a few absences were related to illness, the timing of the session and some women being away, attendance at the exhibition planning day also reflected the participation of those who had been most engaged in the photovoice discussions. Only one of the women who nominated to take part in the Cultural Reference Group meetings attended, as well as one of the interpreter-participants from Ishar on occasion.

These observations can be considered alongside those made by Linda, the interpreter-participant. In her interview Linda discussed the difficulties in using the

SHOWED technique and the aims of the project. Linda stated that although there were reminders throughout about the goals of the project, for some women, *“it’s challenging, because they don’t know what you are expecting. And forgetting that actually it was about them and not you.”*

Linda also highlighted the difficulty for people with a lot of personal issues to reflect on some of their experiences, and that for some the benefit was: *“that sense of it’s an outing, I’m taking photos, I’m going to keep the camera.”*

These observations further demonstrate the divergent agendas that researchers and community members bring to CBPR. They highlight the ever-present power dynamic of researcher-participant within the matrix of oppression—the power hierarchy—despite attempts to challenge this dynamic. It should also be noted that, anecdotally, the Ishar project officers who I worked with expressed the opinion that the project was very positive based on the feedback they received from women who were in their programs. The photography and group sessions were enjoyed by many of the participants and this was expressed in their reflections. An important part of the co-production of knowledge was that the women had control of selecting photos they wished to be exhibited (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). A launch of the photo banners at Ishar was held a year later, to coincide with Refugee Week 2017. It was well attended by the women who had selected their photos for exhibition, along with other Ishar clients. At the launch some women also volunteered to speak impromptu about the research and their lives in Australia.

Following the Ishar launch, a second launch was held at Curtin University some months later, where Ishar staff, service providers, government representatives and other key stakeholders were invited to attend. It was combined with the launches of two other research projects undertaken by the lead investigator. Women participants were sought to speak at the event to share their stories with policy makers and other relevant stakeholders.

However no one took up the opportunity. Here as a researcher, I acknowledge a limitation of this research to effectively engage with the women participants in supporting their empowerment. Barriers included the location of the university as far

from where women lived and, even though transport was offered to them this was not taken up. The timing of the event, in the early evening was also reported to be inconvenient to many with families. Furthermore and importantly, it may also reflect that the forum was not what the women may have preferred as a way of engaging with stakeholders, including decision makers.

The lack of participation demonstrates its non-static nature, as women's involvement shifted from partnership to consultation with power holders representing their views. Furthermore, the advocacy component has been led by Curtin University with some support from Ishar. This has involved the sharing of research results with stakeholders, articles across various media sources and non-academic publications, and some advocacy to government, as discussed in chapter 5. These actions reflect a common theme of participatory research, where community participation ceases at the phase of the dissemination of results, which is then led by academics (Cornell, Mkhize, & Kessi, 2019).

8.6.3 Is community empowerment realistic?

Acknowledging the varied and wavering levels of participation, and the individual empowerment benefits expressed by the women, a useful theory to draw on here is that of Summers-Effler (2002) who examined the potential for women's activism through an understanding of emotional dynamics. Summers-Effler extended existing theory to show how micro emotional processes among women—as a subordinately positioned group in society—can result in social change. Summers-Effler drew on interaction ritual theory by Randall Collins (1990) and synthesised this with Norbert Wiley's model of the self (1994) to explore possibilities for women's resistance. Summers-Effler shows that long term subordinate positioning, which women experience, impacts on their emotional energy. Emotional energy is conceptualised as long term energy, including enthusiasm and personal strength, and is what people seek to maximise in their lives. Because women are subordinately positioned in society, many cannot avoid energy-draining interactions in their daily lives. Directly resisting subordination risks the loss of existing energy levels and may result in conflict with others who are more powerful. Accepting the status quo in a situation means defending existing emotional energy and avoiding conflict. This is the most

appealing choice for many women. Women choose to internalise their emotional response to their positioning.

To avoid conflict in social bond interactions where women face subordination, women internalise deviant emotions. This continued management of emotions impacts negatively on wellbeing and decreases women's capacity for self-reflexivity. However, the internalisation of emotions can be challenged through experiences of solidarity with others in group ritual. Applying this theory, the Photovoice Project is an example of group ritual. Solidarity creates collective identity among people who are similarly positioned, such as women who also have lived experience as refugees.

More frequent interactions help to establish group membership and interdependence, building emotional energy through legitimising deviant emotions. Personal problems are seen in the social context, and a sense of injustice is felt. This can result in critical consciousness through the group experience. This critical consciousness does not necessarily lead to social action, and both require significant cognitive work or high emotional energy of a critical mass of people. Resistance movements here provide the greatest potential for maximising energy. There is a process of weighing up benefits with detriments to one's energy. White, educated women may have more to gain in terms of emotional energy for challenging the status quo over women with multiple subordinate statuses and it is argued that in order to have an inclusive movement for all women "there would have to be a way to create solidarity between women who experience a wide range of emotional conditions that reflect the very diverse contexts for gender oppression" (Summers-Effler, 2002, p. 56).

As discussed, photovoice provided a space for women to explore how they felt about their life experiences through reflective dialogue, which was beneficial and difficult at times. This exploration is important for facilitating critical consciousness (Summers-Effler, 2002). However as the photovoice sessions were conducted over a relatively short period (6 two-hour sessions were held over approximately three months), it was arguably limited in its ability to build significant solidarity among women. As Summers-Effler asserts, longer term interactions are necessary for this to occur. Nevertheless, it represented for women one aspect of the work of Ishar, a women's focused organisation, which promotes group ritual through its activities.

From a feminist perspective, women's organisations have an important role in bringing women together for their mutual empowerment (Sardenberg, 2008). The significance of Ishar was expressed in women's photos and narratives. Continuing to facilitate women's conscientisation through projects like photovoice in the longer term could therefore be seen as a strategy for community empowerment.

It should also be noted that access to resourcing is a significant barrier for the effective functioning of women's organisations (Guilfoyle, La Rosa, Botsis, & Butler-O'Halloran, 2014). Hegemonic interests at the macro level results in services and programs for refugee women that are underfunded, and the feasibility of critical consciousness leading to social action, which already demands significant energy, becomes an even more challenging feat. Ishar is an example here, having suffered loss of funding in recent years, as I discussed in the previous chapter (7).

To reassert, community is also complex and not homogenous (Laverack, 2004). Women learnt about how their experiences and issues were different to others, demonstrating the need to recognise the diversity of contexts in which women experience oppression (Summers-Effler, 2002). This is also important from an intersectional perspective, where women may experience privilege or oppression as part of the category of refugee depending on race, English language proficiency and other characteristics. In this regard, community empowerment may be less realistic. Women must feel part of a mutual group as a step in the process towards social action. In this research, some women were introduced to each other for the first time. One of the groups was also significantly large, comprised of 17 women, and while the group was separated into two for the photovoice discussions, this did arguably represent a limitation to developing small group solidarity.

Furthermore, the notion of the benefits outweighing the risks to emotional energy levels is worth highlighting. If women are already focused on daily survival, which is in itself a form of everyday resilience (Lenette et al., 2013), engaging in conscientisation and as advocates for better policy and advocacy responses to assist resettlement is a significant expectation. Women also have other priorities in their lives. Other photovoice research with mothers has also discussed awareness of the "burden of participation" where there are caring/family responsibilities in

committing to social justice action (Murray & Nash, 2016). This awareness of participation as a burden is an important procedural ethical consideration (Murray & Nash, 2016).

As I have highlighted, the design of this project was decided upon with the partner organisation. A key learning from this process is to explore with women participants from the outset a collaborative approach to systemic advocacy through options beyond what was stipulated. This has also been echoed by other feminist scholars as necessary for decolonising photovoice research (Cornell et al., 2019). An inherent assumption was women were in need of empowering and conscientisation, and they should want to advocate for themselves and others through the exhibition and public speaking component common to the photovoice approach.

Furthermore, empowerment is a subjective term that researchers need to unpack and conceptualise with women participants (Coemans et al., 2017). For this research, I did not explore with the women what empowerment meant to them, a further learning and limitation from the research process. Despite these limitations, there was value in the showing of photos, expression and being understood, which is also demonstrated as a benefit of photovoice research with immigrant women (Sutherland & Cheng, 2009). It was also important as a social outlet and this aspect in supporting women should not be disregarded.

8.6.4 The ethics of undertaking Photovoice and CBPR with people of refugee background

As mentioned, one of the learnings from this research related to the difficult emotions and trauma which some of the discussions triggered and the need for immediate support for women on site to ensure their safety as identified with the Cultural Reference Group members. Other participatory researchers have discussed the importance of research which involves bearing witness. They argue that it is important that research allows refugee participants to speak and process painful memories, as part of preventing further trauma (Carter, Banks, Armstrong, Kindon, & Burkett, 2013). However, in this research, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Cultural Reference Group members recognised that more was needed to support

women who might be processing difficult emotions and memories that arose from the discussions.

As discussed, women had access to a psychologist at Ishar if required. This was communicated to participants during the project. There were also Ishar support workers in the sessions to emotionally support women if needed. The procedures I had mentioned had been reviewed as satisfactory strategies by the university's ethics review committee. On reflection, based on the feedback from the Cultural Reference Group, a more extensive adverse event protocol would have been useful to ensure the safety of participants, as part of ethical considerations.

This issue reflects arguments in the literature on the need for alternative approaches to support the ethical undertakings of CBPR beyond the standard approaches of university ethics review. Research with other vulnerable groups using photovoice has also highlighted the importance of ethical frameworks which are based on the community one is working with, and which extend beyond the requirements of standard university protocols (Creighton et al., 2018). Creighton et al. (2018) notes that the most comprehensive guide for researchers and practitioners on the ethics of photovoice dates back to 2001 with little else published, despite the proliferation of its use and advances in social media, which have changed how we engage with photographs. The inadequacy of research ethics committees in considering the ethics of research with refugees (Gifford, 2013) as well as CBPR more broadly is also acknowledged by researchers (Tamariz et al., 2015; Wilson et al., 2018). Banks et al. (2013, p. 274) describe this, as related to research participants being collaborators or co-researchers:

Institutional codes of ethics and research governance frameworks generally pay little attention to participatory research. They assume that researchers from research institutions are in control of projects and have complete responsibility for ensuring ethical practice. They assume predictability rather than flexibility in the research process, tend to be 'risk averse' and may categorise community researchers in the same way as research participants who are simply informants.

Acknowledging the limitations of ethical guidelines and review processes in the undertaking of participatory research, Groot et al. (2019) proposed a framework for the ethics of care in undertaking participatory research involving people in vulnerable health situations (see Figure 6). The framework builds on the feminist-based, second-generation ethics of care theory of Joan Tronto (2013, in Groot et al. 2019). It involves five aspects of care. The development of this framework follows Groot et al.'s research to address the improvement of emergency psychiatric care in the Netherlands and involved co-researchers with lived experience. The authors describe it as a “compass for reflection” (Groot et al., 2019, p. 299) for research teams in the undertaking of participatory research projects in health and related paradigms. It is applied to academic and non-academic co-researchers with lived experience of the phenomena. Such an approach could be applied to the Photovoice Project, as part of reflexive practice and recognition of refugee research as situational (Gifford, 2013). Its relevance can be demonstrated.

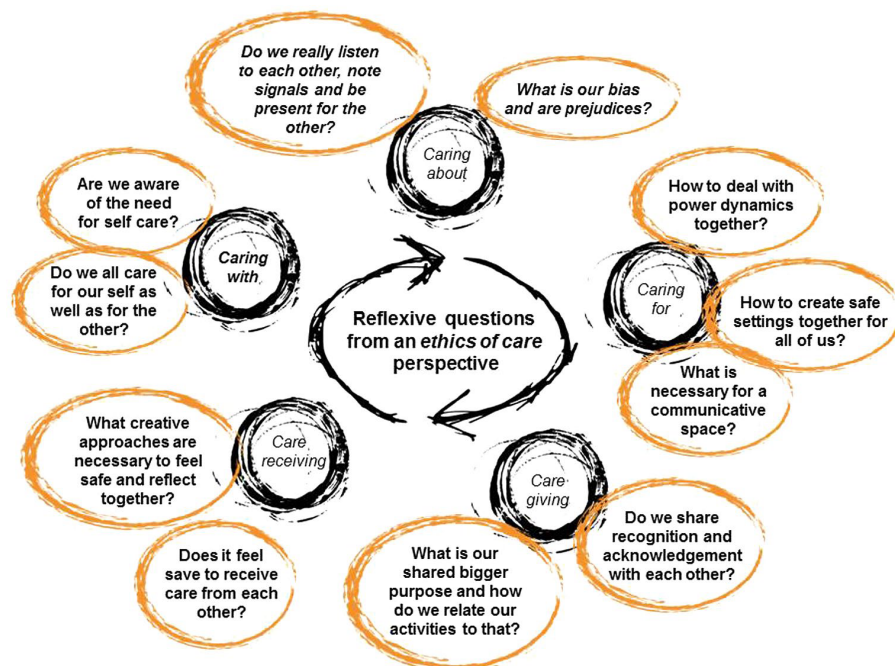


Figure 7. An ethics of care lens for working with co-researchers (Groot et al., 2019).

From “Ethics of care in participatory health research: mutual responsibility in collaboration with co-researchers,” by B.C. Groot et al., 2019, *Educational Action Research*, 27(2), p. 298. Copyright 2018 by the Author.

Firstly, according to the model, *caring about* includes listening to others, being

present, noting signals and empathy for the wellbeing of others. This applies to all participants, researchers and co-researcher. Such a principle may have guided appropriate responses to emotional distress during sessions of the photovoice research, through reflection on any unconscious bias, recognising that some of the co-researchers, myself and fellow Curtin University team members, were without personal experience of the topic, while ensuring that we demonstrate empathy without paternalism (Groot et al., 2019). It also relates to what Gifford (2013) emphasises as respect being a starting point for the undertaking of research with people with lived refugee experience.

The second step is *caring for*, which involves shared responsibility for each other's safety. It involves an appropriate, safe setting and support. This is particularly relevant in light of the concerns which were raised about women's wellbeing during the photovoice sessions.

Care giving is the act of caring, through connectedness and a shared purpose, yet also through demonstrating recognition of the role that co-researchers bring to the research, both immaterial and material. For example, in this project, vouchers and a camera at the end of the project was expressed in women's feedback as important.

Care receiving involves monitoring participatory way of working. It includes ongoing evaluation and reflection of whether ways of working are in line with the community based participatory principles of the research, through debriefing after sessions (which was also undertaken in this research). It also involves recognising that co-researchers all have their own goals and benefits from taking part in the research, which I have discussed in this chapter. Finally, the *caring with* component of the model is based on the principles of justice, equality and freedom, and notions of solidarity in working for social justice, and involves self-care as one is working in an emotional praxis (Groot et al., 2019)

This framework could be considered in the undertaking of future participatory research projects as part of reflexivity. For example, for future projects it could be presented to the community partner at the beginning of the project. The meeting would involve discussion with the community partner about the principles and how

the compass could be applied. The compass could be personalised to the context (e.g., Ishar) and brought to participants (e.g., women) who expressed an interest to take part in the research. Then further discussion could take place and all involved could identify strategies for its application. It could also be a guide for discussion in project reference group meetings.

8.6.5 *Ishar as community partner*

The project partnership with Ishar can also be considered in relation to processes of community empowerment. Ishar is the only multicultural women's health organisation in Western Australia and, as part of a movement of immigrant and refugee women's health organisations, advocates on multicultural women's health policy (Jamieson, 2012). The partnership was vital, enabling strategies for achieving social change and action to be put in place.

The research was conducted at the level of partnership with Ishar on the ladder of participation, with negotiation regarding the design of the project and roles during implementation. Five staff members took part as interpreter-participants, and one of their project officers participated in all of the Cultural Reference Group meetings. As discussed in the methodology chapter (5), I worked with Ishar's project officers who recruited participants, provided input into the design of photovoice sessions to ensure they suited women's availability, assisted with the logistics of running the sessions held at Ishar's premises and organised interpreters. Ishar's project officer and two of the interpreter-participants were also involved in reviewing the themes identified from the photovoice sessions, and the content and format of the banners and booklet. Ishar's Executive Officer reviewed the final report on the project.

Social action continued following the conduct of the research. The Executive Officer was involved in writing a joint letter to Parliamentarians in 2017 in relation to proposed changes to citizenship, which would have made citizenship more difficult to attain for women with low English language skills. The CEO highlighted barriers to English language learning as a key finding from the research. The exhibition of women's photographs and stories toured libraries in metropolitan Perth, and the research team spoke on the findings at community events. In response to the

recommendation to address barriers to employment, Ishar and Curtin University developed a proposal for a peer mentoring program supporting women to enter employment, which was successfully funded.

This relationship, then, can be considered as embodying the principles of empowerment to a degree, as it involved access to a strategic partnership to support further projects (Liebenberg, 2018). Community partnerships also operate within a complex “world of power” however, and it is recognised that to effectively influence policies that can address the social determinants of health, greater attention is needed among partners to processes of power and strategic approaches rather than solely valuing the use of evidence to influence power holders (Freudenberg & Tsui, 2014). Policy change is challenging and complicated. Lasting partnerships based on the principles of CBPR and which incorporate a number of strategies are most effective in contributing to liberating empowerment.

8.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided a critique of the Photovoice Project to explore whether empowerment was evident through the use of the photovoice method and the CBPR process more broadly. I have demonstrated the difficulties of community empowerment within the context of this research and the messiness of undertaking CPBR where all involved bring their own agendas, as well as different levels of power within the existing social hierarchy. This includes my agenda and power, and the significance of this is reflected in the quote from interpreter-participant Linda, included in the title of this chapter. While I attempted to capture the complexities and ethical issues of this research, it has also been demonstrated that there were benefits to the women who participated at the level of individual empowerment, which they valued. It is also important to recognise the researcher held assumptions that people who participate in a photovoice project should want to take on the role of empowered policy advocates. The strength in photovoice research may also be, as Johnston (2016, p. 208) argues, “the proposed shift in power, from the traditional researcher to the participants as co-learners” which is “a shift in viewpoint and authority in the image-making process.”

Chapter 9:

“Welcome Me As a Friend, Then I’ll Be Ok”:

Supporting Women to Settle Successfully in Australia

If for me if I go into somewhere, a party or wedding and if I am different, I am one of the odd one out, ok everyone else look got same colour, same skin and I am the odd one out, then I feel very uncomfortable because I don’t speak the language and I look lost. But if the people there talk to me, welcome me as a friend, then I’ll be ok. (Phuong Loan, interpreter-participant)

9.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, I recap the research approach employed, the key findings and the implications for immigration and settlement policy and practice. I discuss the limitations of the project and areas for further research. I argue that, as demonstrated through the theoretical framework I have employed, policies and programs designed to support refugee women are inadequate to address the complexities of their marginalisation under a gendered, racial hierarchy. Central to my argument is for an equalisation of power from the grassroots to the macro level. Underlying inequalities in society must be addressed and key to this approach is a relinquishing of power for the sovereignty of First Peoples. Policies to support the successful settlement of women can be improved by adopting an intersectional approach and conceptualising settlement as an adversity, where social-ecological resilience should be supported through a facilitative environment. This includes valuing the emic perspectives of women, and ways of working that support privileging their insider experiences.

9.2 The Research Process

This research explored refugee women’s perspectives on the settlement process in Western Australia, using photovoice, including barriers and facilitators to their successful settlement. Successful settlement as integration was critiqued.

The research was underpinned by recognition of the role of the social determinants

of health in influencing the conditions of women's daily lives. I focused on the macro level or upstream determinants, including the social, economic and political environment. A form of CBPR, this research was conducted in partnership with Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Centre, based in Perth, Western Australia. Photovoice was used as part of a qualitative, participatory methodology.

My theoretical framework incorporated intersectionality and postcolonial feminist theories. I examined the intersection of refugee and gender with other categories that reflected personal factors in women's lives. I considered women's social locations as part of a critique of structural factors that impact on women's lives. I examined how Whiteness is bound up in interlocking systems of domination, as these systems are historically constituted and informed by white settler colonialism. I looked at how these systems operate across a matrix of oppression, as theorised by Collins (2000). I considered the understanding of integration drawn from Australian settlement policy alongside women's perspectives. I also tested the framework for integration by Ager and Strang (2008). To examine resilience processes I employed Ungar's social-ecological resilience theory (2008).

9.3 Overview of the Research Findings

Women participants were from diverse backgrounds and their social locations influenced how they experienced settlement. Some women were economically and socially marginalised, whereas women whose social locations positioned them higher on the matrix of oppression were more likely to economically participate in society. This was demonstrated in the examples of two women, Nwe Nwe and Bahia. Settlement challenges included barriers to the three E's of English language, education and employment, family separation and issues, lack of suitable housing, transport difficulties, health problems and racism and discrimination. Women called for these issues to be addressed. Their recommendations included: access to reunification with family; support for family adjustment; improved responses to family and domestic violence; improved access to English language education and employment; appropriate housing; and increased support to help make the settlement period easier.

Others who were already settled could be included in the strategy for increased support, recognised in other research as important to settling in a different culture (Lenette & Ingamells, 2014). English language proficiency was vital to participating in Australian society, a view echoed in other research with refugee women (Watkins et al., 2012). As I have discussed, the present findings are consistent with the existing literature. However, through the lens I have applied, the nuances among women were drawn out. I showed how settlement was experienced in the intersection of personal factors, which were reflected as systems of interlocking oppression at the macro level. I demonstrated the pervasiveness of white settler colonialism and how gendered racialisation plays out through structures and institutions.

Women demonstrated resistance, agency and resilience in their settlement journeys, and cited facilitators, including family and social support. Key informant views reinforced those of the women participants, while also emphasising the role that the host nation has to play to support women's ethno belonging in Australia. The settlement period was seen as longer than five years and the Settlement Program needed a more long term, sustainable focus. There was a disconnect at the policy making level from the experiences and needs of refugees. Better engagement with women and communities was suggested.

Integration from the host nation view includes an expectation of an economic contribution and self-reliance. At the same time, policies are made based on the notion that "settlement is conditional" and women must know their place within the existing hierarchy of belonging (Ramsay, 2017, p. 172). Women's lives intersect with structures that marginalise those who do not fit the norms of Whiteness (Ramsay, 2017). The Australian Government seeks to maximise the productivity of women but does not give them the support needed to do so; furthermore there is an embedded non-acceptance of refugees, which impacts on their ethno belonging.

While the Ager and Strang framework for integration emphasises the interconnectedness of various aspects of settlement, and integration as a two-way process, it is still informed by a host nation understanding of integration. It reinforces an 'us' and 'them' binary. This is of particular significance in the Australian context, where, historically, immigration policy has been largely characterised by a desire to

keep Australia white. This desire is deeply embedded in society. Testing of this theory adds weight to the observation made by Squires (2018) of the need for integration to be based on localised conceptualisations in Australia, but I emphasise that this conceptualisation must be critically informed.

From a social-ecological resilience lens, social and political processes at the macrosystemic level impact on the individual in their recovery from adversity (Ungar, 2013). Broadly speaking, forced migration and resettlement in a new society can be conceptualised as adversity. The more accessible culturally relevant resources are to promote women's wellbeing, the more likely women will be able to engage with processes that support their positive development (Ungar, 2013). A facilitative environment outweighs personal motivation to adapt in the face of adversity. The macrosystemic context is failing to provide appropriate health-sustaining resources for women's resilience and wellbeing.

Lived refugee experience is lacking at the political and policy making level, where power resides. Women's successful settlement cannot be facilitated without unsettling the power hierarchy. Furthermore, successful settlement should be defined based on the goals of individual women. Conceptualising settlement as recovery from adversity and supporting processes of resilience based on a constructionist, social-ecological understanding has the potential to assist women to achieve their individual goals and support their ethno belonging.

Photovoice was also explored as a tool for empowerment. Women valued the process of reflection, access to knowledge and skills, and the interactions with other women in their groups. These reflected characteristics of individual empowerment (Woodall et al., 2010). I also provided critical reflection on participation as empowerment. I looked at the difficulties of community empowerment within the context of this research and the complexities of undertaking CPBR. All involved bring their own agendas, and come to the process with different levels of power within the existing hierarchy. This includes my agenda as an academic researcher and the power that comes with my positionality. An ongoing strategic partnership with Ishar was vital for community empowerment. Furthermore, a key learning was to explore with women participants from the outset of the research a collaborative approach to

communication of the findings and systemic advocacy, as directed by the participants themselves. This is a point others have also argued as necessary for decolonising research (Cornell et al., 2019).

9.4 Limitations

In this thesis I have acknowledged my role in the process of inter subjective knowledge production. I was the white, Australian born researcher/outsider working with women in the matrix of oppression that positions them as low in the hierarchy. I represented a more powerful group. While I worked in partnership with Ishar, my social location inevitably shaped the research process, despite attempts to challenge traditional researcher-researched relationships and democratise knowledge production through CBPR (Groot et al., 2019). Not having the lived experience of the women participants of this research was a limitation of the research process, as an outsider interpreting the views and lives of others.

As discussed in the methodology chapter (5) language was also a limitation, with women from multiple language groups and reliance on interpreters in photovoice discussions, which impacted on the time we had to discuss photos. Interpreters also have a role in the research and it is possible this relationship may have influenced what women chose to discuss. Further, many of the women were also service users at Ishar, and this may have shaped their participation and responses in discussions. However, their length of involvement with Ishar also varied, as inferred through the group discussions. Women also represented a broad range of demographics, therefore supporting the credibility of the research.

Gaps in this research also included no exploration of issues related to systems of heterosexism and ableism. There is little research exploring the intersection of gender, migration status and ability or sexuality in the Australian resettlement context.

9.5 Implications for Policy and Practice

In addition to the recommendations I have discussed to increase women's access to participation across aspects of social and economic life in Australia, broader policy

and practice implications can also be highlighted.

9.5.1 Unsettling the white settler colonial state

Systems of oppression are historically constituted and influenced by white settler colonialism. The white settler colonial state seeks to eliminate the First Peoples in order to justify its legitimacy (Strakosch & Macoun, 2012). The state seeks to protect white sovereignty; possession of Australia “is jealously guarded” (Moreton-Robinson, 2015, p. 7). The hegemony of Whiteness is present (Bonds & Inwood, 2016). I have argued that this is also patriarchal and reflected across layers of Australian society. The implications of this are a marginalising effect on non-dominant groups. The quote from Phuong Loan at the beginning of this chapter is illustrative of this argument.

In the context of this critique, a much broader perspective must be articulated as a necessary implication of the research findings. This involves addressing Australia’s historical foundations. Processes over the course of Australia’s history have produced social inequalities; these are reinforced through ongoing practices of the white settler colonial state (Korteweg, 2017). Australia is not a post-colonial nation. The ongoing effects of colonial rule are still experienced for Australia’s First Peoples (Bessarab & Wright, 2019). Bessarab and Wright (2019, pp. 218-219) explain that:

self-determination and equality, both long-held aspirations, are still yet to be fully realised within a contested space where Aboriginal Australians continue to struggle for their rights as sovereign peoples. To have Aboriginal voices heard, and the legitimacy of Aboriginal knowledge systems and ownership as First Nations people to be recognised and accepted by the leadership in this country, is an ongoing struggle...

There is arguably an “inextricable connection” between the continual usurpation of Aboriginal sovereignty and immigration policy (Pugliese, 2015, p. 91). Pugliese (2015, p. 109) writes:

As the Australian Commonwealth government has never negotiated a formal

treaty that legally acknowledges the ceding of Aboriginal sovereignty over their lands, it continues to mark and exercise its own illegitimate sovereignty through its immigration/foreign policy, even as it works violently to preserve and secure this same sovereignty through its ongoing internal displacement of Indigenous peoples from their Nations.

This can be contrasted with the content of Australia's Multicultural Statement, which I have discussed in the policy context. It outlines aspirations for Australia's shared vision of the future, the importance of a strong and successful nation based on shared values including respect and equality (Government of Australia, 2017). This is also reflected in the Australian Values Statement, which new migrants and refugees must sign. Yet Australia was a multicultural society before colonisation, with Aboriginal peoples belonging to different parts of country and with over 500 language groups (Moreton-Robinson, 2003).

Aboriginal Elder, activist and educator Lilla Watson famously stated, "if you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together" (in Watson, 2007, p. 47). Should Australian shared values be a key pillar of policy discourse, their meaningful realisation will not be achieved without first facing the fallacy of white sovereignty. Recognising a diversity of experiences among First Peoples, who are heterogeneous, the liberation of all in multicultural Australia, immigrants and their descendants, and new arrivals, is tied up in unsettling white settler colonialism. Centring the sovereignties of the First Peoples is at the core of an intersectional approach to social transformation (Australian Women's History Network, 2017). Detailed critique on Indigenous oppression is beyond the scope of this thesis and I acknowledge that debates in this field are complex and nuanced (Carey, 2019). However, from an intersectionality based perspective, the need for relinquishing of white power, particularly at the political decision making level, and the centring of Indigenous voices, resistance and resurgence (Snelgrove, Dhamoon, & Corntassel, 2014) must be acknowledged.

Indigenous political resurgence challenges "settler benevolence or a benign acceptance of the state's foundational illegitimacy" (Maddison, 2016, p. 436). I

argue that societal transformation is possible when there is change in the structure of power relations, and this involves vacating space for First Peoples self-determination (Lentin, 2017). This is vital to “true coexistence based on mutual respect” (Lentin, 2017). As a strategy for dismantling the colonising project, this could potentially help in the journey to realising Australia’s capacity to be a multicultural and egalitarian nation (Curthoys, 2003).

This argument can also be connected to a finding of this research on the role of racism and discrimination as a barrier to women’s successful settlement. This is because racism was there “at the birth of the nation. It is there in terra nullius. An empty land” (Grant, 2016). Australia has a history of racialisation and othering of non-white groups. I have discussed throughout this thesis the role of race and how it interlocks with other systems of oppression. I have shown how racism and discrimination impacted on the lives of women who took part in this research. These experiences were uniquely shaped by the intersection of social categories. An implication of this finding is the need for efficacious anti-racism to confront racism in its various forms, racism denial and white privilege (Nelson, 2015). Current policy frameworks, which take a depoliticised angle, and celebratory events such as Harmony Day, fail to address “the racist foundations of the Australian state and attendant social, educational and economic inequalities” (Nelson, 2015, p. 353). In the next section I discuss how intersectionality could help to tackle the issue of racism and other recommendations discussed by the women in the Photovoice Project.

9.5.2 The potential for intersectionality to improve policy and enhance practice

One of the findings from this research was the importance of English language education to meet the needs of women. Women recommended changes to the AMEP that would help them to access the program. Policies and programs have failed to address structural barriers to this access. This argument can also be extended to other provisions of the Settlement Program that include: access to employment support such as through the mainstream Jobactive program and Community Hubs for mothers, in addition to the two tiers of support offered by settlement services.

Intersectionality based analysis is a valuable tool for improving settlement policy development, bringing attention to issues of equity and social justice. As a policy tool it can “examine and disrupt the way power shapes values to produce inequitable outcomes of settlement” (Clark & Vissandjée, 2019, p. 610). It is the antidote to the reductionism of public policy, whereby “public policy scholars often try to “boil down” the range of people’s experiences down to a single, “treatable” issue” (Manuel, 2006, p. 194). Intersectionality based policy analysis has the potential to illuminate multiple discriminations against women and guide the development of appropriate responses. Because the approach requires a critical angle to a policy problem, and how different groups might be affected, it has the potential to identify issues of racism and its intersection with other categories such as sexism (Hankivsky et al., 2014). However, a practical issue is that methodologies for its application are in their infancy (Hankivsky & Cormier, 2019). Much of the work in this area has been undertaken in Canada and Europe. Research has also discussed the need for an intersectional approach to migration policy in other countries with resettlement programs (Clark & Vissandjée, 2019; Vervliet et al., 2014).

Thill (2019) proposes an approach based on work in Australia that could be applied to refugee settlement policy. Thill argues for a component of an intersectional methodology to public policy called “social justice listening”. Thill’s approach builds on the concept of political listening as important for disrupting privilege (Bickford, 1996; Spivak, in Probyn, 2004). This is distinguished as different from traditional forms of tokenistic community consultation used by government. It involves three components: openness, or relinquishing authority to speak on behalf of others and to challenge our own perspective; recognition of others as partners in the interaction; and continuation, which is ongoing action and engagement. Thill applied this to analysis of disability policy in Australia, to show how ongoing engagement with the lived experience of women with disability contributed to improved policy development.

Thill showed how injustices that occurred at the intersection of gender and disability were addressed in policy making when policy makers listened for intersectionality in the advocacy and representation of issues by disabled peoples’ organisations (Thill, 2019). This concept could be extended to the area of settlement policy to address the

gaps I have highlighted. Various women's civil society organisations in Australia have advocated for intersectional approaches to policy making. At a national level for refugee women, this includes the Harmony Alliance, of which Ishar is a member. Intersectionality is identified as one of the Harmony Alliance's values, and is incorporated in their approach in advocating on policy issues (Harmony Alliance, n.d.). Intersectionality, and social justice oriented listening when working with policy advocates, should be adopted by the host nation.

In addition, intersectionality must be guided by a form of solidarity that is aligned with interculturalism. As Anthias (2013, p. 337-8) explains, interculturalism involves:

the need to move away from ethnocentric and national based lens for achieving inclusion and social justice. It also involves an intersectional sensitivity which recognizes the possibility of more reflexive forms of political struggle and avenues to greater dialogue and collaboration between groups organizing around particular kinds of struggles rather than particular kinds of cultural identities. Such an approach is not focused on cultural difference but on inequalities and subordinations that are produced intersectionally.

There must be an emphasis on equalisation and social locations of marginality over cultural difference and ethnicity.

What I have proposed so far may seem as unrealistic, given the harsh critique I have provided on the political and social climate of Australia. There is still a strong attachment to the idea of a white Anglo-Celtic identity and resistance to a shared national narrative with First Peoples that acknowledges the truth of Australia's colonial history (Nelson, 2018). I have discussed the violence of policy toward asylum seekers who are denied humanness, and a reluctance to adapt settlement programs and activities to be responsive to the needs of women (Losoncz, 2019). In April 2019, the Prime Minister promised that his party, which won the May election, would cap Australia's refugee intake at 18,750, declaring "we make decisions about who comes here based on what's in Australia's interests" (Greene, 2019). The Prime

Minister's statement echoed that of the former Prime Minister, John Howard, in 2001, in response to the Tampa incident, which also resulted in an election victory. Both prime ministers have "objectified" refugees as an "antithesis of what constitutes Australianness" (Dyrenfurth, 2005, p. 194). Their rhetoric illustrates how white racial domination is an ongoing project of the settler colonial state, enabled by white supremacy (Bonds & Inwood, 2016).

In the matrix of oppression I have discussed, resistance is most possible at the interpersonal (the everyday) and hegemonic (group or community level) domains. Adopting this notion, using intersectionality at the level of service delivery could be considered a more immediate way to disrupt power relations. It is suggested as a potential approach for practitioners who work with refugee women during the settlement period. Intersectionality has been advocated for in social work practice in particular (Mattsson, 2013; Mehrotra, 2010), and noted by others as being useful for work in Western nations with people from non-dominant ethnic groups (Van Impe & Arteel, 2018). Intersectionality brings attention to the political context and the ethical challenges that may be involved in implementing service approaches informed by oppressive ideologies (Vervliet et al., 2014). Intersectionality involves bringing critical self-reflection on one's own social location and role in their organisation (Lee & Brotman, 2013). It requires the practitioner to critically reflect on how they might reinforce oppression and social structures through their own thinking and actions (Mattsson, 2013). Rather than see stories of clients as individual, intersectionality situates them in relation to structural mechanisms and inequality (Van Impe & Arteel, 2018).

9.5.3 Reframing settlement to support social-ecological resilience

Dubus (2018) questions what settlement services would look like if resilience was the goal of settlement instead of integration. The question has merit in the case of this present research also, and I argue that supporting the social-ecological resilience of refugee women would have positive implications for their wellbeing. Social-ecological resilience theory focuses on the dual processes of navigation and negotiation for health resources. People may not accept what is offered, as a form of negotiation, as it must be culturally relevant and meet their individual needs (Udah,

Singh, Holscher, & Cartmel, 2019). If supporting resilience is an objective of settlement, then the components of the Settlement Program, which are resources, might be better designed to help women build their lives in Australia.

Support for women would be personalised, based on their needs. Settlement would not be seen as a singular and fixed event but longitudinal, which was a finding from this research and echoed by other researchers (Ramsay, 2017). On the basis of non-Western norms, the role of family and the importance of family reunion might be emphasised. However, there is little other research that has also argued for the social-ecological resilience to be a key component of settlement policy objectives. Some discussion has focused on the potential for designing humanitarian programs for refugees to promote resilience. For example, Carey (n.d.) discusses the benefits of a resilience perspective based on the work of IDEO.org, which designs services in partnership with organisations. This includes host communities that are inclusive and empathetic, providing tools that people need for rebuilding their lives, and services that have the capacity to change and evolve in response to the needs of refugees (Carey, n.d.). Such approaches, based on supporting resilience, could make a difference to the settlement experiences of refugee women in Australia.

I also acknowledge the idealism of this argument and the huge efforts required to tackle structural oppression. Returning once more to the interpersonal and hegemonic domains for acts of everyday resistance, and in conjunction with an intersectional approach, a social-ecological resilience oriented perspective could also be valuable for practitioners working at the coalface. Based on the work of Ungar (2011), and research in the Canadian settlement sector, Vasilevska (2014) proposes how people who work in settlement service delivery can promote resilience while working in a policy context where there is limited organisational autonomy, funding restraints and scrutiny. The application of these principles could be translated to an Australian setting. The first principle is decentrality, which involves examining what the environment offers people for their resilience. Taking this approach may involve systems based advocacy on issues or a systems approach to service provision.

Recognising the complexity of the interconnected needs of refugees is the second principle. This is especially important when working in a policy context where

settlement goals are narrowly formulated, informed by neoliberalism (Lenette & Ingamells, 2014).

Thirdly, Vasilevska suggests adopting atypicality as “a radical client-centred perspective on positive adaptation” (2014, p. 178). This involves critically reflecting on what may be considered typical protective factors. For example, associating with one’s ethnic community may be seen as typically protective. Yet a client who chooses not to do so may be doing so for reasons which support their positive adaptation.

The fourth principle, cultural relativity, is recognising that different cultural values also exist beyond the host nation which is why some people may struggle to adapt to new norms (Vasilevska, 2014). Underpinning this is the importance of the relationship between the worker and the service user, based on trust (Vasilevska, 2014).

In conjunction with these principles, resilience and wellbeing can be supported through community development approaches, as called for by other researchers (Lenette & Ingamells, 2014; Nash & Umugwaneza, 2015; Westoby, 2008). Central to this is privileging the emic perspectives of women, who in rebuilding a new social world upon resettlement should define their own needs (Atem, 2017; Nash & Umugwaneza, 2015; Westoby, 2008). As other research has shown, it involves dialogue to build trust and solidarity, and being a catalyst for rebuilding a new social world drawing on community, culture and power resources, for example building new models of child protection, and family and domestic violence support that integrates both aspects of original culture and new Australian ways (Westoby, 2008).

9.6 Areas for Further Research

Further research is needed in a number of areas. As earlier mentioned, this research did not explore the intersections of sexual diversity and gender. Scarce research has been produced on LGBTI migrant and refugee women in Australia, and advocates have called for further research in this area for an improved understanding of issues women may face (Poljski, 2011).

Ableism and ability is another area where further research is needed. Prior to 2012, people with a disability were excluded from the Settlement Program (Refugee Council of Australia, 2019a). While there have been increasing numbers of people with disability being resettled since the lifting of this discriminatory policy (Duell-Piening, 2018), there is limited research on their experiences of settlement and existing literature indicates people face barriers to appropriate support (Refugee Council of Australia, 2019a). Exploring the intersection with gender would also be useful for illuminating issues particular to women.

In 2019, and after completion of the analysis for this present research, a revised framework for integration was published that built on the work of Ager and Strang (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019). It considers more contemporary issues that have become important for integration and has a deeper emphasis on the host nation to support new refugees and other immigrants. Research that critiques the updated framework for integration could also be useful in order to test whether it addresses the shifts needed from the host nation for women's inclusion and acceptance.

Moreover, action research exploring community development approaches to settlement, and evaluating how these impact on women's settlement experiences, is also needed and the findings could be considered against top-down approaches to integration.

There has been little research on housing and transport issues among women. More research is warranted to address challenges specific to different groups of women, and how challenges may intersect with other aspects of settlement.

Further research that explores the ways photovoice empowers people from a refugee background is also important. An increased understanding is needed of how photovoice can support the refugee lived experience approach. Key principles of this approach include empowerment as "self-representation (which) is about the ability and the capacity for refugees and their communities to influence decision making, policy, program and service delivery processes. It is also about democratic systems and institutions being open to genuinely engage with refugees" (Atem, 2017).

Researchers are recognising the need to shift from storytelling approaches to refugee self-representation (Refugee Council of Australia, 2018b). More research would be useful to explore the impacts of photovoice research, which has employed self-representation, and how it can continue to contribute to this shift.

9.7 Conclusion

The settlement context does not provide “equality of opportunity” for refugee women, despite being espoused as a foundational Australian value. This research has shown that access to opportunities such as English language education and employment depended on the intersection of personal factors, and these intersections determined women’s social locations. Policy and program responses are required, in order to enable reunification with family members, support family adjustment, adequately address family and domestic violence, improve access to English language education and employment, offer appropriate housing, and provide increased social support. Employing intersectionality based policy analysis is an effective way to develop policies to address these issues, as it brings attention to the needs of different groups of women. Complementarily, settlement responses could be designed to support women’s social-ecological resilience.

This research has demonstrated that photovoice is a valuable tool for health promotion research that shifts the traditional researcher-researched relationship by giving participants cameras to decide what to research. Women used photovoice to articulate the difficulties of settlement, and highlight the strategies they used to overcome challenges. The critical reflection and group dialogue was valued by participants. The exhibition of their photos and stories, shown at public libraries and other forums, aimed to raise community awareness about their lives. The results were also used in systemic advocacy and as evidence for funding for an employment support project, also being run in partnership with Ishar. The Photovoice Project was not without its challenges, however, and I have highlighted the nuances and limitations that can characterise a CPBR project, including in relation to the use of photovoice for systemic advocacy and social change.

To conclude, as Niloufar, a research participant stated, “this happiness can be better

if Australian people accept us”. Such non-acceptance represents the biggest stumbling block in the paths women seek to follow as they build a new social world in Australia. Non-acceptance is embedded in societal structures and processes that shape individual and collective life, reinforcing inequalities. Structural change is therefore essential for addressing the social determinants of refugee women’s health.

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Every reasonable effort has been made to acknowledge the owners of copyright material. I would be pleased to hear from any copyright owner who has been omitted or incorrectly acknowledged.

Appendix A

Ethics approval

MEMORANDUM



To:	A/Prof Jaya Earnest School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedicine
CC:	
From:	Dr Catherine Gangell, Manager Research Integrity
Subject	Ethics approval Approval number: RDHS-253-15
Date:	30-Oct-15

Office of Research and
Development
Human Research Ethics Office

TELEPHONE 9266 2784
FACSIMILE 9266 3793
EMAIL hrec@curtin.edu.au

Thank you for your application submitted to the Human Research Ethics Office for the project: 5816
Empowerment and mental health promotion of refugee women through photovoice

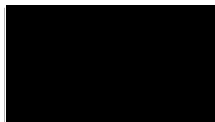
Your application has been approved through the low risk ethics approvals process at Curtin University.

Please note the following conditions of approval:

1. Approval is granted for a period of four years from **30-Oct-15** to **30-Oct-19**
2. Research must be conducted as stated in the approved protocol.
3. Any amendments to the approved protocol must be approved by the Ethics Office.
4. An annual progress report must be submitted to the Ethics Office annually, on the anniversary of approval.
5. All adverse events must be reported to the Ethics Office.
6. A completion report must be submitted to the Ethics Office on completion of the project.
7. Data must be stored in accordance with WAUSDA and Curtin University policy.
8. The Ethics Office may conduct a randomly identified audit of a proportion of research projects approved by the HREC.

Should you have any queries about the consideration of your project please contact the Ethics Support Officer for your faculty, or the Ethics Office at hrec@curtin.edu.au or on 9266 2784. All human research ethics forms and guidelines are available on the ethics website.

Yours sincerely



Dr Catherine Gangell
Manager, Research Integrity

Appendix B

Participant information sheet (women participants)

Empowerment and health promotion of humanitarian entrant women through photovoice

What is the project about?

This project funded by **Healthway** (the Health Promotion Foundation of WA) aims to explore the settlement experiences of humanitarian entrant women in Western Australia, using 'photovoice'. Photovoice involves community members taking photos to document issues they face in advocating for change. The project will be conducted with Isha Multicultural Women's Health Centre, and the results will inform government policy and services about humanitarian entrant women's health and wellbeing needs and how these can be addressed. The project will result in community exhibitions and a report which will include strategies and policy recommendations for successful resettlement of humanitarian entrant women. 50 women are invited to take part in this project. Key service providers working with women will also be invited to provide input into the findings and final report.

Who is doing the research?

The project is being conducted by Professor Jaya Dantas, and Anita Lumbus from Curtin University, in collaboration with **Isha**. Nat Brunovs, a photographer and community arts worker will deliver the photovoice sessions. There will be no cost to you for participating in the project.

Your involvement

There are a number of stages to the project which will require your commitment:

Photovoice sessions (May to September 2016)

- Six two-hour sessions will be held at Isha Mirrabooka or Bentley. The first session will be an information session to explain the project and ethical considerations associated with taking photographs.
- A camera will be provided to you and you will be asked to take photographs in your own time that explain and capture in your eyes your resettlement experiences.

- During the sessions, the facilitator leading discussions will use a laptop computer to download the photographs and display them using a projector. The sessions will also include individual presentations and discussions of the photos.

Feedback about the project and themes (July to November 2016)

- You may be invited to take part in an interview to discuss your experiences of participating in the project (1-2 hours). You will have the opportunity for further comments and reflections on the findings

Exhibition and launch of community report (March 2017 to July 2017)

- You will be invited to choose which photos you would like to be in an exhibition.
- Your photographs and stories of those photos will be used to create an exhibition that will be presented to the community, government, and policy makers.
- You will have an opportunity to speak about your story at the launch of the exhibition and celebration, if you would like to do so.

What you will receive

There will be no cost to you for taking part. You will receive:

- **Three gift vouchers** each worth **\$30 for your participation**
- **Refreshments and childcare** during the photovoice sessions.
- A **camera** that you have been using.
- You will also be offered print copies of your photographs and
- A **Certificate of Participation**.

Benefits of the project to you and the community

- You will be provided with training in photography for this project. You will have the opportunity to share the resettlement issues you face through your photos, and in an interview with the researchers.
- You will also have a voice in proposing strategies and actions which will support humanitarian entrant women's successful resettlement in Australia.

Risks or side-effects of being involved

Apart from giving up your time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or inconveniences associated with taking part in this study.

Confidentiality

All material collected from you will remain confidential. No personal details or information that could potentially identify you will be included in any reports written about the study. When we transcribe the audio recordings, we will remove your personal details and replace them with a code.

Voluntary participation and withdrawal from the project

Your participation in this study is by invitation and is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time and you do not have to provide reasons for your decision. You will also have the opportunity to view your photographs and transcript of your interview and comment on these. The Photovoice photographs may be used by the researchers and Healthway in reports and publications with your consent. A copy of the report and the results will be shared with you.

Contacts

Please feel free to contact the researchers, if you have any questions or anything further you would like to add.

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International Health Programme

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Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has approved this study (HREC number RDHS-253-15). Should you wish to discuss the study with someone not directly involved, in particular, any matters concerning the conduct of the study or your rights as a participant, or you wish to make a confidential complaint, you may contact the Ethics Officer on (08) 9266 9223 or the Manager, Research Integrity on (08) 9266 7093 or email hrec@curtin.edu.au.

Appendix C

Participant consent form (women participants)

Empowerment and health promotion of humanitarian entrant women through photovoice

Consent form

HREC Project Number RDHS-253-15

Project Title Empowerment and health promotion of humanitarian entrant women through photovoice

Investigators Professor (Dr) Jaya Dantas

Photographer-Facilitator Anita Lumbus
Natalija Brunovs

Version Number 2

Version Date 17/03/2016

- I have read, or had read to me in my language, the Participant Information Statement about the project.
- I understand its contents and the purpose, extent and possible risks of my involvement in this project.
- I voluntarily consent and understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.
- I consent to being audio-recorded.
- I will have an opportunity to ask questions.
- I am sharing information with the understanding that my answers will be kept confidential and that my name will not be associated with my answers.
- I understand I will receive a copy of the Participant Information Statement and signed Consent Form.
- I understand that this project has been approved by Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee and will be carried out in line with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) – updated March 2014.

I agree to participate in the following:

Photovoice sessions:

Interview:

Method of recording: Audio recorded

Name _____

Signature _____ Date:

Declaration by researcher:

I have supplied an Information Letter and Consent Form to the participant who has signed above, and believe that they understand the purpose, extent and possible risks of their involvement in this project.

Researcher Name:

Researcher Signature:

Date:

Appendix D

Use of photographs consent form

Empowerment and health promotion of humanitarian entrant women through photovoice

Use of photographs consent form

HREC Project RDHS-253-15

Number

Project Title Empowerment and health promotion of humanitarian entrant women through photovoice

Investigators Professor (Dr) Jaya Dantas

Anita Lumbus

Version Number 2

Version Date 17/03/2016

- I give consent to Curtin University and Healthway to use the photographs that I have taken as a participant in the ***Empowerment and health promotion of humanitarian entrant women through photovoice*** project.
- I understand that my decision to release my photographs for publication or use in public forums is voluntary and that I can withdraw my permission at any time.
- I freely agree to release certain specified photographs for use in this research study.
- These photos may be used for public and community exhibitions/presentations and research reports and journal articles.
- I also give the project team permission to upload my photograph(s) on websites, news releases and in presentations and seminars.

Participant Name	
Participant Signature	
Date	

Researcher Name	
Researcher Signature	
Date	

Appendix E
Subject consent form

SUBJECT CONSENT FORM FOR USE OF IMAGES

HREC Project **RDHS-253-15**

Number:

Project Title: Empowerment and health promotion of
 humanitarian entrant women through photovoice

Investigators: Professor (Dr) Jaya Dantas
 Anita Lumbus

Version Number 2

Version Date 17/03/2016

I give permission to be photographed for the *Empowerment and health promotion of humanitarian entrant women through photovoice* project and the photographer the right to use the photograph/s for public and community exhibitions/presentations and research (including reports and journal articles).

Name	
Signature	
Date	

If person is under 18 years of age, parent/guardian to complete:

Name	
Signature	
Date	

Photographer Name	
Signature	
Date	

Appendix F

Interview guide (women participants)

1. Background and Demographics:
 - a) How did you enter Australia (boat/plane)?
 - b) Country of origin?
 - c) Transient country/countries and how long were you in these countries?
 - d) With whom did you come to Australia?
 - e) What family do you have in Perth?
 - f) What was your education before coming to Australia?
 - g) What languages do you speak?

2. How would you describe the project to your family and friends?
3. What have been the benefits of taking part in this project?
4. What have been the challenges/difficulties?
5. How would you describe the experience of watching other people view your photos?
6. Thinking back, what has changed for you as a result of taking part in this project?
7. What are your reflections on sharing your stories?

8. What are the challenges for refugee women settling in Australia?
9. What recommendations would you make to government for supporting refugee women to settle in Australia?
10. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix G

Participant information sheet (key informants)

Empowerment and mental health promotion of refugee women through photovoice

What is the project about?

This project funded by **Healthway** (the Health Promotion Foundation of WA) aims to explore the settlement experiences of refugee women in Western Australia, using 'photovoice'. Photovoice involves community members taking photos to document issues they face in advocating for change. The project has been conducted in collaboration with Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Centre, and the results will inform government policy and services about refugee women's health and wellbeing needs and how these can be addressed. The project will result in a travelling community exhibition and a report which will include strategies and policy recommendations for successful resettlement of refugee women. 43 refugee women have participated in the project. Key service providers working with refugees are invited to provide their perspectives, including policy and service recommendations.

Who is doing the research?

The project is being conducted by Professor Jaya Dantas, Anita Lumbus and Shelley Gower from Curtin University, in collaboration with **Ishar**. A photographer delivered the photovoice sessions. There will be no cost to you for participating.

Your involvement

As a service provider or stakeholder, we invite you to take part in an interview based on the themes drawn from the photovoice sessions and interviews with participants. We would like your views to help inform effective responses which support women's successful resettlement. All material collected from you will remain confidential. No personal details or information that could potentially identify you will be included in any reports.

Benefits of the project to you and the community

The project will contribute to bridging a significant knowledge gap by exploring refugee women's perspectives of resettlement and inform future policy and interventions to improve the health and wellbeing of refugee women in Australia.

Voluntary participation and withdrawal from the project

Your participation in this study is by invitation and is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time and you do not have to provide reasons for your decision. A copy of the report and results will be shared with you.

Contacts

Please feel free to contact the researchers, if you have any questions or anything further you would like to add.

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Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has approved this study (HREC number RDHS-253-15). Should you wish to discuss the study with someone not directly involved, in particular, any matters concerning the conduct of the study or your rights as a participant, or you wish to make a confidential complaint, you may contact the Ethics Officer on (08) 9266 9223 or the Manager, Research Integrity on (08) 9266 7093 or email hrec@curtin.edu.au.

Appendix H

Overview of research findings for key informants

Empowerment and health promotion of refugee women: the photovoice project

According to UNHCR figures, the global refugee population in 2016 reached 22.5 million, the highest level ever recorded. In 2015-16, 17,555 people entered Australia through its Humanitarian Programme, including 4,860 women.

Women face many challenges during the refugee journey and upon resettlement. They demonstrate great resilience as they start a new life for themselves and their families. Understanding settlement from the perspective of refugee women is important in implementing policies and programs which can effectively respond to their needs and issues.

About the project

Our project explored refugee women's perspectives and experiences of settlement in Western Australia. The project was funded by *Healthway – the Health Promotion Foundation of Western Australia*. We conducted the project in partnership with Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Centre.

We used photovoice, a participatory research tool and the participants were given cameras to photograph images of importance to them. The women then discussed their photos and stories in small groups. Taking photographs and sharing these with the group was described as an empowering experience.

“I felt like it was a way to express myself and taking away some of the pain that is inside me by sharing the photos with others, talking about that.”

The photographs provide a glimpse of the lives of refugee women and raise awareness of issues faced by the women in the wider community.

Participants

43 women of refugee background took part in the photovoice project and 22 women selected photographs to be exhibited. The women were from Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Syria, Vietnam, South Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Lebanon and El Salvador

Settlement challenges faced by the women were:

- Barriers to learning English
- Not having family in Australia and feeling socially isolated
- Adjusting to a new life and different culture which also puts stress on family relationships
- Managing physical and psychological health issues among themselves and family members
- Difficulties accessing suitable housing
- Barriers to employment.

“In the beginning the language is a big barrier and knowing the places, where to go, your directions. Knowing the law and knowing everything about the country or finding your way. Driving, this all difficult. And slowly, slowly you start knowing things from friends or trying to you know, settle.”

Factors that facilitate settlement:

- Settlement and community support services
- Feeling accepted and welcomed in multicultural Australia
- Family reunion
- Having a driver’s licence
- Drawing strength from religion and culture
- Support from peers, religious and ethnic community groups.

“If I go into somewhere, a party or wedding and if I am different, everyone else look the same colour, same skin and I am the odd one out, then I feel very uncomfortable because I don’t speak the language and I look lost. But if the people there talk to me, welcome me as a friend, then I’ll be ok.”

Women’s recommendations:

- English programs tailored to women’s unique circumstances, recognising issues which impact on learning such as family responsibilities, pre-Australian education, trauma/health issues and cultural adjustment
- Support to gain employment
- Resourcing for settlement and women’s services
- Assistance from settled migrants to help new arrivals.

Project team

- Curtin University: Professor Jaya Dantas (Project Lead), Anita Lumbus (Project Manager), Shelley Gower (Research Officer)
- Ishar Multicultural Women’s Health Centre: Collaborative Partner
- Ishar Project Staff: Rehab Ahmed, Sally Bower
- Photographer: Natalija Brunovs

For more information about the research contact Professor Jaya Dantas,
Jaya.Dantas@curtin.edu.au

This study was approved by the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC number RDHS-253-15).

Appendix I

Participant consent form (key informants)

HREC Project Number	RDHS 253-15
Project Title	Empowerment and mental health promotion of refugee women through photovoice
Investigators	Professor (Dr) Jaya Dantas Anita Lumbus
Version Number	1
Version Date	29/06/2017

- I have read, or had read to me in my first language, the Participant Information Statement about the project.
- I understand its contents and I believe I understand the purpose, extent and possible risks of my involvement in this project.
- I am taking part in the project voluntarily.
- I understand that I can stop participating in the project at any time.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have received.
- I am sharing information with the understanding that my answers will be kept confidential and that my name will not be associated with my answers.
- I understand I will receive a copy of the Participant Information Statement and Consent Form for Participants.
- I understand that this project has been approved by Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee and will be carried out in line with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) – updated March 2014.

I agree to participate in the following:

Procedure:

Duration:

**Method of
recording:**

—

Focus group/interview 60 mins Audio recorded

Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Declaration by researcher: I have supplied an Information Letter and Consent Form to the participant who has signed above, and believe that they understand the purpose, extent and possible risks of their involvement in this project.

Researcher Name:

Researcher Signature:

Date:

Appendix J

Interview guide (key informants)

- 1) Please tell us something about:
 - a) Your professional background
 - b) The organisation you work for
 - c) The services you provide for refugees and humanitarian entrants

- 2) What are the main challenges impacting on the health and wellbeing of refugee women during the settlement process?

- 3) What factors help make the settlement process easier?

- 4) What recommendations or suggestions do you have to improve the settlement experiences of refugee women?

- 5) Is there anything else you would like to add or share?

Appendix K

Photovoice Travelling Exhibition and Presentations 2017 - 2019

	Month	Date of exhibition display/ presentation	Venue
2017			
1	April	Presentation World Congress of Public Health 3 rd to 7 th April	Melbourne Convention Centre, Melbourne
2	July	7 th to 25 th	Ishar Multicultural Health Centre, Perth Launch of the banners and display
3	October	26 th	University of Technology Sydney PHAA symposium
4	November	21 st	Launch at Curtin University, Perth John Curtin Gallery
5	November	23 rd	Launch in Adelaide, Flinders University
2018			
6	January	8 th to 27 th	Victoria Park Library, Perth
7	February	27 th to 13 th	Mirrabooka Library, Perth
8	March	14 th to 27 th	Dianella Library, Perth
9	April	18 th to 30 th	Willagee Library, Perth
10	May	1 st to 11 th	Bassendean Library, Perth
11	May	14 th to 25 th	Claremont Library, Perth
12	June	Refugee Week 14 th to 26 th	State Library of WA, Perth

13	July	17 th	Presentation at King Edward Memorial Hospital, Perth
14	July	24 th to 27 th	International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM) Conference Presentation and Display, Thessaloniki, Greece
15	August	21 st to 11 th September	Cockburn Library – Success, Perth
16	September	11 th to 5 th October	Bentley Library, Perth
17	September	13 th	Presentation at Women in Canning Forum, Perth
16	October	5 th to 8 th November	Willetton Library, Perth
19	November	8 th to 26 th	Canning Library, Perth
2019			
20	March	15 th	Presentation with display Commission on the Status of Women, New York, USA
21	March	20 st and 21 st March	Presentation with display Oregon Health Sciences University, Portland, Oregon, USA
22	March	22 nd March	Presentation at University of Calgary, Canada
23	March	23 rd	Presentation with display at Kansas University Medical Centre, Kansas City, USA
24	May	16 th	Presentation at the 12th Annual Conference of the Canadian Association for Refugee and Forced Migration Studies (CARFMS)

