



“I’m just here, almost like an alien”: A phenomenological analysis of how former refugee youth in Aotearoa navigate education and friendship in their new resettlement context

Nuzha Saleem¹, Niusha Aryan¹, Marc Wilson¹ & Damian Scarf²

¹School of Psychology, Victoria University of Wellington

²Department of Psychology, University of Otago

Correspondence: nuzha.saleem@vuw.ac.nz

Abstract

Aotearoa has been resettling refugees for over 100 years, yet there is limited understanding of their diverse histories and resettlement successes, especially for Youth from Refugee Backgrounds (YRB). YRB experience disrupted learning in pre-resettlement and arrive in post-resettlement contexts with complex needs. Furthermore, their challenges are exacerbated by the structural violence they face within the education system in Aotearoa. Through interviews with eight female YRB aged 19-24, this study explored the school experiences that fostered educational and resettlement success. Using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, we found that while ‘bridging’ and ‘bonding’ relationships played distinct roles, connection (support and acceptance) with peers was imperative to successful resettlement. This emphasises the importance of supportive relationships for educational achievement, positive mental health, and belonging in Aotearoa.

Keywords: refugees, migration, education, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, youth, peer relationships

Acknowledgement: I am sincerely grateful to WERO for funding this mahi, and recognising its significance in Aotearoa. I would also like to express my deepest appreciation to the young women who shared their stories with us; shifting tides in refugee research is only possible because of your tenacity. Thank you to Marc for his consistent support, Damian for his unwavering belief in me, and Moana for her gentle leadership. To Torven and my whānau; where do I end and you begin? Jazakallahairan. Mai i te awa ki te moana

Disclosure: The authors have no conflict of interests related to this publication.

To cite: Saleem, N., Aryan, N., Wilson, M., & Scarf, D. (2025). “I’m just here, almost like an alien”: A phenomenological analysis of how former refugee youth in Aotearoa navigate education and friendship in their new resettlement context. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, 54(3), 105-118.



Introduction

Refugee resettlement has become a pressing issue, as the number of people forced into displacement as a result of the climate crisis, politics, and warfare increases (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2023; UNHCR, 2022). Countries that host refugees have faced social, political, and economic challenges arising from the refugee crisis (Garnier et al., 2018; Goodwin-Gill, 2017; Parekh, 2016). In particular, there is a gap between governmental policies implemented by nations that accept former-refugees and the aspirations that former-refugees have for themselves (O' Connor, 2014; Parekh, 2016; Rafferty et al., 2020). It is against this background that we present our research; a qualitative investigation of the factors that young refugee women discuss as part of their experience of resettlement, with a particular focus on the factors associated with educational success.

The New Zealand government resettles 1800 refugees annually through two main pathways: referrals through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the family reunification process. A community sponsorship pathway was also created in July 2023 (Immigration New Zealand, 2023a). It is estimated that New Zealand has resettled over 50,000 refugees from 55 different countries since the end of World War II (Mortensen et al., 2012); the proportion of which are youth or children is unknown. A recent article estimated that 3,000 Youth from Refugee Backgrounds (YRB) are enrolled in Aotearoa's education system (Rafferty, 2019). However, given that the Ministry of Education (MoE) only encounters YRB when a school requires additional support with higher-need students, this is likely a gross underestimation of the number of YRB residing in Aotearoa (Refugee Background Students, 2015). Given that approximately 41% of refugees worldwide are children under 18 years, it is likely that up to half of refugees resettling in Aotearoa are youth (UNHCR, 2022).

Immigration New Zealand (INZ) is the primary government body that oversees and administers resettlement support for newly arrived refugees. To improve resettlement experiences for incoming refugees INZ designed the Refugee Resettlement Strategy (Immigration New Zealand, 2022). The overarching aim of the strategy is that, "former refugees and their families settle successfully, achieve their goals, and thrive in Aotearoa. This includes feeling safe and well, feeling a sense of belonging and being able to participate in and

contribute to all aspects of life (social, economic, cultural, and civic)" (Immigration New Zealand, 2023b). There is no mention of what roles the government (policy or service) or New Zealand citizens play in ensuring that these outcomes can be achieved, which therefore gives the impression that resettlement success is primarily in the hands of former refugees.

The strategy measures successful resettlement of refugees using five outcomes, one of which is education; defined as "former refugees and their families achieve their education, training and English language goals" (Immigration New Zealand, 2023b: to see all the outcomes refer to the aforementioned reference). Success for this educational outcome is measured by the number of resettling youths who pass the national board exams (NCEA Level 2 and 3) based on the number of years they have spent in English language training. However, there is extensive international research that demonstrates that academic success for YRB is influenced by more factors than simply the number of years they have spent learning English. These additional factors can be broadly classified into five main categories: individual, family, peer, school-based factors, and policy (Major et al., 2013; Matthews, 2008; Morrice et al., 2020; Wilkinson, 2002). While many of these areas are uncharted within an Aotearoa context, this article explores the role of peers in supporting education and resettlement success of YRB in Aotearoa, against the backdrop of educational policy offered by the state.

The Education System and its Provisions

The government acknowledges educational inequities for various groups in Aotearoa with the Ministry of Education (MoE) identifying Māori, Pasifika, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and those with special education needs, as priority learners (Education Review Office, 2012). Despite extensive literature about the barriers faced by refugee learners in first asylum countries (Dryden-Peterson, 2016, 2017), and the impact of these barriers on employment and well-being for this group (Miller et al., 2018; Rafferty, 2019), the New Zealand government does not classify YRB as priority learners (Education Review Office, 2012). As a result, YRB do not benefit from many of the measures intended to address educational inequalities between the majority group (Pākehā) and other students.

Further, former-refugee students are not referenced in any of the reports published on the MoE website



(www.education.govt.nz) regarding strategy and planning, and there is no mention of YRB in annually published NCEA achievement rates. Crucial learning needs such as English Language classes, are also severely underfunded (Lewis, 2018). While offering permanent residency upon arrival for this group affords them immediate access to the welfare and health-care benefits provided to citizens, it also inappropriately classifies refugee background learners as domestic students, rendering them invisible within the education system. The lack of publicly available information about this group prevents any informed understanding of their learning needs and the necessary special teaching provisions that could bolster their academic success (e.g., English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes).

In New Zealand, the educational achievement of YRB is largely left to chance. While some educators may provide YRB with support by acknowledging their unique learning needs, such assistance tends to be inconsistent and case based. There is a lack of mandated policy that targets service provision, teacher training, or funding to specifically address YRB's educational needs and ensure they have the necessary resources to reach their highest potential. This has created the systemic inequalities mentioned previously (e.g., invisibility within the system) and disproportionately disadvantage YRB students. Since these inequities are the downstream effects of policy (or lack thereof), perpetuate unequal opportunities to educational achievement for YRB specifically, and have existed for many years, this can constitute as a form of structural violence (see Rafferty (2019) for more detail about structural violence within the education system for YRB in Aotearoa). As mentioned above, international research suggests that academic achievement for this group is also influenced by psychosocial factors, such as social ties. Therefore, this article investigates the role of peer support in facilitating educational success for YRB, against the backdrop of educational policy (or lack thereof).

The Role of Peers in Education for Marginalized Youth

School is usually the primary place YRB develop friendships, with peer attachment playing a protective role in their mental health, well-being, and academic achievement (Bradley et al., 2021; Khawaja et al., 2018; Miller et al., 2018; Trickett & Birman, 2005). For example, a longitudinal study that followed YRB in Australia for over four years showed that key predictors of health and well-being related to school and peers were perceived school performance, status at school, school support, peer

attachment, and the absence of bullying (Correa-Velez et al., 2010). These key psychosocial factors supported a good start at resettlement. These findings are consistent with other studies showing that peers have a significant impact on YRB's physical and emotional well-being (Ellis et al., 2008; Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007; Montgomery & Foldspang, 2008).

With respect to peers, there are two main types of relationships that feature prominently in the literature (Correa-Velez et al., 2010; de Anstiss et al., 2019; Major et al., 2013; Mishra, 2020). First, friendship with peers from the same ethnic group (i.e., bonding relationships). Second, friendship with peers from other ethnic groups (i.e., bridging relationships). Bonding relationships are important for YRB to understand how their communities navigate their new environment (Major et al., 2013), while bridging relationships are important in providing YRB with a sense of belonging to their new home (Correa-Velez et al., 2010; O' Connor, 2014). In addition, bridging relationships link YRB to broader social and economic resources, particularly opportunities within education, training, and employment. Consequently, bridging relationships allow YRB to contribute to and participate in the social and civic life of the broader community (Correa-Velez et al., 2010; de Anstiss et al., 2019; O' Connor, 2014). Strang and Ager (2010) demonstrated that integration was most successful when resettling youth created bridging relationships with people from the majority culture. However, while these relationships were crucial for YRB to feel a greater sense of belonging to their new home, experiences of racism negatively impact both belonging and bridging relationships (Correa-Velez et al., 2010; Major et al., 2013; McMichael et al., 2011).

The association between supportive friendships and academic success is especially relevant as students move from high school to university, an environment where parental and teacher involvement is generally limited. Within this context, information-related social capital and social support become increasingly important in facilitating academic success for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds (Mishra, 2020). Information-related social capital is especially important for young people who are first-generation university attendees, as it is through their social networks that they began understanding the norms, values, and rules present within the higher education context that facilitate successful degree attainment (Müller & Schneider, 2013; Portes et al.,



2005). For marginalised youth at university, increased social support via care, encouragement, mutual aspirations, and motivation for success has the capacity to buffer poor access to information-related social capital, and contribute to positive academic success (Mishra, 2020). However, both information-related social capital and social support contributing towards academic success is likely made possible to the extent that youth were able to access social networks rich in these resources (de Anstiss et al., 2019).

In Aotearoa there is currently limited understanding of the educational experiences that contribute to positive outcomes for YRB, especially the role of peers. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the educational experiences that facilitate positive educational outcomes, considering the people and policy present in the post-resettlement context.

Methods

The current study was grounded in a critical realist ontology and interpretivist epistemology. We recognized that participants' experiences occur within a material world that reflects their 'reality', but that their accounts are shaped by their attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions. The critical realist perspective allowed us to consider how wider social structures, like education policy, influences these subjective experiences. An interpretivist epistemology allowed us to consider the meanings participants had ascribed to their experiences within the specific contexts they had occurred in.

The main author of this paper (NS) is a cis-gendered woman who identifies as ethnically Middle-Eastern and South Asian. NS came to Aotearoa as an International student and is now an early career researcher who works closely with local migrant and refugee communities. This research was part of her PhD, during which she engaged in a reflexive process throughout data collection, development of themes, and discussion, critically considering how her own subjective identities influenced the research. NS's positionality was both a limitation and a strength of this study. Similarities in racial markers between herself and the participants likely signalled to them that she was a safe person to be vulnerable with and, despite not being a former-refugee herself (which she explicitly stated), many participants used phrases like "you understand what it's like to..." or "you get it" or "us as minorities...we have..." when they described the challenges they faced in Aotearoa. However, her own biases and idiosyncrasies may have influenced

theme development and the final analysis. Therefore, she frequently returned to the transcripts and recordings to ensure participant sentiments were accurately represented. Additionally, she made reflexive notes and analysis were critically questioned by other authors. In this way, where she recognised her own positionality could impact the analysis, the team double-checked the interpretation.

The second author (NA) is a cis-gendered woman who identifies as ethnically Middle Eastern, came to Aotearoa as a refugee, and is also an early career researcher. DS is a Pākehā cis-gendered male who was born and raised in Aotearoa. MW is a Pākehā cis-gendered male who was born overseas but has spent most of his adult life in Aotearoa.

The study received ethical approval from the University Human Ethics Committee (application number 30421). NS interviewed eight former refugees aged between 19 and 24 years, three in person and five online. Interviews varied between one to one and a half hours. Of these eight participants, four identified as ethnically African, two as East Asian, one as South Asian, and one as Middle Eastern. Although gender was not a criterion for participation, the final sample consisted of only female participants. The number of years participants had resided in Aotearoa was not a selection criterion either, but the final group included two equally sized subsets: four women who had lived in Aotearoa for under 10 years and four who had been here for more than 10 years. Six participants arrived in Aotearoa through the refugee quota programme, while two arrived through the family sponsorship pathway. After orientation at Te Āhuru Mōwai o Aotearoa (Mangare Refugee Resettlement Centre) in Tāmaki Makaurau, all eight women were resettled in the same main city in the North Island. They had all spent at least one year in high school in this city and, at the time of the interview, were either completing or pursuing a university degree in Aotearoa.

A poster invited YRB who had attended school in Aotearoa to contact us via email if they were interested in discussing their school experiences. This poster also mentioned that participants would receive a movie voucher as koha (gift). The information sheet introduced the researcher, and outlined the purpose and procedure, data security, rights of prospective participants, and contact information. The interview guide was attached to help participants understand the types of questions they might be asked, giving them time to reflect on



their experiences and assess how comfortable they would feel answering these questions. The consent form reiterated their rights as a participant. A distress management protocol was developed in the event participants experienced distress during the interview but was not needed.

An interview guide was developed to solicit secondary school-based experiences of YRB, specifically those related to educational success. This included questions about educational histories to gather a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of participants' educational journeys. Example questions and prompts included "Did you feel well prepared to start school in New Zealand? Had you received any form of education prior to resettling here?", "Looking back at your time in secondary school, how do you feel about it? How do you think it affected you?" and "What happened at secondary school that made it possible for you to do well enough to get into university?"

The study was advertised on Facebook pages, newsletters, or forwarded on to refugee student clubs and refugee student advisors at the university, and to local community centres, organisations, and Ministries. Despite being immersed in the migrant community, participant recruitment was a challenging process, and it took nine months from first advertising to interviewing all nine participants. This was mainly because young refugee communities in Aotearoa are a hard-to-reach, but also an over-researched population. Furthermore, restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic likely contributed to the recruitment challenge. Participant recruitment was grounded in snowball sampling based on authentic relationship building and engagement, and on genuine care and mana enhancement for the community. Further details about the study's methodology can be found in the open-access thesis by Saleem (2024).

NS used Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) because it was suited for exploring the lived educational experiences of YRB through their migration journey (Smith & Eatough, 2017; Smith & Nizza, 2021), and offered a phenomenological, double hermeneutic, and idiographic approach. NS first familiarized herself with the participants' language and conversation style. Then exploratory notes were made to capture descriptive (how they illustrated their experiences), linguistic (intonation and analogies), and conceptual (higher-order sense making) clues. Next, NS created experiential statements (ES) that succinctly captured the meanings of the main experiences for each participant. NS ensured that experiential statements

were grounded in the data and conceptually captured a psychological phenomenon. This means that certain aspects were brought to the forefront reflecting the researcher's positionality, world-view and knowledge of the discipline.

The experiential statements were transferred to a spreadsheet (Microsoft Excel) and grouped to create clusters based on thematic connections e.g., belonging. While IPA guides recommended collapsing clusters to a maximum of five, NS collapsed clusters only to the extent that it made sense for her participants. Initially, there were approximately 10 clusters for each participant. NS and MW worked together to group ES's into clusters and then label it, creating a Personal Experiential Theme (PET) that captured the essence of each cluster. Therefore, each step of the analytical process led towards operating at a slightly higher conceptual level. NS conducted each of these steps for a single transcript before moving on to the next. Once there were PETs for all the transcripts, NS conducted a cross-case analysis to understand what key aspects explained educational success for these resettling youth, committing to both convergence and divergence within a theme. All stages of the IPA analytical process were iterative, and NS ensured that each PET was embedded within the data by confirming that it could be traced back to the original transcript.

Analysis and Commentary

This section introduces and discusses one of the three main themes (and its associated sub-themes) from the broader study, which aimed to understand the school-based experiences of YRB that contributed to their educational success across migration. The theme discussed here focuses on YRB experiences with forming friendships with both minority and majority ethnic groups during post-resettlement in Aotearoa.

Connection as a Precondition to Successful Resettlement

Although the interview guide did not explicitly ask participants about their friends, this topic was brought up spontaneously and organically by every participant. It was evident that young people struggled to make friends in early resettlement, especially with those from the ethnic majority (Pākehā). Yet, making friends with the ethnic majority was pursued and only when they were wholly accepted by minority and majority groups, did they finally feel belonging in Aotearoa.



Moreover, once they had made friends, their mental health, academic success, and overall quality of life increased substantially. As such, the first sub-theme that emerged — **Bonding is Immediate, Building Bridges Takes Time** — describes the early experiences of friendship making. The second sub-theme — **Belonging is Being Wholly Accepted** — describes their journey to finding support and belonging in Aotearoa.

Bonding is Immediate, Building Bridges Takes Time

The young women struggled to make friends in early resettlement, primarily because they were unaccustomed to the dominant Pākehā culture and experienced othering by Pākehā. As a result, they were only able to make friends with other refugee-background students, or friends that were ethnically or racially similar. The cultural divide in early resettlement between themselves and Pākehā appeared too large a gap to create ties.

In the early stages of resettlement, Roslyn struggled with the differences between Asian culture and what is commonly understood as New Zealand (Pākehā) culture. These cultural differences, along with differing interests such as food preferences and hobbies, became a barrier to making friends.

but I think it's mostly just because, like, I feel like they (Pākehā) probably won't understand where I'm coming from or like what I'm trying to say or like... Or like just like even the things we like for example I want to let's just say go see a movie but they want to go sightseeing or hiking which I'm not into sort of thing. It's just like different likes and the norms as well and like for example, even just food in general like we share like... I have like such flavourful, you know, meal, but they have more of a milder side. So in that sense, like it's also like difficult to find a restaurant and to like, you know, accommodate those two.

Iman arrived in Aotearoa and experienced similar challenges at primary school. As Roslyn mentioned earlier, “I feel like they (Pākehā) probably won't understand [...] what I'm trying to say”, for Iman too the barrier to friendship was shared language and interests:

This... I just remember being like alone. Umm. Finding it really hard to make friends or just finding something that we could connect on, but I don't know if we... I couldn't find it or if it was you know navigating the language to find it.

Thili believed that her barrier to making friends (alongside language skills and differing interests)

was likely her personality. However, this internalisation was also reinforced by othering behaviour by Pākehā students: “But they've (Pākehā) always seen me different like I could feel it. Like not only that, I felt different. They have also seen me like differently... maybe it's because I didn't talk much.” Nina also experienced hostile behaviour (by Pākehā) and spoke to the feeling of being made to feel different:

I feel like their attitude towards me, like when I kind of like, talk to them and stuff and like their emotion, their expression, and when they talk to me, it's almost like they talk to me because they have to [...] because I talked to them or something like that, and also some not a lot, but like often times I would come across people who are annoyed by my like my English. So that was sad as well.

She recalled this othering behaviour making her feel “inferior in a way to other people”. These accounts of exclusion due to speaking a language other than English appear to resemble covert linguistic racism, where members belonging to monolingual societies exclude or marginalise those who speak with a foreign accent or in a non-dominant language (Craft, Wright, Weissler, & Queen, 2020).

In discussing their inability to make friends due to their lack of language skills, it is apparent that Iman, Thili, and Nina believed (or were led to believe) that they were not worthy of be-friending until they knew English. Thili spoke to this when she said “Umm yeah, so I had no friends for like 2 years and I kinda isolated myself as well because I didn't know English”. Khawara also mentioned the impact of language fluency on her confidence to interact with classmates:

But I think I had an incredible amount insecurity because I also couldn't speak English. And I think I could speak a little bit in year 2 but I was really bad at it. Umm and so there's a lot of insecurity when it came to sitting down and reading, sitting down and talking to the class.

Iman's switch in the earlier quote from “we” to “I”, and Thili and Khawara isolating themselves until they knew English, hint at an implicit admission to feeling that making friends was their responsibility, for which they didn't have the skills to execute. Additionally, Roslyn and Aliya coped with not having friends in early resettlement by isolating themselves from others, and spending that time studying or reading. However, most of the young women recalled feeling lonely, sad, and isolated because they didn't have friends during this time. These emotions are also experienced by second



language learners and International students in English-dominant countries who also report social withdrawal, self-doubt, shame, and stress as a result of covert linguistic racism and profiling (Tankosić & Dovchin, 2021; Yan, 2024).

While it might seem obvious that knowing the language is important to making friends from a different background, Cleo made a lifelong friend with a Pākehā girl in primary school despite the language:

I love the fact that even though I couldn't speak English [...] she didn't discriminate or judge me for who I am and my characteristics [...] yeah so I just admire the fact that she accepted me for who I am regardless of English language barriers it was quite wonderful so we've been friends since.

Similarly, Khawara's first friend in primary school was also an English-speaking Māori girl:

Umm, she was really nice and really patient with me, I think that was also why I was hooked [...].

These accounts demonstrated the difficulties YRB faced in forming friendships with individuals who showed less empathy towards multilingual speakers during the early stages of resettlement. Language fluency and cultural differences were fundamental barriers to friendship making that appeared to intensify with age. Indeed, research has shown that a younger age at migration is a strong predictor of integration into host cultures (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). However, as demonstrated here, efforts to integrate are likely impeded by experiences of covert linguistic racism, highlighting the cyclical relationship between language learning (and, by extension, integration) and the consequences of racism (e.g., isolation) (Craft, Wright, Weissler, & Queen, 2020; Tankosić & Dovchin, 2021; Yan, 2024).

For many of the women, their first friends were also non-English speakers like themselves whom they met at ESOL and, even though they couldn't communicate with one another, they still connected. Iman experienced this both when she first arrived and then decades later when she became a teacher aide- "...and I found that most of the kids, they were all refugee and they didn't know English [...] but they could still communicate with each other."

It appeared that this connection with other non-English speakers stemmed from sharing the same struggle of settling in Aotearoa as a young person from a refugee or migrant background, and their

shared culture and value systems. Nina mentioned this as a part of her positive experience at Mangere resettlement centre:

I was with people, other people who were also refugees. So even though we came from different places, we were in the same situation so...we were similar in yeah our situations and we could understand each other and make friends with each other better.

...and when she started ESOL class:

I think it (ESOL) gave me an environment where I can like find friends and meet people who come from a similar background. So yeah, even though we have like different backgrounds culturally [...] our situation was similar in a way that we all came here and to this foreign country, right? So we were able to connect with each other and our feelings...[]...it actually provides us space for us to meet and bond with each other. So I actually met my best friend there in that class as well.

Literature often discusses the nature of bonding relationships as those with friends from the same ethnic or religious backgrounds whose primary role is supporting resettling youth in navigating their new environment (Correa-Velez et al., 2010; de Anstiss et al., 2019; Major et al., 2013). This study extended this by showing that bonding relationships were also the first type of friendships most YRB were able to make, and that these friendships were not only with people from the same ethnicity or religion as them, but also with other YRB, despite not sharing a common language.

Thili explained the reason for her lack of Pākehā friends using the same lens of struggle:

because they (Pākehā) didn't know the struggle I was going through at that time because I was learning the language and me and my mom we were trying to settle in New Zealand whereas they were here from the beginning obviously...and they were born here. So their life is quite smooth. So, they were already settled, and their goals are different from mine. So yeah, at that level they were not able to empathize with me. So I was sad.

It was also evident that Thili didn't actively seek those friendships out because she was so focused on making headway with her learning, that she could only make friends with those who shared the same ambition and goals as her:

...most of my friends were Asians, so we had so much in common. They were able to understand where I'm standing...I was really focused on studies. Like I was really focused on studies, whereas like uh, other people



that I was not able to connect, they were not really focused on studies. They're like, like enjoying life, kinda like having fun. But I was not in that umm...I was not thinking that, so we all had the same focus in studies, so we were able to understand that. So that's why we were able to connect.

Iman also found herself gravitating towards students who “look like her” because even though they can't speak English “they wear hijab” like her and, in sharing this practice of faith, they have something in common. Roslyn also preferred Asian friends because of cultural similarities around parenting. She discussed this in relation to having a curfew:

So in that sense, like I just kind of like being more with my Asian friends, they also have like quite strict parents. So they're able to understand like, 'Oh, OK, you can't make it, you genuinely can't make it' compared to the other ones (Pākehā) they're like 'You just don't want to hang out with us, right?' like it's making excuses, 'I don't think your parents are that strict you know'.

Bonding relationships served a special purpose: solidarity. Whether this was shared struggles, cultural norms, or educational aspirations, young people bonded over their commonalities and were easily accepted by one another. As suggested by past research, YRB and their minority friends shared a motivation to succeed despite their negative circumstances, and this shared motivation and mutual aspirations encouraged them in both tangible and intangible ways to do well (Donahoo & Caffey, 2010; Mishra, 2020).

Ultimately having friends, whether they were Pākehā or not, had a significant impact on psychological well-being. Khawara explained the difference between not having friends and having friends as “night and day”. Thili too, despite how focused she was on learning, found that this alone was not enough to sustain her well-being:

and then making friends...it made me really happy in high school because for the two years I was really down [because she had no friends] so I had no motivation. But then after I made friends, I was always with them. So, we help each other. We motivate each other and then we know what's happening in school.

Friends were not only a major facilitator for the young women's psychological well-being and belonging, but also their educational success. Even Thili, who was intrinsically motivated to excel, found friendship beneficial to learning about the academic system, and described encouragement from them as instrumental in her educational

success. She also shared this experience- “I met a lot of friends and then that's when I started to learn the language more and then was being successful in my education as well”, describing the cyclical nature of making friends and learning English, both of which facilitated educational success. Her first friends were also from refugee backgrounds, with whom she shared the same struggles and a shared drive to overcome them: “Because I was able to relate with them, they were able to empathize with me [...] and our focus was all similar like we all wanted to...we all had an ambition that we were running to towards”. When Roslyn was asked what helped her achieve at university, she said:

Uhm, I think like it will mainly be my friends from uni, just 'cause like they're in the same boat as me, you know? So if I'm like, complaining about anything, they're like, 'oh yeah, I totally agree'. You know, just saying out loud like your feelings. So, then I don't have any stress building up to it and just having that group of friends like, 'oh, I'm like, I'm struggling with this, you know?' And then they'd be like, 'oh, ok, like, I have this friend that's studying that course as well like you could probably like ask them for some advice on what to do or like someone to teach you, you know, like mentor you and stuff'. And I'm like, 'OK', so like, just having that connection, I think it's like the main one for now.

Many of the other women spoke similarly about the relationship between friendship and educational success. Supportive friendships were a form of social capital that provided these young people with the resources to do better. Some of these resources were tangible; for example, connections to other people, and sharing notes. However, a vast majority of these resources were not—words of encouragement, shared history and future goals, and the knowledge that even in the trenches of their educational journey, they had each other. While the need for these resources may not be unique to young people from refugee backgrounds alone, because YRB arrive in Aotearoa with minimal financial and social resources, the impact of having these resources is far-reaching. Friendships with like-minded people not only facilitated educational success, but also increased their psychological well-being and belonging in Aotearoa.

These experiences aligned with past scholarship about bonding and bridging relationships (Correa-Velez et al., 2010; de Anstiss et al., 2019; Ellis et al., 2008; Major et al., 2013; O' Connor, 2014) Bonding relationships appeared imperative for the young women to navigate the new environment in Aotearoa and provided a sense of togetherness in achieving similar goals. Previous research



suggested the type(s) of social capital drawn on by homogenous groups shifted from provision of information and material resources in early resettlement to emotional resources with longer resettlement (Major et al., 2013). This was reflected in the experiences of the young women in this study. Concerning bridging relationships, the young women experienced negative behaviours from Pākehā, ranging from more subtle exclusion to obvious hostility, and this was the biggest barrier to forming bridging relationships (see, for examples, de Anstiss et al., 2019; Major et al., 2020). However, consistent with studies conducted in Australia with YRB, this research showed that these relationships were important, as they facilitated quicker English Language acquisition, understanding of the majority culture, and finding a sense of belonging in Aotearoa (discussed further in the following sub-theme) (Correa-Velez et al., 2010; de Anstiss et al., 2019). As attested to by both the young women in this study and past research, the social capital present in bonding and bridging relationships had the greatest capability to facilitate integration and successful resettlement for this population.

Belonging is Being Wholly Accepted

All four of the more recently arrived young women expressed a sense of belonging in places, and to people, who supported them in early resettlement. Thili explained feeling this way with her church community:

...and then we used to go to church in [city of residence] as well. So, they were a really good support as well because we didn't know anything, it was a new country. They helped us settle and yeah, every Sunday I go to church I just have...it was a really nice time there. So, we made some friends through church. So, it was a really nice, we felt like we belonged there.

This belonging, offered through support by the church, was transformational in Thili's resettlement journey, as she found truth in Christianity and later converted. Both Roslyn and Nina, also Christian, connected with their church communities, finding support and belonging. Roslyn found this belonging only after becoming more involved in church activities, which provided a means of connection to the community. This is indicated by her use of "actually" — "but now I am a lot more involved in church, so I have much more connection and I actually feel like I belong there and stuff". Nina's family was supported in a major way by the pastor from their local church, who helped them stay in the same neighbourhood as her aunty, already

settled in Aotearoa. This association between support and belonging is further reflected in Aliya's recollection of how school became meaningful once she made friends:

so I felt like there was more to high school than just studying. And so overall, I start to feel happier about being at High School. And even outside 'cause, I knew that I could text my friend and be like, 'hey, you want to hang out?' So that even affected me outside of school. And I felt way more like that, that sense of belonging, and I felt like there was like a support system I could go to.

All four young women alluded to this sense of belonging to the friends they made in early resettlement. As discussed previously, these friends were predominantly from the same migration or racial background as them, and this shared base became an accessible point of connection. Furthermore, given the role religious communities also played in supporting these young women's families in more tangible ways, being connected to their own religious communities was also crucial in facilitating well-being, support, and a sense of belonging during early resettlement.

These experiences supported a recent review that showed a strong relationship between increased social support (perceived and received) and psychological well-being for refugee-background groups during resettlement (Song, Corcoran, & Zahnw, 2025). Specifically, past scholarship showed that community engagement and participation facilitated psychological well-being and life satisfaction for resettling groups (Hawkes, Norris, Joyce, & Paton, 2021; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018; Modesti & Talamo, 2021). While this positive association has primarily been shown between adult co-ethnic groups, this study demonstrated the same relationship between YRB belonging to the same religious groups. Furthermore, while inconsistencies across the literature between social connection and belonging for refugee groups appeared due to the differences in the types of social connection (bonding or bridging) being explored (Song, Corcoran, & Zahnw, 2025), this study has showed that bonding relationships bolster a sense of belonging for YRB. While this type of belonging didn't appear to be a sense of belonging to Aotearoa specifically, it was still important in allowing them to feel connected and settled in New Zealand.

Belonging to Aotearoa was more complex, and appeared to predominantly rely on feeling accepted (without discrimination) by the dominant groups.



When NS asked Roslyn if she felt like she belonged in New Zealand, she said:

I'll say yes, just 'cause I personally haven't experienced like a major discrimination against me, like my parents have told me about their experiences, but I personally haven't experienced them...

When NS asked Nina if she felt like she belonged in Aotearoa she said:

Yes, I would say so because of my friend group now...well, they accept me as who I am and my whole background, even though I came as a refugee. They accept me wholly and they still want to be friends with me [...] And the friend group is pretty big and diverse as well. Because there are a lot of Pākehā. And there are a lot of Asian Kiwi and there are a lot of Asians who aren't necessarily Kiwi.

Her use of the word “now” at the start of her statement emphasised a distinction between her friend group in early resettlement, and “now” years later, which she later explained is distinct because of its diverse ethnic makeup. Nina’s use of the words “even though” signalled that she held negative connotations associated with being a refugee. While it wasn’t apparent what these were, or why she believed in them, ‘belonging’ to Aotearoa was about being accepted wholly even by those who were different to her.

Aliya shed light on the internalised stigma associated with being a refugee:

cause in [country of first asylum] if you are open about it [being a refugee], you could be taken to prison. And we weren't very respected there, especially with racism and stuff like that. While here, I felt like I could be open about it. And it wasn't looked at negatively [...] I had never heard anyone be like 'all these refugees stealing our jobs or something'. Never heard that. So, I just felt more comfortable about it...so coming to New Zealand where there is more this sense of community, really helped. I was like, 'I belong here'.

Aliya’s experience of disclosing her refugee background in Aotearoa had been positive in comparison to her time in transmigration. This had led her to believe that society in Aotearoa didn’t perceive refugees negatively. In fact, she also viewed specific opportunities (like scholarships) afforded to refugee background students as New Zealand society being invested in uplifting refugee-background communities. Her positive experience and perception of New Zealand society’s treatment of refugees created her sense of belonging in Aotearoa. This perception was held about New

Zealand society as a whole (majority group included) as she hadn’t experienced any negative stereotyping. Therefore, for Roslyn, Nina, and Aliya, acceptance of their refugee-background without discrimination by Pākehā was crucial in facilitating a sense of belonging to Aotearoa.

The need to be accepted by the majority to feel belonging is likely the case because Iman is the only woman of all the participants who explicitly stated that she didn’t feel like she belonged in Aotearoa. Iman is also the only women who doesn’t have Pākehā friends:

Umm. I always felt a sense of belonging, but only with people that looked like me, you know... and umm, if I'm in spaces and where there is Pākehā or just other people, it just feels like I'm the odd one out or I don't feel like I belong there.

This was a pain point for Iman, as she was actively sought belonging even on an implicit level- “...whereas for me, I think one of the reasons why I also even picked working in a school is to not feel like I don’t belong”. Iman felt that, in comparison to an office space, it was more likely that being a teacher would mean more engagement and involvement with other staff, increasing the likelihood of connection and therefore a sense of belonging. This further highlighted that belonging to Aotearoa was only possible once YRB felt fully accepted by Pākehā.

Together, these accounts showed that YRB viewed acceptance by Pākehā as permission to claim belonging to the land, and while they felt belonging to their own communities early on from the support they were given, they only felt belonging to Aotearoa when they were supported by their own minority group and accepted by Pākehā. This result was common across refugee-background communities in many Western countries (Due et al., 2016; Hausmann et al., 2009; Major et al., 2013; O’ Connor, 2014).

Based on the experiences of these young women it appeared that, in New Zealand society, Pākehā are the gatekeepers of belonging to Aotearoa. While it was possible to feel a sense of belonging in early resettlement, this was afforded by people who were of the same ethnic, religious, or migration background as the women themselves, and this type of belonging could only be felt to those specific communities. However, belonging to Aotearoa was only felt when they were wholly accepted by Pākehā. During early resettlement many of the young women faced exclusion and othering by their



Pākehā peers due to their limited English language and ‘foreign’ ways of being. These microaggressions are a common type of treatment experienced by migrants who are considered ‘fresh-off-the-boat’, and while not labelled as such by the participants themselves, constitute racism (Poolokasingham et al., 2014). Therefore, it is unsurprising that as these women improved their English and adapted to Pākehā culture, they began to feel more accepted by Pākehā. Research shows that language proficiency and understanding the majority culture norms and values are key forms of social capital that majority groups offer to support successful integration (Cheong et al., 2007). This raises a critical question: why must YRB conform to Pākehā norms to be accepted, and is this sufficient for true acceptance?

In this way, we argue that the bridging social capital provided to these communities does not promote genuine upward mobility for them as themselves, but is instead a trojan horse to present more amenably to the dominant group, ultimately upholding ethno-cultural supremacy. Thus, successful integration in Aotearoa perpetuates colonial ways of thinking, whereby belonging is only offered by Pākehā once YRB have begun speaking the language of and assimilating into Pākehā culture. Under these circumstances, integration of YRB and their communities becomes a uni-directional process, one they must not only bear alone, but also suppress their cultural ways of being to achieve.

Discussion and conclusion

When we first began this study, the overarching question we asked was, “what are the school-based experiences of young people from refugee backgrounds that facilitate their educational success?” At the end of the interview process, we learned that the question we should have asked is: “what are the experiences that facilitate resettlement success for YRB living in Aotearoa?” This is because extracts from the young women demonstrated that educational success is tied to resettlement success, and *whakawhanaungatanga* (building relationships) was crucial for achieving both. It is important to note that the accounts we provided above are a testament to educational success that has occurred at the forefront of the structural violence imposed on YRB by the New Zealand education system. For this reason, it is impossible to view these accounts as anything but a story of resilience, for academic success has largely occurred not because of but despite what the New Zealand government has offered YRB. In this paper we have discussed only one of three main themes of the broader study and contributed a deeper

understanding to 1) the underlying nature and mechanisms of bonding and bridging social capital offered to YRB by their peers and community, and 2) the wider implications of the structural violence committed by the state. Here, however, we go on to discuss the broader implications of this primary theme.

Analyses from this study showed that YRB draw on social capital present within their relationships to achieve positive educational outcomes. This social capital also fosters well-being and life satisfaction for these youth. These findings could inform multi-cultural pre-service training workshops for teachers, providing them with knowledge about the migration histories of YRB, and their implications in post-resettlement schooling. With more targeted funding for YRB entering the schooling system in Aotearoa, staff could also establish programs like a buddy system pairing refugee students with Pākehā students to help YRB navigate the education system. These programs could support YRB and Pākehā students, by giving Pākehā opportunities to interact with involuntary migrants arriving to Aotearoa. As intergroup contact research has shown, this could likely decrease their prejudice towards those from other ethnicities (Christ & Kauff, 2019; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Wagner et al., 2003), and be a positive step towards bi-directional integration efforts. It is also important that upon arrival YRB are educated on *Te tiriti o Waitangi* to have a better understanding of Aotearoa’s indigenous history and *tangata whenua*. This may dissuade belonging seeking in Pākehā. Finally, the best ways this research can be applied is by ensuring adequate ESOL funding and advocating for supportive educational policy that ensures the educational rights of YRB are recognised, so that their educational achievement and resettlement success are not left to chance.

For decades, the government of Aotearoa has not recognised YRB as priority learners, disregarding their unique learning needs. Consequently, YRB have relied on their own skills and characteristics to find relationships that could direct them to the resources necessary for their academic success. However, successful resettlement was more than simply educational success; it was about forming friendships with those who understood their struggles, supported their journeys, and provided them a sense of belonging in their new home. For young resettling women, the root of successful resettlement, education, and positive mental health was good quality friendships. This cannot be underscored more. Once they made friends, they had both tangible and intangible support with their education, emotional support to cope with the challenges of family life and broader social pressures, and guidance on how to navigate and



settle into life in Aotearoa. The findings from this research emphasize the urgent need for the New Zealand government to develop policy that recognises both YRB as priority learners and Pākehā as equally responsible for the successful integration of former refugees. Only then can we ensure the educational and resettlement success of this group while simultaneously fostering a society where every New Zealander can feel at home.

References

- Berry, J. W., Phinney, J. S., Sam, D. L., & Vedder, P. (2006). Immigrant youth: Acculturation, identity, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 55(3), 303–332. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.2006.00256.x>
- Bradley, G. L., Ferguson, S., & Zimmer-Gembeck, M. J. (2021). Parental support, peer support and school connectedness as foundations for student engagement and academic achievement in Australian youth. In R. Dimitrova & N. Wiium (Eds.), *Handbook of Positive Youth Development: Advancing Research, Policy, and Practice in Global Contexts* (pp. 219–236). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-70262-5_15
- Cheong, P., Edwards, R., Goulbourne, H., & Solomos, J. (2007). Immigration, social cohesion and social capital: A critical review. *Critical Social Policy*, 7(1), 24–49. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018307072206>
- Christ, O., & Kauff, M. (2019). Intergroup contact theory. In K. Sassenberg & M. L. W. Vliek (Eds.), *Social Psychology in action: Evidence-Based Interventions from Theory to Practice* (pp. 145–161). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-13788-5_10
- Correa-Velez, I., Gifford, S. M., & Barnett, A. G. (2010). Longing to belong: Social inclusion and wellbeing among youth with refugee backgrounds in the first three years in Melbourne, Australia. *Social Science & Medicine*, 71(8), 1399–1408. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2010.07.018>
- Craft, J., Wright, K., Weissler, R., & Queen, R. (2020). Language and discrimination: Generating meaning, perceiving identities, and discriminating outcomes. *Annual Review of Linguistics*, 6, 389–409. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-linguistics-011718-011659>
- de Anstiss, H., Savelsberg, H., & Ziaian, T. (2019). Relationships in a new country: A qualitative study of the social connections of refugee youth resettled in South Australia. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 22(3), 346–362. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2018.1508824>
- Donahoo, S., & Caffey, R. (2010). A sense of home: The impact of church participation on African American college students. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 19(1), 79–104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10656211003630471>
- Dryden-Peterson, S. (2016). Refugee education in countries of first asylum: Breaking open the black box of pre-resettlement experiences. *Theory and Research in Education*, 14(2), 131–148. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477878515622703>
- Dryden-Peterson, S. (2017). Refugee education: Education for an unknowable future. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 47(1), 14–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03626784.2016.1255935>
- Due, C., Riggs, D. W., & Augoustinos, M. (2016). Experiences of school belonging for young children with refugee backgrounds. *The Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, 33(1), 33–53. <https://doi.org/10.1017/edp.2016.9>
- Duffy, A. L., Penn, S., Nesdale, D., & Zimmer-Gembeck, M. J. (2017). Popularity: Does it magnify associations between popularity prioritization and the bullying and defending behavior of early adolescent boys and girls? *Social Development*, 26(2), 263–277. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sode.12206>
- Education Review Office. (2012). Evaluation at a Glance: Priority Learners in New Zealand Schools.
- Ellis, B. H., MacDonald, H. Z., Lincoln, A. K., Cabral, H. J., & Link to external site, this link will open in a new window. (2008). Mental health of Somali adolescent refugees: The role of trauma, stress, and perceived discrimination. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 76(2), 184–193. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.76.2.184>
- Gaertner, S. L., & Dovidio, J. F. (2000). *Reducing intergroup bias: The common ingroup identity model* (pp. xiii, 212). Psychology Press.
- Garnier, A., Jubilut, L. L., & Sandvik, K. B. (2018). *Refugee Resettlement: Power, Politics, and Humanitarian Governance*. Berghahn Books.
- Goodwin-Gill, G. S. (2017). The Politics of Refugee Protection. In H. Lambert (Ed.), *International Refugee Law* (pp. 145–160). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315092478-6>
- Hawkes, C., Norris, K., Joyce, J., & Paton, D. (2021). Individuals of refugee background resettled in regional and rural Australia: A systematic review of mental health research. *Australian Journal of Rural Health*, 29(6), 850–864. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajr.12785>
- Hausmann, L. R. M., Ye, F., Schofield, J. W., & Woods, R. L. (2009). Sense of belonging and persistence



in White and African American first-year students. *Research in Higher Education*, 50(7), 649–669. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-009-9137-8>

Immigration New Zealand. (2022). *New Zealand refugee resettlement strategy: Success indicators and measures*. <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/documents/refugees/nzrrs-outcomes-dashboard-2022>

Immigration New Zealand. (2023a). *New Zealand Refugee Resettlement Strategy*. Immigration New Zealand. <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/what-we-do/our-strategies-and-projects/refugee-resettlement-strategy>

Immigration New Zealand. (2023b). *The NZ Migrant Settlement Integration Strategy and NZ Refugee Resettlement Strategy Refresh Project*. <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/what-we-do/our-strategies-and-projects/refugee-resettlement-strategy/the-nz-migrant-settlement-integration-strategy-and-nz-refugee-resettlement-strategy-refresh-project>

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. (2023). *Global Report on Internal Displacement*. <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2023/>

Khawaja, N. G., Allan, E., & Schweitzer, R. D. (2018). The role of school connectedness and social support in the acculturation of culturally and linguistically diverse youth in Australia. *Australian Psychologist*, 53(4), 355–364. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ap.12327>

Kia-Keating, M., & Ellis, B. H. (2007). Belonging and connection to school in resettlement: Young refugees, school belonging, and psychosocial adjustment. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 12(1), 29–43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359104507071052>

Lewis, J. (2018). *ESOL cut leaves schools in lurch*. <https://www.odt.co.nz/news/dunedin/esol-cut-leaves-schools-lurch>

Major, J., Wilkinson, J., Langat, K., & Santoro, N. (2013). Sudanese young people of refugee background in rural and regional Australia: Social capital and education success. *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, 23(3), 108–120. <https://doi.org/10.3316/informit.845809019872687>

Martzoukou, K., & Burnett, S. (2018). Exploring the everyday life information needs and the socio-cultural adaptation barriers of Syrian refugees in Scotland. *Journal of Documentation*, 74(5), 1104–1132. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-10-2017-0142>

Matthews, J. (2008). Schooling and settlement: Refugee education in Australia. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 18(1), 31–45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09620210802195947>

McMichael, C., Gifford, S. M., & Correa-Velez, I. (2011). Negotiating family, navigating resettlement: Family connectedness amongst resettled youth with refugee backgrounds living in Melbourne, Australia. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 14(2), 179–195. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2010.506529>

Miller, E., Ziaian, T., & Esterman, A. (2018). Australian school practices and the education experiences of students with a refugee background: A review of the literature. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 22(4), 339–359. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2017.1365955>

Mishra, S. (2020). Social networks, social capital, social support and academic success in higher education: A systematic review with a special focus on ‘underrepresented’ students. *Educational Research Review*, 29, 100307. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2019.100307>

Ministry of Health. (2012). *Refugee health care: A handbook for health professionals*. Ministry of Health. <https://communityresearch.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/formidable/8/refugee-health-care-a-handbook-for-health-professionalsv2.pdf>

Modesti, C., & Talamo, A. (2021). Defining adjustment to address the missing link between refugees and their resettlement communities. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(18), 9902. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18189902>

Montgomery, E., & Foldspang, A. (2008). Discrimination, mental problems and social adaptation in young refugees. *European Journal of Public Health*, 18(2), 156–161. <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckm073>

Morrice, L., Tip, L. K., Brown, R., & Collyer, M. (2020). Resettled refugee youth and education: Aspiration and reality. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 23(3), 388–405. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2019.1612047>

Müller, S., & Schneider, T. (2013). Educational pathways and dropout from higher education in Germany. *Longitudinal and Life Course Studies*, 4(3), 218–241. <https://doi.org/10.14301/llcs.v4i3.251>

O’ Connor, R. (2014). *Refugee Youth Resettlement Report “Then came reality”: Lived experiences of refugee youth in their first 12 months in New Zealand*. <https://www.redcross.org.nz/about-us/publications/>

Osterman, K. F. (2000). Students’ Need for Belonging in the School Community. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(3), 323–367. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543070003323>



[Parekh, S. \(2016\). *Refugees and the ethics of forced displacement* \(1st ed.\). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315883854>](#)

Poolokasingham, G., Spanierman, L., Kleiman, S., & Houshmand, S. (2014). “Fresh off the boat?” Racial microaggressions that target South Asian Canadian students. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 7(3), 194–210. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037285>

Portes, A., Fernández-Kelly, P., & Haller, W. (2005). Segmented assimilation on the ground: The new second generation in early adulthood. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 28(6), 1000–1040. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870500224117>

Rafferty, R. (2019). Rights, resources, and relationships: A “Three Rs” framework for enhancing the educational resilience of refugee background youth. In *Migration, Education and Translation*. Routledge.

Rafferty, R., Burgin, A., & Anderson, V. (2020). Do we really offer refuge? Using Galtung’s concept of structural violence to interrogate refugee resettlement support in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Sites: A Journal of Social Anthropology and Cultural Studies*, 17(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.11157/sites-id455>

Refugee background students. (2015). *Education in New Zealand*. <https://www.education.govt.nz/school/student-support/supporting-transitions/refugee-background-students/>

Saleem, N. (2024). *Bridges and bonds: An applied study on the importance of friendship for successful resettlement and educational resilience of former refugee youth in Aotearoa* [PhD thesis, Victoria University of Wellington]. <https://doi.org/10.26686/wgtn.27135189>

Smith, J., & Eatough, V. (2017). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In W. Rogers & C. Willig (Eds.), *Sage handbook of qualitative research in psychology* (pp. 193-209). Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526405555.n12>

Smith, J., & Nizza, I. (2021). *Essentials of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis*. American Psychological Association.

Song, J., Corcoran, J., & Zahnow, R. (2025). The resettlement journey: Understanding the role of social connectedness on well-being and life satisfaction among (im)migrants and refugees: A systematic review. *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities*, 12, 2128–2144. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40615-024-02036-7>

Strang, A., & Ager, A. (2010). Refugee integration: Emerging trends and remaining agendas. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 23(4), 589–607. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feq046>

Tankosić, A., & Dovchin, S. (2021). (C)overt linguistic racism: Eastern-European background immigrant women in the Australian workplace. *Qualitative Research*, 23(5), 802–820. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14687968211005104>

Trickett, E. J., & Birman, D. (2005). Acculturation, school context, and school outcomes: Adaptation of refugee adolescents from the former Soviet Union. *Psychology in the Schools*, 42(1), 27–38. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.20024>

UNHCR. (2022). *UNHCR - Refugee Statistics*. UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>

Wagner, U., van Dick, R., Pettigrew, T., & Christ, O. (2003). Ethnic prejudice in East and West Germany: The explanatory power of intergroup contact. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 6(1), 22–36. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430203006001010>

Wilkinson, L. (2002). Factors influencing the academic success of refugee youth in Canada. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 5(2), 173–192. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676260220134430>

Yan, X. (2024). The impact of accent stigma on self-efficacy and acculturation strategy among international students in the United States. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, 1414282. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1414282>

