



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Research Commons

<https://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/>

Research Commons at the University of Waikato

Copyright Statement:

The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand).

The thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.
- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author's right to be identified as the author of the thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.
- You will obtain the author's permission before publishing any material from the thesis.

**Love letter: A study of South Asian Women, and their relationships with
Māori and other racialised Women in Aotearoa**

A thesis
submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of
Doctor of Māori and Indigenous Studies
at
The University of Waikato
by
Ara Alam-Simmons



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

2025

Abstract

This project records the experiences of South Asian women in Aotearoa, New Zealand, and what those experiences reveal about the possibilities and limits of solidarity with Māori and other racialised women under conditions of settler colonialism and white supremacy. This work is a response to my own relational experiences as a South Asian woman living in Aotearoa, and to the conversations that have emerged from years of active community involvement. This project centres women's voices through the lens of Indigenous, Black, and women-of-colour feminist thinking and praxis.

Using a toolkit methodology comprising collaging, one-to-one conversations, found poetry, and autoethnography, the study engaged fifteen South Asian women across three interconnected sites of inquiry. The first explored how South Asian women make sense of their own experiences of colonisation and what it might mean to reclaim identity outside of colonial narratives. The second took a look at women's relationships with other racialised women, including Māori women, to understand what those relationships reveal about the conditions under which solidarity becomes possible, conditional, or foreclosed. The third drew on my own autoethnographic account to illuminate how deliberate acts of remembering, unsettling colonial narratives, resisting co-optation, and being in solidarity can function as a decolonial practice grounded in relational accountability to Māori sovereignty and Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The central empirical finding of this thesis is that solidarity among South Asian women and between South Asian women and Māori is not a natural outcome of shared marginalisation or identity. It is a relational practice that is structured, conditional, and sometimes foreclosed by the intersecting dynamics of settler colonialism, caste supremacy, heteropatriarchy, biculturalism, and internalised colonial narratives. Key findings demonstrate that solidarity requires, first, an internal reckoning: healing from internalised oppression, reclaiming ancestral histories, cultural practices, language, and knowledge systems, and developing critical consciousness of complicity within settler-colonial structures. Second, it requires an external and political commitment: confronting caste supremacy within South Asian communities, refusing model minority positioning, and grounding relationships that engages in a political commitment to Te Ao Māori and Māori sovereignty, rather than in the false promise of inclusion within settler-colonial frameworks. Additionally, this thesis, locates caste supremacy in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

This thesis makes both an empirical and methodological contribution to the Asian-Indigenous solidarities literature. Methodologically, it demonstrates that arts-based approaches can make visible the complexity and diversity of South Asian women's relational lives in ways that conventional qualitative research cannot, offering a practical toolkit that can be taken up in community and activist spaces beyond the university. Conceptually, it offers two frameworks as new contributions to the decolonial solidarities literature. The first extends the whakawhanaungatanga framework developed by Rata and Al-Asaad (2019) by adding two new dimensions. These are restoration, which centres the reclaiming of identity, healing, and spiritual practice as political acts; and reconstruction, which names the need for joint political struggle as the governing horizon of solidarity. The second is a decolonial framework developed through the autoethnographic inquiry. This is made up of four interconnected dimensions: historical remembering, unsettling settler colonial narratives, resisting co-optation, and being in solidarity that is led by Te Ao Māori and accountable to Māori sovereignty. Together, these frameworks offer South Asian and other tauwiwi of colour communities practical and political pathways for building solidarities that refuse settler-colonial logics and actively contribute to creating more just and relational ways of living together in Aotearoa.

Lay Summary

This thesis explores South Asian women's experiences with Māori and other racialised women in Aotearoa, New Zealand and what those relationships can teach us about building solidarity in a country shaped by colonialism and white supremacy. Using Indigenous research methodologies and methods to centre the voices of fifteen South Asian women, the project found that solidarity does not happen automatically just because women share experiences of racism or marginalisation. It requires honesty and accountability. It requires a political commitment, which means understanding our responsibilities as settlers of colour in Aotearoa, refusing to be positioned against Māori by a system that benefits from our division, and actively supporting Māori sovereignty and the promises made in Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The thesis offers two practical frameworks to support this work, providing South Asian and other racialised communities with tools to begin these conversations and strengthen relationships with one another.

Dedication

For Mar, Sharn, Mog, Egg, Toid, Shoid and always little Pip.

বাঙালি!

Scarborough beach, slot machines and donkey rides.

The way we were.

What I would give for one more day together.

মুক্ত

Acknowledgments

This work was never mine alone but a weaving together of many voices, stories and insights woven through its pages.

To the women who trusted me with your stories, art and solidarities, this thesis has been stitched together with your power, your tears, laughter and dreams to want better for us all. Thank you for showing me how we can and do imagine otherwise.

To my supervisors, Dr Arama Rata, Professor Waikaremoana Waitoki and Professor Tom Roa, ngā mihi nui ki a koutou for your guidance, patience and for reminding me to always remember who I am in all of this and what this project is about. Thank you also for enabling me to dedicate my full attention to completing this project due to the WERO (Working to End Racial Oppression) scholarship I received.

To my fellow co-conspirators on the WERO team, there is so much I have learnt (and continue to learn) from you all. Special mentions to Dr Andrea Edwards, Dr Kyle Tan, Byron Williams, Dr Hemopereki Simon and Dr Logan Hamley for many generous and supportive conversations and insights.

To my friends, my community who keep me going and keep me hopeful – thank you Sam, Gauri, Shelly, Byron, Lovely, Nik, Rach, Naima, RJ, Pā, Manawaka Ao, Whānau community hub, the Wāhine toa crew, Henderson North Whānau, and of course Puma.

To Paul, Sufia, Kasim, Ashar, Mar and Sharna – there will never be enough words. May Allah keep their promise. ٱمۇت.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
Lay Summary.....	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgments	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables	xii
List of Figures.....	xiii
Prologue	xiv
Chapter 1: Introduction	15
1.1 Significance of the proposed research	17
1.2 Power in being the ‘other’	18
1.3 The importance of citation and style	19
1.4 Writing myself in	19
1.5 Positioning self	20
1.6 An Invitation.....	24
1.7 Thesis structure	24
Interlude 1: Celebrating independence while colonised.....	30
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	34
2.1 Introduction	34
2.2 Context	34
2.2.1 Te Tiriti o Waitangi	36
2.2.2 Māori resistance	38
2.2.3 White New Zealand	39

2.3 The arrival of Indians in New Zealand	42
2.3.1 A system of segregation - Indians in New Zealand	44
2.4 Racialisation of Asian groups.....	44
2.5 Whiteness and white supremacy	46
2.5.1 Maintaining whiteness through the model minority myth.....	47
2.5.2 Situating casteism with the model minority myth	48
2.5.3 Pākehā Treaty-led work	49
2.6 Biculturalism and Multiculturalism tensions	51
2.7 The racialised woman	54
2.8 Indigenous and Black women and women of colour feminist thinking	56
2.8.1 Reclaiming the sacred	57
2.9 Decolonisation.....	58
2.10 Solidarities.....	60
2.10.1 Asian-Māori solidarities in Aotearoa.....	62
2.11 Summary	64
Interlude 2 Connecting through our colonised histories	67
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	72
3.1 Introduction	72
3.1.1 Takarangi theoretical framework.....	72
3.2 Theoretical approach	77
3.2.1 Standpoint theory	79
3.2.2 Liberatory theory	80
3.2.3 Indigenous methodologies	81

3.2.4 Indigenous, Black and women of colour feminist theory	82
3.3 The importance of citation and style	85
3.4 Methodology as toolkit.....	86
3.4.1 Participant selection	87
3.4.2 Research design	87
3.4.3 Confidentiality	88
3.5 Methodology and methods.....	89
3.5.1 Collaging.....	89
3.5.2 Storytelling.....	92
3.5.3 Autoethnography.....	93
3.6 Data Analysis	95
3.6.1 Found poetry	95
3.6.2 Thematic Analysis	95
3.6.3 Refusal	97
3.7 Ethical considerations	97
3.8 Questions about methodology	98
3.9 Conclusion.....	99
Interlude 3: Hīkoi mō Te Tiriti: Walking into the future	101
Chapter 4: Who can we be without colonisation?	104
4.1 Introduction	104
4.2 How do South Asian women interpret their own experiences of colonisation?.....	104
4.3 Method.....	108
4.4 Findings	112

4.4.1 Reconstruction and reclaiming Identity	114
4.4.2 Resisting Colonial Narratives	127
4.4.3 Healing and reclaiming space and freedom	131
4.4.4 Summary	139
4.5 Discussion	140
4.6 Meaningful contributions	147
4.7 Limitations	148
4.8 Conclusion	149
Interlude 4: Model Minorities	151
Chapter 5: The daily choices we make.....	156
5.1 Introduction	156
5.2 Method.....	165
5.3 Findings	167
5.3.1 Solidarity with others.....	168
5.3.2 Barriers to solidarities	172
5.3.3 Routes to conscientisation.....	184
5.4 Discussion	188
5.5 Implications.....	196
5.6 Applications	196
5.7 Limitations	197
5.8 Future research opportunities.....	198
5.9 Conclusion	198
Chapter 6: Reflections of an ‘ungrateful’ (im)migrant	200

6.1 Introduction	200
6.2 Methods	202
6.3 Findings	209
6.3.1 Historical remembering	210
6.3.2 Unsettling settler colonial narratives	216
6.3.3 Resisting co-optation	218
6.3.4 Being in solidarity	220
6.4 Discussion	227
6.5 Implications.....	233
6.6 Applications	233
6.7 Future research.....	234
6.8 Conclusion.....	234
Chapter 7: Towards decolonial relationships and futures – Reflections, Implications, and next steps	236
7.1 Introduction	236
7.2 Key findings across this thesis.....	237
7.3 Broader implications.....	244
7.4 Limitations	246
7.5 Further research and recommendations.....	246
7.6 Conclusion.....	247
7.7 Final Remarks.....	247
References.....	248
Appendices.....	281
Appendix A: Letter of introduction to the project.....	281

Appendix B: Participant consent	284
Appendix C: one to one conversation : Semi structured questions	286
Appendix D: Ethics Approval	288
Appendix E: Book recommendations	290

List of Tables

Table 1 Collaging Themes and Sub-themes.....	112
Table 2 Summary of one-to-one conversation themes.....	168
Table 3 Decolonial framework.....	210
Table 4 Adding to Whakawhānaungatanga model	240
Table 3 (already introduced in Chapter 6) Decolonial framework.....	242

List of Figures

Figure 1 Te Tiriti Banner	xiv
Figure 2. The Takarangi Framework	74
Figure 3 Manually organising codes into themes for one-to-one conversations	96
Figure 4 All of me.....	114
Figure 5 Taketake whenua	116
Figure 6 The Masala of me	117
Figure 7 Everything Everywhere	119
Figure 8 Echoes of Identity-reclaiming roots	121
Figure 9 Migration and belonging	122
Figure 10 Interwoven, unravelling.....	124
Figure 11 The scars of colonisation in the frames of reference	125
Figure 12 Duality	128
Figure 13 Prana, the life force within that fuels our breath and being.....	130
Figure 14 Untitled	132
Figure 15 Fragments and Figments on the journey home.....	134
Figure 16 Dissecting me	136
Figure 17 Exploring the mirrored	137
Figure 18 Living as an ancestor	138
Figure 19 The Bengal Famine, 1943, Manchester Museum [personal collection, 2023].....	212
Figure 20 Bangladeshi Rickshaw, Manchester Museum [personal collection, 2023].....	215
Figure 21 community space [personal collection]	222
Figure 22 South Asian banner making [personal collection].....	226

Prologue

Colonialism and white supremacy get in the way of our relationships with each other, and ourselves. Let us be intentional and deliberate in the *ways* that we are in these relationships.

Figure 1 *Te Tiriti Banner*



Chapter 1: Introduction

A feminist project is to find ways in which women can exist in relation to women; how women can be in relation to each other. It is a project because we are not there yet (Ahmed, 2017, p. 14).

Colonialism has had a devastating impact on racialised women. Feminist scholar, Sara Ahmed (2017), states that being in solidarity with each other takes effort, and continual work. Solidarities are necessary if we are to resist colonialism. Assimilation, and the divide and conquer tactics that colonialism employs as tactics, intentionally weaken solidarity with ourselves, our communities, and other racialised communities.

As people who are Indigenous, racialised as Black or brown, it is as if every aspect of our lives has been designed to separate us from who we truly are and from being in relationship with each other. We have been designed to forget our histories, both personal and cultural, as well as our relationships to land and ancient cultural practices, spiritual ways and rituals. Our tongues have even forgotten their languages. All of this keeps us from ourselves and each other; from seeing each other and being in relationship with each other. It keeps us scared, it keeps us in a state of scarcity, and it keeps us isolated from one another. This is everything that the colonial project wants (Fanon 1963).

Despite colonialism's attempt to entice us, assimilation remains a false promise (Fanon, 1963). Whiteness prevents us from being fully included. As racialised people of colour, we can't physically assimilate, but this can be done in other ways through the values we hold, meeting our own independent needs, and prioritising productivity and objectivity. We need to remember, as racialised people, that none of us are free until we are all free.

As Franz Fanon (1963) describes, instead of assimilating we must instead seek to decolonise our minds and develop conscientisation. "Who are you without colonialism?" is a question posed by Indigenous global scholar Clelia O. Rodríguez (2023) who invites us to connect with our own personal narratives, ancestors and ourselves while envisioning alternative futures in which the ways we relate to ourselves and others are important in disrupting and confronting colonial legacies. The lineage and the use of this question as a dialogic provocation will be introduced in the methodology (see 3.5.1.1).

The task is also to recognise that we have not all been oppressed equally as people who have been colonised. There are various intersecting oppressions of class, caste, race and gender work as part of an overarching system of colonialism that seeks to dominate.

This intersectionality of overlapping oppressions is important, given the limitations of Western notions of feminism and gender. These frameworks often fail to acknowledge issues such as racism and class, so we need approaches focused on specific communities of racialised women to create knowledge that is useful for them (Combahee River Collective, 1977; Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1991). A project about how we might relate to one another is more than the Western placeholder word 'feminism' can hold. It is more than the narrow scope of what gender alone can offer. It is about forming relationships that do not dehumanise or cause violence, but rather foster mutual respect.

As well as being intersectional, our approaches should acknowledge embodied knowledges. Lived experiences are part of relationship building, so understanding relationships should involve embodied approaches to knowledge creation (e.g., the collages that were created during this research). This project also relates to the body, in both the physical and metaphorical sense. Our bodies are the sites of all the relationships we have. They are sites of remembering, love and resistance (Menakem, 2017; LB Simpson, 2017a, b). Our bodies can reimagine, beyond the confines of the colonised imagination that offers nothing more than pain and exclusion (Olufemi, 2021). When we begin to share our stories, our knowledges, the meanings become an inside phenomenon. Our lives and experiences can also become sites of our own transformation. Our bodies hold our solutions within them (LB Simpson, 2017a, b).

We have to create spaces for this embodied knowledge to emerge (see Hemphill, 2024). This can facilitate being in relationship, both in community, and with each other, that can offer pathways to connection. We can then rehearse together our aliveness, our wholeness and our interdependence on each other. To be able to do that, we need to unlearn being in transactional relationships with each other, and find spaces where we can sit and engage in collective storytelling with each other, to build an understanding of what it means to be in relationship with one another.

A pathway to solidarities involves strengthening our relationships with each other.

This thesis provides an empirical and methodological contribution to the Asian - Indigenous illustrates ways in which South Asian women in Aotearoa can continue to strengthen

relationships with other women who are racialised, including Māori women. It also helps us to explore solidarity with ourselves. In its broadest terms, this thesis calls for a collective modelling and reflecting of futures to live better lives together, which also means that we find ourselves in each other's social imaginations.

1.1 Significance of the proposed research

I am non-Indigenous to Aotearoa, a woman, part of the South Asian diaspora, born and raised in the United Kingdom. I have lived in Aotearoa, New Zealand for over two decades. There is little research exploring the experiences of South Asian women in relation to those of other women, including Indigenous women in Aotearoa. What does exist in the arena of Asian and Māori solidarities is often from the perspective of Chinese and East Asian relations (see Dam, 2022, 2024, Omura, 2014). These perspectives explore Asian philosophies and how Te Tiriti o Waitangi can support belonging for Asian people. This project provides a South Asian perspective that also considers the impacts that colonisation has had on South Asian women's relationships with each other and contributes to the scholarship that builds on the works of Asian researchers Lincoln Dam (2024); Saburo Omura (2014); and Nabila Husna Binte Abdul Rahman (2025) among others.

This project uses feminism theory and praxis in relation to Indigenous and Black women and women of colour, using a combination of autoethnography, collaging, found poetry and storytelling to learn how we disrupt oppressive structures that harm us, and create relational worlds that move us towards collective liberation.

The aim of this research is to investigate how South Asian women can refuse to participate in white supremacy and what impacts this might have on creating solidarities with other racialised women, including Māori women. It shows how racialised women can find ways that disrupt the status quo of white superiority and find healing in who they are beyond how others have defined them. A meaningful contribution is also made to expanding the relationship-building model that takes a Māori approach to the Indigenous-Settler of Colour relationship-building proposed by Arama Rata and Faisal Al-Assad (2019).

The question this thesis seeks to explore is:

How do South Asian women in Aotearoa experience solidarities with other racialised women, including Māori women?

Sub-questions include:

- How do South Asian women make sense of their own experiences of colonisation?
- What do the experiences of relationships that South Asian women have with other racialised women, including Māori women, tell us about solidarities?
- What possible pathways and strategies exist for strengthening solidarities between South Asian women and other racialised women, including Māori women?
- How has the process of completing this research and writing this thesis offered insights and learning for my own life and practice?

This thesis is a response to the ways in which South Asian women have been marginalised, excluded, othered. For this reason, it was important for me to emphasise the power available ‘in the margins’: to adopt a citational practice that centred the knowledges of racialised women, and to write myself into this thesis. These ideas are extended on in the following sections, before I position myself in the research, and invite the reader to an embodied engagement with this thesis.

1.2 Power in being the ‘other’

There is power in being the other that colonialism seeks to obscure from racialised people.

The ‘other’ is a social construct that those in the West, often Europeans, use to create narratives depicting how inferior the ‘other’ is. Palestinian–American academic and political activist Edward Said (1978) shared that to be the ‘other’ and who is defined as ‘other’ is always imagined based on perceptions of people who come from or have roots in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa.

Researchers who are Indigenous or Black women, or women of colour remind racialised women of their power. Scholars bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Ngahuia Murphy, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, and Chelsea Watego contend there is power in being the ‘other’, and that there is power in the margins (hooks, 2000b; Lorde, 1984; Pihama, 2005; Murphy, 2019; Smith, 2012; Watego, 2021). In sharing the findings and analysis (see Chapter 5) of this project, I have intentionally initially presented the voices of the women who participated in this project with minimal references to literature, ensuring that those voices take centre stage.

1.3 The importance of citation and style

Often, Indigenous, brown and Black women's voices are silenced and erased in research (Ahmed, 2017). Research is not a neutral act; it is a political one, and so who we cite matters. Sara Ahmed asserts that citations in universities serve as more than academic tools: they reproduce and centre western knowledge, ways of thinking and doing "... a way of reproducing the world around certain bodies" (Ahmed, 2013, para 3). In the context of our relationships with one another, who we cite can be an act of care and relationship that offers us ways to address the silencing faced by those who are women of colour, Indigenous or Black (see Ahmed, 2017).

1.4 Writing myself in

Too often, the colonial messages around us want us to keep quiet. These colonial messages inform us that when we experience harm from racist experiences directed at us, we should not be too distressed about them but just move on. And if we happen to cry, we should do this quietly, away from the gaze of dominant others, who may feel uncomfortable.

To write myself in is to borrow this phrase from Black feminist, Guilaine Kinouani (2021), who shares that if she does not do this for herself, then no one else will. She adds that "we are part of the world we write about; the world we write about lives inside us" (p. 14). I write myself in, recognising that the personal is political and that what is shared by the women in this project is occurring not just in their lives but in my life too. I write to remind myself that I exist along with others, and that when we exist, we also get to remember who we are.

Writing myself in will include my positionality statement, and an autoethnographic section sharing my own experiences of being in relationship with other racialised women, including Māori women, and my own learning as a result of this research. Writing myself in also involves a set of five interludes that occur between the chapters of this thesis, which draw on wider thoughts and reflections that run in parallel to this thesis. The interludes offer insight into how South Asians have both been colonised by the British, however not in the same way; being able to remember own colonised history can support South Asians to connect to the histories of Māori dispossession and resistance in Aotearoa, New Zealand; how as (im)migrant communities we can be pitted against Māori and held up as model minorities which is yet another colonial tool used to divide and conquer Indigenous and (im)migrant

communities. These interludes were originally published in e-Tangata¹. They appear *italicised* also to emphasise this difference. These interludes can be thought of metaphorically as the margins between these chapters. bell hooks (2000b) teaches us that there is power in the margins; that is, it offers racialised peoples a point of view where the systems of white supremacy are made visible. This is picked up in Chapter 2 when discussing standpoint theory. In addition, the interludes also acted as methodological prompts. This will be elaborated on in Chapter 6 where the autoethnographic study is unpacked.

Finally, in writing myself in, we never know what shores our messages/writings will make it to, and the power and the effect that may have. As Indigenous scholars Jodi Byrd and Eve Tuck et al., (2023) share:

“ ...think of writing in the footnotes, as messages to one another in a bottle. We don’t know what shores those writings will wash up on....” (Byrd et al., 2023, p. 241).

1.5 Positioning self

When I ask myself, “Who am I?”, the response is never immediate and is often a muddy one. It depends on where I ask myself this question. Ask me when I am in England, and the response is much more precise and confident, as the people I come from are part of the country's fabric. Ask me here in Aotearoa, where my own identity is flattened and rendered invisible from being from a minority group within a minority and being pitted against Tangata whenua, and my response shifts. Here, I am categorised into an ethnic box, reminded of who I am not, and repeatedly reminded to be grateful to be in New Zealand, and to engage in the colonial myth that I am in the land of milk and honey and opportunity. And as long as I play along, I will be rewarded with the right job; rewarded if I play along with diversity and inclusion to make the colonisers look good with my pop of brown skin.

¹ E-Tangata is an Aotearoa based online Māori and Pacific platform that offers a range of voices and perspectives that covers a range of socio-political topics, culture and identity.

I am a second-generation, British-born Bangladeshi woman. My parents travelled and settled in Northern England in the 1960s. My father arrived first, while my mother arrived at the end of that decade. My mother never wanted to leave her ancestral land to live in cold, pale England. She was eighteen. She had access to a school education, which she regretted later not taking up as she was more concerned with being on the land, climbing trees, going for midnight swims, ritualist preparations of food, engaging in craftwork and the stories of her elders. It was a happy time that she remembers fondly. My parents came from South Bangladesh, a region called Chattogram. Most Bangladeshis who left their homeland were from the North and spoke a different dialect. From the outset, we were marked as different and looked different. The region we are from is also home to the Chakma people, who are one of the Indigenous tribes of Bangladesh.

I grew up with my siblings in the UK in a working-class household and lived on a council estate that was sometimes referred to as the arsehole of Europe - apparently, it was one of the largest estates around at the time.

I became very aware of the world's injustices from an early age. [Trigger warning. The next two paragraphs describe racial and physical violence.] I was seven when a group of teenagers tried to burn down our house. Everyone was at home, apart from my father, who was working. Glass bottles filled with petrol-soaked rags were pushed through our letterbox and set the front entrance area alight. My brother's pram melted away, and my bike, with its stabilisers now covered in black soot and smoke, was now unrideable. It wasn't the first time, and we shrugged it off. I remember a confusing time, asking ourselves, 'Why us?' However, as young as I was, I knew exactly why. What these experiences offered us as a family was a real street-smart way of surviving in the surroundings in which we lived, and they profoundly impacted my political awakening and bearing witness to injustice around me.

British conservative politician Enoch Powell's infamous 'rivers of blood speech' made in 1968, sent reverberations throughout society for decades to come. It wasn't just our family that was impacted by the racist hatred that erupted as violence, petrol bombings and even murder. It is odd for me to reflect on the time my father came home and said that they are 'out to kill us all' one night, just out of the blue. He was referring to the killing of Altab Ali, a young Bangladeshi textile worker who was murdered in the East End of London in 1978 as he returned from work. It's difficult to express in words the effect of hearing this as a young child. There had been multiple racial attacks on South Asians and Black people up and down

the country, but it was the murder of Altab Ali that galvanised South Asian, Black and white communities to organise together and fight back.

My parents did their very best to raise us all amid the rise of far-right extremism in the 1970s and 1980s. It's in these moments that I also reflect on how incredible they were despite everything: despite the constant smashing of our windows, having to remove racist symbols from our door, and seeing their kids being repeatedly assaulted. It must have been painful for them as parents not being able to fully protect and shield their children from the hatred they had to witness. As a parent myself, I can't imagine the pain they may have felt at the time. They tried not to tell us many things, like when my father would come home bloodied and beaten, after working in a Bangladeshi restaurant. Apparently, the busiest and most violent times in hospitality occurred when the pubs closed, and their patrons, needing a curry to round off the night, coupled it with just a bit of racial violence directed at the staff. This was the reality of Britain back then.

But there was one thing we also shared with the people who were attacking us. We were all struggling financially. There were also people in our lives who stepped in the way of the aggressors we faced. They were other working-class people, just like our family, so we always knew we had some allies. These working-class solidarities were also split along racial lines and exploitative conditions. My mum briefly managed to find some work to gain a bit of financial freedom. She was exploited at the lowest level of pay for a 50-hour week.

These experiences growing up led to my own conscientisation of how different groups of people are treated, viewed, and how their precarious lives make them vulnerable to exploitation. My own conscientisation to the conditions we lived in and how people like us were perceived deepened when I started attending secondary school.

Pointing to and pointing out injustice had me on the pathway to being briefly suspended from school. The education I received was neither socially nor culturally sensitive; nor was it relevant. I distinctly remember one event as a teenager. History was one of my favourite subjects, and we had begun a topic on the American Civil War, on the battle of Little Bighorn (the battle of Greasy Grass). I didn't like how First Nations were characterised in this telling of history, where they were rightfully protecting their land. One thing led to another when another student engaged in racist taunts. I subsequently found myself in the headteacher's office. In her scholarship, Sara Ahmed (2022) teaches us that when you point to the problem,

you become the problem. That was a lesson I learned from a young age. I learned that it didn't take much for me to be seen as a problem. Although I was briefly suspended from school following this particular incident – for standing up to racism – I did finish my education.

These are not memories that I look back on with victimhood but with awe at how we were still able to navigate through life under such hostile conditions. My family resisted by always staying put; we resisted quietly and just continued; we resisted with mar's cooking; we resisted with mar's stories of home; we resisted with our hobbies of martial arts, visiting second-hand shops, collecting stamps, living at the library, and entering silly competitions which I often won, and lucky trips to the cinema. The small things in between made the bigger things that happened more survivable. Only later did I realise that my parents had used these experiences as teaching moments for us as children. Teaching moments as acts of defiance and resistance reminded us that acts of violence would not erase us.

The personal is political. These early experiences shaped my own political understandings as I became an adult. I share this to illustrate how I, over time, came to gain an extra layer of vision. Over time, I began to be able to understand and give names to a number of the experiences I had since coming to Aotearoa, New Zealand, concealed behind a veneer of kindness. Living in a settler colony served up another negotiation of repeatedly being informed as a brown body that you do not belong. In response to life designed to separate us from ourselves and keep us divided, depleted, and fearful, I have learned that a life of connectivity is needed. One where we see ourselves as interdependent on each other, whole, alive; where we can connect in a more reciprocal way, and where we get to engage in collective storytelling to build an understanding about what it means to be in relationship with each other. Our sites of transformation are everywhere.

This brief introduction about my earlier years shows what has shaped who I am, and my politics, influencing the way I perceive people and the connections I forge by linking my lived experiences to the broader socio-political and cultural landscapes to which I belong. These insights position me as both an 'insider' and an 'outsider' to this research, which is discussed in Chapter 2 – Ethical Considerations. This opening chapter has presented an introduction to this thesis and explained why it is written in an intentional way, allowing the 'other' to speak and occupy space to remind ourselves repeatedly of our inherent power. The

interludes that occur in the spaces between these chapters are a metaphor for speaking from the margins, as it is powerful (hooks, 2000b, 2015d).

1.6 An Invitation

This thesis has been written in a way that invites the reader to engage both academically and at times through an embodied experience via personal stories, interludes, and through the collaged artwork created by the 15 South Asian women. These artworks are also accompanied by found poetry in which I explore their stories for sites of solidarity and learnings (see Chapter 4). Aboriginal Australian professor and writer Chelsea Watego (2021) encourages us to notice how the language of white supremacy highlights which aspects of our stories to elevate and which aspects it chooses to homogenise and erase by rendering them silent. This is also why I wish to pay attention to how this project unfolded.

This work also presents the opportunity to ‘feel’, as the women in this study invite you into the preciousness of their lives. Preciousness, because often people like us, with bodies, with feelings and the space we inhabit, are considered subhuman (Grosfuguel, 2013). This project is very much about our humanness and the power to make choices about leading better lives together against the broader oppressive systems of white supremacy, whiteness, and colonialism that can manifest in everyday lives and relationships.

1.7 Thesis structure

This thesis consists of seven chapters, with five interludes (one following each chapter). Chapter 1 introduces this research, which also includes a positioning statement.

Chapter 2 covers the literature review, introducing the reader to the context that sets the scene for this work against the backdrop of Aotearoa, New Zealand, as a settler colony. Here the foundations are set for this thesis and the limits on the claims that it can make. It outlines the experiences of the first Indian arrivals in Aotearoa, New Zealand, the racism they faced, and how they were racialised as a group, pitted against other ‘Asian’ groups. This section also describes how South Asians can be complicit in the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous people on their own land by the settler colony. It goes on to explain whiteness as a structure, how it is made visible, and how it functions in Te Tiriti training and within the apparatus of Biculturalism and Multiculturalism. This review closes with a discussion on how the frameworks and thinking of Indigenous, Black, and women of colour are useful in

considering what it means to be in relationship with each other. It concludes with a summary of the current scholarship on Asian-Indigenous solidarities, both globally and locally. Overall, the purpose of this literature review is to introduce the reader to the complicated landscape that racialised communities/people face when living in a settler colony.

Unlike methods that generalise participants' 'data', found poetry refuses to homogenise South Asian and migrant experiences, and allows different positionalities to be centred and held in tension, enabling the expression of complexity, such as that South Asians do not have the same claim to sovereignty to that of Māori under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, but also have a different political relationship than Pākehā, as settlers of colour. The review of the literature identifies that decolonisation in Aotearoa is about Māori land, Māori sovereignty, and for those arriving to Aotearoa, New Zealand to uphold their responsibilities to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. It emphasises that decolonisation is not about Multiculturalism as defined by the state. This review also identifies that South Asians/racialised peoples are not positioned as innocent or outside of settler colonialism but rather operate inside of this structure. Finally although the review provides ways that we might look at alternative ways of being in relationship that are not founded on colonial thinking, these relationships are not straight forward. Solidarity within this thesis is not romanticised and occurs within the very settler colonial structure that liberatory solidarities seek to destroy.

Chapter 3 covers the methodology, outlining the theoretical approaches I engaged with that inform the research design of this project. This chapter includes a justification for the design of this research that has been informed by the Takarangi framework. Takarangi was developed by WERO (Working to End Racial Oppression), a multi-year research project, that enables researchers to reflexively consider how their social positioning, ontology, axiology, ethics, epistemology and research goals shape their research process, from the way they engage with community to transformative action (Rata et al., 2025). This section also provides an explanation for the choice of methods that were used. These are collaging, storytelling, and autoethnography, along with the subsequent approach to how the data was analysed. The lineage of the question "Who are you without colonialism? (Rodríguez, 2023) is also honoured and its use as a dialogical provocation within the collaging method as "who are you without colonisation?" Finally, the limitations and ethical considerations are also discussed to close this chapter.

Chapter 4 presents the collages study, which involved the research participants creating collaged artwork using the prompts: **1. Who are you without colonisation? 2. Who are your ancestors? 3. What are they whispering to you?** This provided a reflexive space and an opportunity for women to express their own personal narratives by arranging images and words taken from magazines onto a page. The collages were themed through a combination of looking at their titles, together with listening to the story they shared in describing their collage. Three themes were extracted.

The first was **Reconstruction and reclaiming Identity**, which involved reorientating to restoring and reclaiming identities that centred on reconnecting with knowledge systems, practices, rituals and relationships with land that exist outside of the colonial gaze. The next theme was **Resisting colonial narratives**, where women recognised the various ways in which colonisation had impacted their lives, and the colonised thinking that they experienced in their interactions with other racialised women and communities.

The final theme was **Healing and reclaiming space and freedom**, which found that there was a need to grieve and heal from the losses that colonisation had inflicted on women in terms of disconnection from self, cultural and ritual practices, languages and histories. This study emphasises the need for South Asian women to have spaces to learn about themselves, where they can safely come together and to share and learn from each other's histories and lived experiences. Having such spaces also provides opportunities to engage in education about the feminist theories and praxis of Indigenous and Black women and women of colour, and how this can also support ways to restore identity and offer strategies for resisting colonial narratives and centring decolonial relationships.

Chapter Five presents the one-to-one conversations study. This involved 15 conversations that were conducted over Zoom and transcribed. These conversations were guided by a series of semi-structured questions that also allowed for flexibility of responses to include anything that the participants wanted to share that was relevant to the conversation. The conversations were transcribed manually and were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) inductive thematic analysis. Three themes were identified, which also included subthemes. Theme one was **Solidarity with others**, which included the subthemes of mutual growth and respect, abundant mindset and engaging with love. This involved being in relationships with others that were mana (respect)-enhancing. The second theme was **Barriers to Solidarities**, which included the subthemes of binary thinking, clashes of values, structural barriers in places of

learning and work settings, hetero-patriarchy, casteism, and the internalisation of colonial narratives, which included believing colonisers' myths of superiority, competition, and racial stereotypes and hierarchies.

The final theme was **Routes to conscientisation** with subthemes including practising self-awareness (reclaiming own histories/rituals/identities, being reflexive); pathways to solidarity with self (healing from internalised oppression); practicing spirituality; and practicing collective community care (mentoring, accountability in community, joyful practice). Routes to conscientisation involved being critically reflexive and prepared to do the work of decolonising the mind and reconnecting with our own histories, rituals, cultural and spiritual practices. Being able to engage in critical reflexivity and accountability as part of South Asian communities was also important.

These findings highlight several needs that can aid in relationship building and promote community solidarity, as well as broader political initiatives aimed at providing opportunities for South Asian and Māori women to come together and learn about each other and their respective histories. Community care is also essential, which entails holding our own communities accountable in ways that also demonstrate care.

Both the studies from Chapters 4 and 5 make a meaningful contribution to expanding the Whakawhanaungatanga as a Māori approach to Indigenous–Settler of Colour relationships (Rata & Faisal Al-Assad 2019), to also include the dimensions of 'restoration', which attends to the need for reclaiming our own histories, practices, rituals, engaging in reflexivity and healing from internalised oppression and 'reconstruction' which recognises the need to be engaged in political projects and joint struggle in working towards a world that we want together. These are required components for supporting South Asian–Māori solidarities.

Chapter 6 is my autoethnographic study, which describes my own journey and growth throughout this research project and what I have learnt about my own life and practice.

Where I was born and raised is significant. Manchester, England was the site of working-class rights activism, so I grew up with an understanding of class consciousness and political awareness, witnessing numerous acts of Black, South Asian and white working-class solidarities fighting against racism, suppression of workers' rights and poverty. I was around racialised women who were both politically aware and engaged in the feminist thinking and praxis of Black women and women of colour, which also aided my understanding of class

consciousness. My own experiences illuminate other sites of potential solidarities that could be explored between South Asians and Māori.

The findings provide opportunities to learn about class consciousness as a way of understanding how oppressive structures (patriarchy, colonialism, capitalism) work, which also fosters opportunities for joint political projects between South Asians and Māori.

The concluding section of this thesis, Chapter 7, draws together the studies outlined in Chapters 5 and 6, and presents the broader implications, strengths, limitations of the research, along with possible future research directions.

The broader implications of this study include:

1. The need for ‘Asian’ communities to speak more openly about our different positionalities and histories, impacts of internalised colonialism, and how we are also differently racialised.
2. The need for strengthening relationships between different ‘Asian’ groups.
3. The need to move beyond labels such as ‘Asian’ that homogenises, erases and how this can shape or disrupt our relationships with one another due to the way different ‘Asian’ groups are racialised.
4. The need to reckon with caste supremacy in South Asian communities, as a disruptive force to both relationships and potential solidarities.
5. The identification of Migrant working-class spaces for South Asian and Māori to come together as class oppression is shared by these groups.
6. The opportunity for South Asians communities to learn from the Chinese community in how they have strengthened solidarities with Māori.
7. The need for more scholarship around South Asian–Māori solidarity that moves away from the broad ‘Asian’ category and becomes more intersectional in approach.

Chapter 7 offers limitations and future directions for research. These include consideration of collaboration between South Asian and Māori women researchers who pose similar questions to this study but specifically ask Māori women about their relationships with other racialised women, including South Asian women. This could reveal additional insights not found in this study. Finally, by looking at transnational settings, exploring what such relationships entail in other settler colonial contexts would build on the findings of this study.

In conclusion, this chapter underscores the importance and significance of this study, as it aims to fill a gap in the literature concerning South Asian women's experiences of relationships with other racialised women, including Māori women.

Interlude 1: Celebrating independence while colonised

As South Asian communities mark 75 years of independence from British rule, Ara Alam-Simmons reflects on why it's important for South Asians in Aotearoa to better understand and acknowledge the colonial violence they've experienced — and how that can help them connect to the stories of colonisation here.

This year marks 75 years of independence for Pakistan and India. Celebrations have been held across Aotearoa with tree planting, hoisting of national flags, cultural performances, and happy selfies with politicians.

Seemingly absent from these “celebrations”, however, has been the acknowledgment of the millions of people killed and brutalised. Freedom and independence came at a massive price.

For 200 years, India was under British colonial control, but then won back its independence in 1947. Partition, as it is also referred to, involved recruiting a British lawyer (who had never visited India) to draw arbitrary lines on a map.

A geographical division along religious lines resulted in a Hindu majority, which became India, and a Muslim majority, which became Pakistan. Pakistan would be in two parts at opposite ends of India — West Pakistan and East Pakistan — separated by 1609 kms. (East Pakistan became Bangladesh in 1971.)

That cold-blooded redrawing of national lines in 1947 resulted in the largest mass migration of people in human history. Between 10 and 12 million people. People moved en masse to what they hoped would be a safer place for their families. Muslims headed towards Pakistan, Hindus and Sikhs towards India.

The partition, as my parents describe it, was etched in the blood of the one to three million people who were savagely and violently killed as two countries emerged. Women attempted to escape being raped by jumping to their deaths in wells. This reality also ensured that some men killed their own women and children for fear of them being abducted, violated, burned alive, and murdered with machetes, kerosene bottle bombs and other tools.

It still astounds me how a minority group of British people could enslave millions of Indians for two centuries. The British Empire began about 400 years ago when Britons travelled to the East in search of spices and other resources. What began as a haphazard trading enterprise

by the East India Company, driven by greed and profit, soon became about seizing power, destroying the local Indian industries, dehumanising the brown body, racism and white supremacy.

My whānau and ancestors came from Bengal, a region that the British bankrupted with the imposition of taxes that the average Indian found hard to pay. My mother shared stories with me that had been passed down to her of how the British would come to the villages for their taxes, and if families couldn't pay, they'd be tortured. Sadistic behaviour was encouraged that also involved suspending entire families in the local rivers with ropes around their necks.

A few years before partition, in 1943, the Bengal famine took place. The famine was exacerbated by the British, who continued to export food for profit, rather than feed the starving local population.

Britain's departure from India was chaotic and violent. People who were once neighbours and had lived side by side over centuries became enemies overnight. The partition process — dividing India in two along religious lines and allowing people to migrate if needed — was meant to take five years but that was reduced to just 70 days.

Let's just pause for a moment and take in the gravity of that timeframe. You couldn't make up this stuff. An ethnic cleansing killing frenzy ensued as fear gripped an entire population. Families were also separated, land taken, identities lost, long-held friendships and community ties severed, and people were cut off from their spiritual places of worship.

The ramifications of dismembering the Indian continent continue to be felt today. The legacy of colonisation continued with the 1965 [Indo-Pakistan war](#), and with the fight for [Bangladesh](#) to become independent from Pakistan. And the list continues.

Despite the partition happening 75 years ago, there's a lot of healing still needed. Every South Asian family will have their own story surrounding partition. But, for many of us, it's [not something we talk about](#).

It's unclear how my father, a young child at the time, was left orphaned and raised by his older siblings. Bitterness and trauma are what slip out in the moments when he has shared his memories. But, naturally, many of his rememberings are fractured.

My mother, born later, shares the brutality that her ancestors faced before partition and after. It's no wonder that you wouldn't want to recall histories like this. Mum also told me that some stories were so violent and inhumane that deliberate decisions were made not to pass certain

histories down as they were too painful. Trauma associated with partition has certainly made it through into our present-day family bloodlines.

Here in Aotearoa, 11,000 km away from Bangladesh, you may be wondering: So what?

Colonisation continues to have long-lasting impacts on us as South Asians even here in Aotearoa. As tangata Tiriti and settlers of colour here in Aotearoa, our history of being colonised provides a route for us to better understand the continuing impacts of colonisation on Māori.

Without understanding and talking about our own stories, it's difficult to connect to the stories of colonisation here in Aotearoa. Lack of understanding or slips show up in what we might say, how we might behave, or who we may align ourselves with.

It's no accident that our gaze is often towards Pākehā, and not towards tangata whenua. That's because we're often seeking external validation from Pākehā. And we are more aligned with the project of "diversity and inclusion", which often casts Māori as just another ethnic group and subverts the conversations we need to be having around decolonisation and anti-racism.

We make comments such as: "We want what Māori have — it's only fair." Or: "Colonisation is in the past." These slips reveal our disconnection to our whenua and histories. And, sadly, they continue the project of colonisation by upholding the status quo and playing to stereotypes.

Such sentiments often hide something else: the stereotypes we often conform to and police each other on. The "good immigrant", the "grateful migrant", and the "model minority". Colonisation works on us in both physical and mental ways, and we've all been infected. It takes work to undo the harm.

Stereotypes have often been used to play off communities of colour against each other — and that includes our Māori and Pasifika brothers and sisters. We are very much entangled in each other's struggles and liberation. Let's not forget how racist New Zealand has been to South Asian migrants in addition to Māori and Pasifika — for example, the [long history of anti-Indian racism](#).

Last year marked the 50th anniversary of Hana Te Hemara rushing on to the Treaty grounds at Waitangi, beginning what has become a tradition of contemporary Māori protest there.

Before this, New Zealand held annual official events to “celebrate” the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. Just as Hana did, our South Asian communities must reject “celebrations” that obscure colonial violence. And we must demand that our histories be ethically remembered. That means taking an honest look at the historical reasons for why things are the way they are. It means honouring and naming the reality of what took place.

The 2018 census recorded 247,665 South Asians living in Aotearoa ([Pakistani](#), [Bangladeshi](#) and [Indian](#)). That’s a significant number of people who can lift the curtain on our own stories and engage with and explore why we also might engage in collective amnesia. Our histories have also been deliberately hidden from us. Hence, we also need to put in the work and excavate and uncover these stories, much like tangata whenua, who continue to uncover their histories.

[Research](#) conducted in 2019 explores whakawhanaungatanga as a possible foundation for good relationship building between tangata whenua and people of colour, with four key components: “Positioning, power-sharing, dialogue and cultural practice.”

In understanding our positioning, we need to both know and ethically remember our histories.

For me, colonisation and the British empire eventually meant that I was born and raised in Britain to Bangladeshi parents. Aotearoa has been my home for the last 17 years, and I’m very clear as to where my gaze lies. It’s in honouring the people of this land who continue to be dispossessed, in supporting their struggle for tino rangatiratanga, and in all of us working to end white supremacy.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This thesis aims to illuminate the impacts of colonialism on South Asian women and their experiences of solidarity with other racialised women, including Māori women. It is therefore important to provide an overview of how Aotearoa was violently colonised, by colonisers who did not leave. It is helpful to think about what shapes our relationships with one another. The literature review covers what structures are in place and recognises that colonisation is an ongoing structure of violence, how racialised population groups experience being racialised differently in Aotearoa, New Zealand and how they may be positioned as various ‘Asian’ groups, but can also be pitted against each other.

This literature review consists of ten sections. In the first section, I outline the context of the colonial history of racism in Aotearoa, New Zealand, the signing of ‘Te Tiriti o Waitangi’, and Māori resistance. Section two covers some of the legislation that ensured a white New Zealand. Section three describes how the first Indians arrived in Aotearoa and the racism they faced. This is followed by section four, which addresses how Asians are racialised as a group in Aotearoa. Section five examines white supremacy and whiteness and how these concepts function. It also explores how Asians can engage in the model minority myth and caste supremacy as ways of approximating whiteness. Section six explores biculturalism and multiculturalism and how these frameworks can either erase racialised communities or pit them against Māori communities. Section seven investigates how racialised women can be categorised within settler colonialism. Sections eight and nine cover Indigenous, Black, and women of colour feminism, and the ways these knowledge systems can help us reclaim our wholeness; decolonisation follows this section. The final section explores solidarities with a focus on Asian-Māori solidarities and addresses the need to fill the gap in the literature that this project seeks to address.

2.2 Context

New Zealand has a long colonial history of racism, which is one that continues to racialise and marginalise communities/peoples (Anae et al., 2015; Ng, 2017).

Before the 1970s, “...it was simply assumed by the then majority-white settler communities that New Zealand was a cohesive society characterised by shared values of egalitarianism, self-sufficiency and a notion of fair play bound in a complex and desirable interdependency with the ‘mother country’” (Kennedy, 2008, p. 402).

Māori, from the perspective of increased settler-colonialism, have historically faced and continue to face systematic oppression. Settler colonialism is not a singular historical event, but one that is made up of multiple structural forces that deny the rights of Indigenous people to self-govern and self-determine on their own land (Jackson 2020b; Wolfe 2006). These forces also included the embedding of European knowledge systems, world views, cultural values and political institutions that caste Māori knowledge and culture as inferior (G.H. Smith, 2000).

The systematic oppression refers to the normalised abuse and intentional disadvantaging of individuals perceived as different, whether through ethnicity, culture, or religious background; abuse that is supported and enforced by society, law, and its institutions. This systematic oppression has been well documented (Moewaka Barnes & McCreanor, 2019; Ministry for Culture and Heritage n.d.).

Moewaka Barnes and McCreanor (2019) outline how James Cook’s arrival in 1769 marked the beginning of imperialism, colonialism, and racism. The Endeavour expedition brought harm through the killing and kidnapping of Māori, as well as exposure to disease (Salmond 1991). Following this arrival and in the subsequent decades, O’Malley’s (2014) research describes the trade that occurred between Māori and settlers, which also involved international exchanges. However, the health and population of Māori rapidly declined due to new diseases that decimated kāinga (Māori villages) and resulted in a public health disaster for Māori (Lange, 1999). Prior to this, Māori enjoyed better life expectancy than 18th-century Europeans (Reid et al., 2017). Population estimates for Māori before contact were around 100,000, which dropped to between 70,000 and 90,000 by 1840 (Lange, 1999).

2.2.1 Te Tiriti o Waitangi

He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tirenī set the scene for understanding and language development in creating Te Tiriti o Waitangi in 1840. This was a bilateral agreement made between Māori and the British Crown. To grasp the intent behind Te Tiriti o Waitangi is to comprehend what Māori agreed to in 1835.

He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tirenī, the Māori language version of the declaration of Māori sovereignty, was initially signed by 34 Māori rangatira at Waitangi on 28 October 1835, growing to 52 rangatira by 22 July 1839 (Keane, 2012). He Whakaputanga consisted of four articles. Article 1 stated that New Zealand was an independent state under the United Tribes of New Zealand. Article 2 declared that sovereign power and authority lay with the Māori rangatira. Article 3 noted that the Māori rangatira would meet annually at Waitangi to create laws that safeguarded the country's welfare. Article 4 was that a copy of the declaration would be sent to the King of England. The rangatira also asked him “to be a parent of the infant state” (para, 13, Keane, 2012).

Te Tiriti o Waitangi was first signed on 6 February 1840. This was an agreement made in 1840 between more than 500 Māori rangatira and representatives of the British Crown. Most Māori signed the Te reo version, which can be referred to as “Te Tiriti o Waitangi” or “Te Tiriti” and not the English version ‘The Treaty of Waitangi’ or ‘The Treaty’ (Orange, 2012). ‘Te Tiriti’ and ‘The Treaty’ are not direct translations of one another (see Orange, 2012). As the majority of Māori rangatira signed ‘Te Tiriti’, it is this version of the text and understanding that is referred to in this thesis. ‘Te Tiriti’ consists of three articles, plus an additional spoken covenant (see Orange, 2012; New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference, n.d).

Article one stated that Māori rangatira gave the queen ‘te Kawanatanga katoa’ – the governance or government over the land. This is consistent with the language and understanding used in He Whakaputanga, five years earlier, in which Māori retained sovereign power over their own land and did not cede sovereignty. Article two guaranteed that Māori continued chieftainship by retaining ‘tino rangatiratanga over their own lands, peoples and treasures’, and that this would remain unaffected. The third article stated that the Queen would provide Māori with equal protection and rights as were accorded to all of the Crown's British subjects. The spoken covenant was made on 6 February 1840 during the signing of Te Tiriti, which promised “religious freedom for all in the new nation, including

Māori” (New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference, n.d.). Since the signing of ‘Te Tiriti’, the Crown has never honoured the agreement with Māori, but instead has engaged in dispossession of their land, culture and language through a variety of colonial tactics.

By 1865, Māori had lost two-thirds of the entire land area of New Zealand (Taonui, 2012). As the settler colonial population rapidly increased, the demand for land became insatiable. Mass land dispossession through land grabs and theft was facilitated by Crown decision-making and legislation. The Land Claims Ordinance, 1841, granted the Crown unfettered rights over Māori land; the Native Trust Ordinance, 1844, directed that Māori children in schools learn how to be European; and the Education Ordinance, 1847, instructed schools to teach English. Dispossession continued. Yet more Māori land was taken, this time to construct boarding schools for Māori children who were removed from their homes and villages (Human Rights Commission, 2022). Māori were also compelled under the Native Schools Act 1867 to relinquish land to establish village schools that were under the control of the Native Department. Additionally, Māori had to contribute to the construction and repair of these schools and cover teachers' salaries and schoolbooks. The latter demands were ceased four years later in 1871 (Calman, 2012; Waitangi Tribunal, 2007).

For Māori, access to water and food sources was heavily impacted as the kāinga shrank. Many suffered from malnutrition and hardship (Reid et al., 2017). During this period, iwi also had to move to urban centres to attend land court sittings and prove their land ownership. This meant they were exposed to diseases (Taonui, 2012). By 1930, the 4.4 million hectares of land that remained in Māori hands had been halved and sold to Pākehā. Pākehā ex-servicemen returning from the First World War received support from the Crown to purchase Māori land. In a continuation of race-based privileging, similar support was unavailable for Māori who had served (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2023).

Māori landowners faced discrimination and tighter scrutiny for loans that were more readily accessible to Pākehā farmers. In search of waged work, Māori moved away from their kāinga to urban centres. This further separated Māori from their economic base, culture, and wellbeing, contributing to dispossession and loss. By 1960, 68% of Māori resided in urban centres (Hill, 2009).

2.2.2 Māori resistance

Māori resistance to colonialism, grounded in tino rangatiranga (self-determination), has been consistent and multifaceted in its approach. Since the early 19th century to the present, Māori have engaged in various forms of resistance. He Whakaputanga serves as an example of diplomatic resistance, asserting Māori sovereignty and ensuring their wishes were documented and sent to the King of Britain (Keane, 2012). This included the subsequent signing of Te Tiriti (Orange, 2012). Māori were not passive victims of colonialism while British troops violently settled Indigenous land between the 1840s and 1870s. Organised opposition to land confiscation by the crown was led by Waikato-Tanui and Ngāti Toa in the Waikato (Walker, 2004). Resistance also took the form of refusal and non-violence at Parihaka, led by Te Whiti-o-Rongomai and Tohu Kākahi (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2025). Under their leadership, Parihaka Māori began a ploughing campaign to protest Pākehā settlement.

Cultural resistance involved the revitalisation and preservation of te reo through the Kōhanga reo movement. This cultural reclamation began in 1982 and immersed young children in learning Te reo (Rei & Hamon, 2018, [1993]). The epistemic knowledge reclamation of Mātauranga Māori and Mana Wahine theories that resisted colonialism's efforts was also occurring (see Simmonds, 2011; Murphy, 2019; Smith, 2012).

The most recent acts of Māori resistance in 2024 have included mass protest and action, featuring the largest mass hikoi (walk) in history to Parliament, which began in Cape Reinga against the divisive and dangerous Treaty Principles Bill². The Regulatory Standards Bill is aimed solely at removing Māori rights and facilitating unrestricted access to global corporations for capitalist exploitation, further undermining Indigenous rights³.

² Reflection by Meriana Johnsen, a reporter for The Hui. Hikoi mō Te Tiriti: This is what peace feels like <https://e-tangata.co.nz/reflections/hikoi-mo-te-tiriti-is-this-what-peace-feels-like/>

³ Opinion piece by Ryan Ward, lecturer at Otago University <https://e-tangata.co.nz/uncategorised/how-the-regulatory-standards-bill-gives-companies-more-rights-than-the-public/>

2.2.3 White New Zealand

The settler colonial violence and racism that Māori were subjected to also extended to other racialised peoples who began arriving in New Zealand. The earliest known arrival of such peoples was in 1769 (Leckie, 2021). Extensions of racism were experienced, as Chinese, Indian, Syrian, Singhalese, and Lebanese people were specifically excluded from receiving a state pension. The Old Age Pensions Act, 1898, introduced means-tested support that was offered to those ‘of good moral character.’ While Pākehā encountered few barriers in accessing this benefit, Māori often found this support challenging to obtain, as proof of age (65) was necessary. Māori births were not registered. Even when Māori were eligible, they received less than Pākehā (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2023).

Immigration policies between the 1840s and 1940s were designed solely by Pākehā settlers to create a predominantly white society, serving as an example of settler colonial violence directed towards (im)migrants. Up until 1881, anyone who arrived in the colony, including those classified as aliens (non-British subjects), was able to remain. Chinese (im)migrants had been invited to come and work in the Otago goldfields. Settlers responded with fear as the number of Chinese migrants increased to about 2,000 men by 1869. The Chinese Immigrants Act 1881 was passed, imposing a poll tax on each Chinese person entering the country and restricting the number that could arrive on one ship. The Chinese Immigrants Amendment Act 1907 imposed further restrictions, requiring Chinese people to pass an English-language reading test. Indians, despite being British subjects, were also restricted from entering New Zealand from 1896; prior to this, they were free to enter. The Immigration Restriction Act 1899 ended this access and made it difficult for other Asians to enter New Zealand as well (Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand, n.d.b). In essence, New Zealand’s white immigration policy served settler colonialism by excluding non-white (im)migrants (Kukutai & Rata, 2017). The 1950s saw a shift in population demographics due to the need to fill labour shortages after the Second World War. From the 1950s onwards, those Asian (im)migrants already here were able to bring over their family and relatives (Vasil & Yoon, 1996).

Economic and business aspirations drove (im)migration, highlighting the necessity to engage in capitalist progress (Ward & Liu, 2011). White New Zealand's immigration policies shifted in response to the growing demand for labour, while there was little change in settler violence practices towards racialised peoples, where the immigration policy and law enforcement

systems collaborated. Until the mid-1970s, Britain and Ireland were the primary sources of migrants to New Zealand, with individuals from several Polynesian island states granted citizenship and allowed entry as temporary migrant workers to address labour shortages. Anti-Pacific racial sentiment emerged, portraying Pacific peoples as overstayers, unlike the well-known white overstayers. Consequently, Pacific peoples were cruelly deported during what became known as the ‘dawn raids’ (Kukutai & Rata, 2017).

Despite shifts in immigration policy that eliminated racist criteria based on race or nationality for entry into New Zealand, (im)migrants faced racism in their workplaces. From 1974, entry into the country was governed by an immigration policy that allowed potential (im)migrants to apply under a General Category focusing on skills listed in the Occupational Shortage list. Consequently, migration to Aotearoa became increasingly diverse, initially from the Pacific Islands between the 1950s and 1970s, and later from Asian countries from 1986 to 2006 (Asian as defined by the Indian subcontinent and South-East and East Asian countries). This trend was further influenced by the Immigration Act of 1987, which transitioned to a skills-based system. This approach then evolved into a points system in 1991 (McKinnon, 1996).

Despite relocating to New Zealand, (im)migrants often face marginalisation in the workplace. Evidence from the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment (2018) shows that (im)migrants in Aotearoa, New Zealand report experiencing discrimination in the workplace more than those born here. Daniels (2022) states that (im)migrants of colour face discrimination in the workplace and are constantly required to prove themselves and their skills, whilst also enduring poorer working conditions.

(Im)migrants entering a country founded on racialisation and inequity, where Māori also lack access to proper housing and healthcare, create tensions as (im)migrant and Māori communities are pitted against each other (see Kukutai & Rata, 2017). The history of colonisation in Aotearoa, New Zealand, is important to remember when considering legitimate Māori concerns about growing (im)migrant populations. As Kukutai and Rata (2017, p. 31) state, “Memories of displacement are not relegated to the past; for many Māori they are real and raw.”

(Im)migrants were also pitted against one another and became the focus of high-profile politicians and church leaders. Bandyopadhyay and Buckingham’s (2018) research discusses how (im)migrants became politicised and racialised, leading to conflict between

different groups. New Zealand politician, Winston Peters, for instance, referred to Indians as ‘first-rate citizens’ while describing other citizens of the Commonwealth, namely East and South-East Asians, as ‘alien’ cultures. This ‘warmth,’ as stated by Bandyopadhyay and Buckingham (2018), harks back to the idea of Indian people being ‘well behaved’ and democratic members of the Commonwealth, unlike other groups, but ultimately serves to divide migrants against each other. Brian Tamaki, who is Māori and the leader of Destiny Church (a Pentecostal, fundamentalist church with a significant following), along with the Vision NZ party (led by Hannah Tamaki) and Te Pāti Māori, campaigned on an anti-immigration platform during the 2020 general election. These high-profile examples illustrate how our position as racialised people doesn't necessarily lead to unity against racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia (Leahy, 2019). These dehumanising representations are underpinned by liberal expectations of an economic ‘diversity dividend’ that emphasise the idea of ‘quality’ (im)migrants and reinforce longstanding anxieties in New Zealand about immigration and ethnic diversity. This mirrors the experiences of earlier (im)migrants to New Zealand who had to contend with the anxieties of Pākehā settlers (Leckie, 2021).

Despite Māori and (im)migrant communities being pitted against one another, both groups consistently experience racism. (Im)migrant communities also include Muslims. A 2019 survey of 2000 respondents found that racism thrives in Aotearoa, with both Māori and Muslim people being regular targets (Stuff, 2019).

Elers and Jayan (2020) stated that "As a by-product of Whiteness and colonisation, hostile attitudes or discrimination towards Indigenous and ethnic minority communities have been recorded in education, health and justice" (p.238). Whiteness in this regard can be described as a system of power based on domination. More recently these hostile attitudes towards Māori were made visible, during the Covid-19 vaccination rollout. Tangata Whenua were blamed for the low uptake of vaccinations within their communities. The rollout policy, which focused on older people, privileged Pākehā, and overlooked the damage that colonisation had done to erode trust within communities towards authorities as a reason for the low vaccination rates was never considered (Ngata, 2021). Increased microaggressions towards (im)migrants and racially motivated attacks, especially involving ethnic minorities from Asian backgrounds. A link could be made to the political rhetoric blaming Asians for Covid-19, and racist media reporting, (Chan-Green, 2020; Zhu, 2020).

Racism in the media is systematic. (Im)migrants are both racialised and portrayed as morally inferior in Aotearoa news media (Lee & Cain, 2019). Research conducted both in New Zealand and overseas shows that mainstream Western media exhibit clear biases in how they present news items about different ethnic groups. This overly negative reporting further marginalises communities from ‘mainstream’ society (Rahman, 2019).

In conclusion, this offers a brief illustration of how Aotearoa, New Zealand continues to be violently settled, with Māori communities continuing to bear the brunt of the settler colony and who continue to have a long history of resistance against it. The subsequent flow-on effects of legislation and policies have also impacted other (im)migrant or racialised communities who face racism in multiple areas of life.

Despite both Māori and (im)migrant communities being portrayed negatively in the media it is important to record that the impacts on these communities must neither be conflated or considered the equivalent. (Im)migrants are also settlers that can be co-opted into white settler expectations and politicised as a group and pitted against Māori communities. This will be expanded on in section 2.6 of this chapter.

2.3 The arrival of Indians in New Zealand

The earliest recorded arrival in New Zealand of Indians occurred in 1769, the same year Europeans and Māori first made contact on land (Leckie, 2021). Names Mahmud Qāsim and Nasreen, indicate that they were Indian Muslims.

In 1769, 14-year-old ‘Mamouth Cassem’ (probably Mahmud Qāsim), born in Pondicherry, and a Bengali named ‘Nasrin’ (Nasreen), aged about 16 or 17, most probably came ashore when the Saint Jean-Baptiste berthed in the Hokianga (Leckie, 2021 p.14).

Reclaiming shared histories that involve individuals beyond Pākehā is powerful. As a Bengali Muslim, learning about such a history makes me reflect on the other invisible generations of people and stories who have settled here in Aotearoa, many of whom we do not know about. Lascars (sailors) from India continued to arrive in Aotearoa, New Zealand, aboard both timber and sailing ships, and it is recorded that in 1809, a Bengali lascar jumped ship in the

Bay of Islands to marry a Māori woman he had fallen in love with (Shingade, 2024). ‘Ship jumpers’ were often indentured labourers, servants, and other working-class labourers (Nachowitz, 2018). The 1921 New Zealand census recorded that there were 671 Indians in the country. Many of these were Muslim, with others originating from the Punjab and Gujarat regions of India (Leckie, 2021). There is a richer history that links Indians to the Empire-building occurring in India by the British at the time. Notably, South Asian presence in the United Kingdom dates back as far as the beginning of the 17th century (Visram, 2002).

The migration of Indians to Aotearoa stemmed from British rule in India. During the uprising against the British in 1857, Indians fought against social reforms, crippling land taxes, and exploitation and oppression by the British. The British responded brutally, inflicting racial humiliation on Indian prisoners (trigger warning). In Cawnpore (now Kanpur), prisoners were forced to lick up the blood of British women and children who had been killed (Sanghera, 2021). This uprising compelled the British to reorganise their control over India. As a result, the British Crown took power away from the East India Company in 1857. This company had already created landlessness, debt, and other forms of poverty that forced Indians to seek opportunities elsewhere through migration. Many followed the sea routes of the British Empire, which took them to Africa, Great Britain, and other British settler colonies, including New Zealand (Leckie, 2021). Despite Indians being subjects of the British Empire, which afforded them the same rights as all of Britain’s other subjects, they faced exclusionary policies and practices in British settler colonies, including New Zealand (Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand, n.d.-a). By the 1920s, Indians who had migrated to New Zealand saw Queen Victoria’s promise of equality, made in 1858, as void (Leckie, 2021).

The Pākehā population grew rapidly between 1840 and 1874, increasing from a few thousand in early 1840 to 165,000 in 1865. This figure did not account for a significant number of soldiers from the British Empire, who were brought from India and Australia. These soldiers participated in much of the fighting during the New Zealand Land Wars (Taylor, 2004). Many settled in urban centres, contributing to a thriving economy for local food producers. In fact, Wellington settlers would intentionally engage in conflict with local Māori to attract troops to the area (Taylor, 2004). As highlighted earlier, while the Pākehā population surged, the Māori population and their way of life were being decimated. These examples further illustrate the colonial violence being enacted on Māori and smaller racialised populations and the multiple ways in which this occurred.

2.3.1 A system of segregation - Indians in New Zealand

Crown immigration policies between the 1840s and 1940s both legitimised and stoked fear within the Pākehā settler population to maintain a white society. Settler violence worked in tandem with Crown immigration policies to uphold white supremacy (Nakhid & Devere, 2015). The White New Zealand League was formed in 1926 as anxiety grew about a perceived threat from both Indian and Chinese men, who were portrayed as possessing loose and alien values that led white men to fear they might form sexual relationships with white women.

Indians, as mentioned earlier, were British subjects and could enter New Zealand freely until the passing of the Immigration Restriction Act 1899 (Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand, n.d.). Restrictions were also imposed on Indians' ability to join associations, use barbers, and attend the cinema. Jobs were limited to hawking (selling fruit and other goods on street corners) (Swarbrick, 2015). The KKK also garnered support in New Zealand, with around 1000 members opposing Asians from working (Leckie, 2021). A system of segregation had been established.

The culture of violence and fear continues today. More recent forms of exclusion, discrimination, and violence have included notes pushed under the doors of South Asian households in Christchurch, warning: 'Beware! Ku Klux Klan is here; you are watched; warning!' Additionally, there were the terrorist murders at the Al Noor Mosque and Linwood Islamic Centre, where 51 victims were killed on Friday, March 15, 2019. A number of the Shuhada (martyrs) were of South Asian descent (Leckie, 2021, p. 77).

2.4 Racialisation of Asian groups

Racialised population groups experience being racialised differently in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Firstly, the country creates categories for population groups that flatten and erase identities. The 2023 Census indicates that Asians comprise 17.3% of the population in Aotearoa (Stats NZ, 2023). This group includes individuals from vastly diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds, with variations in colonial histories. Looking at level 2 ethnicity categories (where the broad Level 1 categories are disaggregated), Indians (5.8%) represent the third largest ethnic group in Aotearoa (RNZ, 2024), behind Pākehā/Europeans (67.8%) and Māori (17.8%).

Asianisation refers to specific forms of racialisation and racial marginalisation experienced by Asians (Kim & Hsieh, 2022). In Aotearoa, Asianisation manifests through the construction of the ‘model minority’, a stereotype that portrays Asians as more successful than other minoritised groups. They are also seen as the perpetual foreigner, where all Asians are (im)migrants unfamiliar with the cultures of Aotearoa. Lastly, as (im)migrants/refugees, they are expected to express gratitude for both their presence in Aotearoa and the resources they receive, which reinforces the white saviour narrative (Dam, 2022; Mok, 2022). Additionally, a superiority–inferiority dynamic may exist between different groups within the broader ‘Asian’ category.

South East Asian and Chinese scholar and political scientist Tze Ming Mok (2022) states that there's a superiority–inferiority dynamic, where Asians from East Asian countries and middle-class backgrounds who have successfully assimilated into Pākehā settler expectations are privileged compared to migrants from other parts of Asia and different class backgrounds. In her book chapter, *Black Asian, White Asian*, Mok (2022) discusses how East Asians (those generally from China, Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, North Korea, South Korea, and Taiwan) also benefit from colour-based privilege in white supremacist societies.

‘Asian’ as a term shifts in meaning based on geographic and cultural context. Asians in the UK often refer to South Asians and commonly mean ‘Brown’ (Mok, 2022). Mok (2022) asserts that South Asians are placed in a racial hierarchy with East Asians, with the latter group considered Asian (Mok, 2022).

New Zealand uses ‘Asian’ to capture a pan-ethnic geographic category that homogenises large groups of people, which only serves to flatten and erase people’s identities. Using ‘Asian’ to describe ‘South Asians’ invisibilises this group. South Asian counterparts in the United States challenge the term ‘Asian American’, which they perceive as predominantly describing East Asians (Venkatraman, 2021). Native Hawaiian activist Haunani-Kay Trask (2000) commented that the ‘local’ identity in Hawai’i available to Asian communities often obscured the differences between this marginalised group and the Indigenous Kānaka ‘Ōiwi. In this example, the Indigenous people's identity and position were being erased as they were considered alongside racialised communities that were also able to use the ‘local’ identity available to them.

This limitation of the term ‘Asian’ becomes significant against the backdrop of Asian–Māori solidarities literature here in Aotearoa, which primarily presents East Asian perspectives and will be discussed in section five of this chapter. An alternative viewpoint is that ‘Asian’ can serve as a shared political identity; however, Mok, as cited in Wang (2023), notes that the ‘Asian’ label has yet to develop into a strong collective identifier that mobilises us into collective action, as physical actions are necessary to unite Asian communities in Aotearoa, New Zealand in such efforts. The literature so far illustrates a country built on continued colonial violence that is kept in place by settler colonialism, white supremacy and whiteness.

2.5 Whiteness and white supremacy

White supremacy is both institutional and structural. Charles Mills (1997) argues that white supremacy is a political system that shapes many aspects of our lives. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (1997) describes white supremacy as a global racial structure rooted in colonialism and maintained not only through political domination but also through capitalist and cultural oppression. He asserts that the underlying ideology of white supremacy is one of colonial conquest, domination, and control, with this mindset being deeply embedded in institutions and social policies that all seek to uphold white privilege in Western countries (Bonilla-Silva, 2000).

White supremacy and whiteness are closely linked. They are part of the same dominant power structure, where white supremacy serves as the overarching framework that seeks to maintain the invisibility of whiteness, which in turn upholds the logics of white supremacy (Bonilla-Silva, 2000). The term whiteness has been described as a racial category, a social condition, a power relation, and an ‘ecology’. It is through the history of colonialism, global capitalism, and other localised tensions that we can comprehend the structure of whiteness. Whiteness acts as the default by which racially othered groups are measured. Nayak (2007) considers whiteness an ecology rooted in white supremacy that manifests as social racialisation. Bonds and Inwood (2016) argued that whiteness is constructed as a foundational logic of white supremacy:

A focus on white supremacy thus highlights both the social condition of whiteness, including the unearned assets afforded to white people, as well the processes, structures, and historical foundations upon which these privileges rest. European and, later, North American colonists created and developed a

logic of race that placed white, European men at the pinnacle of the social hierarchy and all others in various positions of subordination (Bonds & Inwood, 2016, p.720).

Here, whiteness is not just about skin colour; it encompasses who is treated as deserving and seen as the norm in society, as well as the privileges bestowed upon those racialised as white, which have been systematically designed. Whiteness has also been crafted to include other racialised groups through ‘model minority’ frameworks, where these selective groups can reproduce whiteness and gain proximity to power without threatening white supremacy (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Phung, 2019).

2.5.1 Maintaining whiteness through the model minority myth

By adopting Western values of success, being compliant, and remaining quiet, Asians can engage in the model minority myth; by working hard, they can achieve success and gain social mobility, which allows them some conditional privileges afforded by whiteness (Wong et al. 1998). Asians in the United States (including Indians) are referred to as a ‘model minority’. This is because they are seen as the ‘model’ that other (im)migrants should aspire to emulate. This term was first used during America’s civil rights movement of the 1960s (Wang, 2008). It was constructed to be weaponised against African Americans, who were portrayed as lazy and complaining (Kim, 1999). In other words, the myth served as a tool that racially distinguished Asian Americans from Black and Indigenous people and perpetuated the lie that Asian success demonstrates that racism can be overcome (Dennis, 2018).

The racial stratification that the model minority myth enables is a means of preserving the structures of whiteness, as it seeks to erase the visibility of systemic barriers. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2004) calls this ‘new racism’, where the “maintenance of systemic white privilege is accomplished socially, economically, and politically through institutional, covert and apparently non-racial practices” (p.654). The hegemony of whiteness is both reproduced and entrenched through racialised bodies, as Asian Americans who reap the social benefits of the model minority myth distance themselves from other minority groups, buying into the belief system of meritocracy. What is necessary, as Lebanese Australian Professor Ghassan Hage (1998) shares, is to say no to aspirational whiteness or, more accurately, white supremacy. This is echoed by researchers Beliso-De Jesus, et al. (2025).

2.5.2 Situating casteism with the model minority myth

Casteism can contribute to the model minority myth. The Indian caste system is over 3000 years old and divides people into a hierarchy of different social classes from birth. This system persists both in India and within the South Asian diaspora (Alam-Simmons, 2024). Activist and Bengali scholar Professor Mohan Dutta (2025b) shares that “Deeply casteist ideas of merit shape the constructions of the model minority in the Indian diaspora and mobilise the organising of the diaspora toward historically disenfranchised minorities in the West.” (April 25, para. 9). What this expresses is that ideas of merit, i.e., that one's success in life comes from hard work, do not acknowledge the caste privilege that one might hold and can lead to the belittling of Indigenous peoples who continue to be historically marginalised. He not only warns how the Indian caste system shapes views that contribute to the model minority stereotype but also highlights the abuses of Adivasi (Indigenous) communities in India. He invites us to understand and recognise how the historic and systemic abuse that continues to take place in India has flowed through to the Indian diaspora here in Aotearoa (Dutta (2025b, see New Zealand Herald, 2010). This aligns with the thoughts of Indian-American Dalit feminist Thenmozhi Soundararajan (2022), who states that caste is portable and travels with upper caste South Asian diaspora wherever they go, impacting their views towards Black and Indigenous people. These observations can be seen as further movements towards whiteness. Put another way, caste can be regarded as a racial project and an anti-blackness project, as those who do not benefit from caste privilege are often darker in skin colour. Racialised communities can be described as migrants of colour, communities of colour, ethnic minorities, ethnic communities, and (im)migrants. The reality is that these terms all refer to racialised bodies. ‘Racialised’ signifies communities and individuals who have been othered through the presence of white settler society (Ahmed, 2012; Razack, 2002). These observations highlight that racialised bodies can also uphold settler colonialism and benefit from colonialism, though not in a manner that is accessible to the white body (Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Jafri, 2007).

It is well documented in the literature that the ecology of whiteness impacts the lives and wellbeing of racialised communities (Chan & Spoonley, 2017; Togiato, 2017; Tan, 2016; Department of Internal Affairs/Office of Ethnic Communities, 2020). Stereotyping and racism are what racialised bodies experience, but also how they can be co-opted into

whiteness, and how it can be covered up. Another way of covering up in addition to the model minority myth is via the diversity framework.

The diversity framework can serve as a cultural framework: a white framework, in which Indigenous and racialised people are used as tokens that exist in the prescribed space and are co-opted as progress towards tackling racism, while the organisation does none of the work to tackle racism (Ahmed, 2012). Racism is no longer just about looking visibly different. Racialised communities can be marginalised for not possessing so-called values that may not align with ‘mainstream’ society (Melamed, 2006; Liu & Mills, 2006). This also illustrates the slippery nature of whiteness and how it operates to maintain itself within the lives of racialised people, demonstrating how this diversity and inclusion still marginalises (see Ahmed, 2012).

Racialised communities need to understand their role within this ecology of whiteness and how racial identities and stereotypes can uphold whiteness and also engage in racialised groups being pitted against both Māori and other racialised communities. Reflecting in this way also provides the opportunity to interrogate the power dynamics that support whiteness.

2.5.3 Pākehā Treaty-led work

Whiteness and racism have often gone unexamined, partly because the trajectory of anti-racism from the 1980s has shifted towards Treaty training. While this has been beneficial in educating the New Zealand population about Te Tiriti, the discourse on anti-racism education remains underdeveloped. Historian Patrick Wolfe (2006) posits race as “...a process, not an ontology, its varying modalities so many dialectical symptoms of the ever-shifting hegemonic balance between those with a will to colonise and those with a will to be free, severally racialised in relation to each other. Race registers the state of colonial hostilities. The common factor is whiteness” (p.20). Race is something that is produced and reproduced through power relations and maintains whiteness as the norm, which upholds the dominance of power over other racialised peoples. There is reluctance to engage with race in Pākehā-led Treaty work. Discussions of race and racism are often omitted from Pākehā Te Tiriti pedagogy (Azarmandi, 2022; Pickering, 2024). Feminist and political scholar Mahdis Azarmandi (2022) states that such Treaty work “is largely focused on dismissing what race *is* rather than trying to engage with what race *does*” (emphasis original, p. 139). She notes that

while biological concepts of race can be rejected, the social implications of race and how these have shaped settler colonialism in Aotearoa are not addressed. Instead,

Pākehā Te Tiriti work distances itself from whiteness and white supremacy more broadly, and instead focuses on the relationship between Pākehā and Māori as foundational cultures in Aotearoa, that also creates a narrative for Pākehā belonging (Azarmandi, 2022). Azarmandi (2022) argues that Anti-racism education requires a political focus on dismantling whiteness (see also Mikaere 2004). She asserts that such Te Tiriti workshops offer whiteness as a cultural position, rather than one of power and domination, so does not necessarily indicate a commitment to ant-racist education.

This distancing from whiteness and white supremacy can be observed in the way that racialised people in Aotearoa, who can also be referred to as tauwi of colour when discussing relationships with people (who are not Māori or Pākehā) to ‘Te Tiriti’, are often excluded from historical, critical, and aspirational narratives and discourses (Azarmandi 2022; Dam 2023; Jackson 2020b; Omura 2014). Because of this avoidance, tauwi of colour have to endure a fair bit of racism along with receiving education on Te Tiriti (Azarmandi, 2022). What also goes unaddressed is the racialised power dynamics that exist between Pākehā, who benefit from whiteness (Gray et al. 2013), and other racialised groups who are not Indigenous to Aotearoa (Tecun et al., 2022). What this reproduces is racialised dynamics, where there exists an epistemology of ignorance (Mills, 1997) in which Pākehā-led Te Tiriti work, while acknowledging the work it has done in educating people on Te Tiriti, is also a space where both exclusion and racism can be reproduced. Pickering (2024) contends that there must be more responsiveness to understanding race and racism within Pākehā-led Tiriti work and that the movement itself must be responsive to tauwi of colour and their contributions.

Through my own experiences of receiving Te Tiriti trainings in the workplace, there was never any space for tauwi of colour within the conversation. Training was often framed within the relationship of Māori and Pākehā, highlighting the ‘special place’ that this relationship holds. Within the education workforce, the facilitators were predominantly Pākehā, with some Māori who also focused mainly on ‘culture’, which overshadowed any opportunity to discuss or commit to dismantling structures that perpetuated white supremacy and whiteness, with an emphasis on the relationship with Pākehā. These observations are reflected in the findings and the concluding chapter (see Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7).

A commitment to an antiracist approach to Te Tiriti education would reveal the power and structural advantages associated with whiteness. Without examining race, the binary of Pākehā and Māori continues to obscure the different ways Pākehā and tauīwi of colour are positioned, as well as the various ways in which they access the benefits of white settler colonialism. What whiteness also does in these contexts is subsume differences and conceal the asymmetrical power dynamics between Pākehā and tauīwi of colour. Furthermore, racism is inherent in colonialism and the treaty that was established. Throughout my experience within the education system, race and racism have rarely been addressed in the delivery of Te Tiriti in education or within community programs. Whiteness also remains unaddressed in discussions on biculturalism and multiculturalism.

2.6 Biculturalism and Multiculturalism tensions

Frameworks such as biculturalism and multiculturalism are not neutral; they can function as tactics employed by the settler state to contain various cultural groups, defining who belongs and who is recognised (see Fleras & Spoonley, 1999). New Zealand adopted a bicultural approach as a result of the Māori rights movement in the 1970s, which brought colonial injustices to the forefront at a time when other British settler colonies were implementing multicultural policies (Dam, 2024). McMurchy-Pilkington (2001) refers to biculturalism as the celebration and inclusion of two cultures, whereas multiculturalism is described as a celebration of cultural plurality (Fleras & Spoonley, 1999).

As stated by Dam (2024), biculturalism foregrounded the two foundational cultures of Māori and Pākehā as a result of the signing of Te Tiriti. Culpitt (1994) argues that biculturalism serves as the unique political foundation on which citizenship rights and responsibilities rest. Meanwhile, Colin James (2004) contends that biculturalism involves the sharing of power between Māori and the Crown.

Biculturalism and multiculturalism are often seen as opposing frameworks. Some academics argue that multiculturalism dilutes Māori by relegating them to being just another ethnic group among the many in Aotearoa, which provides an opportunity to sidestep bicultural responsibilities under Te Tiriti (O’Sullivan, 2007). Sullivan (1994) contends that commitments to Māori must be addressed before any discussions on multiculturalism can take place.

Some Pākehā supported adopting multiculturalism, but as a means of preserving the status quo of Pākehā (Fleras, 2009; Santamaría & Hoskins, 2015). This is exemplified in Terruhn's (2015) study, where her findings illustrated that Pākehā benefited from biculturalism. She researched Pākehā experiences of being Pākehā, considering the context of living with or growing up alongside biculturalism and increasing ethnic diversity. Her research captured the life stories of 38 people who identified as Pākehā. Through these stories, she demonstrated how biculturalism benefits Pākehā by naturalising their presence on Indigenous land and positioning them as foundational to New Zealand alongside Māori. This positioning, while benefitting Pākehā, continues to deny the colonial violence towards Māori. Terruhn's (2015) research also highlighted the attraction of multiculturalism among the respondents, which would further relegate colonialism to a past event, as multiculturalism offers the opportunity to develop New Zealand's identity as a cosmopolitan country.

As illustrated, Pākehā benefit from both biculturalism and multiculturalism; however, the current limits in which these terms are understood mean that neither Māori nor tauīwi of colour gain from them. Within this confined imagination, neither Tangata Whenua nor tauīwi of colour communities get to be in relationship with each other but are instead held in tension with whiteness, where both are excluded (Terruhn, 2015). Biculturalism's benefits to Pākehā are further highlighted by Māori scholar Hemopereki Simon (2022), who describes it as a 'zombie concept'—a dead idea that remains alive, from which Pākehā, whom he refers to as settler/invaders, benefit. He notes that, while the term seems inclusive, it continues to uphold settler colonial power structures and does nothing to remedy Mana Motuhake (Māori sovereignty). In contrast, for tauīwi of colour, biculturalism renders them invisible, while multiculturalism places them in tension with Tangata Whenua. Though biculturalism and multiculturalism can coexist, focusing on one without the other is unhelpful. By contrast, in the UK, the practice of multiculturalism often serves to avoid directly confronting structural racism, power relations, and socioeconomic inequality, instead engaging in diversity and cultural awareness (Hall, 2000). Multiculturalism can be seen as yet another means of homogenising ethnic communities and obscuring the power differences that exist among these communities based on gender, migration journeys, class, religion, and caste.

Biculturalism and multiculturalism invite another conversation regarding settler moves to innocence. This concept was developed by Tuck and Yang (2012). It describes strategies that settlers engage in to distance themselves from meaningful involvement in decolonisation

work by participating in the structural changes necessary for decolonisation. The understanding of how decolonisation is used in this thesis, will be picked up in section 2.9 of this chapter. Strategies engaged with by settlers include giving empty land acknowledgements, offering apologies for past harms without taking meaningful actions for reparations, and failing to challenge the impacts of settler colonialism (Tuck & Wang, 2012). I would argue that engaging in Tiriti work that does not address race and racism is a settler move. Moreover, viewing multiculturalism as a concept that relegates colonialism to a past event can also be considered a settler move (see Terruhn, 2015). Settler moves apply to both white settlers and settlers of colour.

A complex dynamic of (im)migration and colonialism exists within Aotearoa, New Zealand. In this context, Simon (2022, 2023) uses the term ‘settler/invader’, which acknowledges that not all those who settle in Aotearoa bear equal responsibility for Indigenous dispossession. White settlers are more culpable and benefit more than settlers of colour. He shares that settler/invader colonialism is a transnational and global phenomenon. Asians, as settlers of colour and settler/invaders, disrupt discourses that frame racialised communities not only as victims of racism and exclusion but also as settlers in the project of settler colonialism.

Examining international scholarship, Hawaiian scholar Dean Saranillio (2013) states that non-white people, such as Asian Americans, can be involved in settler colonialism. He cites the memoir of a former Filipino American governor of Hawai‘i as an example. In this story, the governor recounts his experiences of poverty and racism; however, at the same time, he dismisses the rights of Indigenous Hawaiians to their own self-determination. The means by which people arrive in a settler colony are inconsequential. Malissa Phung (2019), who identifies as a second-generation settler descendant of Sino-Vietnamese refugees resettled on the territories of the Cree, Blackfoot, Metis, Nakado, and Tongva peoples, asserts that even if Asians come to the country out of necessity, having been forced to leave another place, they are still settlers. Phung (2019) encourages Asian Americans to confront the uncomfortable truth that they are settlers and urges individuals to engage in ‘genealogical disclosure,’ meaning they should critically reflect on their own migration histories, privileges, and complicity in settler colonialism. Other scholars argue that applying the term ‘settler of colour’ to migrants, diasporic, and racialised communities engages power binaries that erase the existing power dynamics and fails to consider the historical impacts of colonialism. It also

conflates migration and colonialism. (see, e.g., Takagi 2005; Sharma & Wright 2008; Barker 2009; Byrd 2011; Wolfe 2013; Day 2016).

Other Indigenous academics and scholars of colour have proposed alternative terms, which include: arrivant and arrivant colonialism (Byrd 2011); alien and alien capitalism (Day 2016); minor settler/co-colonizer (Huang 2015); refugee settler (Lê Espiritu 2018). These scholars agree that non-Indigenous resettlement occurs at the expense and displacement of Indigenous people (Phung, 2019).

2.7 The racialised woman

Within the settler state, we can begin to understand how racialised women are positioned. The racialised woman within settler colonialism is constructed as a body to perform capitalistic labour (Ng, 1996). In her research, feminist scholar Roseanne Ng examines the institutional barriers impacting (im)migrant women in community organisations. Her work explores class relations in terms of the roles racialised women took on in not-for-profit organisations in Canada and who benefited from their efforts. Her findings reveal how women's work was racialised in that it was undervalued and considered disposable, as well as how larger state systems in Canadian society shaped the conditions racialised women experienced. Ng (1996) engages in Marx's class analysis, examining how labour is both organised and exploited under capitalism. She goes on to share that the experiences of racialised women are often tied to governmental structures. Ng (1996) explains that fundamentally this was about creating a set of "social relations which also organise how people relate to one another. What is important to grasp is that these social relations are relations of domination and subordination: they are relations of power" (1996, p.86). This demonstrates how even our relationships with one another are influenced by the environments we work in, which are deliberately engineered by the state.

Another way the racialised woman is constructed is as a diversity category in workplaces and institutions, a category that also includes racialised people more generally. Sara Ahmed's (2012) research on diversity workers in both Australia and the UK explores how whiteness is perpetuated through diversity work. Ahmed (2012) explains that for institutions, diversity is only about including those who "look different" (p.33), while leaving the structural norms of whiteness in place and unchallenged. When diversity workers speak up, they are often treated as the problem, rather than the institutional racism they point out (Ahmed, 2012). What both

of these analyses offer is insight into how whiteness and colonialism impact racialised women in both their working conditions and the work they do, as well as in their roles as diversity mascots in institutions and workplaces, and how they can be disadvantaged in terms of the lack of power they have in these spaces.

South Asian women are not a homogeneous group, so it is important to consider intersectionality. Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) coined the term intersectionality to describe individuals' positioning and identity within society by examining factors such as class, race, culture, gender, language, and the oppressions individuals face when their identities intersect with race. To understand how these identities produce experiences that cannot be explained by any single factor, it is helpful to adopt a feminist perspective from women of colour.

Feminism from the perspective of a woman of colour can be seen as an approach that informs our understanding of the world and our place within it. Sara Ahmed describes that living as a feminist requires us to act with compassion in seeking to create loving systems that leave no one behind. Living a feminist life is a way of life that also shapes our experiences of how we imagine the world (Ahmed, 2017). Feminism can be viewed as a building project that enables us to dream and reimagine a better life, not just for ourselves but for others too. Such a project also demands that we consider how knowledge is generated, whose knowledge is used and cited, and how we write (Ahmed, 2017; Olufemi, 2020). This perspective brings a consciousness where one begins to piece things together in a drip, drip approach that eventually becomes a flood, engaging in a reflective journey for racialised women.

So far, what emerges through the literature is a landscape of constraints that can impact our relationships with one another, both externally through the structure of colonialism, settler colonialism and white supremacy and also in the way we are also positioned as settlers of colour, understanding that as racialised people and women, we are not all racialised in the same way.

In refusing such constraints, Indigenous, Black and women of colour feminisms offer powerful ways of thinking and being, that turn us away from the false promise of approximating whiteness and towards reclaiming knowledge systems and alternative ways of being in relation with one another that are engaged in developing critical consciousness and action towards collective liberation (Hartman, 2019; hooks, 2000b; Lorde, 1984).

2.8 Indigenous and Black women and women of colour feminist thinking

Feminism from Indigenous, Black, and women of colour perspectives can be understood as a way of thinking about the world and our place within it. Such a project demands that we ask: what constitutes knowledge; who has the authority to create knowledge; and whose knowledge is recognised (Ahmed, 2017; Olufemi, 2020). Mana Wāhine theory emphasises the importance of Māori analysing Māori thought, regenerating knowledge from its sources, and asserting mana for all (Pihama, 2005). These feminisms encourage us to reclaim our own knowledge systems and redefine what knowledge is valid. Engaging in this thinking process fosters a consciousness that can lead to action (Ahmed, 2017).

This way of thinking challenges the myth of objective knowledge favoured by Western scholars and frameworks (Smith, 2012; Chilisa, 2020; Hartman, 2019; hooks, 2000b; Lorde, 1984; LB Simpson, 2014; Murphy, 2019). Smith (2021) in her scholarship demonstrates how research that is embedded in colonial frameworks shapes what is considered, created or recognised as knowledge. Such framings do not affirm Indigenous or non-Western epistemologies and how individuals and communities are engaged with the production of knowledge (Brown & Strega, 2005).

Storytelling itself serves as a method of knowledge production (LB Simpson 2014). Storytelling fosters collective visions, remapping, and dreams that challenge capitalism and settler-colonial dispossession. Simpson explains that theory is not merely an intellectual pursuit but is generated through embodied practice within families, communities, and across generations. She further describes that it goes beyond formal education, being rooted in lived experiences and ancestral relationships (LB Simpson, 2014). Frameworks from Indigenous, Black, and women of colour perspectives offer powerful insights into knowledge and its production, and how reclaiming these ways of knowing for ourselves can enhance our critical consciousness.

Powerful relational worlds exist in the realms of motherhood, sisterhood, and friendship within Indigenous, Black, and women of colour communities. These relational frameworks enable us to centre ourselves in our own stories and attune to ancestral wisdoms. In these narratives, we discover a language for healing and for speaking ourselves into existence in new ways. The margins become a place where new habits are born—a space brimming with beauty, joy, and the potential for alternative futures (hooks, 2000a). This perspective aligns

with the work of Jodi Byrd and Eve Tuck, who argue that Indigenous feminisms must remain anchored in land, people, environments, and reality. They present the concept of "elsewhere"—not as a utopian fantasy but as grounded alternative ways of doing and thinking beyond colonial logics (Byrd et al., 2023).

Developing critical consciousness is an act of resistance. Black feminist, Patricia Hill Collins (1990), explains that a woman's internal consciousness is an internal space that can offer freedom, self-knowledge, and self-empowerment. Similarly, Moeller (2019) discusses bell hooks' (1993) pedagogy, which sees self-recovery as foundational to social transformation. This pedagogy integrates spiritual, political, and emotional dimensions and forms part of what hooks refers to as decolonisation.

Together, these thinkers and feminisms provide a powerful roadmap: one that does not seek validation from the colonial state but engages in generative refusal (LB Simpson, 2017c), relational sovereignty, and epistemic restoration. They provide tools for transformation that are grounded in love, resistance, community, and the reclamation of life itself. To engage in such refusal is also about reclaiming what is sacred and who is considered human.

2.8.1 Reclaiming the sacred

Frantz Fanon (1963) described colonialism as a structure that divided humanity into two zones: those seen as fully human (the colonisers) and those seen as subhuman (the colonised). Ramón Grosfoguel (2016) expanded on Fanon's ideas by characterising the world as stratified into those above and below the human line. A line that excludes Indigenous people and women. Colonialism is not only racialised but also gendered; it recast Māori and other Indigenous women as inferior, erasing their voices, stories, and rituals (Gunn-Allen, 1991; Irwin, 1991; Murphy, 2019; Pihama & Johnston, 1994).

Postcolonial scholars such as Gayatri Spivak (2003) and Ranajit Guha (1989) have extended this critique to the Indian subcontinent. By using the concept of the subaltern, they examined how colonialism created hierarchies that silenced the agency of colonised people especially women denying them the right to self-definition on their own terms.

Dalit feminist scholarship (Rege, 2006; Rao, 2009) exposes the internal stratifications of caste and the limits of any unified "South Asian" subject, while transnational South Asian feminist work (Mohanty, 2003) critiques the assumption that shared experiences of

racialisation produce political alignment. The findings illustrate the stratification within South Asian communities and bringing this lens into view allows an analysis of solidarity that is attentive both to settler colonial power and to intra-community hierarchies. It foregrounds how solidarities are not given through shared marginalisation, but are structured, constrained, and sometimes foreclosed by the intersecting dynamics of settler colonialism, race, caste, and gender.

Re-centring Indigenous and global South knowledge systems offers a powerful means of reclaiming the sacred identity of Indigenous and racialised women. Reclaiming the sacred and re-centring Indigenous modes of knowledge are essential tools for unsettling whiteness. 'Interrupt' is used here deliberately, as a way of stopping dominant narratives in their tracks.

2.9 Decolonisation

Decolonisation, as understood and applied in this project, requires consideration of the following. In Aotearoa, decolonisation is not a metaphor for diversity and inclusion, nor is it reducible to epistemic recovery or the raising of critical consciousness alone (Jackson, 2020). In explaining decolonisation in Aotearoa Moana Jackson shared that “ In this country, the potential exists to develop a different and unique decolonisation discourse because there are already stories which express the power of a different truth. These stories reflect the hopes that iwi and hapū placed in Te Tiriti o Waitangi and they offer the chance to enhance the dignity of everyone who lives here” (p.136). As Tuck and Yang (2012) argue in their seminal critique, decolonisation is not a metaphor. When it is used as one, it empties the term of its material and political demands and risks becoming a substitute for the structural change it names. While epistemic recovery and critical consciousness are necessary, they are insufficient without political action (see Lorde, 1984). In Aotearoa, decolonisation involves taking the lead from Te Ao Māori and honouring the promises of Te Tiriti o Waitangi as the governing document of this land (Jackson, 2020; Tuiono & Dutta, 2019; Ngata & Dutta, 2023). As Wolfe (2006) establishes, settler colonialism is not a historical event but an ongoing structure. It is one organised around the elimination of Indigenous peoples and the permanent acquisition of their land. It is this structural understanding that governs how decolonisation is understood throughout this thesis. As Moana Jackson (2020) reminds us, the colonality of knowledge and its perversions of reality work to hide what he describes as

Indigenous truths that recognise Indigenous peoples have the right to be fully free and sovereign in their own lands. He offers a vision specific to Aotearoa: that, because of the stories carried by iwi and hapū and the hopes placed in Te Tiriti, there is the potential to develop a unique and different decolonisation discourse, one that has the power to enhance the dignity of everyone who lives on this land. Drawing on Smith's (1999) foundational work on decolonising methodologies, this thesis understands decolonisation as inseparable from Indigenous self-determination. It is not simply about recovering what has been lost but about restoring the conditions under which Indigenous peoples can exercise sovereignty over their own lives, knowledge, and land. It is within that vision that this thesis locates itself.

Decolonisation in this thesis, therefore, means first and foremost, upholding Māori sovereignty. It is not a thesis that speaks for Māori. It requires South Asian women and communities to understand their positionality within settler colonialism, which recognises that as settlers of colour, we can be positioned against Māori, benefit from colonial structures through model minority positioning, and reproduce the very hierarchies we seek to dismantle (Wolfe, 2006; Saranillio, 2013). Relational responsibility to Māori is central to this understanding. This means recognising that there are limits to what South Asian women can claim in this context. Solidarity with Māori is conditional on upholding Māori sovereignty and understanding our obligations under Te Tiriti. It cannot be assumed on the basis of shared racialisation alone (Jackson, 2020; Ngata & Dutta, 2023). Internalised colonialism, as Fanon (1963) argues, not only wounds the self but also distorts how we see and relate to one another, reproducing colonial hierarchies within and across racialised communities. Understanding this is a precondition for solidarity, not an alternative to it. Equally, solidarity among South Asian women cannot be assumed on the basis of shared identity or shared marginalisation (Mohanty, 2003). South Asian women are not a homogeneous group. As mentioned earlier, Intra-community solidarities are conditional on naming caste supremacy and actively working to dismantle such supremacy. This includes confronting the ways in which Hindutva ideologies, rooted in Islamophobia and caste supremacy, have taken root within South Asian diaspora communities in Aotearoa (see Dutta, 2025).

It is equally important to name what decolonisation does not mean in this thesis. It does not mean claiming that South Asian experiences of colonisation are the same as Māori experiences of colonisation in Aotearoa. These are structurally distinct, and conflating them

would obscure Māori sovereignty rather than uphold it (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Jackson, 2020). Decolonisation is also not a process of self-improvement or personal transformation that leaves colonial structures intact. It is also not a framework that can be borrowed or applied without accountability to the Indigenous peoples on whose land it is being enacted.

In this thesis, decolonisation is used as an analytic framework to examine how South Asian women's narratives align with, diverge from, or remain constrained by settler colonial structures, both in relation to their own sense of self and identity, and in relation to their understanding of and commitment to Māori sovereignty (Jackson, 2020; Smith, 1999; Wolfe, 2006). Where women's narratives reflect a genuine political orientation toward Te Ao Māori and Te Tiriti, this thesis reads that as decolonisation in practice. Where they remain at the level of personal healing or cultural reclamation without that political grounding, this thesis names that silence as a limitation, as part of its commitment to an analysis that does not mistake epistemic recovery for structural change, and does not allow the urgency of solidarity to obscure the sovereignty it needs to serve (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Tuiono & Dutta, 2019; Ngata & Dutta, 2023).

2.10 Solidarities

Settler colonialism seeks to disrupt relationships, centring settler colonial ways of being and doing that sever the individual's ties to the collective and place emphasis on ideologies of race, gender, and class hierarchies (Burgess and Painting, 2020). Settler colonial relationships based on systems of domination, exploitation, and extraction replace those of whanaungatanga. Moreover, failing to critically engage with settler colonialism ensures its presence in our collective futures (Jackson, 2019; Tuck & Yang, 2014).

Mana wahine scholars Hana Burgess and Te Kahuratai Painting (2020) discuss whanaungatanga through whakapapa, which refers to being in good relationships within and between generations. Here, they use the term 'Whanaunga' to denote relation, and the suffix '-tanga' signifies being in a state of. Indigenous peoples recognise their place in an interconnected world through its people, lands, and oceans (Wilbur & Keene, n.d.). Suaalii-Sauni et al. (2018) share that Samoan paramount chief and former politician Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi viewed whanaungatanga as having four layers: whanaungatanga ki ngā atua, ki te taiao, ki te tāngata, ki a koe anō: relationships with ancestors of continuing

influence, the natural world, people, and the self. Relationships expressed this way are generative, abundant, and life-giving.

Benton et al. (2013) describe whanaungatanga as “kin-like reciprocal relationships among people generally” (p. 524). In Māori and settler colonial relationships, where people are not related, whanaungatanga is created through shared experiences (Mead, 2003, p. 28) and implies a “special social solidarity” (Benton et al., 2013, p. 524). Drawing on Indigenous concepts to generate a model for relationship building that is not founded on settler colonial ideologies allows people of colour to define themselves in relation to one another and to Māori, fostering stronger connections.

Jackson (2020) shared that “the ethic of restoration” (p.149) is a more fitting term than decolonisation, as it goes beyond the term of decolonisation, which does not fully capture the decentering of colonial power structures but also involves a restoration of ways of doing things, cultural practices, and engaging in social relationships that existed before the coloniser's gaze. Jackson (2020) shares: restoration “will require a change of mind and heart as much as a change of structure” (p. 149). This also pertains to being in good relation with one another. Jackson (2019) describes decolonisation as being in good relation.

Arama Rata and Faisal Al-Saad (2019) developed a relationship-building model independent of the settler-colonial perspective, drawing on Indigenous concepts that aim to disrupt settler-colonial relationships. Settler-colonial relationships are the only means through which Māori and tauwiwi of colour can engage with one another, mediated by Pākehā who seek to uphold white supremacy and colonial power. This approach aligns with international literature on Indigenous-settler of colour relationships that emphasises Indigenous starting points and helps communities understand their positionalities within relationships (Sium et al., 2012; Snelgrove et al., 2014).

Being in solidarity means maintaining relationships with one another. Black feminist Lola Olufemi (2020) describes solidarity as strategically uniting individuals who are committed to a collective vision. Activist Adrienne Maree Brown (2017) explains that it is through our relationships that we practice the values of liberation: belonging, radical honesty, accountability to one another, self-determination, and mutual growth. It is easy to be in solidarity when things are going well (Olufemi, 2020), but our relationships with each other are not without tensions. Ramona Beltrán and Gita Mehrotra (2015) encourage racialised

women in academia to engage in reflexivity, reflection, and humility. This is particularly critical given that whiteness in academia seeks to disrupt relationships (see Ahmed, 2012). Melanie Tervalon and Murray-Garcia (1998) describe humility practices as an ongoing engagement in “self-reflection and self-critique as lifelong learners” (p.118). To engage in ‘generative refusal’ is a way of operating outside the colonial state. LB Simpson (2017c) invites us to say ‘no’ to the state, which she describes as engaging in generative refusal. Instead, she calls on us to care for one another by validating each other, rather than seeking validation from colonialism. This refusal also invites a ‘yes’ of affirming living practices that are rooted in love and care for one another.

This can also be referred to as decolonising solidarities. One way to achieve this is by exploring our own social location and positionality. Māori scholar and activist Arama Rata and Indigenous scholar Faisal Al-Saad (2019) developed a relationship-building model that operates outside the settler-colonial gaze, drawing on Indigenous concepts that also aim to unsettle settler-colonial relationships. Their approach sits alongside the international literature on Indigenous–Settler of colour relations that centres Indigenous starting points and enables communities to understand their positionalities within relationships (Sium et al., 2012; Snelgrove et al., 2014). This model is expanded on in the concluding chapter of this thesis (Chapter 7).

Exploring social location and positionality also involves reflecting on our thoughts, and listening to and understanding other people’s stories and histories (Morris, 2016). This decolonising of the mind is presented as a first step in dismantling colonial relations and comprehending how they have influenced our knowledge constructions, histories, and power relations (Ng, 2010). Azarmandi and Fu (2023) encourage being reflexive, asserting that possessing the language or Māori cultural knowledge does not necessarily lead to meaningful action to dismantle oppressive systems. Solidarity cannot be merely performative.

2.10.1 Asian-Māori solidarities in Aotearoa

Building alliances with Indigenous peoples is necessary. Of the Asian–Māori solidarity literature available in Aotearoa, perspectives usually come from East Asians. Academic Lincoln Dam (2022, 2024) examines the relationship with Te Tiriti through the lens of Asian philosophies. Dam (2024) engages with his own Chinese Cambodian positionality and Asian philosophies of Buddhism and Taoism to explore this topic. He contends that establishing

connections across these philosophies can foster solidarities with Tangata Whenua and enhance understanding of Te Tiriti. Dam (2024) argues that Asian philosophies advocate collectivist worldviews in which everything is perceived as interconnected, and that this orientation makes Te Tiriti a natural site of belonging for Asians in Aotearoa. This discourse actively incorporates them. This resonates with Japanese scholar Saburo Omura's (2014) broader findings on the Asian migrant experience, in which engaging with Te Tiriti supported not only newcomers' orientation but also their psychological adjustment, suggesting that the Treaty offers more than political inclusion. That can also create a framework for rootedness. Nabilah Binte Abdul Rahman (2025), takes this a step further. In their study Southeast Asian migrants developed a critical consciousness of Te Tiriti and colonialism by connecting Aotearoa's settler-colonial history with their homelands' colonial experiences, despite facing barriers posed by dominant colonial narratives here in Aotearoa. The participants in the study recognised their complex positionality as both racially marginalised and sometimes privileged positions that required careful attention to power dynamics that could co-opt them in reproducing coloniality. This thesis builds on the work of these scholars, in that both internal work and external political work is necessary for solidarity with Māori.

Liangni Liu and Jun Lu (2008) note that political expressions of solidarity and support among Asian people remain low. When considering the grey literature, stories of solidarity predominantly come from Chinese and East Asian perspectives (ASTR, n.d.; Jackson 2020b; RNZ, 2020; RNZ, n.d.). Visibility through activism, political and cultural commentary, and research has increased from these viewpoints.

What feels limited in the academic research on Asian–Māori solidarities is the consideration of how race, gender, migration status, class and discussions of colonised mindsets may be considered within the context of solidarities. Literature from North America also describes how the colonised mindsets of South Asians impact solidarities with Indigenous and Black people (Prashad, 2000). These intersectionalities remain under-researched when considering being in a relationship with Māori here in Aotearoa. What is also absent are South Asian perspectives of solidarities with Māori. This thesis will contribute to this gap in the literature from a South Asian perspective and explore more closely what relationships currently reveal about solidarities. In the United States, Global South Asian and Black relationships are often overlooked in the binary of Black and White (O'Loughlin & Rastogi, 2022). South Asian relationships with Black people are often erased in this binary, and their complicity in anti-

black racism and the historical tensions under-explored. What is argued for is that if we can explore the multiple ways we might be in solidarity, resist or be complicit in struggles, we can gain understanding of how gender, race and power also interact and consider the histories of how people have been colonised. Again, one of the gaps that exists in this research is what day-to-day interactions between South Asian and Black people look like, not just in moments of crisis, such as Black Lives Matter. This literature will be expanded on in the findings and discussion section of this thesis (see Chapters 4 and 5).

There is a lack of research from South Asians in Aotearoa contributing to the critical field of solidarities with Māori, apart from singular voices such as Dr Ruth De Souza. In her blog, as a scholar and respected leader in the South Asian diaspora in Aotearoa (now residing in Australia), she describes how her “*experiences with Tangata whenua were mainly through Pākehā institutions*” (De Souza, 2020, para 6). Her solidarity with Tangata Whenua and marginalised communities is evident in both her scholarship and physical actions, from creating resources to using her voice in the spaces where she has shown up. The other more recent voice and scholarship is that of Professor Mohan Dutta (2025a; 2025b)

This research will look at how South Asian women navigate their relationships with other racialised women, including Māori women, to inform ways of strengthening solidarities as an alternative to the colonial gaze.

Solidarity is analysed as a relational practice shaped by structural constraints already outlined in this literature review. This thesis contributes to the South Asian – Indigenous solidarities literature empirically demonstrating when solidarity is possible, conditional, or foreclosed within participants’ narratives. This project seeks to respond to the gap in the literature on the exploration of South Asian–Māori solidarities. As a researcher who is tauwiwi of colour, engaging in this project on Māori land, I must also recognise that this land continues to be violently colonised and that Māori continue to be dispossessed and oppressed on their own land.

2.11 Summary

In summary, this review of the literature drew on scholarship that provides context regarding New Zealand as a settler colony, which has fostered a less than welcoming environment for racialised communities and continues to impose hostile conditions on Tangata Whenua in

their own land. Despite this, Māori have consistently engaged in resistance against settler colonialism. Different ‘Asian’ groups are racialised differently in New Zealand depending on their ethnicity and background. This is referred to as Asianisation (Kim & Hsieh, 2022). The category of ‘Asian’ used in New Zealand to represent a pan-Asian identity serves to flatten and erase distinct identities. The underlying ideology of white supremacy present in New Zealand, rooted in colonialism, seeks to maintain political, capitalist, and cultural domination over the lives of Indigenous and racialised peoples. Whiteness helps keep the logics of white supremacy in place, serving as a racial category, a social condition, a power relation, and an ‘ecology’. Whiteness also exists in Pākehā Treaty-led education, where racialised individuals can experience racism while learning about Te Tiriti.

Whiteness operates in multiple ways, and those who are racialised can also be co-opted in their proximity to whiteness by adopting the model minority stereotype. This stereotype is often applied to ‘Asian’ peoples and engages in the myth of working hard, remaining quiet, and adhering to Western standards of success. This stereotype is used as a tool that racially distinguishes Asians from Black and Indigenous people and perpetuates the lies that racism can be overcome by hard work (Dennis, 2018). Casteism also contributes to the model minority myth that engages in the notion of meritocracy, again engaging in the idea that racism can be overcome without the need to address white supremacy. This illustrates how people who are racialised can also be co-opted into the settler colonial project.

The apparatus of biculturalism and multiculturalism supports the logics of white supremacy, as they are presented as pathways forward. The former framework, which gained popularity in the 1980s in response to Māori resistance, has offered no meaningful power-sharing relationship between Māori and the Crown. Multiculturalism, within the context of Aotearoa, engages in a settler move to innocence that relegates colonialism to a past event and also serves to pit the interests of Māori and racialised communities against one another.

Indigenous, Black, and women of colour feminisms can provide us with alternative ways to think about how we can relate to each other, our communities, lands, and cosmologies outside of the colonial relationships of extraction, erasure, and superiority. These feminisms concern themselves with more than just the category of gender, and seek to dismantle white supremacy, racial capitalism, and racism. They support us in centring our own knowledges and power to understand that, as Indigenous and racialised communities, we are legitimate creators of knowledge and possess power.

The purpose of this research is to understand the experiences of racialised women of South Asian descent and our relationships with other racialised women, including Māori women, to build solidarity in our struggles against anti-oppressive systems. There is a gap in the Asian-Māori solidarities literature, where the focus on South Asian-Māori solidarities has yet to be explored, and insufficient attention has been given to the experiences of women and how colonisation impacts such solidarities. This project also provides space to uncover women's life histories, cultural knowledge, and memories as tools that can offer pathways that act in opposition to dominant narratives (Chilisa, 2020).

Interlude 2 Connecting through our colonised histories

The colonisation experiences of Māori have many parallels with the South Asian diaspora in Aotearoa, who themselves come from countries colonised by the British. For Ara Alam-Simmons, connecting to her own Bangladeshi history helps her better understand and support the aspirations of tangata whenua in this country.

Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis don't like to talk about how we were colonised.

Within our communities, there's a general lack of critique of that period of our history — and anyone who attempts to have a conversation about the impact of the colonial violence and oppression that our ancestors faced is quickly shut down.

There's also an unwillingness to consider how our communities here in Aotearoa may be perpetuating that lateral violence on others, including on Māori and Pasifika people. By lateral violence, I mean racism and discrimination, as well as our self-loathing and belief in the stereotypes about our own communities.

There are many reasons for wanting to forget the violence of past histories. These include just wanting to move on and placing little value on remembering. It's painful to revisit or address our own deeply entrenched traumas — and because these histories aren't often openly discussed, there are many among us who don't even know our histories in the first place.

For many South Asians living here, the desire to successfully assimilate into a new country, and the striving to get ahead and secure status, cancel out everything else.

Some in our communities, which include Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Afghanistan and the Maldives, even believe that being colonised by the British was a good thing that brought a more “civilised” South Asian into being. This point of view is often expressed by assimilated folk who are aspiring to be white. During the 2023 general election, for instance, it was deeply embarrassing to see some of our self-appointed South Asian community leaders carrying placards with the slogan “take our country back”. I could only reflect on how messed up this belief is.

I am Bangladeshi British, born and raised in the United Kingdom, and Aotearoa is my home. I moved here 20 years ago after marrying a Pākehā New Zealander who then wanted to come home.

Last year, my father passed away in Bangladesh — and this prompted me to reflect on my own complicated family history. External colonial forces and trauma not only shaped my father's shifting identity but also how he related to others. These forces also shaped my own identity.

My father was a Bengali, who spent his entire life trying to prove his worthiness to other South Asians around him, and even to his own community. He was a bit too dark for other people's liking. His nose was too wide, and he was from the wrong side of town, from too near the Chittagong Hill tracts where Chakma (one of the Indigenous tribes of Bangladesh) live. He was, in other words, just a bit too Indigenous-looking.

He was born in India in 1936 (according to his passport, although births were often not recorded so we can't be certain that this was his real birthdate). And he became an orphan just after the 1947 partition that divided what was then British India into two nation states: Muslim-majority Pakistan and Hindu-majority India. He was raised by his siblings who he later supported through his labour in the UK.

Going through my father's things after he died, we found his old Pakistani passport and a British labour voucher which allowed him to gain entry into Great Britain in 1964. He left what was then East Pakistan for factory work in the North of England. When he eventually returned to his homeland, many years later, it had become the independent state of Bangladesh.

It had taken only five years after the 1947 partition for colonised cracks to appear in the newly-formed Pakistan. Bengalis (my ancestors) soon began struggling for their linguistic, cultural, and political rights in their newly designated state.

Even before partition, Bengalis were an often-marginalised people, both at the hands of the British and those Indians who the British chose to carry out their colonising work. The Indian Civil Service of 1947, for example, consisted of just one Bengali officer. After partition, Bengalis expected this to change, but marginalisation continued. There is much literature on those who were once colonised becoming colonisers themselves.

Despite 44 million people (out of a population of 69 million) speaking Bengali, Pakistan made the decision to adopt Urdu and the language of the colonisers, English, as its two official languages. Bengali as a language didn't feature. "Bangla choro — Urdu Bolo" (Let go of Bangla — Speak Urdu) was a slogan that my father often heard as a youth. Bengalis had to fight to ensure that Bengali also became a state language of Pakistan.

Bengalis in East Pakistan continued to suffer humiliation and cultural denigration, along with increased socioeconomic hardships. This all came to a head in the liberation war of 1971, where East Pakistan was able to free itself to become the independent state of Bangladesh. This is also remembered as a partition and a genocide.

During this partition, the West Pakistan military approved state-sanctioned violence under what was known as Operation Searchlight. This included the systematic killing of Bengali intellectuals and the rape and brutalisation of women. Between 200,000 to 400, 000 Bengali women and girls were held in camps, violated and raped to deliberately interrupt bloodlines. There are stories from women who, when they asked for water, were given coconut shells filled with urine to drink. This barbaric savagery was not dissimilar to what many Indians had previously faced under British colonial rule.

Ten million Bengali refugees fled to India, in the largest refugee movement in history, with another 30 million people internally displaced. If you're Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi, you will remember partition (and what you consider partition) quite differently.

It was a time when power politics and violence mattered more than the humanity and rights of people to self-determine, which is what we're seeing now in the genocide of Palestinian people by the Israeli military, playing out for all of us to see on Instagram and TikTok.

Back in 1971, there was no social media to record the slaughter. Foreign journalists were encouraged to leave the area formerly known as East Pakistan before the murders took place. There was very little international media coverage as evidence of what took place.

America refused to condemn the genocidal actions of the West Pakistan military but instead shipped their army weapons from Turkey, Jordan and Iran. This is a repeat of what we're seeing happening in Palestine, with different brown bodies, while the oppression, enablers and global forces remain the same.

Nine months after the 1971 genocide began, Bangladesh was born out of what was formerly known as East Pakistan. That genocide is still not recognised by the United Nations, 53 years on, because of politics, power and money.

Kill the knowledge, defile the women and bloodlines, kill multiple members of families, and displace millions of people from their homelands. Does any of this ring familiar to us here in Aotearoa?

Whether we are the people of the land or part of diasporic communities, are there connections we can make here to our own histories?

Our communities have called for more inclusion in wider Aotearoa New Zealand society, but we also need to look in the mirror and reflect on whether we're doing enough to tackle the supremacist thinking that exists within ourselves.

We can be anti-Māori, Islamophobic, transphobic, homophobic, anti-refugee and anti-poor.

Here in Aotearoa, we also rarely hear about the Indian caste system — a system of dividing people into a hierarchy of different social classes from birth. It's been around for more than 2000 years and continues to operate within the diaspora to this day. There's [evidence](#) and discussion of caste harassment and discrimination in places like the UK (where caste discrimination is recognised within the Equality Act 2010) and in the [US](#), but very little awareness of it here. It would be foolish, though, to think that we're immune to this here in Aotearoa.

The legacy of empire continues to cast a long shadow. Colonised minds, if left unattended, seek to colonise.

When I think about the language suppression in my own history, it helps me to connect to the activism of [Hana Te Hemara](#), Ngā Tamatoa and the Te Reo Māori Society who, in 1972, gathered 33,000 signatures for a petition calling for te reo Māori to be offered in schools. It reminds me of the experiences of those who, while collecting signatures, were set upon by dogs, followed by the police and had to endure racist insults. It's sobering to think that te reo Māori only became an official language here in Aotearoa in 1987.

When we can create connections to each other's histories, we also get to see how we're entangled together in the global project of colonisation that continues its violence.

When I think about the precarious nature of the immigration status of my father, who had been invited to work in the UK, and how it took him years to become a citizen, it makes me think about the [Dawn Raids](#) of the 1970s, where Pacific peoples endured racist state violence by the

government. My own parents often lived in constant fear that the authorities would send them back, even though they had legitimately arrived in the UK. We were constantly reminded of this as we grew up.

There is an interconnected thread running through all these histories.

Keeping silent on our own colonised histories is not the answer. That's what white supremacy wants us to do.

Not critiquing and reflecting on the role that we, as the more established members of our South Asian communities, play in upholding white supremacy is not the answer.

Critiquing our own communities is not about throwing shade. It demonstrates a love for the diaspora to be better and to do better.

It's convenient to forget that our communities get to be in Aotearoa because of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and not in spite of it, when we muse that Te Tiriti no longer has any relevance, or when we receive our residency or citizenship. Te Tiriti o Waitangi protects us all: our whānau, our communities and our environment.

When we begin to know ourselves by returning to our own histories, it can also lead to better understanding and acceptance of tangata whenua aspirations and solidarities with other communities here in Aotearoa.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this research project, I aimed to explore how South Asian women in Aotearoa experience solidarities with other racialised women, including Māori women. I sought to explore what facilitates such solidarities and what the barriers are. I was also interested in South Asian women's own experiences of colonisation. In the previous chapter, I outlined the power of knowledge generated from the margins (hooks, 2000b), and the importance of citational practices (Ahmed, 2017), that centre women of colour's feminist and indigenous scholarship, as well as the need to bring forward embodied knowledge and the lived experiences of racialised women, along with the significance of writing oneself into such research. In this section, I will outline my rationale for the theoretical approach and the tools/methods I used to explore the questions posed. I conclude by commenting on ethical considerations and limitations.

3.1.1 Takarangi theoretical framework

This project is part of the WERO (Working to End Racial Oppression) project. WERO is a research programme that confronts institutional and interpersonal racism in Aotearoa. This study lies within the Whanaungatanga theme, which addresses Intergroup Relations, focusing on building alternative community relations and solidarities across racial differences to create empowering responses to challenge racism (WERO, n.d.). The Takarangi theoretical framework was developed by the WERO research team that engages in anti-racist research, to respond to the need for a large research team to build cohesion through collective reflection and consider the interplay between our own positioning as researchers in social orders, ways of being and knowing, values, ethics and research approaches. The research team included both Māori, First nations and tauwi of colour researchers. This framework enabled researchers working with Indigenous, racialised and minoritised communities to “reflexively consider how their social positioning, ontology, axiology, ethics, epistemology and research goals shape all aspects of their research process from community engagement to transformative action’ (Rata et al., 2025, p.1).

Research completed within universities is often attached to colonial frames and often shapes how knowledge is ‘created’ and how communities who are being researched are engaged in

the production of knowledge (Brown & Strega, 2005). Smith (2021) reminds us that when engaging in anti-oppressive work, asking ourselves questions such as whose interests does our research serve, and whose research this is, form fundamental points of also keeping us accountable. These are seen as fundamental starting points where the work of Indigenous, Black feminist, subaltern and queer scholars are able to also use as resistance in speaking back to the colonial academy (Chilisa, 2012; hooks, 2014). The Takarangi was built from these decolonial research approaches.

As a researcher, the Takarangi was critical in the way I began orientating myself towards this project. As part of me both learning and engaging with the framework reflexively, I critiqued my own understanding of how I understood the nature of reality and my place in it (ontologies), the value system I have (axiology) and my ideas about knowledge (epistemologies). As part of my own reflexive process, I began uncovering how colonisation had and continues to impact various parts of my own life and the reality that my own education had been steeped in Western knowledge systems. This reflection will be taken up in Chapter Six (autoethnography).

What became apparent, as a researcher was that I wished to design a methodology that responded to creating knowledge through other ways of knowledge production, wanting to both honour my participants and also understanding that they came with their own colonised histories.

These new understandings about myself, led me to the work of Clelia Rodríguez (2023). This will be taken up in section 3.5 of this chapter. The framework encouraged my ongoing reflections as a researcher through a series of questions (see Appendix C) on how to design research, gather data, analyse and disseminate my findings (Rata et al., 2025).

Unpacking the framework

Figure 2. *The Takarangi Framework*

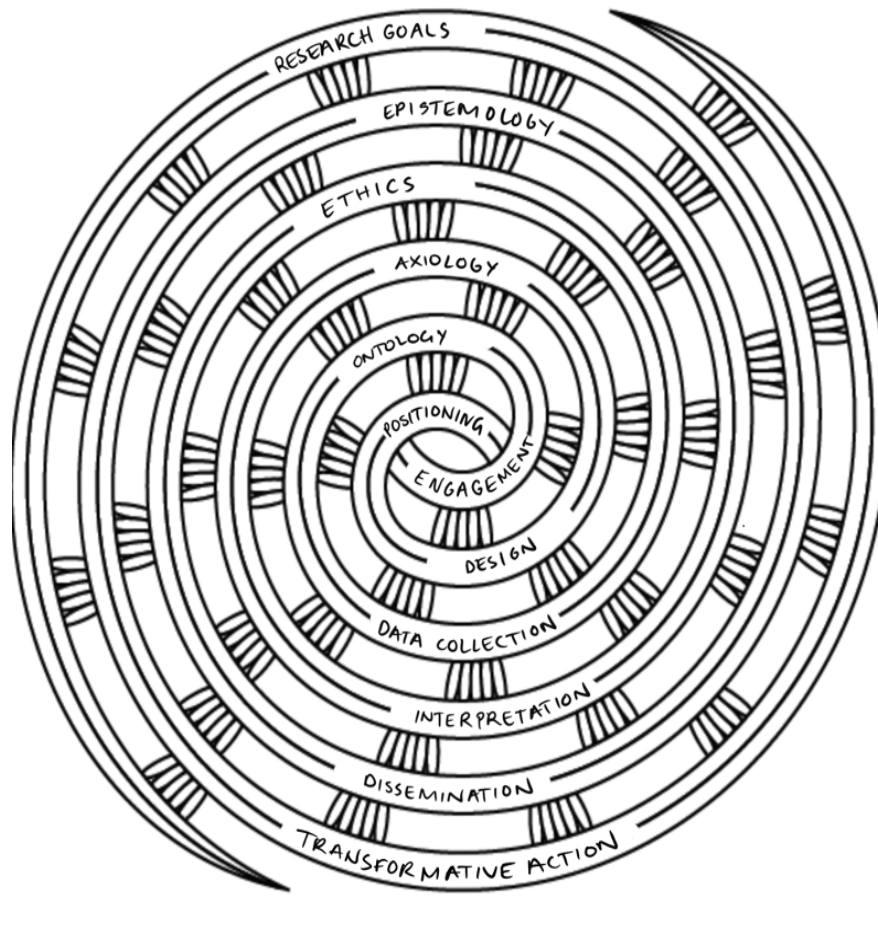


Image credit (Rata et al., 2025)

The framework is based on the Takarangi, which is a double spiral pattern found prominently in Māori carving. This pattern circles in and out and has been used to represent the interconnected parts that are involved in the production of knowledge (Rata et al., 2025). The components outlined below represent

The layers represent how assumptions underpinning research (positioning, ontology, axiology, ethics, epistemology and research goals) influence key stages in the research process.

The critical components of the Takarangi framework are:

- Who are you (positioning) - a reflection on your own ethnic, racial and cultural identities.
- What do you believe in (ontology) – this refers to the body of knowledge related to the nature of being. For example, according to what I believe in, what are the universe's origins?
- What do you value (axiology) - refers to knowledge about one's values. For example, what are my values?
- What guides you (ethics) - relates to knowledge regarding moral principles.
- Starting points for knowledge (epistemology) - refers to knowledge and what counts as knowledge (Rata et al., 2025).

3.1.1.1 Takarangi framework role in methodological decision making

The Takarangi provided me with an ethical and epistemological frame within which methodological decisions were made. In working through, and reflecting on the Takarangi, this framework was the overarching key to how I orientated myself firstly as a researcher with my own positionality, and then how I designed this project. The framework is also governed by axiology and ethics. Collaging was chosen not simply because it is a creative method but because it offered my participants a form of expression that did not privilege academic or language fluency using easily accessible everyday materials. It was a way to centre on their own knowledge and imagination, which also created a relational space for women to come together rather than be interviewed in isolation. The Takarangi model's commitment to the well-being of research communities and to research as a reciprocal rather than extractive process is directly evidenced in that methodological choice (Rata et al., 2025).

The central research question and sub questions, seek to examine South Asian women's personal experiences of colonisation and relationships with one another together with the meanings they assign to those experiences. In order to be able to facilitate this, qualitative research approaches are needed to facilitate such understandings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Qualitative research emerged in the late 1960's in the social sciences and embraces a range of methods where the primary aim is to understand participants' own perspectives (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). Bogdan and Biklen (1997) posit that there are five main features of qualitative research: the researcher's senses, judgments, and interactions shape data collection and interpretation; findings are represented through words or images that support deepened

understanding; qualitative research can provide rich accounts of everyday life; analysis is inductive, meaning that the data production is not about testing a hypothesis; and qualitative research centres on meaning that prioritises the participants' perspectives so studies are designed to interpret this experience. Qualitative research is well suited to investigating under-studied topics such as South Asian women's experiences with other racialised women, including Māori women, as it has the ability to produce rich, detailed data (Creswell, 2007).

Next, the Takarangi's emphasis on positioning within my own heritage and community directly informed the decision to include autoethnography as one of my methods, as I was not a detached observer of South Asian women's experiences of relationships with other racialised women, including Māori women. I recognised that my own relationships are also shaped by the same structural conditions that this thesis analyses. On reflection, the movement between the need to do my own internal work as a researcher and the research's relational work mirrors the thesis's own argument that solidarity also requires both an inward reckoning and an outward political commitment. Neither is sufficient without the other. In completing this research, I am also reminded ethically, that even though the focus is on the experiences of South Asian women, I do not claim to represent the experiences of Māori women, and do not position South Asian experiences as equivalent to Māori experiences.

Finally, the framework's focus on epistemology, as in what counts as knowledge and whose knowledge is centred, informed the use of found poetry as a method to represent women's words. The emotional, spiritual, and relational ways in which the women shared their stories of the collages could not be fully captured by thematic analysis alone. Found poetry was chosen as a response to that epistemological problem, and, along with the collages, as a way of honouring the complexity of women's knowledge. The Takarangi model's understanding of knowledge is layered and not linear but relational, which gave me permission to make that methodological choice.

Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang (2014) discuss how refusal is about resisting the assumption that not all stories and experiences should be extracted from communities and shared, because this can reduce them to units of damage. In reflecting on my own learnings when engaging with the framework myself and in responding to the questions that the Takarangi asks, what became clear to me is how my own thinking had been shaped in multiple ways, from the academic institutions I attended to the professional learning I acquired in my workplace. What also became visible were the legitimate sites of knowledges in my own spiritual

practices, lived experiences and ways of being and doing in the world. I had not fully understood this in its entirety. Reflecting on the Takarangi and connecting it with my own growing and strengthened understanding of the scholarship relating to the thinking and praxis of Indigenous and Black and brown women of colour (see Ahmed, 2017; Brown, 2017; hooks, 1994, 1996, 2000a, 2012, 2015a, 2015c, Lorde, 1984; Mohanty, 2003; Murphy, 2019; Olufemi, 2020; Smith, 2012) provided a powerful foundation.

Not only does the Takarangi framework engage us in the research process; it also seeks to give back to the community being researched (Wilson, 2008). As mentioned in the Indigenous methodologies section, the Takarangi engages in ceremony. Ceremony is described by Wilson (2008) as love and care for the process, as we care for outcomes from the research that benefit the communities we research. The double spiral nature of the Takarangi invokes an iterative revisiting that I found myself (willingly) embracing as a researcher, applying a ritualistic checking in as I worked through bringing the pieces of this project together. This engaged me in a ceremony that engaged the ethics of care, and the ethic of love for the participants in this research (hooks, 2000a). The approach engages relationships as central: relationships with self, communities, ancestors and the spiritual world. (Wilson, 2008). Again, this speaks to the ceremonial act: the holistic nature of how research is to be considered, invoking the heart, body and mind.

3.2 Theoretical approach

The knowledge traditions that I draw on are Indigenous methodologies, and liberatory and Indigenous and Black women, and women of colour feminist thinking and praxis. I argue the need for research that does not harm the communities it seeks to research. In doing so, I reflect on my positionality and standpoint theory, and engage with the relevant liberatory and feminist theory, which provides my rationale for using Indigenous methodologies that provide the flexibility to include the experiences of the project's participants and centre these women's experiences, voices and knowledge.

Western research approaches can be damaging (Smith, 2012; Tuck, 2009), by spreading one-dimensional but believable narratives that stereotype marginalised communities (Harwood, 2004). These narratives also harm Indigenous and marginalised communities as "we are as likely to be shackled by the stories we tell (or that are culturally available for our telling) as we are by the form of oppression they might seek to reveal" (Ewick & Silbey, 1995, p. 212).

One-dimensional narratives are often focused on deficits or damage. Damage-centred research operates with a flawed theory of change: it is often used to leverage reparations or resources for marginalised communities. Eve Tuck (2009) asked researchers and educators in communities to consider the long-term impacts of such research in an open letter referring to:

... "damage-centred" research that intends to document peoples' pain and brokenness to hold those in power accountable for their oppression. It simultaneously reinforces and reinscribes a one-dimensional notion of these people as depleted, ruined, and hopeless (p.499).

Eve Tuck (2009), highlights the dangers of telling single stories that pathologise, reducing people to pain points, in which those who are marginalised are only invited to speak from places of woundedness. This not only reinforces the pain and trauma of their stories but also narrows our vision of who we can be beyond the caricatures created for us in a white supremacist reality, which hide the possibility of imagining otherwise (see Benjamin, 2024; Fanon, 1963; Olufemi, 2020).

Damage-based research is not confined to academic institutions. It can shape thinking across various learning spaces and it extends further, informing policy and practice across institutions, wider society, and continents (see Tuck, 2009). We need to broaden our horizons and reject invitations to share our stories with researchers who only seek to share narratives of our oppression. I remind myself of this as a researcher and as a racialised British Bangladeshi woman whose own people have been impacted by such ‘damage’ stories. There are alternative research approaches.

Desire-based research, as Tuck (2009) describes, is an antidote to damage-based research. Desire and desire-based frameworks take account of people's loss and pain, but also document the hope, visions, and wisdom of lived experiences of communities. Desire is integral to being human (Gingrich-Philbrook, 2005; Anzaldúa, 1987; Cheng, 2001; Didion, 2005; Williams, 1992). Desire-based research requires engaging in our humanness as Indigenous and racialised communities/people. This project did so when considering the design of the questions asked of participants. This point is revisited in the research design section of this chapter.

Holistic approaches to research are necessary when researching communities. Shuster and Westbrook (2022) advocate against one-dimensional narratives and recommend holistic approaches in capturing the lives of marginalised communities. In their research on transgender lives, they chose to focus on joy as they argued there was a ‘joy deficit’ in previous studies. Exploring the stories of transgender joy and struggle provided a fuller picture of lives.

3.2.1 Standpoint theory

In introducing my positionality in the last chapter, I revealed my own social location. Social location describes how people are placed within a social hierarchy: it considers their race, gender and other social identities that they hold, often revealing aspects of reality and experiences that can remain hidden from and not experienced by those who benefit from oppressive systems and the power that comes with it. This is referred to as standpoint theory (Harding, 2016).

Standpoint theory argues that our social location shapes what we regard as knowledge. This standpoint also acknowledges that research has often ignored and marginalised women and feminist ways of thinking (Britannica, n.d.-b). Standpoint theory emerged from the thinking of philosopher Karl Marx, who argued that people from oppressed classes have access to knowledge that the more privileged classes do not (Britannica, n.d.-a). People in oppressed classes are also placed low in the social hierarchy.

Standpoint theory encompasses three main ideas: situated knowledge, which indicates that our understanding depends on our social location in society; the standpoint thesis, which suggests that some standpoints are more advantageous than others in providing clearer insights into how society operates; and the inversion thesis, which posits that the most valuable knowledge is derived from the least powerful (see Harding, 2016). Collins' (2002) work uses standpoint theory to highlight the experiences of Black women and other women of colour as central to understanding social power dynamics.

Story telling

This research centres on the diverse perspectives and experiences of South Asian women. It is also important to acknowledge that women are powerful knowledge creators. As Holman

Jones (2016) articulates, “*story is theory*”, “*theory is a story*” and “*theory tells a story in non-ordinary language*” (p. 228).

Stories shared by racialised communities/people can offer theoretical insights and critiques of how power operates in systems. What Holman Jones (2016) invites us to do is to consider the stories of the everyday, and the plain and accessible language in which they are spoken. They are just as important as the less easily accessible scholarship and language of academia. This is also consistent with the literature (see hooks, 2000a, 2000b, 2015a, Lorde, 1984; Jones & Larasi et al., 2019; LB Simpson, 2025; Smith, 2012). LB Simpson (2025) further asserts that turning to the stories of the land, the elements, the sky, animals, flora and fauna there is theory to be had that sits outside academia, in addition to the stories as theory that we share as Indigenous and racialised communities/people. Her work invites us to explore liberatory theory.

3.2.2 Liberatory theory

Liberatory theory explores how to free people/communities from oppressive systems that aim to erase, deny and decentre the voices and bodies of Indigenous peoples and those who are not racialised as belonging to the dominant group. Freire (1970), in ‘*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*’ argued that the processes that reproduced racism at all levels of society were connected to how those who were once oppressed become the oppressors in upholding the violent systems of colonialism that exploit lands, resources and racialised peoples’ bodies. As a Brazilian educator and philosopher, he suggests that the pedagogy of the oppressed is a living method of practice that infiltrates all aspects of our lives and calls on us to decolonise our minds. The most significant task of the oppressed is for them to free themselves.

Not everyone who experiences oppression is oppressed equally. bell hooks (1994) describe being oppressed as “...the absence of choices. It is the primary point of contact between the oppressed and oppressor” (p.5). This quote illustrates the relationship and the power imbalance in favour of the oppressor. hooks (1994) contends that there are overlapping systems of oppression and depending on who we are based on our class, race and gender, we will experience oppression differently. She refers to these overlapping systems of oppression as imperialist, white supremacy, capitalist, and patriarchy, which are a series of interlocking oppressions that shape our everyday lives (hooks, 1994, 2015d).

Patricia Hill Collins (2002) uses the term ‘matrix of domination’ to describe these interlocking oppressive systems. Being able to think about the oppressions of class, race, and gender allows them to be considered as part of an overarching structure of domination. Her work also recognises that Black women must be at the centre of their knowledge production. The life experiences of Black women matter, and through their worldview, new knowledge can be reproduced that can both define and empower ways of being in the world that are not reductive. To summarise, liberatory approaches offer opportunities to create space to centre the knowledge of Indigenous and Black women and women of colour.

hooks' (2000a), suggested response to these interlocking oppressive systems is love and community. It is not a relationship with personal love but one that calls on individual accountability and responsibility. This she describes as a ‘love ethic’ where “...care, commitment, trust, responsibility, respect and knowledge” in our everyday lives is critical (hooks, 2000a, p. 94). A love ethic can only be achieved by cultivating an awareness in which we can critically examine our own actions. This attention to creating a safe space that cultivated, trust, care and respect for the women engaged in this research was a necessary part of my methodology.

The following sections explore approaches relevant to this research, including Indigenous methodologies, the Takarangi framework and feminist theories relating to Indigenous and Black women and women of colour.

3.2.3 Indigenous methodologies

Indigenous methodologies are research approaches that centre on Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being (Chilisa, 2020; Smith, 2012). They involve communities in the research design with the aim of producing outcomes that directly benefit those communities (Chilisa, 2020; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008). These approaches are rooted in world views, values, and non-western knowledge systems. I was guided by cultural relevance, community engagement and decolonisation. I considered all these elements as part of my research design. Being culturally relevant ensured that I was engaging with the women and collecting their stories in ways that they connected to, and that there was an opportunity for them to create new insights and new learnings by listening to the stories of other women who were also part of the project. Decolonisation also informed the research design in the initial prompts that guided the collage making, which are discussed in the methods section.

Such considerations supported moving away from extractive western methodologies (Smith, 2012).

Indigenous methodologies are also relevant to individuals and communities that are racialised and whose knowledge, practices, and ways of knowing are diminished, othered, and treated as inferior. Such methodologies offer a way to reflect on culturally familiar research approaches and enable women to feel self-determination in collecting their voices and being in relationships with themselves, their ancestors, other people, their lands, and their spirituality. This project was about collecting the data and forging and strengthening relationships that gave back to the participants. Honouring the shared stories and knowledge was also considered in the research design. Wilson (2008) describes research as a holistic and relational process: it is not just about the step-by-step collection of data but is more like engaging in a ceremony. Wilson (2008) argues that this method underpins Indigenous research. The idea of ceremony shifts how research is understood, approached and conducted with Indigenous and racialised communities. It also moves us away from the extractive and damage-based research practices of Western research framings. Kovach (2009) and Smith (2012) support the view that research is also a relational and ceremonial act.

3.2.4 Indigenous, Black and women of colour feminist theory

This is a feminist project, exploring how we might exist and be in relationship with each other and what it might mean to be in solidarity. Being in relationship with one another is more than the Western placeholder word ‘feminism’ can hold and more than the idea of what the narrowness of gender can offer. It is how we have relationships that do not dehumanise and cause violence but allow us to be in mutual and respectful relationships.

Indigenous feminism must be inclusive, recognising the diversity that exists within Indigenous communities and how colonialism and racism impact groups differently.

Verna St. Denis (2007) shares that Indigenous feminism is an essential framework for exploring and addressing the unique intersectional struggle of Aboriginal women. She asserts that this form of feminism is not just about gender equality but also addresses the intersectionality of race, colonialism and systematic oppression faced by Indigenous women.

In exploring Indigenous frameworks, Mana Wāhine is one example, which centres the voice, experiences and views of Māori women. It is an approach that reclaims the status of Māori

women's before colonisation and to deal with the intersections of gender, race and colonialism. Smith (2012) highlights the importance of Indigenous women's knowledge systems that uplift their voices and challenge colonial narratives that have historically marginalised Māori women. She also goes on to emphasise the importance of Indigenous women reclaiming their narrative against colonial oppression as a form of resistance. The Mana Wāhine framework supports my understanding of epistemic recovery and offers insight into what epistemic recovery may mean for South Asian women in this study. This research does not seek to appropriate, or extract Indigenous knowledge or its frameworks, but rather to put liberatory methodological frameworks in conversation with one another. As discussed later in the methods section, the act of being able to tell our own stories is not just a cultural practice but a political act to speak back against the dominant and distorted colonial narratives that not only impact Māori women but also other racialised communities/peoples (Smith, 2012; LB Simpson, 2017a Irwin, 1991).

Being in charge of your narrative also offers a route to healing and a reconnection to your own cultural roots (Elder, 2020). In her work, Māori psychiatrist and author, Hinemoa Elder (2020), discusses how storytelling is integral to the Māori concept of Whakapapa. She describes whakapapa as individuals connecting to their ancestors and cultural heritage. She further contends that connection can be a source of healing and strength, particularly for Māori wāhine who have been disconnected from their cultural roots by the impacts of colonisation.

This disconnection can be compounded when we also consider the migration journeys of the women in this project. There is not only disconnection from their cultural practices, language, and traditional social structures when migrating to Western countries where there is pressure to assimilate, but also the disconnection experienced through being colonised by the British. The British colonised India for more than two hundred years before it gained its independence in 1947⁴ (see Sanghera, 2021). As racialised people that are part of the South Asian diaspora, the constant tension of maintaining one's own cultural identity can often be

⁴ <https://e-tangata.co.nz/comment-and-analysis/celebrating-independence-while-colonised/>

met with resistance both from the host society (where Asians also experience racism) and from their own community. This marginalisation can also create a disconnection from cultural roots, as a way of avoiding further discrimination (Brah, 1996; Mohanty, 2003; Puwar, 2004).

In reflecting on these learnings, a further consideration in designing this research approach was to create a space where women could hear each other's stories and feel some form of healing in sharing some of their (hi)stories with each other. In the initial stages of this project and speaking with women I knew using the snowball recruitment technique, a number of what were then (potential) participants commented how they did not know many other South Asian women and would value the opportunity to come together in a group in some way. These were noted and became part of my research design of bringing participants together during the first part of the research collection. I was responding to my community in a way that would benefit them (see Rata et al., 2025). This thinking was used to inform the initial introductions during the collaging day (see Methods in this chapter).

As this project explores the experiences of South Asian women, Indigenous women's feminist thinking and praxis can provide insights into the intersecting ways in which other racialised women experience oppression and how women also resist the structures of patriarchy. Reclaiming and protecting knowledge systems and cultural heritage that respect and give voice to Indigenous women are important reclamation responses that South Asian women in Aotearoa can learn from (Smith, 2012; Mead, 2003; Murphy, 2019). They also provide a lens for decolonising Eurocentric feminist narratives that often erase the specific herstories of Indigenous women and women of colour (Smith, 2012; Mohanty, 2003). They provide a way of articulating struggles that subvert colonial narratives. These feminisms also encourage the use of localised knowledge. Localised knowledge consists of cultural practices and traditions specific to cultural, historical, and geographical contexts (Smith, 2012; Spivak, 2003). This will be expanded on (see Chapter 4) when I discuss the process during the collaging day.

Feminism from a women of colour perspective can be seen as an approach to a way of thinking about the world and how we live in the world. Sara Ahmed (2017) notes that living as a feminist requires us to act compassionately to create loving systems that leave no one behind. Living a feminist life also shapes our experiences and how we imagine the world (Ahmed, 2017). Feminism can be seen as a building project that can also dream and reimagine a better life for ourselves and others. Indigenous feminism and women of colour

feminism are interconnected as they focus on intersectionality, resistance to colonialism, imperialism and decolonising feminist thinking and practice (Arvin et al., 2013; Crenshaw, 1991; Mohanty, 2003). Acts of resistance also involve who we choose to cite as researchers. This reinforces the decision that I made at the outset of the project, in demonstrating my resistance by engaging in citation politics.

3.3 The importance of citation and style

Research is not a neutral act; it is a political one. This is a feminist project. Sara Ahmed (2017) and Lola Olufemi (2020) demand that we think about how knowledge is generated, whose knowledge is used and cited, and how we write. Whom we cite matters. Often, Indigenous, brown and Black women's voices are silenced and erased. Sara Ahmed asserts that citations in universities serve as more than an academic tool, and that “... *citation is a rather successful reproductive technology, a way of reproducing the world around certain bodies*” (Ahmed, 2013, para 3). Citation, she also contends, is a political act that reproduces the power dynamics of voices that are the norm and are always centred on being the producers and knowers of knowledge. McKie (2020) argues that Indigenous ways of knowing, particularly oral teaching and oral histories, are often not seen as valid in academia.

Being more critical about whom we cite provides an opportunity to decentre Western knowledge systems and allows for learning environments with a diverse range of knowledge. This can also be described as engaging in feminist and decolonising practices. Ahmed (2017) contends that who we cite is an act of care and relationship with others to shape an environment that lifts and elevate voices that are intentionally marginalised. This invites to the conversation the work of the Combahee River Collective, which was an American, Black feminist lesbian organisation that was active between 1974 to 1980. They worked in ways that included metaphorically penning collective love notes to each other and understanding that as Black women, and racialised people more broadly, we are inherently valuable. They also understood citation, honouring the lineage and thinking of the women who came before them (Combahee River Collective, 1977). In bringing the strands of thinking together here, citation politics can be used to ensure white supremacy, unequal power distribution and Eurocentric ways of knowing can be kept in check (Deerchild et al., 2018; MacLeod, 2021).

As mentioned in the introduction, this research project focused on understanding the experiences of racialised women of South Asian descent and our relationships with other

racialised women, including Indigenous women, and what these could mean for strengthening solidarities against colonialism and white supremacy.

3.4 Methodology as toolkit

The methodology engaged so far can be best described as a toolkit approach, which is one that engages with a range of theories, methods and frameworks to best examine a research problem (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The toolkit approach was a response to a methodological problem, which was how to bring these theories and frameworks in conversation with one another. Kovach (2009) shares how Indigenous methodologies require a customised approach to respond to Indigenous worldviews. Smith (2012) contends that such approaches integrate theory and practice. As this project engaged with Indigenous methodologies and Indigenous and Black women and women of colour feminist theory and praxis, and research methods, including collaging, storytelling and autoethnography, this seemed apt. This toolkit approach enabled a flexible response, to more fully engage with the complexities of exploring the participants' rich and diverse experiences and provided the opportunity to disrupt the linear nature and extractive knowledge production. The qualitative methods comprising collage (attend to knowledge that is embodied and not easily expressed), storytelling (the meaning that the participants made of their collage), found poetry (provides insight into the participant meaning making of their collage), and autoethnography (situates me as the researcher within the research), enables forms of analysis that attend to silence, tension, and relational positioning (see Chilisa, 2011; Smith, 2012).

In summary, the toolkit approach employed in this project used the lenses of standpoint theory, which posits that the most valuable knowledge is derived from the least powerful (see Harding, 2016); Collins' (1990); liberatory theory, which explores ways to free people and communities from oppressive systems (Freire 1970); and Indigenous, Black, and women of colour feminism, which is not only concerned with gender equality but also addresses the intersectionality of race, colonialism, and systemic oppression, centring the voices of Indigenous and Black women, and women of colour (Smith, 2012; St. Denis, 2007).

The approaches outlined in the toolkit include Indigenous methodologies that centre Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being (Chilisa, 2020; Smith, 2012) and the Takarangi research framework, which engages the researcher in reflexivity regarding their

own positioning as a researcher, including ways of being and knowing, values, ethics, and research approaches (Rata et al., 2025).

The methods used were: collaging, which allowed research participants to express their experiences through embodied expression (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010); storytelling, which supports women in centring their own voices (see Weems, 2003); and Indigenous autoethnography, which involves me as the researcher holding a social location and position that doesn't come from a dominant viewpoint, offering powerful insights by reflecting on my own experiences (Harding, 2016; hooks, 2000b). Finally, the method of found poetry was used to both understand and convey lived experiences (Furman et al., 2006; Hordyk et al., 2014; Miller & Brockie, 2015).

3.4.1 Participant selection

The criterion for participation was women who identified as being of South Asian descent. This description remained broad, allowing those who responded to the call to determine their suitability for the project. Participants selected themselves for this study based on this criterion. Convenience sampling was initially used for recruitment. Being part of groups and communities within the Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) region, I approached individuals known to me through mutual connections and work in diverse communities. Of the 20 women who responded to the invitation to participate and information sheet and consent details for this research project, 15 were able to attend the collaging session. When these women were asked if they would also like to be involved in a follow-up one-to-one conversation, all of them wished to be involved. (Appendix A, B).

3.4.2 Research design

The following design was constructed based on the methodological toolkit approach to this project and the Takarangi framework. The research design guided my method selection for this project. The methods I engaged with are collaging, storytelling and autoethnography. A list of the steps is outlined below, and a fuller description is provided in the Methods section.

1. Online hui and one-to-one conversations introduced the project to research participants, where consent was also gained.
2. 15 participants were involved across two collaging days.

3. Each collaging day began with a whakawhanaungatanga session, where participants introduced themselves to each other. They were asked to bring along an item from their home and asked to share about who they were and about the item they brought along.
4. During the collaging day, participant stories were captured visually with the art produced and the participants sharing their stories at the end of the session. Each participant was audio-recorded as they shared their story.
5. All participants kept the artwork they created.
6. Following this, one-to-one conversations using semi-structured questions were audio recorded with those participants who wished to participate.
7. One-to-one stories collected were analysed using thematic analysis.
8. Copies of transcripts were provided to participants to check.
9. An interim themed analysis of the one-to-one stories was presented to those participants who wished to be involved in the process for feedback.

Ethics approval for this research was received on March 28, 2023 from Te Kāhui Manu Tāiko: Human Research Ethics Committee: Faculty of Māori Indigenous Studies; Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao: Ethics number FMIS_23/02_2_AAS. The ethics of the research design are dealt with in section 3.7.

3.4.3 Confidentiality

Confidentiality was critical. For this reason, limited information is shared about participants' demographics other than the following. Two women were born in Aotearoa, New Zealand; two arrived during their primary school years, one during high school, and the rest as adults. Women had the option of choosing pseudonyms or using their real names. Seven women chose their own pseudonyms, while two women wanted their actual name to be used. I chose pseudonyms for the six remaining women who did not select one. Of the 15 women in this project, 13 resided in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland), and two lived outside this region. All participants identified as being of South Asian descent, with ancestry that included Fijian Indian, Fijian Indian-Afghani, Sri Lankan Tamil, Pakistani, Bangladeshi-Sri Lankan Tamil, Fijian Indian-Māori-Pākehā, Indian, and Gujarati Indian, and they were aged between 21 and 60 years. Each of the women had a distinct migration journey to Aotearoa, from the Global South and North. The migration journeys of all the women are not shared here, to support confidentiality.

3.5 Methodology and methods

In this section, I first outlined the methodology of the chosen research design. I engaged a toolkit approach that I have already described to capture data in a way that supported the participants accessing stories that went deeper than they might be able to articulate with words. This is also to honour the various ways of coming to knowledge. I then describe the process of bringing the participants together for the collaging day and the one-to-one storytelling that followed. I complete this section with the approaches taken to analyse the data. The implication of these methods and the analyses will be described in the results chapters (see Chapters 4, 5 and 6). I now turn to the methods.

3.5.1 Collaging

Collage is taken from the French verb *coller* (to stick) and is the process of using fragments of images or other materials and sticking them on a surface of choice to display a range of situations, events, and phenomena (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010). This creative and visual research method allowed women to express their experiences and emotions by arranging images and words from magazines onto paper. Collaging allows for a subjective and embodied expression of the participant's experiences (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010). Furthermore, art not only provides the opportunity for the researched to access themselves but also for others to be able to access what is being uncovered, which can also create a reflexive space. A form of embodied knowledge can be created (Pitt, 2021). Collaging is an easily accessible creative tool that can support an individual's ability to retrieve knowledge used in their everyday life and to dip into areas of their unconscious (Pitt, 2021). This process also supports a way of expressing oneself without needing words.

There is a congruence to how art and visual storytelling have been used in South Asian cultures to express stories, traditions and personal experiences (see Princeton University Art Museum. (n.d.)). Smith (2012) discusses the importance of integrating Indigenous cultural practices and symbols into research methodologies that support the meaningfulness of the research to its participants. Through the act of collaging, women have the agency to select whatever images they are drawn to as part of this process.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) share that visual methods such as collaging support researchers in exploring the complexities of identity, power, and resistance. For women in the diaspora who

also have to navigate multiple identities shaped by their own migration or their parents' experiences, gender, and cultural background, collaging is a powerful tool. This was useful for this project as it allowed the women to participate in making new knowledge. This provided an opportunity for agency in their own stories. As already outlined in the literature review, South Asian women face an intersection of challenges, and although there were no language barriers as all women spoke and understood English, collaging offered a different way of articulating their experiences and an opportunity for them to gain new insights into their own experiences. Collaging can allow individuals to explore and reflect on the tensions and alignments between their cultural heritage and the realities of their lives, and challenge the dominant narratives (Bhopal, 2010).

Collaging is an arts-based method. Such methods are also useful when making sense of one's own identity, which women were invariably doing as they were collaging using the following prompts:

1. Who are you without colonisation?
2. Who are your ancestors?
3. What do you think they are whispering to you?

This method also provided the opportunity of 'remembering being in the world with others' through women's own experiences, using simple materials: a collection of magazines, scissors and glue to make what seemed intangible on the inside, tangible on the outside (Waskul & Vannini, 2006). Collaging materials were everyday materials. The use of cut-and-paste materials enabled participants to juxtapose conflicting ideas, layer meanings, and represent multiple co-existing truths. This was methodologically aligned (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Enlisting an arts facilitator to run the collaging workshop enabled me to observe the collaging process, how women engaged, and make reflective notes that I could return to later when I began looking at the data. These notes also helped me in creating my own autoethnography, which I respond to in Chapter 6. I have worked alongside this arts facilitator, who is also a racialised woman, in artistic collaborations and someone I trust through my own experiences in bringing sensitivity and care to guiding the women in their art. The arts facilitator was responsible for helping the women create their collages, whilst I orientated the participants with the two prompts that were used to create the collages, answered any questions that arose and recorded written reflective notes during the collaging process. The women were asked to 'trust their bodies' and 'go with their instincts' by the arts

facilitator while selecting both the images and how they were to be arranged on the paper. This acknowledges how our bodies are also involved in the cultural and social experiences that we have and engages with the idea that our bodies are telling stories too through our actions, feelings and expressions (Waskul & Vannini, 2006). This is important for the reader to note, as this is also part of the invitation to the reader to consider their own body responses as they engage with this project. This idea of our bodies also being involved keeps the score both on colonial violence and on how our bodies can orient us to and away from relationships with each other (see Menakem, 2017, Ngo, 2016). This will be discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5 when we talk about our bodies keeping the score on colonial violence. Collaging can be thought of as an embodied method where the senses and emotions of the self are engaged (Eisner, 2002).

Such arts-based methods also offer alternatives to western methods that only look at the world in a particular way. This approach creates deeper insights that would not ordinarily be captured, by “undoing dominant and oppressive ways of knowing and instigating acts of resistance” (Capous-Desyllas & Morgaine, 2018, p. xvi). Such methods can also draw out embodied knowledge that can be expressed without the use of words, addressing lived experiences and emotions in our subconscious (Pitt, 2021). In summary, this method allows for the visual representation of lived experiences, capturing the nuances of identity, culture, and memory in ways that conventional methods may not fully encompass. Collaging provides a medium through which South Asian women can express their multifaceted identities, negotiating between their cultural heritage and contemporary experiences in a diasporic context.

3.5.1.1 Who are you without colonialism?

The question posed during the collaging process, "Who can you be without colonisation?" was not a neutral prompt. The question originates in the scholarship of global feminist scholar Clelia O. Rodríguez (2023), who developed it within a public, transnational educational series formally titled *Who Are You Without Colonialism?* (SEEDS for Change, 2021). This series was convened by Rodríguez at the University of Toronto as part of a course titled *Settler Colonialism and Pedagogies of Oppression* (CTL1333H). This course takes a critical approach to the ways settler colonialism persists through knowledge, subjectivity, and the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous peoples. This educational programme not only names the problem but also actively supports individuals to unlearn the

assumptions and habits that keep settler-colonial systems going. It is grounded in the understanding that non-Indigenous people living on stolen land must be accountable to Indigenous communities and their ongoing resurgence (SEEDS for Change, 2021).

It is within this established intellectual and political lineage that the question is taken up in this thesis, not as my own framing device but as an inherited dialogical provocation whose ethical responsibilities this thesis seeks to honour. In this thesis, the question is used as a dialogical provocation rather than an interview question or a thematic prompt. This naming matters methodologically. A dialogical provocation does not seek a definitive answer but instead opens up a shared space of inquiry that holds tension, contradiction and refusal (Rodríguez & Gabi, 2023). In bell hooks (2015a), the question “Aint I a woman?” called white feminists to account for the exclusions embedded in their own frameworks. The question “Who can I be without colonisation?” asked the participants to reflect on how colonisation has shaped their own understandings of themselves and what might be imagined in its absence. As already explained, using collage as a method to explore the question was both a methodological and a political choice. The question also carries with it an ethical limit in the Aotearoa context. Asking such a question without connecting it to the political reality of whose land it is being asked on is a reminder that decolonisation is not merely a metaphor; it also remains on the level of personal liberation (Tuck & Wang, 2012).

The limit of this question in this thesis is named. The question was used as a dialogical provocation for the women to flip their reality and open up a space for internal inquiry. It was not used to answer what decolonisation requires politically in Aotearoa. What the collaging process revealed (see chapter 4) was that no participant referred to the land in Aotearoa. This was read as a structural finding that settler colonialism, as an ongoing structure, helps explain and points toward the political education that the thesis argues is necessary beyond epistemic recovery alone.

3.5.2 Storytelling

Storytelling and reflection can support racialised bodies to connect more deeply (Weems, 2003). There are two types of stories. One contains elements of mythology that are used to teach or share, and the other is personal storytelling (Kovach, 2009). Wilson (2008) contends that Sacred stories have protocols around them regarding who shares them and when and how such stories are shared, as well as legends or teachings and stories of personal experiences. Iseke (2013) shares that “*there is a need to take seriously knowledge found in stories because*

stories can be spaces of resistance” (p.561). They contend that storytelling can support one's spirituality and can be used as a tool to bear witness, remember and offer a way to recover from colonisation. Storytelling is a powerful vehicle, and women are powerful knowledge creators (Jones et al., 2016).

In learning from shared stories, we can remake ourselves in ways that serve us and the ways in which we wish to be seen. Women's personal stories were collected in this project during the collaging phase, during which participants were asked to introduce themselves and then later share their collages. The stories were about the participants sharing aspects of their identity and experiences in Aotearoa in relation to the two prompts and shared later in the data-gathering section.

I created a talking circle for women's sharing of introductions to each other and then again when sharing their stories from the collage. As each participant shared, they held the object they had been asked to bring along as part of the sharing and explained why they had chosen that object. The talking circle in many Indigenous cultures symbolises respect, sharing stories, togetherness, and compassion for one another. Chilisa (2020) explains that the circle can also represent the earth and the collective construction of knowledge and relational ways of being amongst the group. This process was intended to centre the women and their stories. This type of research can be described as life-changing (Wilson, 2008). Stories have always been central to the human experience. Stories offer an understanding of an individual's frame of reference and can act as a commentary on social relations and society. As participants have control and ownership of their representation by creating their own narratives, the methodology ultimately allows them to define how they wish to be represented, which is empowering (Shohat & Stam, 2014). This process also allowed for trust building and relationality between me and the women.

3.5.3 Autoethnography

Autoethnography focuses on the writer's subjective experience rather than others' beliefs and practices (Hayano, 1979). This method can unearth possibilities of meaning in a writer's experience. It can also create the opportunity to explore how power shapes our relationships and experiences (Bouchner, 2000; Chang, 2008). Autoethnography is an approach used widely in various fields such as sociology, nursing, and counselling; however, it has also been described as having weaknesses, such as a lack of academic rigour and being a self-

absorbed process. There are considerable challenges for Indigenous people aiming to conduct research with their community in a way that honours the community's customs and practices. Houston (2007) questions the validity of traditional Western research that seeks to remove the researcher self from its subject. As previously explained, western notions of knowledge do not regard seeking knowledge within the self as reliable and continue the myth that valid knowledge is external to the individual and must be objective (Grosfoguel, 2013).

Autoethnography also engages with standpoint theory that those in less powerful social locations have particular insights into how power operates in oppressive systems, which are hidden from those who hold more privilege because of their own social location (Harding, 2016). This is also what bell hooks (2000b) refers to as having power in the margins.

Indigenous autoethnography can encapsulate both Western and Indigenous forms of knowing. Whitiwhi (2014) shares that Indigenous autoethnography is a distinct method of exploration that requires a Māori individual to introduce who they are and where they are from. Indigenous autoethnography is a culturally distinctive way of discovering who Indigenous people are. Unlike its Western counterpart, ethnography, which involves the researcher taking a detached, objective position that can perpetuate power imbalances, Indigenous autoethnography is more holistic in what can be captured as it considers spiritual dimensions and being in tune with the natural rhythms of the environment (Ellis & Bochner, 2003; Houston, 2007; Jones & Jenkins, 2008; Kapa, 2009).

As Indigenous autoethnography may be conducted by anyone researching their community, this was a method I engaged with (Tomaselli et al., 2008). I use the term Indigenous here to include peoples who have been impacted by colonialism and imperialism. Western autoethnography engages with how we interpret the world in the broader context of cultural, political and social herstories, and doesn't necessarily ask us to consider our cultural way of thinking and how we might reclaim that. In using this method, I journalled throughout the research-gathering process. I recorded personal memories that arose, which I could use as textual data, and kept a field journal, which helped with healthy interruptions that supported me to move in and out of reflection (Chang, 2008). Writing as a process is also a way of getting to know and create knowledge our way (Morrison, 2015). As a result, my autoethnographic journey appears throughout this project, in the first instance as a positioning statement (see Chapter 1) and then between the chapters as a series of interludes that were originally published on an online Māori and Pasifika platform. These interludes run parallel

to this thesis and were written over the course of the research. They became a way of both writing myself in (Kinouani, 2021) and engaging in a conversation with a wider audience including South Asians and Māori. This is further expanded on in the Autoethnographic section of this thesis (see Chapter 6).

3.6 Data Analysis

3.6.1 Found poetry

Found poetry is a method for representing qualitative research findings (Sullivan, 2000). Found poetry can be used to both understand and convey lived experiences in ways that respect and care for those experiences (Furman et al., 2006; Hordyk et al., 2014; Miller & Brockie, 2015; Prendergast, 2009; Wang, 2025; Wells, 2004). In this project, I used found poetry to authentically represent the women's voices and to centre their experiences (Butler-Kisber, 2002; Rich, 2023; Richardson, 1994). Rather than coding their stories, I created found poems, which involved using the women's actual words and phrases. This enabled me to see the data in a new way through a more empathetic way of connecting with the women and what they had to say. Reilly et al. (2018) comment that found poems can provide a new way of seeing by injecting "life" (p. 213).

3.6.2 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006), is used to identify and interpret patterns in data. It is flexible enough in its approach to be employed alongside various theoretical approaches, including Indigenous methodologies and liberatory, Indigenous, Black, and women of colour approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021b). There is a variety of methods within the thematic analysis 'family' that can involve the use of code books, or approaches called Reflexive thematic analysis (RTA). This analysis involves a more organic approach to coding, based also on the subjectivity of the researcher before theming takes place (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2021a)

As one of the strengths of thematic analysis is its flexibility, I used a codebook approach when dealing with the data from the one-to-one conversations. This approach consists of six steps: becoming familiar with the data, coding, generating initial themes, reviewing and developing those themes, refining and naming the themes, and finally, writing. This process was iterative and involved revisiting and relistening to the audio transcripts several times.

to be engaged in reflexivity. I needed to check how my own assumptions could influence the themes. This was mitigated by my use of the Takarangi framework throughout the course of this research, in reflecting on my own positionality and ways of knowing.

I also engaged found poetry as a method for representing research findings after I had completed the RTA of the one to conversations (Sullivan, 2000). Found poetry is a way to present the voices of the participants and also to extract meanings and patterns. Found poetry is dealt with in detail in the finding's sections of this thesis (see Chapter 4) along with the potential advantages and risks of its use in research. In this project, I used found poetry to authentically represent the women's voices and to centre their experiences (Butler-Kisber, 2002; Rich, 2023; Richardson, 1994). For the collages that the women created. Rather than coding their stories that they had shared to describe their collages, I created poems to uncover meanings and patterns related to the themes identified during the grouping of the collage titles.

3.6.3 Refusal

Refusal, as it operates in this thesis, draws on the work of Audra Simpson (2007, 2014), who theorises refusal as a political and methodological stance, a deliberate choice not to make certain things available for consumption, analysis, or circulation within dominant frameworks. In this thesis, refusal operates at two levels. The first is methodological. There was a deliberate effort in participants' narratives to avoid overinterpreting or extracting meanings beyond what they had themselves named. It limits what can be claimed and also protects the integrity of the narratives shared that Indigenous and feminist scholars have long critiqued in academic research (Tuck & Yang, 2014; Smith, 1999). The second level of refusal is analytical. Where women did not name things, such as making reference to the land in Aotearoa during the collaging study, it was read as silence that needs structural analysis and not an absence of a finding. It refuses to speak for women beyond what they shared.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Being a researcher of South Asian descent, I am similar in some ways to my participants. This has both advantages and disadvantages. The total insider shares multiple identities with their participants, which may become visible during the research process (Ergun & Erdemir, 2010; Lavis, 2010). Some of these identities placed me as an outsider, like the dual heritage

family I belonged to. I felt different degrees of ‘insiderness’ that were entirely dependent on the situation, such as when a couple of the participants shared their experiences of growing up in the UK. Herod (1999) and Kusow (2003) share that context matters. Puwar (2004) reminds researchers to be aware of their positionality. Positionality refers to the social and cultural context that shapes a researcher’s identity, including race, gender, class, and professional status. They go on to share that these identities are not just personal attributes but markers that influence how a researcher is perceived and interacted with.

In describing this work’s ethical and practical considerations, I return to decolonisation and its meaning to this project. Decolonisation is the return of Indigenous land and ways of living (Tuck & Yang, 2012). From a research perspective, conducting inquiry in a decolonising way means giving space to those individuals who have been marginalised to speak from their worldviews (Chilisa, 2020). It is a process that involves “researching back” to question how disciplines such as education, psychology, sociology, anthropology or physical sciences theorise about the colonised without including frames of reference from the colonised (Chilisa, 2020, p.12). Smith (2012) has identified strategies for decolonisation that involve retelling stories from the past and envisioning the future; research that centres the lives of those being researched in a strengths-based and ethical way, validating Indigenous knowledge and cultures. This decolonisation process is central to my thesis.

The Takarangi framework (see 3.1.1) also supported me to consider the ethics of this project and reminded me of my own positionality as tauwi of colour, living on unceded Māori land. This ensures that this research does not speak across Indigenous epistemologies that are not mine to speak to nor extract from.

3.8 Questions about methodology

Qualitative research that engages an Indigenous paradigm centres knowledge systems that are not Eurocentric as its starting point, and incorporates information gathering, interpretation and dissemination methods that serve and benefit the communities being researched (Chilisa, 2020; Smith, 2012). The context-specific nature of using Indigenous methodologies has been argued as a limitation as there are limits to understanding other population groups (Kovach, 2005). I argue that because feminist theories of Indigenous and Black women and women of

colour recognise the diversity and multiple truths that exist in perspectives and experiences, this plurality can throw up conflicting views on the oppressive systems of racism, colonialism and patriarchy. Such viewpoints should not be generalised however, they require exploration.

I contend that the opportunities within this methodology are the best use for the research question and the population involved. The toolkit approach allows for a level of fluidity that also challenges the idea of the researcher being disconnected from the research. The methodology calls for me to act ethically to create research that does not harm the community being researched and interrogate decision-making around research design. The Takarangi framework supports reflexivity. As mentioned earlier the framework provides pathways of how women South Asian women can be in relationship with themselves and others who are racialised and what this might mean for solidarities with Tangata Whenua.

This thematic analysis took place after transcribing all 15 one-to-one conversations. After transcribing each conversation, I went back to each conversation to relisten and recheck my transcription and then sent these to each of the women for checking and to clarify any words that I was unable to pick up from the audio recording. Minor corrections were made to a couple of transcripts. During this time women were also asked to pick a pseudonym should any quotes be used in their transcripts. They were asked to think of a woman, femme, either past or present, that they connected with, either from their own personal life or someone they admired. Women were also given the option of choosing to use their own name or having me choose a pseudonym. Twelve women chose their own pseudonyms, two wanted to use their own names and I chose a name for one of the participants. At this time, participants were also informed that once the analysis of transcripts began, they were no longer able to withdraw from the study. None of the women withdrew their consent.

3.9 Conclusion

In this section, I described my rationale for using Indigenous methodology and Indigenous, Black and women of colour feminist theory. This not only recognises that there are overlapping systems of oppression but also that everyone oppressed is not oppressed equally.

Both Indigenous methodology and Indigenous, Black and women of colour feminist theory call for the centring of Indigenous and other non-western knowledge and the centring of the racialised woman's voice. This also informed the methods of collaging, storytelling,

autoethnography, and found poetry used to collect stories from the participants. The Takarangi framework offered a potent way for this research to be conducted in a decolonising way that sought to do no harm to the community being researched. The Takarangi framework also creates a reflexive mechanism for the researcher to engage ethically in how they have designed the research, collected, analysed and shared the project's findings. This chapter also includes a brief overview of the methods and analysis approach undertaken in this project, which will be dealt with in further detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

Interlude 3: Hīkoi mō Te Tiriti: Walking into the future

There's a disconnect between the racism and exclusion that migrants to this country face personally, and their understanding of the ongoing colonial violence faced by Māori, writes Ara Alam-Simmons.

The rain held off as a few of us travelled together to Onepoto domain on the North Shore to join the hīkoi across the Harbour Bridge in Tāmaki Makaurau.

We were there to protest the racist Treaty Principles Bill that seeks to rewrite history. It erases tangata whenua rights, relegating Māori to just another ethnic group under the disingenuous banner of “equal rights for all”.

It is a bill that aims to strip Māori of their Treaty rights.

Unsurprisingly, not everyone understands this. After the hīkoi, we caught an Uber back to our mahi. The Uber driver was a migrant like me. He shared his confusion about why the protest was happening.

He told us that he'd lived in Aotearoa for 35 years and that Māori were indeed treated well and had their rights met. In fact, he felt they were given more rights than others.

His comments drew silence from us. Having just left thousands of people walking over the bridge — people who understood what's at stake, who understood that the protest was not just about this bill but the countless other manoeuvres that the government is pulling against Māori — we were thrown off guard.

When we tried to explain, we could see that our counter-arguments weren't landing — so we stopped.

His thinking is not uncommon. It's perfectly possible to spend decades living on Māori land and never think of Te Tiriti, or falsely believe that tangata whenua rights are being honoured.

As we drove on, we learned more about our driver. He arrived here in 1989, and despite his professional background, qualifications and work experience in overseas universities, he couldn't get work here as a lecturer. He cited racism based on his ethnicity, the region of Asia that he was from, and his accent, as the core reasons he wasn't able to secure suitable work. He eventually set up his own business.

We guessed that he didn't want to be an Uber driver. His story is a well-worn, familiar experience for many migrants of colour who come to Aotearoa to live.

This disconnect — between the racism and exclusion migrants face personally and their understanding of the ongoing colonial violence faced by Māori — is common.

We understand our own marginalisation but remain disconnected from the deeper, longer histories of oppression that shape Aotearoa.

We asked the Uber driver a question: "If you've been treated this badly, why would you expect the same country to treat Māori well?" At that moment, the penny seemed to drop for him.

Such disconnection opens up spaces for hate to thrive.

The colonial fiction spun by Act's spokesperson for ethnic communities, Dr Parmjeet Parmar, is one example. She is challenging Brian Tamaki about his "Make NZ Kiwi Again" campaign which targets immigrants, after concerns were raised by Indian and other unnamed ethnic communities.

This is the same Parmjeet who, over the last number of months, has [targeted](#) Māori initiatives, and engaged in rhetoric that relegates tangata whenua to just another ethnic group under the banner of "equal rights for all". Such a story fails to recognise that Māori were promised tino rangatiratanga — control of themselves and their taonga in their own land.

When we attack tangata whenua, when we attack Te Tiriti, and when we attempt to erase the history of the people of this land, we lay ourselves open to attack. In her own words, Parmjeet says: "The migrant community shouldn't be feared — they should be embraced for all they bring to New Zealand." Yet she fails to recognise that her framing of Māori is to fear Māori.

Dr Parmmeet arrived as a migrant in 1995 and, just like the rest of us, can only make her home here because of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Migrants are often fed stories from the dominant group in Aotearoa that colour their understanding of society here. Fed stories which result in them replicating colonial hierarchies and dismissing Indigenous struggles.

We saw this in the British colonial rule of India, where Indians were used to both subjugate and kill other Indians on behalf of the colonisers.

That history is a stark reminder to all of us that fictional stories are so easily absorbed, particularly when they are aligned with power structures that we've come to accept.

Our conversation with the Uber driver prompted me to reflect on how we can support our growing migrant communities to care about Te Tiriti, and also critique what we're being fed from the media and servants of the Crown.

When I think about these questions, I reflect on the concept of generational care. I turn to the values of my own Bangladeshi upbringing such as পরিবারিক দায়িত্ব (poribarik daitto), which highlights one's family responsibility to one another. And সংসার (shongshar), which calls on our responsibilities of care and wellbeing for extended family. Extended family also encompasses community.

We also have the practice of পূর্ব পুরুষের কথা মনে রাখা (purbo purusher kotha mone rakha), which means remember the words and sacrifices of your ancestors.

These align closely with Māori values on generational care, and planning for future generations. Let us remember and honour the many struggles that our own ancestors made through our actions when we are caught in the crosswinds of colonial myth-making.

It goes without saying that migrant parents are highly motivated to secure a better future for their children. When I walked over the Auckland Harbour Bridge last week with friends, my feet walked into a future where we care for each other.

My children, your children, our children moving toward a future foundation where Māori values and Te Tiriti are central. Central to us all living better lives here in Aotearoa.

I felt the hope in every step I took with thousands of others.

Toitū Te Tiriti. Ake, Ake, Ake

Chapter 4: Who can we be without colonisation?

4.1 Introduction

Colonisation is not merely about seizing and occupying land; it also encompasses a psychological occupation that aims to erase knowledge of self and replace it with the coloniser's cosmology. It distorts our histories and constrains our imagination within the boundaries set by the coloniser. Colonisation continues to leave a trail of destruction indefinitely unless we disrupt it by turning away from the 'white' gaze and reclaiming the fullness of who we are (Fanon, 1963). As mentioned in the literature review, developing a critical consciousness by engaging with our internal worlds as racialised women can open up spaces of knowing, power, and social transformation that can inspire us to take action (Collins, 1990; hooks, 1993).

Patricia Hill Collins (1990) explains that a woman's internal consciousness is a space that can provide freedom, self-knowledge, and self-empowerment. Similarly, Moeller (2019) discusses bell hooks' (1993) pedagogy, which views self-recovery as foundational to social transformation. This pedagogy integrates spiritual, political, and emotional dimensions and is part of what hooks refers to as decolonisation.

The aim of this thesis is to examine how South Asian women in Aotearoa experience solidarities with other racialised women, including Māori women. This chapter investigates the sub-question:

4.2 How do South Asian women interpret their own experiences of colonisation?

If colonisation consists of multiple invasions, coloniality represents the air, the ideas we breathe, and the power structures that are entrenched in place, facilitating the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous and racialised people who are not white. It is not hard to envision this, as colonisers have engaged in the identity colonisation of the native people in the colonised country, leading to the erasure of cultural sites and artefacts (Fanon, 2008; Fanon, 1963). Such devastation has not only affected the colonised individuals but also denied future generations the chance to learn about their cultures, free from colonial distortions (Kovach, 2009)

Colonisation has disrupted our relationships with one another. Colonial relationships bring with them transactional, exploitative, and extractive ways of engaging (Burgess & Painting, 2020; Jackson, 2019; Tuck & Yang, 2014). Knowing this, we can imagine more. We can be invited to consider that settler colonialism is not an unchangeable condition. In this way we do not have to survive the structures of colonialism, but act beyond them to dismantle (LB Simpson, 2014).

Indigenous and racialised women are not afforded the humanity of having emotions under colonisation. Ruby Hamad (2020) states how colonialism is rigged against women of colour⁵. Hamad (2020) shares how white women strategically use their tears and emotions to silence women of colour and how women of colour often do not feel able to express their own emotions in racist societies. If they do, they may be considered ‘angry brown women’. In contrast, Indigenous and Black women, and women of colour feminists have noted that white women are seen as women and regarded as innocent and worthy of protection against harm (Ahmed, 2017; hooks, 2015a; Murphy, 2019; Zakaria, 2021).

In rejecting colonisation in our own lives and relationships, Indigenous, Black, and women of colour scholarship invites us into pedagogies that encourage us to engage with ourselves in terms of raising our own critical consciousness, while not forgetting the distortions colonisers have inflicted upon our histories, rituals, and cultural practices (Murphy, 2019). This scholarship also supports us in connecting with our ancestors and in reconnecting with our relationships to land and to other beings. These ways of knowing and doing are outlined in the following sections.

Settler colonialism impacts Indigenous and racialised women in multiple ways. Uncovering the ways in which colonialism has left marks on our lives can help raise awareness.

Bangladeshi scholar Dipto Das and colleagues (2022) conducted a study on identity work in Bengali communities, observing that participants reclaimed their agency over identities by sharing historical accounts of British actions during their rule in India. Notably, participants

⁵ Women of colour is a term used by Ruby Hamad to describe women who are not racialised as white. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, I also use this term interchangeably with racialised women.

in this study were not attempting to return to a fictional pre-colonial version of their culture but were instead identifying colonial traces in their lived experiences.

Understanding the impacts of colonialism on our lives and connecting with ourselves and our ancestors creates opportunities for new insights and knowledge. As mentioned in the introduction, Rodríguez (2023) invites us to connect with both our ancestors and ourselves while envisioning a world that encourages us to embrace the richness of our differences and shared humanity when she asks the question, “Who are you without colonialism?” This question compels us to connect with our personal narratives, which transcend physical and psychological borders, urging us to consider and engage in futures that not only confront colonial legacies but also guide us in how we relate to ourselves and others.

Developing a critical consciousness that can resist binary thinking (e.g. white/non-white; New Zealand-born/migrant; settler/native) while embracing ambiguity and transformation strengthens our ability to cut through the binary ways of thinking that colonisation promotes. Gloria Anzaldúa’s (1987) concept of “borderlands” as a liminal space recognises the complexity of identities, histories, and the multiplicity that exists beyond the colonial binarism. It is within this space that the possibility of new forms of identity and ways to resist can emerge. This not only honours the intersectional nature of racialised women’s identities but also recognises that they cannot be homogenised into singular categories, as colonialism attempts to frame them.

Resistance to colonisation is personal. This perspective is supported by bell hooks (1993), who noted that processing the personal is part of what is needed to heal as a collective group grounded in love, where women can refuse colonial erasure and the notion of returning to some pre-colonial utopia. Recognising not only how colonialism impacts our lives in multiple ways but also being able to engage in a generative refusal that affirms love and care of relationships with self and each other is necessary (see Fanon, 2008; LB Simpson, 2017c). Ahmed (2012) further argues for developing an awareness of how state institutions and public spaces centre whiteness.

As mentioned in the literature review (section 5), whiteness is the default standard of what is normal, and against which other races are judged. Whiteness is perpetuated through diversity work in institutions that are happy to include racialised people as superficial cover, integrating individuals who appear different within organisations without addressing the root

structural causes of white supremacy. Whiteness seeks to hoodwink racialised women in multiple ways, making the work of critical consciousness a daily struggle. It is necessary to reclaim our internal worlds as they are both sites for our own knowledge production and places where we get to reclaim our sacredness (Murphy, 2019; see also Lorde, 1984). Our internal worlds are also sacred spaces where we can connect with ourselves. Many of our ancestors would have explored their imaginations to escape assaults on their minds, bodies, and spirits. Professor Ruha Benjamin (2024) and Saidiya Hartman (2019) contend that the imagination is also a realm where freedom can be envisioned: a place where one can feel safe. To reclaim is also to remember what colonisers have done to us, and who we are without colonialism.

Reclaiming knowledge systems, reclaiming relational power, and engaging in refusal can be considered acts of love that move beyond individual and emotional experiences to collective action (hooks, 2000a). As Audre Lorde (1984) asserted, to love is to say yes to ourselves and others against the injustices of oppression. Love also comes with honesty that invites growth.

Both bell hooks and Audre Lorde explore ethics of love that emphasise relational responsibility. This highlights collective care and the duty to address harm within communities, promoting generative ways to move forward together that encourage both healing and reparative actions. In doing so, they forge alternative pathways for relating to one another beyond the colonial gaze. This aligns with LB Simpson (2017b) and Kimmerer (2020), who remind us that love is intertwined with our relationships, which also involve reciprocity.

While colonialism impacts women of colour, critical awareness and expression of experiences require safe spaces. Artistic expression, including collaging, enables subjective and embodied expression of experiences (Butler-Kisber, 2010). Applying collaging as a research method creates a reflexive space for knowledge development without requiring women to find words for their self-expression (Pitt, 2021). There is a gap in the literature on using racialised women's experiences of colonialism and applying art-based methods to explore this topic.

In this study I explored South Asian Women's experiences of colonisation by bringing participants together to make a piece of art through collaging, which they then described.

Women's experiences of colonisation included fragmented identities that they sought to reclaim, resisting colonial narratives and finding ways to heal and reclaim space and freedom.

4.3 Method

Participants

The criterion for participation in this project was that women identified as being of South Asian descent. Participants selected themselves for this study based on this criterion and their ability to attend the in person collaging session. No one was turned away. Convenience sampling was initially used for recruitment. I approached individuals known to me through mutual acquaintances. Of the 20 women who responded to the invitation to participate in this research project, 15 were able to attend the collaging session. Thirteen women lived in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland), and two lived outside this region. Participant heritages included Fijian Indian, Fijian Indian-Afghan, Sri Lankan Tamil, Pakistani, Bangladeshi-Sri Lankan Tamil, Fijian Indian-Māori-Pākehā, Indian, and Gujarati Indian. Women were aged between 21 and 60 years. Each of the women had a distinct migration journey to Aotearoa, from both the Global South and North. Minimal details are shared, to protect the confidentiality of the women. Each participant received a \$50 voucher in appreciation of their time.

Data collection

Data were collected over two collaging days that were held a month apart. This was so the 15 women could be split into two smaller groups, so that women did not feel rushed in sharing their stories and also to manage the data collection. Each session ran for 6 hours, with snacks and lunch provided. Participants constructed collages in response to two prompts. At the end of each session the participants described their pieces in a sharing circle that was audio recorded and transcribed afterwards. They also gave titles to their art pieces following these sessions.

Procedure

Two collaging days were held one month apart to bring 15 participants together in two smaller groups. A week before each session, three question prompts were sent out to guide

the women in creating their own collages. These were: **Who are you without colonisation?**
Who are your ancestors? and what do you think they are whispering to you?

Participants were offered various ways to reflect on these prompts, such as journaling, allowing the prompts to sit with them, sketching in response to the prompts, or listening to music as a method of reflection. This supported their thinking and preparation for the 6-hour collaging day. Women were also encouraged to bring any images of their choosing to incorporate into their collage.

Before each collaging session began, a talking circle was created. This provided space for women to introduce themselves. During these introductions, women were able to learn about each other's backgrounds, migration histories, and any life experiences they chose to share. There were introductions to each other, and they talked again at the end when sharing their stories from the finished collages. As each participant shared, they held an object (which they were asked to bring along) as part of the sharing and explained why they had chosen that object. These artefacts included hair clips, passports, necklaces, shawls, and rings. This also helped to put women at ease while sharing about themselves. The talking circle in many Indigenous cultures symbolises respect, story-sharing, togetherness, and compassion for one another. Bagele Chilisa (2020) explains that the circle can also represent the earth, the collective construction of knowledge, and relational ways of being among the group. This process was intended to centre the women and their stories. By centring the women in this way and allowing them to share with one another, the research process was designed to affirm the women and create a space where critical consciousness of self and others could be deepened. Research conducted in this way can be described as life-changing (Wilson, 2008).

Stories have always been central to the human experience. They offer insights into an individual's frame of reference and can comment on social relations and society. As participants maintain control and ownership of their representation by creating their narratives, the methodology ultimately enables them to define how they wish to be represented, which is empowering (Shohat & Stam, 2014). This process fostered trust and relationality between the women, including myself.

Once introductions had been shared, the facilitator I had recruited to guide the collaging art session was introduced. The decision was made to engage an arts facilitator to run the session so that I could fully immerse myself in documenting and recording observations throughout the day. The first part of the collaging session involved women selecting images from the

collection of books and magazines brought along to the session. Participants were encouraged not to overthink the process and to select, cut, and tear the images they felt drawn to. They were reminded again of the two prompts to support them as they searched for images. It was left to the women whether they wanted to cut or tear images from the magazines. They then arranged the images to create a new story. I recorded observational notes throughout the focus group day, including feelings, thoughts, and notes on any ancillary conversations that arose in the space. Adopting this method allowed me, as the researcher, to gain insights into other “perceptual and embodied knowledge” (Fontain, 2013, p.75).

Towards the end of the session, participants were brought back together in a circle and asked to share their collaged art along with the story behind it. These stories about the collages were audio recorded, and images of the collages were captured. The women listened to each other's stories and shared reflections on them as well. This co-creation also created space for the development of shared understandings among the participants regarding their stories, allowing new narratives to emerge as the group listened to one another and reflected together (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). This also affirmed the notion that in many Indigenous cultures, the talking circle symbolises respect, sharing stories, togetherness, and compassion for one another (Chilisa, 2020).

For this project, women were gathered for a day to create collages based on the guiding questions:

1. Who are you without colonisation?
2. Who are your ancestors?
3. What are they whispering to you?

Storytelling was another method that the women engaged in when they shared their stories that described their completed collages. Iseke (2013) reminds us that there is knowledge found in our stories that needs our attention as they are also spaces where we can resist stories that do not serve us. They also contend that storytelling can support one's spirituality and can be used as a tool to bear witness, remember, and offer a way to heal from colonisation.

Analysis

I found searching for an analytical tool to analyse the collages challenging. I had initially anticipated only using Braun and Clarke's (2021a) reflexive thematic analysis. However, I

discovered that this approach was insufficient to capture both the collages and the stories with any emotional depth. Relying solely on reflexive thematic analysis would have been too reductive in expressing the richness of both the art and the narratives. I identified a preliminary way to group the collages according to the titles the women had given them. This involved repeatedly reviewing and familiarising myself with the collages, noticing cultural symbols and re-listening to and re-reading their stories. In considering the toolkit approach of my methodological framework (see the Methodology chapter), I decided to expand the thematic analysis to include poetic inquiry, which addressed ways to incorporate emotions into the understanding of complicated human experiences (Patrick, 2016).

Found poetry emerged as a method at the analysis stage of the collages rather than as a predetermined methodological choice. Found poetry is a method for representing research findings (Sullivan, 2000). It can be used to both understand and convey lived experiences in ways that respect and care for those experiences (Furman et al., 2006; Hordyk et al., 2014; Miller & Brockie, 2015; Prendergast, 2009; Wang, 2025; Wells, 2004). In this project, I used found poetry to authentically represent the women's voices and centre their experiences (Butler-Kisber, 2002; Rich, 2023; Richardson, 1994). Rather than coding their stories, I created found poems, which involved using the women's actual words and phrases.

This enabled me to see the data in a new light, establishing a more empathetic connection with the women and what they had to say. This process involved arranging the women's own words and phrases in a flow that brought their voices to life. Their stories were transcribed prior to creating each poem, and the words and phrases were guided by the women's collages and the titles they assigned their work. Found poems can bring the women's words to life. Found poetry was chosen at this stage because thematic analysis, while rigorous, could not fully hold the complexity, contradiction, and feeling that lived in the women's words as they told the story of their art. The poetry did not replace analysis. The found poetry worked alongside the collages, offering a different register through which the findings could be known. Participants who wished to remain involved in the research process were able to review found poems created from their narratives to ensure that the representations felt accurate and respectful. Women's own words were kept at the centre. This created an ethic of accountability. This is also consistent with Indigenous and Black feminist methodological commitments to centre the knowledge of those whose experiences have been historically marginalised and misrepresented within academic research (Smith, 1999; Lorde, 1984).

There was no set way to create a poem (Shashwati et al., 2022). Found poetry is a creative method to illuminate findings of qualitative research where verbatim quotes are used (Watson & Hamilton, 2022). The main body of each poem appearing in this chapter has been crafted from each woman's words, with occasional words either removed or added for clarity and flow. The words were also arranged in a way that flowed well, aligning with the women's collages and the themes identified. Again, the found poems were created from the actual words shared by the women in this study, in conjunction with studying the visual aspects of the collages (such as the cultural symbols being used) to construct the themes.

4.4 Findings

The findings are presented as a series of collages (for example, Figure 4 All of me) followed by a found poem (example: Found poem, All of me). Three themes are revealed (reconstructing and reclaiming identity, resisting colonial narratives and healing and reclaiming space and freedom) with subthemes provided (see Table 1).

Table 1 *Collaging Themes and Sub-themes*

Theme			
Collage Title	Reconstructing and reclaiming identity	Resisting colonial narratives	Healing and reclaiming space and freedom
	All of me Found poem <i>All of me</i>	Duality Found poem <i>Duality</i>	Everything Everywhere Found poem <i>Everything Everywhere</i>
	Taketake whenua Found poem <i>Taketake whenua</i>	Migration and belonging Found poem <i>Migration and belonging</i>	Untitled Found poem <i>Untitled</i>
	Everything Everywhere Found poem <i>Everything Everywhere</i>	Scars of colonisation in the frames of reference. Found poem <i>Scars of colonisation in the frames of reference</i>	Fragments and Figments on the journey home Found poem <i>Fragments and Figments on the journey home</i>

	Prana - the life force within that fuels our breath and being. Found poem <i>Prana – the life force within that fuels our breath and being</i>	Prana - the life force within that fuels our breath and being. Found poem <i>Prana – the life force within that fuels our breath and being</i>	Dissecting me Found poem <i>Dissecting me</i>
	The Masala of me Found poem <i>The Masala of me</i>		Exploring the mirrored Found poem <i>Exploring the mirrored</i>
	Interwoven unravelling Found poem <i>Interwoven unravelling</i>		Living as an ancestor: Witnessing history to creating change Found poem <i>Living as an ancestor: Witnessing history to creating change</i>
	Echoes of Identity: Reclaiming roots and heritage Found poem <i>Echoes of Identity: Reclaiming roots and heritage</i>		Taketake whenua (original family) Found poem <i>Taketake whenua</i>
	Scars of colonisation in the frames of reference Found poem <i>Scars of colonisation in the frames of reference</i>		Prana - the life force within that fuels our breath and being. Found poem <i>Prana – the life force within that fuels our breath and being</i>

The collection of collages, along with the found poems created from the women's transcribed descriptions of their collages, built a complex and rich picture of the women's personal experiences and internal landscapes relating to their own identity and the lasting impacts of colonisation. In this chapter I describe each collage, with the found poem as a form of analysis and storying. In this chapter, I provide a fuller description and analysis of each collage and link these to each other – in the same way as participants stories intersected.

4.4.1 Reconstruction and reclaiming Identity

Reconstruction and reclaiming Identity was selected as a theme as a number of women were looking to acknowledge themselves more fully in various ways, including by expressing their emotions, expressing colour, and recognising multiple truths. Subthemes are highlighted within each theme which are expressed as a figure (the collage) and a found poem as a form of analysis. Each figure and subtheme are: All of me; taketake whenua; the masala of me; everything everywhere; migration and belonging; interwoven unravelling and the scars of colonisation in the frames of reference.

The collage “All of Me” (Figure 4) highlighted aspects such as communal eating, the deliberate use of colour in the art, and being creative.

Figure 4 *All of me*



In describing her collage, 'Anita' highlighted,

"The communal eating is very important to me...It's really equalising" (Found Poem *All of me*). This quote suggests that 'Anita' sought to reconstruct her identity by returning to a cultural practice that also involves community and recognising the importance of creativity. Reconstruction was a theme that applied across many of the collages.

Found poem *All of me*

This is me.

Communal eating.

With other people,

Other people's children.

Really equalising.

I would have been more in touch with my creative side

the things that I love doing,

like sewing and knitting,

and making things,

they would have been much more encouraged.

Reconstruction and reclaiming Identity was a theme that also applied to the collage

"Taketake Whenua" where 'Bibi' said "I would have dressed more traditionally" (Figure 5).

Figure 5 *Taketake whenua*



‘Bibi’ also referred to “going back to my roots” and “...been the people of the land” which links to reconstruction and also to having an identity that is connected to the land (Found Poem *Taketake Whenua*).

Found Poem Taketake Whenua

Paying homage to my ancestors before they were colonised.

We cannot ignore.

It’s there in the corner, monarch crown.

Where it belongs.

They would have held onto religion.

I would have dressed more traditionally.

We would have been the people of the land where we were.

Me, going back to my roots, doing the things that I love.

Paying homage to my Afghani side.

We would have been so rich in culture.

So rich in who we were.

The women shared aspects of their identity that had also been shaped by multiple migrations and impacted by colonisation. The collage “Masala of Me”, created by ‘Nivedita’, depicted different parts of her. It held what looked like boxes in her art (Figure 6).

Figure 6 *The Masala of me*



‘Nivedita’ shared, “*I was born in a country that was colonised, that was also a coloniser. India is also a coloniser. I moved to a country that was colonised and became a coloniser*” (Found Poem *The Masala of me*). This narrative not only illustrates the complex nature of belonging

to spaces that have been colonised but also highlights struggles within self and the many-layered identities that ‘Nivedita’ feels that she was/is navigating. She also shared, “*I belong to this space, I belong to that place, I belong to this family, who am I, where am I?*”

Found Poem The Masala of me

I was born in a country that was colonised,
that was also a coloniser.
India is also a coloniser.
I moved to a country that was colonised,
became a coloniser.
I lived in another country in Europe,
also a coloniser.
Now I live in a country coloniser and colonised.
Colonisation is in me, I am in colonisation.
We are interwoven.
I belong to this space, I belong to that place,
I belong to this family— who am I, where am I?
From the colonised gaze,
Break free.

Cultural symbols across the women's art were also evident, including symbols such as ‘Om’, which is Gujarati writing and also a cultural symbol. Traditional dress was also noted (Figure 5).

In the collage “Everything Everywhere”, (Figure 7) ‘Arundhati’ shared, “*Without colonisation, I would be closer to that truth [points to Om and Gujarati text] and further away from a different truth*”.

Figure 7 *Everything Everywhere*



I think “multiple truths exist” (Found Poem *Everything Everywhere*). She also shared “I’ve got a bookshelf, books missing” as a way of acknowledging that if it had not been for colonisation, she may have been closer to her own cultural roots and knowledge systems. Her comment also highlights an understanding that both her cultural heritage and her colonised history are part of her reality and that navigating the two can bring conflicting truths that can exist simultaneously. For example, ‘Arundhati’, as a self-identified Queer Indian woman, shared her understanding that it was because of colonisation that she was able to have children without the need for a male partner; however, at the same time, she felt that she was missing so much of her cultural knowledge because of colonisation. This observation around how she felt about not being able to have a family if it were not for colonisation will be picked up in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

Found Poem *Everything Everywhere*

You might have a map,
but it doesn't mean I can read it,
or know which way to go.

I've got a bookshelf,
books missing,
education we don't know.

Half-naked on a beach.
Freedom in the sun,
radiant, radical.

Colonisation,
never given me space,
Space for self.

Always rushing,
always productive.
Colonisation steals space,
Space I need.

Without colonisation,
maybe I could live,
True.

Generations move,
Tanzania, India, Burma,
colonised steps,
Lineage displaced.

Multiple truths,
Exist and resist.
I am ready to blow.

Reconstructing and reclaiming identity was also represented in ‘Kajul’s’ collage, *Echoes of Identity*, reclaiming roots as soil running through a pair of hands and the colours of nature, blue, green and brown (Figure 8).

Figure 8 *Echoes of Identity-reclaiming roots*



‘Kajul’ shares “The sky, the land, the ground carving paths where I belong.” (Found Poem *Echoes of Identity - reclaiming roots*) as a way of recognising that her identity is tied up in her relationship with the environment around her and it had it not been for colonisation these elements would be a much more orientating, intuitive part of who she might be.

Found Poem *Echoes of Identity - reclaiming roots*

The sky, the land, the ground.

The sky, the land, the ground I feel quite lost without colonisation.

it's embedded deep, part of me.

Yet without it, I find spaces like this,

and I stand between worlds: a strange place to navigate,

but a place that's mine.

The sky, the land,

the ground carving paths where I belong.

‘Nadia’s collage ‘Migration and belonging’ depicts a horse, camel, huts and traditional farming images (Figure 9).

Figure 9 *Migration and belonging*



Reconstruction and reclaiming identity for Nadia was about remembering the connection to land and the farming roots that she had come from “*My father, farming, horse and bullock*” (*Found Poem Migration and belonging*).

Found poem *Migration and belonging*

What they had with them.
Their identity of who they are, little carpets.
Afghanistan and Iran.
My ancestors.
I would have a very relaxed life, like fishing.
My imagining.
My father, farming, horse and bullock.
Part and parcel of sugar cane life.
Are we heard enough?
Our voices, the voices of Fiji-Indian descent,
the fear put in each other, the segregation, not heard.
We are seen; features give us away,
Rice and paddy fields, staple diet.
Fiji pristine but murky story behind.
Colonial legacy embedded in the postcards of tourism.
Still, we are here.

‘Karuna’s collage “Interwoven, unravelling” used a series of family pictures placed within the four corners of her canvas (Figure 10).

Figure 10 Interwoven, unravelling



‘Karuna’ shared,

“I really wanted to show the importance of all my family to me, and all the different parts of my family. Try to connect them together” (Found Poem Interwoven unravelling). She felt that reclaiming her identity involved gathering the different members of her family together (on paper) as she has felt that colonisation has forced and disrupted relationships within her family. This gathering was important to her as she felt that she had never experienced her family physically together.

Found poem *Interwoven, unravelling*

I really wanted to show the importance of all my family to me,
and all the different parts of my family.

Try to connect them together.

How much without colonisation,

our family would not be here,

or not how we are now.

In the collage "*Scars of Colonisation in the Frames of Reference*", "Hina" used the colour red to specifically represent emotion (Figure 11).

Figure 11 *The scars of colonisation in the frames of reference*



She shares “*But red is still here. Anger, love, strength, stability*” (Found Poem The scars of colonisation in the frames of reference). What ‘Hina’ was expressing here was that often those who are marginalised are told to contain their emotions, not express their emotions otherwise they may be characterised in a particular way, such as being too angry. It was as if ‘Hina’ was reclaiming emotions as part of her identity. These emotions could also be considered as reclaiming knowledge about herself and how she felt moved to respond in an emotional way against injustice.

Found Poem *The scars of colonisation in the frames of reference*

We were better off under the British,
as if they are the saviours.
Without their skill, without their endurance,
we are nothing; the boats do nothing.

What are we without them?
They took our art, our clothes, everything.

But red is still here.
Anger, love, strength, stability.

My marriage and the domestic abuse,

Colonialist factor.

I love my culture, but I see its poison, too.
Colonialism, exposing ugliness.
I know it might sound like,

Oh, colonialism was good.

No.

What remains silent in these narratives is that women made no reference to the land in Aotearoa, when responding to the prompts for their collage or when providing the story for their art. Settler colonialism, described as a structure in the literature review can explain this

silence. It provides an example of how Indigenous dispossession of land takes place via settlers (Jackson 2020b; Wolfe 2006).

In summarising this theme: Reconstructing and reclaiming identity has involved women recognising the disruption that colonisation has had on their own lives and the lineages of people they come from. Reconstruction and reclaiming identity involves returning to cultural practices, knowledge systems, language, reclaiming emotions and ways of dress; expressing themselves in colourful and creative ways; reconnecting with being in relationship with land, but not necessarily the land women are currently on. Being able to be in relationships with animals and family members in a less disconnected ways was also described.

4.4.2 Resisting Colonial Narratives

Resistance recurred as a theme through many of the collages, where each figure (collage) and subtheme are: duality; prana, the life force within that fuels our breath and being; migration and belonging and scars of colonisation in the frames of reference.

Women challenged the narrative of the British colonisers that framed their ancestors as powerless and having nothing to offer the world. In the collage titled: “Scars of colonisation in the frame of reference”, ‘Hina’ made a particular point of repurposing the faces of white women that she found in magazines (Figure 11). She also depicted the Patriarchy as a male figure whose eyes were covered by the hand of an animal. It did not escape the South Asian women’s notice that the magazines they had access to were filled with images of white women. Any images that were used were fragmented and recreated in new ways or even covered up to decentre whiteness by the women.

‘Hina’ reflected on the narrative that was written on her collage, that South Asians *“were better off under the British”* and that *“they have somehow made us believe that we can’t”* (Found Poem *The scars of colonisation in the frames of reference*). This quote highlighted the justifications offered in favour of the coloniser and served to deny the agency of the people being colonised. ‘Hina’ further shared, *“They have somehow made us believe that we can't do anything without them”*. This quote strongly speaks to the colonisation of the mind.

The importance of resisting harmful cultural practices within one's own culture that had been shaped by Patriarchy and made worse by the influences of colonialism was also mentioned when ‘Hina’ shared *“I love my culture, but I see its poison, too. Colonialism, exposing*

ugliness” (Found Poem *The scars of colonisation in the frames of reference*). Being able to speak up against toxic parts of your culture was imperative, and also rejecting the narrative “*Oh colonialism was good. No*”. This speaks to the idea that to resist colonial narratives is to be able to critique cultural practices and question how they might have been altered due to the impacts of colonialism. ‘Hina’ had recognised that colonisers had weaponised aspects of her own culture as a way of controlling women, which also included Patriarchy as a tool to control.

Speaking up against Indian casteism and colourism, which some of the women identified, was also critical. In the collage titled ‘Duality’, ‘Amay’ had the wording of pioneer Captain Cook in her art, which she placed a cross over as a way of resisting the colonial narrative (Figure 12).

Figure 12 *Duality*



When describing her collage, ‘Amay’ shared, “*We often try and glorify our ancestors, but they were not heroes either. Our own violence... casteism...willing to do whatever the British were asking of them*” (Found Poem 9). In these words, Amay offers a critical reflection on how our

ancestors are both remembered and represented within history and cultural narratives. The impacts of colonisation are not just a simple binary of the colonial oppressor oppressing; however, there were those within the oppressed groups exerting dominance over others, thereby also perpetuating violence at times in problematic social systems.

Found Poem *Duality*

Our histories are so distorted.

Our language,

One of the oldest Dravidian tongues.

Left behind not well researched.

I wonder how we lived before six hundred years of colonial shadow.

I think we lived in balance with the environment.

We have lost so much knowledge because of the conflict,
not just the colonisation and what happened after colonisation.

I would like to regain that knowledge - hard.

While questioning this colonisation,

I should question my own past.

We often try and glorify our ancestors, but they were not heroes either.

Our own violence, casteism.

Willing to do whatever the British were asking of them.

Their descendants, probably including me are slightly in a better way.

They were agreeing with British, assimilating so I have conflict with that.

I probably would not have been as educated if my ancestors had resisted them.

I do not want to have a glorified view of my ancestors.

I want to have a balanced view.

‘Amay’ also raises the complexity of what not resisting colonial narratives can do even when colonisers leave a country but have left imprints of colonial ways of thinking on those colonised. She also states “*our histories are so distorted*”, recognising that we have to also be able to know our own histories and not the version left for us (*Found Poem Duality*). ‘Amay’ further recognised that resistance was also about reclamation of “*our language*” and learning what we can about our own heritages before colonisation, although she recognises how hard this would be given that so much knowledge of her own culture has been lost.

In the collage “Prana, the life force within those fuels our breath and being” ‘Diya’ uses images related to a person in seated meditation with the breath within a temple that sits over a map of current day India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (Figure 13).

Figure 13 *Prana, the life force within that fuels our breath and being*



‘Diya’'s way to resist colonial narratives was to recognise on a ‘metaphysical’ level how colonisation had disconnected us. She made mention of “animals, energy, intuition” (*Found Poem Prana, the life force within that fuels our breath and being*). Reconnecting to her breath and her body intuition and recognising a more spiritual way of moving through life that centred relations was a way to resist colonial narratives.

Found Poem *Prana, the life force within that fuels our breath and being*

We would all breathe a lot easier if we were not colonised.

I feel detached sometimes.

I don't understand.

I don't speak Hindi as well.

Tongue of home.

Connection lost— animals, energy, intuition

a lot more connection had we not been colonised.

In Nadia's collage (Figure 9), she covered the face of a white woman with a sticker depicting the Black activist and scholar Angela Davis. Her way of resisting whiteness, as others have mentioned, was to recognise it. She also recognised how colonial narratives hide themselves within other stories: "Fiji pristine but murky story behind. Colonial legacy embedded in the postcards of tourism" (Found Poem *Migration and belonging*). Again, to resist colonial narratives, one must be aware of how colonialism can hide itself in plain sight.

In summary, the theme of resisting colonial narratives involved critiquing and questioning aspects of one's own culture and how we remember our ancestors. The women achieved this by identifying colonial imprints in their lives, such as recognising their lost connection to intuition and resisting colonial thinking through questioning. Resisting colonial narratives also acknowledged the complexity of the coloniser's identity in colonised populations and how colonised people can perpetuate that role. Some women felt that if not for colonisation, they might not have received the education they did or had their current family composition.

4.4.3 Healing and reclaiming space and freedom

Healing and reclaiming space and freedom were identified as themes in many of the women's collages. Here each figure (collage) and subtheme are: everything, everywhere; untitled; fragments and figments on the journey home; dissecting me; exploring the mirrored; living as an ancestor; taketake whenua; prana, the life force within that fuels our breath and being and

dissecting me. This was illustrated in various ways, such as having space for self, freedom, and being whole rather than fragmented.

In describing her collage (Figure 7), 'Arundhati' shared, "Colonisation has not given me space. Space for self... It's always rushing around, always trying to be productive. Without colonisation, I think I would have space." Her sharing highlights how colonisation can limit one's sense of having space to be oneself, space from rigid colonial norms of the brown body being a productive body, a body kept busy so it does not have time to think about its need for space. Within this theme, the idea of freedom was also present. 'Nandita' with her collage "Untitled", shows a broken picture frame that has butterflies being freed from its confines and spreading their wings (Figure 14).

Figure 14 Untitled



This was to symbolise freedom and transformation. *"We are not restricted, and we have freedom... the butterflies represent freedom and transformation"* (Found Poem Untitled).

Found Poem *Untitled*

If I weren't colonised, I would not be under their feet.

They would be under their own.

The tree of life, abundance, more of our resources,

in tune with nature, not busy, not theirs.

Busy, a Western concept. I want to take up space.

I've written clean because we were always clean.

Not dirty, not animal, without their label.

I have broken the frame.

The butterflies are flying out.

We are not restricted.

We are free.

'Nandita' also recognised that as human beings, we were never inhuman. as colonisers had depicted us. As she puts it, "*Not dirty, not animal, without their label.*" Freedom was also about not allowing the coloniser to frame you with their labels and "*not be under their feet*" (Found poem *Untitled*), recognising the inhumaneness of the colonisers. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the complexity illustrated in all the collages shows that many came under multiple themes. 'Nandita's' collage was also an example of resisting colonial narratives by being able to reject the 'label' that colonisers placed on the colonised.

Furthermore, both 'Arundhati' and 'Nandita's' collages spoke to a yearning for autonomy and pre-colonial ways of being that seemed to offer them space to be themselves. This space was articulated in ways that supported them to show up as they are and to reconnect with the knowledge, practices, and ways of their own cultures.

In 'Rani's' collage titled 'Fragments and Figments on the journey home', a colourful array of food, travel, places and art is depicted (Figure 15).

Figure 15 *Fragments and Figments on the journey home*



She illustrated her own sense of freedom and shared, “*I do not want to live life in binaries anymore*” (Found Poem *Fragments and Figments on the journey home*). There was not only a desire to bring the multiple parts of herself together but also to embrace the various ways she experienced the joys and beauties of the world. It felt like ‘Rani’ was engaging in a refusal to be caught up in a binary, and for her, freedom was also about living in ‘Aotearoa’ and not ‘New Zealand.’

Found poem *Fragments and Figments on the journey home*

That sense of trying to find home.
Connecting with this place as Aotearoa,
more meaningful to me.
Greater sense of belonging than New Zealand.
I do not want to live life in binaries anymore.
Belonging to different places.

Her way of expressing freedom again felt like enacting her own autonomy. This collage also falls into the theme refusing colonial narratives.

In the collage 'Dissecting me' by 'Ghazal' there are multiple depictions of flora and fauna (Figure 16).

[illegible]

I would be more nature,
How she is always uses nature to heal.

‘Ghazal’ recognised the significant role that connecting to nature and land could have in healing “How she [Mother Earth] always uses nature to heal” (Found poem *Dissecting me*).

‘Subbalaksmi’ in her collage ‘Exploring the Mirrored’ included images of flora, animals, and ancient buildings typically found in South Asia. ‘Subbalaksmi’ found it difficult to explain

why she named her collage as she did. She had also incorporated the phrases “people are made how they are” and “death and desire” in her collage, but she again struggled to articulate the reasoning behind it (Figure 17). The sense was that being a South Asian woman was not valued in New Zealand society; was someone to be dismissed.

Figure 17 *Exploring the mirrored*



In describing her collage, she expressed the idea of needing to look back as a way of thriving and growing, saying, “looking back and flowering” and “blooming, the past keeps giving” (Found poem *Exploring the mirrored*). Her words conveyed that looking back was a way to reconnect and heal, helping us to find out who we are and allowing us to move forward—something she was on a journey to achieve.

Found Poem *Exploring the mirrored*

People are made how they are.

Looking back and flowering.

Blooming, the past keeps giving

People are made how they are.

The 'Living as an ancestor' collage by 'Saraswati', which included images of a native woman, animals, mountains, and temples, identified things that she was seeking to 'unlock' (which is a word that she also used on her collage (Figure 18).

Figure 18 *Living as an ancestor*



The title of her collage ‘Living as an Ancestor’ encapsulated her pathway of healing for herself and the elements that she considered as being part of that. ‘Saraswati’ also described this as “*The eyes on the mountain, ancient, watchful, still*” recognising again the healing that can be found in connecting to land and the wisdom it can hold (Found poem *Living as an ancestor*).

Found Poem Living as an ancestor

The eyes on the mountain, ancient, watchful, still.

In many of the collages, healing was revealed as reconnecting with relationships to soil, land, animals, nature, and flora. Many of the collages were filled with imagery of this (see Figures 5,6,8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17,18).

Further, ‘Bibi’, ‘Diya’, and ‘Ghazal’, in their respective collages, ‘Taketake Whenua (original family)’, ‘Prana, the life force within that fuels our breath’ and being, and ‘Dissecting me’ (Figures 5, 12, and 16), recognise that nature, land, language, and traditional practices are aspects of identity from which they have been separated. Reassembling these fragments of identity would enable them to express a more whole self.

What also became apparent within this theme of women's collages was grief. This was expressed when ‘Arundhati’ shared that she would be “closer to another truth” if it were not for colonisation (Found poem *Everything Everywhere*). Additionally, when ‘Nividita’ asked, “who am I, where am I?” (Figure 6), she articulated the disorienting impacts that colonisation has had on her. It is worth noting that throughout the collaging engagements with the women, many participants displayed tears and feelings of grief. Grief will be explored in the discussion section, along with its role in the healing.

4.4.4 Summary

The results from this section were composed of three key themes. These themes focused on **reconstructing and reclaiming identity**, highlighting how women could see the impact of colonisation on their own lives and lineages. Through their collages and stories, they identified disruptions to language, knowledge systems, rituals, and cultural practices. Women also recognised disruptions to their relationships with animals, land, and nature. Colonisation had also muted their ability to express themselves as colourful, creative, and emotional

individuals. This theme illustrated the multiple ways women could reconstruct and reclaim their identities. In **resisting colonial narratives**, women understood that critiquing and questioning aspects of their own culture was necessary. There was a recognition that colonisation had distorted elements of women's cultures. The complex relationship between the coloniser and the colonised was acknowledged in relation to how the colonised can collude with the coloniser in enforcing colonial rule over colonised populations. Some women's narratives reflected colonising myths, with the belief that without colonisation, they might not have their current lives, level of education, or families. The final theme addressed **healing and reclaiming space and freedom**, where women recognised how colonisation categorised brown bodies as inhuman and only valuable for capitalistic extraction. They understood that healing involved looking back and identifying pathways for recovery, such as reconnecting to the land, spirituality, and knowledge of their ancestors. Healing also included rejecting the binary framework that colonisation imposes on lives and embracing joyful acts of travel and the celebration of being alive. All the collages related to the identified themes were titled by the women who created them and organised into themes, with some relating to more than one theme. Several collages fell into multiple themes, illustrating the various forms colonisation takes in their lives.

These themes will be explored further in the discussion that follows, contextualising the results within the relevant existing literature.

4.5 Discussion

As stated in the introduction, the purpose of this thesis was to explore how South Asian women in Aotearoa experience solidarities with other racialised women, including Māori women. This chapter aimed to investigate the sub-question: How do South Asian women make sense of their own experiences of colonisation?

The women's collages were analysed alongside the found poems that I created for each collage, using the women's words, which I arranged to best reflect their descriptions of the collages they had made. The three themes that emerged were: reconstructing and reclaiming identity, resisting colonial narratives, and healing and reclaiming space and freedom.

Reconstructing and reclaiming identity

The question posed in this chapter is: **How do women of South Asian descent make sense of their own experiences of colonisation?** It encourages us to reorient reconstruction and reclaim identity by engaging in decolonial relations, which involve reconnecting to knowledge systems, practices, and relationships with land and other life forces. The women in this project interpret their experiences by recognising the multifaceted ways in which colonisation has disrupted their lives and those of their ancestors. For these women, reconstruction and reclaiming identity entails returning to cultural practices, knowledge systems and language, reclaiming emotions, and modes of dress; expressing themselves creatively; reconnecting with the land, the elements, and animals; and finding ways to engage with family members that are less fractured.

This study found that our identities can be shaped by our histories and in relation to the dominant structures of colonialism, whiteness, and patriarchy, as previous literature has concluded (Ahmed, 2017; Fanon 1963). This also means that our identities are not fixed but can evolve over time. Stuart Hall (1989) stated that “cultural identities have histories and undergo constant transformation ...they are subject to continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power” (p.70). This indicates that our identity formation is in constant motion. Franz Fanon (1963) further observed that “Colonisation is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying out the native brain of all form and content” (p.170). This is evident in the findings, which convey the picture that the colonised have nothing useful in terms of knowledge, practice, and being that is worth keeping (Figure 11, Scars of colonisation in the frames of reference). What colonisation also does is disfigure oppressed peoples’ histories so that in the end, we can only imagine ourselves through the narrow lens of the coloniser (Figure 4, 7, see also Brah, 1996, 2022; Collins, 2002; Fanon, 1963; hooks, 2015a). With this, Fanon (1963) urges us to reject the ‘white’ gaze and reclaim the fullness of who we are.

This study also found that Whiteness, as a structure, plays a role in shaping identity. Women in this study described not feeling able to express emotion within a racist society. This resonates with previous literature that found the anger expressed by women who are racialised as non-white is often disproportionately punished (Hamad, 2020). In Ruby Hamad’s book *‘White Tears, Brown Scars’*, she critiqued how white women, constructed as innocent and fragile bodies in need of protection (by white men), weaponise their position by

claiming victimhood through tearful displays against racialised women who speak out against white supremacy. Here, racialised women are portrayed as threatening, aggressive, and undeserving of sympathy. Ahmed (2004) succinctly describes how emotions ‘stick’ to bodies differently depending on gender, race, and class.

Ahmed’s (2006) work on Queer Phenomenology explored how the world is experienced through our bodies. She similarly argued that whiteness shapes the spaces we inhabit and that some bodies are made welcome, or are ‘orientated’ towards being welcomed, as they align with the norms of the space, while others are not. Ahmed (2006) encourages us to develop an awareness of how institutions and public spaces centre some lives while marginalising others. She urges us to notice whose bodies are able to express emotion as part of reclaiming identity and whose are not.

Reclaiming identity includes the reclamation of emotion (Found poems, *Everything Everywhere; The scars of colonisation in the frames of reference*). In this process, we are invited to consider emotion as a form of knowledge that provides political insight into our emotional truths against dominant oppressive structures (Lorde, 1984). In Audre Lorde’s essay “The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism”, she welcomes the solidarity of white women who can move past their own guilt and engage their privileges in dismantling white supremacy. She reminds us that it is not Black and racialised women’s anger that is “dripping down over this globe like a diseased liquid. It is not my anger that launches rockets... slaughters children in cities... bent upon the annihilation of all of us” (Lorde, 1984, p. 126). Audre Lorde reframes the anger of racialised women as expressions of love and care. Love and care for our communities that compel us to refuse to suppress our anger, as this serves as a source of power. Embracing our emotions is part of living a feminist life and something that can be viewed as powerful (Ahmed, 2017).

Sara Ahmed uses the term ‘Killjoy feminist’ to describe those individuals who point to issues and refuse to comply in spaces merely for the sake of keeping the peace. She urges us to be ‘wilful’ (p. 66), to intervene against injustice, and to confront colonial systems as a means of reclaiming our identities. LB Simpson’s (2017c) concept of ‘generative refusal’ encourages us to develop alternative ways to reclaim our identities that nurture our wholeness by reconnecting with our own knowledge systems, engaging with the land, and forming relationships that are not predicated on transactional interactions. This aligns with the findings presented in this thesis.

Resisting colonial narratives

The results in this chapter present a complex picture of resisting colonial narratives. Contradiction arises in resisting, as noted by some women who recognised that reconstructing and reclaiming identities also requires critique. Resistance involves unlearning the internal ways in which we have been oppressed, how we think and remember our histories, and engaging in refusal, as has been found in the literature cited this far.

South Asian scholar Uma Narayan (1997) discussed how South Asian women must navigate a dual consciousness, which involves steering themselves through the cultural expectations of their community and the external stereotypes imposed by the West. This notion was articulated by women in this study. Narayan (1997) echoed Patricia Hill Collins' emphasis on self-definition and resisting the multiple intersections of oppression based on race, gender, and class. Collins (2022) argued that Black women's consciousness is rooted in creating self-defined identities that are essential for resisting stereotypes and achieving empowerment. Resisting colonial narratives involves recognising how colonialism impacts individuals' lives (Fanon, 2008). This awareness is the first step.

Sara Ahmed (2017) framed resistance as 'willfulness.' She observed how willfulness is subject to who is sharing. For instance, "speaking of a wrong is heard as being in the wrong" (p.66). This quote illustrates how resisting colonial narratives involves naming and speaking out against injustice; however, it is the speaker who is being judged and not the content. This impacts how the message is then being heard. Throughout both collaging days, participants had also shared anecdotes from their own lives whilst making their art at how they had been judged and considered 'trouble' for pointing out a wrong (field notes). Speaking out is also turned into something negative that sticks to the individual who speaks out. This is particularly true for those who are Indigenous, Black, and women of colour, who are considered to have "too much will" (Ahmed, 2017, p. 66).

Resistance is also practiced through unsettling colonial systems that dictate social hierarchies and position western knowledge as superior. LB Simpson's (2017c) work urges us to engage in generative refusal. Here, generative refusal focuses on centring care in relationships with each other and the land, practices rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems. Resistance can also be framed as personal. The results in this chapter illustrate the complexities and contradictions within women's collages and their descriptions. The mixture of fragmented identities and

histories aligns with feminist scholar Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) concept of "borderlands" as a liminal space where there is room for the complexity of identities, histories, and multiplicity that can exist beyond the colonial construct of the binary. It is within this space that the possibility of new forms of identity and ways to resist can emerge. She emphasises a consciousness that can develop to resist binary thinking while embracing ambiguity and transformation. This perspective is supported by bell hooks (1993), who noted that this personal process is part of what is needed to heal as a collective group grounded in love, where women can refuse both colonial erasure and the notion of returning to some pre-colonial utopia.

Moving from resisting colonial narratives to embracing resistance found in everyday acts, South Asian feminist scholar Nabiha Chaudhary (2024) shares in her study how two Pakistani women engaged in resistance by reclaiming the Punjabi language, centring local knowledge and culture, and envisioning futures for women that are grounded in justice. These women recognised that they had to reflect on their own lived experiences to understand how colonialism had shaped their lives. It becomes apparent that the themes of reconstruction, reclaiming identity, and resisting colonial narratives are interconnected, with each informing the other. What emerges as critical is that women are able to recognise how colonisation has impacted their own lives as a step towards critical consciousness. (see Sapara Barton, 2024; Hemphill, 2024).

In addition, resistance to colonial narratives, must be more than epistemic or emotional. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, genuine resistance requires political action that takes the lead from Te Ao Māori when on their Indigenous lands (Jackson, 2020; Tuiono & Dutta, 2019; Ngata & Dutta, 2023). This political work is also collective as framed by Indigenous, Black and women of colour praxis (hooks, 2000b, 2015d; Lorde, 1984).

Healing and reclaiming space and freedom

Healing is inherent in the wisdom of all people. When we can return to those wisdoms of knowing, we create opportunities to make space for settling and healing, both individually and collectively (Clarke & YellowBird, 2021; Jemal et al., 2023; Menakem, 2017). The women's collages expressed this as engaging in decolonial relationships with soil, land, animals, nature, and flora. Throughout the collaging process, all the women involved in this research articulated at one time or another that there were no spaces for South Asian women to come together and feel safe.

The work of healing is rooted in love. To heal is to extend a compassionate balm to oneself and to hold oneself. It involves engaging in practices that promote healing and self-care. Self-care is a revolutionary act, as described unapologetically by the Black feminist scholar, poet, and writer Audre Lorde (1984). The concept of 'self-love' also encompasses community, as Black women found strength in the stories of other women who nurtured their minds, bodies, and spirits. Embodiment facilitator Prentis Hemphill (2024) shares that healing is a restoration of our relationship with ourselves, rather than a destination we reach. Healing can be perceived as a daily practice, a way of being in a loving relationship with ourselves (Lorde, 1984).

Healing cannot occur in isolation; it requires a community. Critical-radical social worker and activist, Alexis Jemal, et al. (2023) contends that for Indigenous, Black, and women of colour working in predominantly white educational institutions, access to spaces for women to come together to engage in storytelling, ritual, and critical consciousness is necessary. Having such spaces supports women in engaging in decolonial practices.

Healing spaces create revolutionary spaces. To reimagine space is to think beyond colonial restraints and embrace Black feminist thinking as outlined above. To recall space is to reconnect with rituals and narratives. To reclaim space is to engage in reflexive practice and to reimagine and reconstruct how we might relate to one another, being mindful of our positionalities (Jones & Larasi et al, 2019). Space held great significance for the women in this research. Women sought to break free from the constraints of colonisation and reunite all the different aspects of themselves.

Being able to tend to our wounds and grief is a necessary part of decolonising, as it helps us find our way back to ourselves (Barton, 2024; Hemphill, 2024). We continue to experience repeated colonial assaults that wound our spirit, which have neither been named nor recognised. Although not explicitly identified as grief, many of the women's collages conveyed this sentiment in some way. Grief made its presence felt during the women's introductions before the collaging began; it erupted as tears and losses when women shared their truths; and it remained silent when women struggled to find the right words to express the complex emotions being felt as they listened to each other's stories, which resonated with their own narratives.

Social justice facilitator Camille Sapara Barton (2024) highlights the role of grief in acknowledging the impacts of colonialism. By creating space for self, she contends, we are provided with ways to understand and tend to our grief. Grief also helps us recognise how to orient ourselves and comprehend the power dynamics and complex histories in which we find ourselves. She writes, “Without feeling into our past, how is it possible to imagine new futures?” (p.14, Barton, 2024). The invitation to tend to our grief offers a pathway that allows us to expand our imaginations. What Barton (2024) encourages us to contemplate is the opportunity for choice when we permit ourselves to grieve: the choice to move beyond the tendencies conditioned in us to see each other within social hierarchies, as competitors, and to accept the levels of inhumanity that Indigenous peoples and those from the global South face. In this choice, grief could also support us in creating space where we are encouraged to feel alive, to connect more deeply with the expansive versions of ourselves that exist as whole human beings. There are more worlds than the one created for us, which limits our relationships to mere transactions while living under white supremacy. Women expressed the desire for wholeness.

Grief provides a way to clear space, encouraging us to take different actions that move us towards what we love and care for most deeply. Grief, as Potawatomi scientist and writer Robin Wall Kimmerer (2020) reminds us, is part of a broader process of repair that involves our reconnection to the land and our relationships with more than just the human world. It offers a powerful antidote to colonisation, which only serves to disconnect. In their collages, women engage in reclaiming and reconstructing their own stories of who they might have been had it not been for their colonial histories. Prison abolitionist Angela Davis describes resistance to colonial impacts as grasping things at the root (Davis, 1990). This involves training our gaze on the root causes to remove them. Community is vital, as being in a community together stems the disorientation and disconnection from one another. It gives us a place where we can sit together in our differences.

The relevance of healing and grieving to how South Asian women experience racialisation and colonialism suggests that addressing our grief is also a crucial precondition for our intergroup relations with one another. This will be addressed further in chapter 6.

As bell hooks (2015d) reminds us, sisterhood among women cannot be based on connecting through shared victimhood. Identifying as victims can aid in perpetuating the harms of patriarchy, racism, and classism. There needs to be a focus on political solidarity. Political

solidarity, as described here, means having a conscious commitment to working towards ending sexism, racism, class, and white supremacist oppressions.

Being in revolutionary spaces creates pathways to solidarity. By engaging in spaces where we can articulate our experiences with the system of whiteness and the power it holds over our relationships and lives, education centred on Indigenous, Black, and women of colour feminisms fosters the political solidarity necessary for collective progress towards liberation. Merely gathering under the banner of shared victimhood is insufficient, as we are all oppressed as women. Participation in such spaces is a revolutionary act, as they also prioritise love. These spaces can illuminate our inherent power and demonstrate how personal growth contributes to our understanding of existence, revealing that our individual experiences are interconnected.

Dorret Jones, Marai Larasi et al., (2019) contend that safe re-created spaces are opportunities for healing. Even though the context they speak to is spaces for Black British and South Asian women experiencing domestic violence, what is relevant here is that they connect this to the violence of the colonising project. In reading their work, what strikes me is the connection made between healing and social change. To heal while we engage in social change is how we can also care for one another in community. There is power in healing and how we might show up in our relationships with each other without inadvertently triggering our trauma in one another. What becomes significant here is the centrality of love, which was not anticipated in relation to the question posed in this chapter: How do women of South Asian descent make sense of their own experiences of colonisation?

To conclude this section, healing in the context of South Asian women being in relationship with other racialised women, including Māori women needs to be both epistemic and political. This discussion will be extended in chapters 5 and 6.

4.6 Meaningful contributions

The method I adopted in this part of the research makes a meaningful contribution to the literature by serving as a practical response within the community, aiming to both engage and support racialised women in discussions about how we might decolonise our identities while simultaneously strengthening our sense of self and understanding the diverse contexts of women's lives. The findings from this chapter offer several practical applications for

community implementation. Firstly, there is a need for spaces where women can gather and participate in a collaging process that provides support for collective healing from the impacts of colonisation, as well as a nurturing environment to share and learn from each other's histories and perspectives.

Women highlighted a significant lack of spaces for South Asian women to engage both safely and critically. This is identified as a key application that would foster active solidarity and contribute to social change. Furthermore, creating such spaces also presents an opportunity for education around Indigenous, Black, and women of colour feminisms, which can help restore identity and offer strategies to resist colonial narratives while centring decolonial relationships. Throughout the collaging sessions, all the women expressed the need for South Asian women to come together. Many women lacked support networks in Aotearoa. Reflecting on the women's lived experiences within their family networks, nine women were among the first generation of their families to arrive in Aotearoa. Five women had no family here besides their own children. Only one woman had lived in Aotearoa for over 30 years and had multiple family members and an extended network.

This research captures the diverse and rich narratives and insights of South Asian women with a variety of identities and migration journeys. These include Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan Tamil, Fiji-Indian, Afghan, Solomon Islands, Indian, Pakistani, Māori-Fiji-Indian-Pākehā, and Indian. Although women's religious faith, age groups, and generational responses were not a focus of this study, I observed that the barriers shared by women in relationships with other racialised women, including Māori women, transcended lines of faith and age.

4.7 Limitations

While the approach taken in this study enabled rich exploration of the research question, there were several limitations. Firstly, there are potential advantages and risks in using found poetry in research. Advantages include uplifting academic representation of data that creates impact (Commeyras & Montsi, 2000; Patrick, 2016). It also consistently ensures that what is shared is concise (Patrick, 2016). The disadvantages include missing insights and reducing participants' voices (Furman et al., 2006; Lyons, 2008; Patrick, 2016). One way to mitigate this risk is for researchers to use this tool to share their own processes, thereby promoting transparency. By outlining my own approach to using found poetry in both the method in this

chapter and the methodology (see Chapter 2), I sought to mitigate this limitation (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Patrick, 2016).

This study did not capture any experiences of women who identified as Nepali, Maldivian, and Bhutanese within the broader description of what constitutes South Asian (see Chapter Three). Given that the intention of this study was to illustrate the rich and deep narratives of women and to show the diversity of women's experiences of colonialism, further research could examine a larger group of women to include the experiences of those missing from this study. It is crucial to explore how class, rural/urban settings, and generational differences impact the experiences of South Asian women and what decolonial relationships look like with other racialised women, including Indigenous women.

What might also be of interest is considering collaboration on research, with an Indigenous scholar, that poses similar questions regarding Māori women and their relationships with South Asian women as a way of understanding these perspectives from a different point of view, uncovering other potential results not found here. Looking to transnational settings, it would be of interest to explore what similar relationships might look like in Australia, highlighting the potential for building trans-Tasman solidarities across the two settler colonial contexts.

4.8 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to explore how women of South Asian descent in Aotearoa experience solidarities with other racialised women, including Māori women. This chapter specifically investigated the sub-question: How do women of South Asian descent make sense of their own experiences of colonisation?

The results identified three themes: reconstructing and reclaiming identity; participants recognising the disruption that colonisation has imposed on their own lives and the lineages they come from, along with engaging in the reclamation of cultural practices, knowledge systems, and their relationships with land, animals, and fauna. For this reclamation to happen, it is essential for women to understand the myriad ways in which colonialism has impacted their lives as part of a process that enables them to disrupt it. The second theme was resisting colonial narratives, which involved engaging in a critical consciousness and decolonising mindsets that promote more life-affirming relationships as opposed to extractive, harmful

interactions. The final theme, healing and reclaiming space and freedom, highlighted the need to grieve the ongoing harm that colonialism has caused to racialised women. It is crucial to have spaces where South Asian women can come together to learn about each other's histories and lived realities. Healing was recognised as a necessary pathway towards decolonising relationships with one another, allowing for tending to the wounds and grief created by colonialism. This chapter highlights that reclaiming identity, resisting colonial narratives and healing cannot be just about epistemic recovery, but also requires collective political action.

The next chapter describes the findings from the one to one conversations and highlights the challenges and barriers in forming solidarities.

Interlude 4: Model Minorities

The Indian community is now the third-largest ethnic group in Aotearoa, part of a larger South Asian diaspora. Ara Alam-Simmons argues that these growing communities should show solidarity with Māori rather than aligning with the colonial state's depiction of them as model minorities.

At Holi, a Hindu festival held in early February, the prime minister Christopher Luxon thanked the South Asian diaspora for their contributions to New Zealand.

He said: "In a world where we need a lot more unity and tolerance of diversity and all of that good stuff, a big thank you to our South Asian diaspora. You have made New Zealand a much better place, richer culturally, socially [and] economically.

"Your contribution to New Zealand is incredibly special. We know how hard you work. You often take on two or three jobs to get that first house, first business. You are a great role model to all New Zealanders, and that's why we are so grateful to you in this community."

Crowds cheered at what seemed like a fairly innocuous message, celebrating the contributions of immigrant labour, and casting these communities as hardworking, compliant, dutiful, and successful — despite the odds.

Our South Asian communities receive such messaging regularly and consistently. And it's easy for us to be hoodwinked by such language.

It's a message that values South Asians primarily as an economic unit and frames us as monolithic, flattened, model minority communities.

This is a corrosive message that must be resisted.

Luxon's words reflected a broader settler colonial narrative, which praises immigrant labour for making New Zealand "a much better place". The recognition is conditional on such communities remaining compliant and contributing their low-paying labour.

That same week, Luxon reinforced the idea that Māori are secondary in the narrative of building a better New Zealand. Just a few days before praising the Hindu community at Holi, he was absent from Waitangi after refusing to be there for this year's Waitangi Day celebrations.

It seems that diversity is acceptable as long as it serves the economic needs of the state without challenging the status quo. For the prime minister, during Waitangi week, it was South Asians

who were making the country “richer culturally, socially and economically”, being celebrated for their “hard work”, and for being “role models” to “all New Zealanders”.

Can you imagine him saying those same things about Māori?

It feels like Māori are more relevant to Luxon as entertainers on the global stage. He took a kapa haka group to India with him last week. I found this cringeworthy given his government’s methodical dismantling of Māori rights.

Language shapes worlds and narratives that stretch into our collective futures. His framing puts South Asian communities in opposition to Māori communities, who continue to fight for justice on their own land.

It appears that, for Luxon, diversity is more about assimilating immigrant communities to align with the economic needs of the country.

It’s natural, of course, for our South Asian communities (and other communities) to want to be accepted by their adopted countries. But when they hear these positive messages often enough, they begin to believe them. For those who are busy toiling and surviving, there is no time to pause and reflect on what these messages really mean, and how their status as a so-called “model minority” plays into harmful narratives about the undeserving “minorities” who refuse to conform. Many will be unaware of the historical context behind the claims of an Indigenous people who never ceded sovereignty. This can lead to behaviour that harms those people.

One example is retail crime reform. Sunny Kaushal, an Auckland-based Indian-born business owner, is chairing a [Ministerial advisory group](#) for victims of retail crime. The group was established in 2024 to provide ministers with independent advice and recommendations.

This is the same Sunny Kaushal who in [2023](#) advocated for sending “14-year-old ratbags” to military-style boot camps as a “circuit breaker”. He also said: “Youth crime is not the fault of Captain Cook.” And, “Kiwis went through two World Wars, the great depression and the 1980s reforms without smashing up a corner dairy.”

Such comments deny the ongoing historical legacies that settler colonialism has left on present-day Aotearoa. The implicit suggestion is that if Pākehā have been able to survive hardships, there are no excuses for Māori. This thinking isn’t unusual among South Asians. Across our communities, there are few opportunities to connect and be in meaningful relationships with

Māori in everyday situations that offer alternative truths. We're just not part of each other's lives, generally speaking.

One of the advisory group's proposals is to give shop owners more power to detain suspected shoplifters. Māori voices appear to be absent in these recommendations.

Indians and, more broadly, South Asians involved in such reforms (whether it be in health, education, or anywhere else) need to reflect on the real impacts of their participation. We should be vocally advocating for policies that address the root causes of crime, such as poverty and the cost-of-living crisis, rather than aligning ourselves with policies that perpetuate racial profiling and create further opportunities for harm.

This type of settler colonial programming turns the screws on already faulty beliefs, entrenching an attitude of: "If they don't care, why should we?"

It also harms the South Asian diaspora itself — which is great news for the colonial project. The British may have physically left India after 200 years of colonial rule, but the scars left by their occupation remain in the psyche of those it dominated.

During their rule of India, the British became adept at weaponising Indian groups against each other, which included exacerbating the impacts of caste, and playing on differences in people's ethnicities and religious affiliations. Caste, as a way of categorising people, was particularly important. The caste system sets out rules on who someone can marry and socialise with, and the type of work they can do. It is a hierarchy that keeps people in their place, locked into a structure that serves those at the top. Many Indians were also forced into indentured servitude — better described as slavery — and sent to work in places such as Fiji, Africa and the Caribbean.

The colonial project of exacerbating division didn't just end when the British left. These divisions became deeply ingrained across the diaspora — and if you're part of the diaspora, as I am, you know there is very deep work to do to unpick the indescribable levels of violence done. When you couple this history with hearing colonial messaging against a minority in a settler colony, it's easy to feel invited into a narrative of division.

I also get a feeling that this government is primarily engaging with a particular section of the Indian diaspora — the section that does not care about, nor concern itself with, the fight for Indigenous rights of Māori.

Given the growing South Asian diaspora here in Aotearoa — Indians now make up the third largest ethnic group in the country — the question is this: How can we resist continued colonial programming and pay attention to what is not being said about the realities of tangata whenua in the places where we are?

Our responsibility must go beyond symbolic displays of solidarity and critically engage with the systems that harm tangata whenua.

I write this knowing that, as communities, we struggle to even show up for one another.

Alastair McClymont, the lawyer for Daman Kumar, a New Zealand-born Indian teenager who was facing deportation, recently expressed his deep frustration over the Indian community's reluctance to speak up for the Kumar family. Aside from a few voices, the community was largely silent. He observed that there was a "desire not to upset the government, to not interfere with their ability to take a selfie with an important government minister or to brag to all and sundry about having lunch with the prime minister. Like all good colonial subjects, the priority is to be seen as being an obedient lapdog to their colonial masters".

We must question our own actions, whether in politics, business or everyday life.

We need to confront the fact that we are "settlers" too.

We have plenty of examples to draw from across Aotearoa of people refusing colonial programming.

Hana Rāwhiti Maipi-Clarke rejected the Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi Bill in Parliament, as many thousands also refused its intent by walking the streets in mass protest during hikoi mō Te Tiriti.

Then there was Malay-Tamil Nabila Husna Abdul Rahman's powerful submission against the bill, where she drew parallels between the treatment of Indigenous peoples in her home country of Singapore, and Aotearoa.

Community activist, Dr Sapna Samant, works with the Indian community to encourage understanding of what it means to be tau iwi.

Duality, a Sri Lankan youth support group, rallied over 150 people to submit against the bill. They drew on lessons from their own colonial history, including the Kandyan Convention of 1815, where colonial powers manipulated language to strip sovereignty from one of the kingdoms, allowing the British to consolidate their control over all of Sri Lanka.

A group of Bangalis and others from the South Asian diaspora created a Toitū Te Tiriti banner holding multiple languages (Urdu, Sri Lankan Tamil, Farsi, Bengali, Malayalam, Gujarati, Punjabi, Hindi, Marathi) to demonstrate support at hīkoi.

These are but a few examples.

Our collective future in this country depends on our willingness to show up — not as obedient subjects of the Crown, but as those who refuse to participate in the settler colonial project of disenfranchising Māori on their own whenua.

We need many more from across our South Asian diaspora who call Aotearoa home to show solidarity. Not enough of us are yet showing up, and we know it.

The colonial project won't end for any of us here in Aotearoa if we don't.

Chapter 5: The daily choices we make

We can be in spaces where we can both enjoy the spoils of colonialism and discrimination at the same time (Stephenson, 2003)

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to focus on the results from the one-on-one conversations. This chapter highlights the challenges and barriers that exist in forming solidarities. It reveals whiteness as a structure and casteism and also points to how we can resist and unsettle these structures by engaging in love and care.

Our experiences of needing to survive as racialised communities must not be shaped solely by our experiences of white supremacy. Our solidarities should be rooted in the love theorised by thinkers who are Black, Indigenous, and women of colour. These ideas transcend the necessity for us all to be the same; what unites us is our shared suffering and resistance. bell hooks (2015a) reminds us that if we focus exclusively on the pain caused by colonialism, we risk overlooking the possibilities for collective transformation in society. Love can create alternative pathways to relationships and solidarities that centre on joy, interdependence, and accountability.

The observation made at the opening of this chapter by Stephenson (2003) captures the tension that exists for racialised people living in a settler colony. As tauiwi of colour residing on land that Māori have been dispossessed of, we also bear responsibilities in ensuring that we both honour and uphold the foundational contract of this country, which is Te Tiriti o Waitangi (see Dam, 2022, 2024). Ruth De Souza and Donna Cormack (2009) illustrate how colonisation continues to shape our relationships with one another in the construction of ‘competing others’. This remains a key colonial tool and technique in reproducing unequal power relationships that seeks to obscure the power held by White supremacy. De Souza and Cormack note that this technique can diminish solidarity between oppressed groups.

Avtar Brah (1996) states how racialised groups can get caught up in the colonial sandwich, illustrating the tensions that exist between Indigenous and racialised groups. The latter can benefit from some of the privileges that colonialism affords them while living on Indigenous land but also facing harsh discrimination. Black feminist Saidiya Hartman (2019) reminds us of the choices we can make in our own lives. She asks us to remember our inherent power in

choosing which inheritances we want to both let go of and keep alive. In doing so, we need to confront the totality of the situation we are in as racialised peoples. This also means realising that we have been internally oppressed by colonisation. In the Aotearoa, New Zealand context, this also means acknowledging that we are settlers of colour. In short, we need to reckon with the implications, complicity, and accountability of life-diminishing systems of colonialism and white supremacy, and move away from colonial thinking (hooks, 2012). We must form solidarities with others who challenge these life-diminishing systems.

This chapter continues the conversation begun in Chapter 4 about imagining who we are without colonisation through the extracted themes of **Reconstruction and reclaiming identity, Resistance to colonial narratives, Healing, and reclaiming space and freedom.**

This chapter addresses the sub-questions:

- **What do the experiences of the relationships South Asian women have with other racialised women, including Māori women, tell us about solidarities?**
- **What possible pathways and strategies exist for strengthening solidarities between South Asian women with other racialised women including Māori women?**

In responding to these questions, I provide a review of what current research reveals about the challenges, barriers, and solidarities among racialised communities, as well as what we know about South Asian women and South Asian communities. This is followed by the method, analytical approach, and results. I then discuss the findings and their significance. The chapter concludes with several implications raised by these findings, along with limitations and future directions for research.

Colonialism and white supremacy seek to hide the power we have as racialised people. Multiple Indigenous, Black and women of colour scholars seek to remind us how powerful we are as racialised people. We only need to look back at our own histories of how we have resisted British colonial rule and white supremacy (see Collins, 1990; Hartman, 2019; Pihama, 2005; Sanghera, 2021; LB Simpson, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c; Smith, 2012; Watego, 2021).

Indigenous and Black women and women of colour have been able to speak powerfully about their lived realities as racialised women in a settler state under the ongoing violence of white supremacy, heteropatriarchy and anti-Black racism (Bailey, 2010; hook, 2015c, 2015d;

Lorde, 1984; Olufemi, 2020, see also Ahmed, 2017; Chilisa, 2020). bell hooks' extensive body of scholarship affirms that the margins, where racialised people are pushed to, can actually provide a powerful lens through which to view the world. She asserts that power lies here, in that we can imagine other ways of being together (hooks, 2000b). She reframes the margins as a place of accessing other knowledges and viewpoints about how the dominating systems of white supremacy work so that we can use this knowledge to create communities outside of colonial logics. This is consistent with other studies where power is reframed as the capacity to survive, imagine, and refuse colonial logic (hooks, 2000b Lorde, 1984; LB Simpson, 2017c).

There are various ways in which solidarity has been defined so far in this thesis by the literature and by the end of this chapter from the participants in this research. These have been to strategically unite individuals committed to a collective vision, engaging in radical honesty, accountability, self-determination, and mutual growth with one another. Solidarity also means to be prepared to engage in reflection and humility (Beltrán & Mehrotra, 2015; Brown, 2017; Olufemi, 2020). Chandra Mohanty (2003) encapsulates her understanding of solidarity as "...mutuality, accountability and the recognition of common interests as the basis of relationships among diverse communities" (Mohanty, 2003, p. 7). What she recognises is that rather than making assumptions about shared oppressions among people, it highlights communities that have chosen to work and fight together, with diversity and difference as central values. Solidarity in this thesis is defined in this way. Black feminist, Lethabo King (2020), observes that our differences as racialised communities must not be flattened and erased, but must be named, honoured and sat with in ways that can help us to build ethical relationships together as opposed to barriers to solidarity.

Kimberlee Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality framework acknowledges difference. The framework explores the oppressions resulting from the overlapping identities of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Critics argue that the framework has limitations, particularly in its ability to explain how different social categories interconnect; it often overlooks Indigenous or non-Western experiences that do not account for colonisation, settler colonisation, migration, caste, and other oppressions that cannot be fully understood through the intersectionality lens. Such omissions risk erasing the complex realities of marginalised peoples' experiences (May 2014). Furthermore, it does not consider how entrenched ways of thinking are often relied upon, particularly those from Indigenous and other non-Western

knowledge systems, which can lead to misrepresentations of the marginalised. With this awareness, it is beneficial to explore how this framework might be extended to highlight shared struggles around heteropatriarchy, colonisation, and racism, which also intersect with both caste and class among South Asian women and other racialised women, including Māori women.

There are important observations to consider regarding some challenges faced within the South Asian diaspora in forming relationships with other racialised communities. Maya Bhardwaj's (2021) research indicated that the majority of South Asian activists fighting for gender and economic justice and prison abolition tended to be from "caste-oppressed, working-class, marginalised faith and other marginalised backgrounds." Another study by Sangay Mishra (2016) illustrated that South Asian migrants in America felt they had less in common politically with more privileged South Asian Americans than with Black Americans due to class, caste, and nationality divisions among various South Asian communities. These studies demonstrate that caste, class, and personal politics are significant. The intersection of caste and race became visible in her research.

This further complicates the experience of racism for South Asian women, where casteism is a form of social supremacy that discriminates. In his blog, Mohan Dutta (2025a) discusses how upper-caste Indian women in the diaspora leverage both race and gender to create pathways of upward mobility for themselves in work and society. His post explores how the pedagogy of caste teaches upper-caste Indians (which includes Indian women) and provides "lessons on merit, hierarchical notions of merit, the biological basis of merit" (para.8). Caste pedagogy operates similarly to white supremacy. South Asian historian Vijay Prashad (2000) highlights how South Asian Americans aspire to approximate whiteness; aspirations he contends are anti-black and help sustain racial hierarchies. There appears to be no desire to expose, name, and dismantle the intersecting forms of violence involving caste and class. Isabel Wilkerson's book *Caste: the origins of our discontent* (2020) powerfully conjures the metaphor of caste as bone, with skin representing race. This compelling imagery depicts the living, moving, ingrained nature of both caste and race that can exist in the very marrow of individuals.

Caste is not generally acknowledged in New Zealand's research literature. Aside from the CARE institute at Massey University, led by Prof. Mohan Dutta, this topic remains under-theorised.

Savita Bhashkaran's (2023) study, which explored the experiences of 12 Indian (im)migrant women managers in relation to leadership career progression in New Zealand, described how some participants perceived a lack of support or encouragement from other Indian women in the workplace or within the Indian community. She noted in her findings that her participants described experience of distance and low engagement in being mentored by other Indian women managers. These accounts were not analysed further within this small sample. Although Bhashkaran (2023) did refer to caste discrimination affecting Indian women in India, her study may have benefitted from also considering the possibilities of how caste, migration, or the racialised labour conditions that exist in Aotearoa might also contribute to these dynamics. What is left open in this study is how the structural conditions around how the women are racialised in work settings, the intra community hierarchies that may exist and the scarcity of leadership opportunities impact the relationships between the Indian women.

Caste is further complicated by class. Caste and class consciousness involve beliefs about one's economic circumstances. In diasporic communities, this is often masked by racial or ethnic identity (Jain 2001; Sharma 2004). Both caste and class place people. Tolbert (1995) uses the metaphors of 'blood' and 'bread' to describe the politics of location, where 'blood' represents family ties and 'bread' represents a person's economic status. She contends:

Together the 'facts of blood and bread' locate each of us socially and politically at any given moment in relation to our access to power, our relative freedom from oppressive treatment, and our assurance of our own human dignity, integrity, and worth (p. 331–2, Tolbert, 1995).

In the South Asian context, 'blood' represents family and caste, while 'bread' signifies class, including economic and educational backgrounds. Caste and class are interlinked. Sen (2005) adds that those from the Indian and South Asian diaspora tend to maintain their caste, class, and cultural identities from India when they migrate to other countries. Sharma (2004) shares how this attachment acts as a defence mechanism against the insecurity people experience in a host country and serves as a means to compensate for the loss of status they encounter.

Amit Sarwal (2018) found that the psychological and symbolic importance of caste influences people's perceptions and behaviours within the Australian Indian diaspora. Sarwal's study aimed to fill a research gap in Australia by exploring the association between caste and class in Indian and Sri Lankan communities. Sampath (2015) contends that race

acts as a form of class in that it can function to exclude, marginalise, discriminate against, and privilege individuals. To this end, Sarwal (2018) argues that class, caste, and race are so interconnected among Indian-Australians that this logic is used to feel superior to Aborigines and other immigrants perceived to be of lower class. Given that this is also an under-theorised area in Aotearoa, New Zealand, it would be a beneficial topic to explore.

Internalised oppression impacts solidarity with other racialised women. Shalina Khanna's (2022) Master's thesis explored how middle-class, second-generation South Asian Canadian mothers challenged anti-Black racism. She noted that varying degrees of racist beliefs existed within the diaspora, which seemed inevitable if raised by post-colonial South Asian parents (SAPs). These parents often reinforced anti-Blackness due to their own ingrained white supremacist beliefs; beliefs, as Khanna contends, that exist in many South Asian countries today. Khanna (2022) identified the need for SAPs to reflect on their internalised racism, a form of internalised oppression based on race. It was crucial for them to acknowledge their role in perpetuating colourism, stereotypes, and white supremacy, and to find a way to reorient/reframe their relationship with Black communities. This supports Layla Saad's (2020) observation that being able to "dig deep into the parts of yourself that you are not aware of" (p. 31) is foundational and necessary work.

In considering how we are internally oppressed, it is important to reflect on how racism can manifest in our bodily habits, and when we recognise this, how we can challenge it within ourselves. Helen Ngo (2016) argues that racism is not just about thoughts and beliefs but also about habits. She invites us to perceive racism as a habit formed by the body. Gestures such as body movements and facial expressions reveal an individual's feelings or thoughts, which can also be interpreted as a form of 'speech'. Ngo (2016) shares that racism is also entrenched in how our bodies interact with others, influencing the way we might emotionally react even if we do not consciously endorse racism. This is illustrated by a vignette of a white woman who clutches her purse tightly and stiffens her body when a Black man enters the lift she is in. This example not only demonstrates how we respond to certain racialised individuals based on our ingrained bodily behaviours but also how we have been shaped by societal stereotypes and norms. Merleau-Ponty's (2012) idea of "sedimentation" describes how our bodies react over time to others, becoming deeply embedded and feeling quite natural. Ngo (2016) employs this concept to argue that these habits are not fixed and can be disrupted by engaging in discussions about recognising our own bodily responses towards

others and questioning them in order to interrupt unhelpful bodily responses, whether we are aware of them or not.

Such systems of supremacist violence disconnect us from our bodies, our communities and our abilities to feel safe with one another. This is not an accidental disconnection; it is very much the colonial tool in operation. This disconnection brings hypervigilance and numbness, making it hard for us to imagine anything other than the current reality we are in (Hemphill, 2024; Kinouani, 2021; Menakem, 2017; Olufemi, 2021; Sapara Barton, 2024). Not only does this disconnect us from our bodies but it also limits opportunities for us to be able to co-regulate with others (Porges, 2011).

Doctor, therapist and trauma specialist Resmaa Menakem (2017) reminds us that when our fight-flight-freeze-fawn responses are activated, these are embodied responses to centuries of systematic oppression that our bodies remember even without consciously naming this. Menakem (2017) highlights the role of the body in being able to heal itself and the role it plays in passing down racialised trauma across generations if not attended to. His approach avoids pathologising individuals but instead centres on multiple forms of knowing to respond to trauma that looks away from white dominant perspectives that do not consider the impacts of colonisation. Jehangir (2021) adds that Menakem's work recognises the ongoing impacts of historical trauma on present-day experiences and offers pathways for mending hearts and bodies. Racialised communities/people need to be able to heal from colonial violence. Our nervous systems are hard-wired to keep us safe and keep things predictable. This is a survival mechanism that is particularly relevant for Indigenous, Black, brown and other marginalised bodies who have often been the ones subjected to varying degrees of violence at the hands of oppressive systems. Dr Elena Ruiz (2024) studies violence and how it is reproduced in society. She argues that racialised trauma needs to be framed as a tool of settler colonial violence rather than severing this from the colonial project.

Scholars Noah Romero, Marta Estéllés, and Wairehu Grant (2023), in theorising Māori-Philippine solidarities, highlight how we can decentre colonial narratives by focusing on Indigenous perspectives that support communal relationships. They encourage a focus on shared histories, recognising their interconnectedness with Māori rather than solely focusing on their distinct identities and experiences as Filipino people. What they call for is not just to coexist but also to collaborate, engaging in activities grounded in mutual respect and learning from one another.

Activist Teano Tuiono and Mohan Dutta (2019), in their white paper on solidarities in anti-racist struggles, argue for a framework of solidarity that calls on us as Māori–(Im)migrant communities to learn about each other’s struggles while also respecting our differences. This also engages with a political call for action. This is further elaborated by activist Tina Ngata and Mohan Dutta (2023), who recognise the crucial need for Māori and (Im)migrant communities to deeply engage with each other in conversation around our respective histories of colonial oppression so that we are better placed to understand where our histories converge and diverge. They also argue for the need for solidarities that support the political work defined by Te Ao Māori, which includes Tiriti-centred constitutional transformation, land back movements, and Indigenous-led climate justice movements. Ngata and Dutta (2023) also warn us against the co-option of Māori cultural values by communities that seek to engage in performative solidarities with Māori while hiding behind supremacist ideologies. In one observation, they note:

Hindutva groups within Aotearoa have focused upon Māori cultural traditions as a bridge between cultures, upon which is loaded harmful far-right ideas of supremacy, persecution and exclusion. In understanding the far right underpinnings of Hindutva, solidarity can then be built with migrant communities upon the shared concerns of far-right harm and cultural co-option when applied to Māori and South-Asian migrant communities alike (p.11).

New Zealand Muslim scholar and community members, Shemana Cassim, Jennifer Khan-Janif, and Nuke Martiarini (2023) explored solidarities between (Im)migrant Muslims and Māori, focusing on the values of respect, reciprocity, manaakitanga (hospitality), and whanaungatanga (relationship-building); values that they contend can foster these solidarities. Adab (respectful conduct) and aklaq (good manners) are Islamic cultural values. This understanding is useful for identifying points of connection and building on the strength of their work this thesis seeks to unpack the sites of supremacist ideology that can exist as a way to strengthening solidarities.

While this research did not focus on faith, four of the participants were Muslim women who shared experiences of colonial thinking imposed by others within their own families and/or communities. There are political and historical differences, and power asymmetries that exists within the Muslim diaspora in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Additionally, Muslims come

from a range of different ethnicities and classes, with diverse migration and colonisation histories. This was also apparent from those from Hindu households. This underscores the notion that internalised oppression stemming from colonialism transcends the confines of religious belief, rather than serving as an antidote. This is a crucial reckoning that we, as racialised communities, must confront (Hartman, 2019). What the last few examples of solidarity here in Aotearoa and globally show is that being in relationships that foster solidarity need to move beyond sameness and essentialising ourselves based on similar cultures and values. The examples offer insight into bringing our differences together, learning about each other's lived realities and histories and coming together under a collective political vision.

This thesis addresses a specific under-theorised gap in the research, as there has been little research to explore the lived experiences of South Asian women in Aotearoa with regard to their relationships with other racialised women, including Māori women. It examines how these epistemic spaces can serve as sites for political solidarity, while also acknowledging that such solidarities are not straightforward, as they involve both complicity and complexity.

This research deliberately focuses on women. Indigenous, Black and women of colour are often significant figures in their communities and families and play pivotal roles in culture and language transfer to the next generation (Wilson, Acuff, & Kraehe (2022). Understanding this also identifies that Indigenous, Black and women of colour are powerful sites for forging and strengthening solidarities with one another, which aligns with the literature (Combahee River collective, 1977).

The rest of this chapter will discuss the method, analysis, findings, and discussions from the one-on-one conversations with 15 South Asian women, explaining why these findings are significant. It will conclude with the implications and applications of this study, its limitations, and future research directions. The three themes that were extracted after analysing these conversations were: “solidarity with others”, “barriers to solidarities”, and “routes to conscientisation”. Together, these themes illustrate the multiple, intersecting systems of oppression women faced and how they navigated them. These findings also provide insight into how women confronted their own relationships with these racist systems, and how they understood and reinterpreted them in ways that allowed them to stand in solidarity with others.

5.2 Method

All 15 participants who were involved in the collage phase were invited to engage in one-on-one conversations. These were held over Zoom (between 90 to 120 minutes) at a mutually convenient time following the collaging. Rapport and connection had already been built with the women as part of the collaging day, creating an easy conversation style. I decided to use a semi-structured approach so that I could respond flexibly to individuals and be open to what they wanted to share (Adams, 2015). This semi-structured approach also allowed space for the women once again to share stories and elaborate on anything they needed to.

All participants received a \$50 koha for their participation, and one participant received an additional koha to support their accessibility needs. In total there were 15 participants. The semi-structured questions were designed to capture an understanding of what women's relationships with other racialised women, including Māori women, looked like (see Appendix C for the semi-structured question schedule). An example of a question that women were invited to respond to is:

What things help form solidarity with other women of colour, and what makes solidarity harder with other women of colour?

- Prompt (depending on answer given): specifically in relation to other South Asian women
- Prompt (depending on answer given): specifically in relation to other tauwi women of colour
- Prompt (depending on answer given): specifically in relation to Māori women

Potential risks in this approach and method were that participants might have felt uncomfortable sharing stories related to the topic; i.e., racism and discrimination. I ensured that participants were comfortable addressing this throughout the process. Participants were reassured that they could skip questions, have a break or end the session at any point. These ground rules were repeated at the outset of the one-to-one conversation session. My ethics application outlined my process for ensuring my participants' safety. My background as a skilled facilitator and positive psychology practitioner also assisted me, as a researcher, to navigate conversations safely. If sensitive information did arise, this would not be published.

The women who participated in the conversations came from a range of South Asian ancestries, which also included other ancestries. These were Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan Tamil, Pakistani, Indian, Fiji-Indian, Solomon Islander, Māori, Guyanese, Afghan and Pākehā. The women were aged between 21 and 60 years. Three women were born in New Zealand, with four women arriving as primary-aged children. The rest came as adults from both the Global South and Global North (these terms are used in this way to describe the general geographical locations that women came from, which also protects confidentiality).

Ethics approval for this research was received from the University of Waikato Te Kāhui Manu Tāiko: Human Research Ethics Committee (see Chapter 2). Women signed a consent form prior to engaging in this research, which covered the collage making and one-to-one conversations. All the conversations were recorded on Zoom and transcribed manually. I sent a copy of each of the completed transcripts to participants for checking. At this point, participants were also reminded of the opportunity to withdraw their consent. No one withdrew consent. To protect confidentiality, women were given the option to provide a pseudonym for themselves or have me choose one for them. This would anonymise any subsequent quotes used from their transcripts. Women were asked to choose a name based on a woman or person that they admired in their own lives. This request was to position women as being at the centre of and central to this thesis. Two participants wanted their own names used with their quotes; I chose pseudonyms for 6 participants, while the remaining 7 participants selected their own pseudonyms. In total 15 interviews were conducted.

Analysis

I used inductive thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2021b). This approach involved six steps: becoming familiar with the data, coding, generating initial themes, reviewing and developing those themes, refining and naming the themes, and finally, writing. I started by listening and re-listening to the women's audio transcripts to become familiar with the data, then went through their transcripts and coded them. These initial codes led to the formation of initial themes. The process was iterative and involved revisiting and relistening to the audio transcripts several times. After this, I further developed the theming by using NVivo software to organise codes and themes more effectively. During this process, I realised that it took me away from the women's transcripts and created a sense of detachment from what they were saying. Feeling this, once I completed all the coding in NVivo, I returned to a more manual method by cutting up the codebook I had created using

the software. I continued to refine my themes and subthemes until I was satisfied with them. I also discussed the themes and subthemes I identified with my supervisors to ensure they were distinctive.

As each theme is described, quotes illustrating the theme are provided. The technique of creating found poetry was also employed. The found poems were composed by collecting quotes from multiple women, removing superfluous words without altering the overall meaning, and presenting them together to give the reader a general sense of what was being said across the one-to-one conversations for the theme 'Solidarity with others' with subthemes of the Indian caste system, competition, and racial hierarchies. The theme and subthemes were specifically chosen to demonstrate what both generative and harmful thinking can build or disrupt in regard to our relationships with one another. I created five found poems after extracting the three themes from the analysis above. The titles of these poems are 'Solidarity,' 'Caste,' 'Racial Merry-Go-Round,' 'Competition,' and 'Exclusion.' The results are expressed as both quotes from the women and as found poetry that brings together quotes from multiple women to express the complexity of experience, particularly when dealing with the barriers to solidarity.

5.3 Findings

Three themes were extracted using the inductive thematic analysis outlined above. The first theme was **Solidarity with others**, which included the subthemes of mutual growth and respect, an abundant mindset, and engaging with love. The second theme extracted was **Barriers to Solidarities**, which included the subthemes of binary thinking, a clash of values, structural barriers in places of learning and work, hetero-patriarchy, the Indian caste system, and internalising colonial narratives. The final theme was **Routes to conscientisation**, with subthemes including practising self-awareness (reclaiming own histories, rituals, identities; being reflexive), pathways to solidarity with self (healing from internalised oppression), practising spirituality, and collective community care (mentoring, accountability in community, joyful practices).

Table 2 *Summary of one-to-one conversation themes*

Themes	Sub themes
Solidarity with others	- Mutual growth and respect - Abundant mindset - Engaging with love
Barriers to solidarities	- Binaries - Values clash - Structural barriers at places of learning and work - Hetero-patriarchy - Indian Caste system - Internalising colonial narratives a. Believing coloniser's myths of superiority b. Competition c. Racial stereotypes and hierarchies
Routes to conscientisation	- Practising self-awareness a. Reclaiming own histories/rituals/identities b. Being reflexive - Pathways to solidarity with self - Joyful practice - Practicing spirituality - Practising collective community care

5.3.1 Solidarity with others

This theme encompasses women's experiences of what it means to support being in solidarity with other racialised women, including Māori women. The findings in this category focused on concepts of mutual growth and respect (not operating from preconceived notions, seeking to understand one another, accepting and respecting one another's journeys), an abundant mindset (recognising there is space for everyone, acknowledging we're not in competition) for engaging with love (providing care, being there for one another, showing generosity and investing in each other, which sometimes involves risk).

As a starting point, there were many descriptions of what the word solidarity meant to people and how it was expressed which is illustrated below (Found Poem, solidarity).

Found poem *Solidarity*

Solidarity, not feeling like you're in competition with other people.

Understanding that there's space for everyone,

and that everyone has unique things to bring to the table

and not just being brown,

like there's a lot more to each of us.

It's not an either-or,

it can be an and-and,

like it can be both of us talking

because we both have unique things to offer.

Solidarity, I've become a lot closer

with people who don't feel like they would fault me.

Being able to lift other people up,

without feeling like it's going to be bringing you down.

I do feel like it's about uplifting everybody simultaneously.

Understanding that we equally have the same struggles.

It means challenging stereotypes, challenging narratives

thinking about their own way of framing relationships

between Māori and other groups.

Makes me feel proud to wear these little cultural things

that makes me feel I'm showing Māori I'm an ally.

[Solidarity] means being available,

because you want to, and it means sometimes with sacrifice.

So part of that is challenging when our own people start making comments.

It's about giving space,

and accepting the other person in their own journey.

This found poem was created using a number of women's responses to the question when they were asked what solidarity meant to them. Their exact words and phrases were used.

Mutual growth and respect

The sub-theme of mutual growth and respect highlighted the understanding that, as human beings, we are all flawed and on our own personal journeys. It involved holding a lens of compassion and understanding towards others. As "Karuna" shared: *"I've become a lot closer with people who don't feel like they would fault me."* Respect also encompassed giving space. "Hina" remarked, *"it's about giving space and accepting the other person [is] in their journey."*

Abundant mindset

An abundant mindset was characterised by space for everyone and not feeling that in terms of lifting others up, it was about bringing yourself down. As noted by "Karuna", solidarity was not about *"feeling like you're in competition with other people"*, but rather that there was space for everyone to thrive. She continued to say, *"both [sides] have unique things to offer"*. Solidarity involved the internal disposition of having an abundant mindset and holding a perspective of being able to *"uplift"* each other.

Engaging with Love

"Nandita" recognised that *"understanding that we equally have the same struggle"* offered a compassionate perspective on engaging with love for others. Engaging with love also manifested as sacrifice. For "Arundhati", it meant being *"available"* to show up in ways that prioritised care for someone else. "Saraswati" spoke about wearing a ring with a Te Tiriti flag insignia, a small way she felt *"I'm showing them I'm an ally."*

Solidarity was not always convenient and, at times, came with risks. "Arundhati" commented that she either lost work or turned down significant jobs that sought to address racism in the workplace as a tick box exercise. She wanted to live in alignment with her values and

understood the cost of being viewed as a problem. Solidarity required both emotional and physical investment to foster community. Not only did she recognise that solidarity was about showing up and being available to others, but she also acknowledged that as an educated, professional South Asian woman, she had several experiences and privileges to leverage in order to practice solidarity with other racialised women. She demonstrated reflexivity by asking herself questions such as:

How does it affect Māori? How does that link to Tikanga Māori? How does that work for these groups of folks? You know, probably the best way that I'm upholding it, in terms of most effective way and in my everyday life with friends, family, you know, school ("Arundhati").

"Nadia" used her privileges to mentor other young women from refugee backgrounds. Being available, showing up when needed to support others, sharing resources, and promoting a shared sense of mutual care and respect were key to fostering solidarity among women.

"Amay" expressed her solidarity with Māori women as *"not competing with them"* and understanding her own place and the history of this land. It meant educating herself and understanding the need to *"let them lead their struggle, to be a voice for them wherever they can't voice ...or ...where somebody is actually ...is saying something racist"* ("Amay").

"Amay" primarily encountered Māori women, particularly in activist spaces. She recognised that solidarity also meant that those most affected by struggle should be the ones to lead, whether they are Māori or part of the LGBTQ+ community, for example. Additionally, she realised that being in solidarity involves supporting interconnected struggles that affect multiple communities and peoples.

In the health space, what solidarity in supporting Māori meant for "Amay" was to speak up and ensure that the research being done in her line of expertise considered the alignment with Te Tiriti o Waitangi. She mentioned that this had only been a recent development at her workplace and that no considerations had been made prior. Engaging in love was, for "Amay", about noticing what was happening or not for Māori, speaking up when Māori were unable to, and being mindful of her own role in being in solidarity, *"also coming from a place of humility...non-judgmental."*

In summary there were varied understandings of what solidarity meant to the women. One participant shared that “I’ve become a lot closer with people”, while another shared she had developed an “understanding that we equally have the same struggles”. What this also seemed to reveal was that understandings of solidarity might have been limited to notions of empathy and or of conflation of oppressive struggles. For other participants solidarity meant understanding their own positionality in relation to Māori on their own land and that solidarity also involved risk in challenging settler colonial structures.

5.3.2 Barriers to solidarities

The *barriers to solidarities* theme addressed women's experiences of obstacles in forming relationships with other racialised women, including Māori women. Fundamentally, it dealt with systems of oppression that positioned women in racial hierarchies where they were treated subordinates. Also noted were their experiences and observations regarding the internalisation of this oppression and how it impacted their relationships with other women.

5.3.2.1 Binaries

Biculturalism was seen as an example of binaries that caused harm. Opinions on the term biculturalism varied, including its meaning and whether it fostered solidarities with Tangata Whenua. Women who grasped the term viewed biculturalism as a barrier. “Arundhati” described it as a concrete block.

*It's the f*cking Berlin wall. East and West Germany. That's how it feels.
You're either Māori on one side of the fence or you're non-Māori on the other.
Can't cross it. Barbed wire. There's armed guards, there's risk of death, risk
of injury (“Arundhati”).*

“Arundhati” stated that she viewed biculturalism as a concept that involves a hierarchy and a settler mentality, which positions racialised people who are neither Māori nor white in a state of limbo. She continued, stating that language is significant and that even using the term ‘Bi’, meaning two, is problematic as it aligns with a feature of white supremacy: binary thinking.

*“There's graffiti on each side of the wall...but it's very under the surface
graffiti. [It's] the energy field more than the graffiti on the actual cement”
 (“Arundhati”).*

She understood that openly discussing Biculturalism and its potential harm to people of colour, as well as the power that Pākehā wield in its application, remains a taboo subject enveloped in an energetic force field.

I do have a problem with the word, and it is triggering for me (“Arundhati”).

She even expressed a physical reaction to the word, feeling that it serves to exclude rather than to invite in.

“Nandita” observed another way in which biculturalism was used as a cover by Pākehā. She commented on how they justified their lack of cultural awareness and appropriation of Indian culture by using Māori terminology and tikanga to absolve themselves of accountability.

They use Māori as a scapegoat (“Nandita”).

Biculturalism was viewed as a confusing term if one was neither Māori nor Pākehā “Nividita” also perceived this as a binary issue. When she sought clarification from those around her, she learned that she was Tangata Tiriti (people of Te Tiriti o Waitangi). It did not make sense to be grouped with white colonisers who, at some point in history, had colonised her own country of India.

I don’t understand how someone like me can be lumped into that [in a category with the coloniser] (“Nividita”).

There was a sense that Tangata Tiriti represented an identity in which people previously colonised could be re-colonised by Pākehā. “Anita” did not see herself included in Biculturalism. However, when she regarded herself as a settler, this shifted.

I am a settler...If I’ve chosen to be part of the settler economy, settler colony. If we’re talking about biculturalism as being Māori, Indigenous, and those who have settled on Indigenous land, then I am part of that (“Anita”).

5.3.2.2 Values clash

A clash in values prevented “Nadia” from forming relationships with other South Asian women. Aside from her own extended family, she tended to build connections with women from African and Middle Eastern diaspora, refugee, and migrant backgrounds. “Nadia”

generally interacted with South Asians only in her professional life. She voiced her disappointment in the more settled members of South Asian communities who had been here for decades.

They've been here long. They know the system. When I say know the system, [I mean] how to access resources and all that. They don't give a toss about Treaty issues ("Nadia").

What was interesting to note was that "Nadia" appeared to have had negative experiences with women from her own community, so she placed boundaries around herself as a way of protecting herself, as she perhaps felt let down by her community.

"Nadia" went on to share that more settled individuals, some of whom took on the role of leaders in ethnic communities, were more concerned with locking up Māori youth, who are seen as the cause of increasing crime rates and ram raids. She expressed the importance of ethnic communities reflecting on their roles regarding the number of ethnic-run bottle [alcohol] and vape shops, which are perceived as profiting off the miseries of others. When asked for an explanation for her observations, "Nadia" shared that the ultimate desire was to make money by any means necessary, partly due to the impacts of being internally oppressed from being colonised themselves.

Another perspective on "Nadia's" observations is that when marginalised groups are brought into close proximity with one another in 'low socioeconomic areas' where there are limited employment options, this can lead to migrants of colour opening businesses that sell addictive substances (nicotine, alcohol, sugar) to poorer communities, and (often young) people in these communities stealing from small businesses due to limited choices under capitalism, which encourages tension among communities of colour. This conversation will be built upon in the Internal oppression section further on.

"Amay" commented that people within her own community were in "*their own societies*".

She explained how various groups of people segregated themselves based on the socio-political histories of her country.

5.3.2.3 *Structural barriers at places of learning and work*

When asked specifically about relationships with Māori women, “Ghazal” commented that she did not have much opportunity at school to connect with other Māori students. She noted that it was as though she was on the outside of the Māori and Pacific activities. There was no support from the teachers to foster deliberate, intentional connection-making among different ethnic groups. This also seemed to be true for the other women who had completed their secondary schooling in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Māori and Pasifika [were] put together, and then everyone else is just on the outside (“Ghazal”).

Ghazal’s interpretation of this separation was that perhaps it stemmed from the school’s efforts to support Māori and Pacific students. At university, there was again little opportunity to develop relationships with Māori women; however, she managed to build an enduring relationship with one Tokelau/Tongan woman.

“Rani” recognised that seeking approval from white people in power hindered solidarities among other women of colour and that she was aware of no space to support the connection between women of colour and Indigenous communities in New Zealand, apart from one community group. It also felt like a craving for attention. “Rani”, who worked in government, noted how the structures in her workplace worked against her ability to forge solidarities with Māori women. She had a Māori female colleague working for a senior male Māori advisor in a team where she was the only female. Not only was this colleague dealing with gender issues, but she was also contending with men from the same iwi (tribe). Both the cultural and gender hierarchy impacted the relationship “Rani” felt she could have with the Māori woman. An incident occurred at a group meeting where “Rani” felt thrown under the bus by a Māori woman; however, what “Rani” managed to do when she reflected on this experience was recognise that there was something larger at play within it:

It’s not personal. It’s systematic. We are being pitted against each other, and there was little space for us to work together and collaborate (“Rani”).

She had also realised that the workplace was not a safe environment for this Māori woman, who was being overworked and was simply trying to protect herself.

“Rani” also observed a hierarchy of network structures that impacted relationships between different women. Working for the Crown, “Rani” is part of both the Government women's network that was started by Pākehā women and the women of colour public sector network that spans all of government, initiated by women of colour. While the former network received funding to operate, the latter, in “Rani’s” words, was established as a “diversity, equity and inclusion exercise” and initially received no financial support from the Public Service Commission. It's with sadness that “Rani” reflected on feeling much safer being part of the Government women's network, as the women of colour network had been structured in a way that felt unsafe and offered little solidarity. She explained that there is competition among women as individuals compete for attention and personal advancement.

Everyone wants to be the DEI [diversity, equity, inclusion] expert (“Rani”).

“Bibi”, who also works in the government sector, shared how she could feel the racism at work. Along with her Pacific co-workers, she described how they would be stereotyped and their work undermined in the office, primarily by Pākehā women. She also commented on the lack of opportunities available to them and how there was no way to change things.

All the top jobs went to white women (“Bibi”).

When women were asked about their relationships with other Māori women, many could not articulate what these relationships were because they had little contact with Māori women. This finding will be revisited in the broader implications chapter of this thesis (see Chapter 7).

5.3.2.4 Hetero-patriarchy

As outlined in the literature review, patriarchy is a social system where men hold power and privilege over women and gender-diverse individuals. This patriarchal system ensures that male dominance is favoured, as gender norms are enforced across various systems, including education, religion, culture, family, the workplace, and government (hooks, 2000b).

“Amay” commented on the harm of patriarchy as a system within the South Asian diaspora. She found it challenging to form solidarities with women in her community who supported men who considered themselves leaders discussing issues of domestic violence while also being perpetrators of domestic violence themselves.

Dominant voices in the South Asian diaspora is very problematic men who pretend to be progressive (“Amay”).

She described how, under the guise of being progressive and unwilling to reflect on their own sexist views, men—and women whom she believed enabled them—made it difficult to stand in solidarity with women who supported this. “Amay” also noted the misalignment in values.

You can be the shittiest person on the planet ...you will be welcomed in that space (“Amay”).

“Amay” believed that the lack of critique within [their own] communities regarding what is culturally accepted as the norm hindered solidarities with other South Asian women, along with reflections on what they [women] had been socialised into believing.

When “Hina” decided to leave her violent marriage, the community rallied around, encouraging her to stay with her abusive partner. Yet, when she sought support from others (including women) prior to this, there was little help forthcoming.

When we talk about the South Asian, not just women, generally in their communities tend to kind of like police...When I left my ex everybody wanted to pull in together for me to stay (“Hina”).

5.3.2.5 Indian Caste system

As described in the literature review, the caste system has existed in India for over three and a half thousand years (Bayly, 2016). It consists of a racist hierarchy that predates Western colonisation. The roots of this system categorise people into a hierarchy that dictates rules regarding whom one can marry, socialise with, and what type of work one can perform. As Dutta (2025a) describes, it maintains a hierarchy that keeps people in their place, locked into a structure, and normalises the way people interact with each other.

The following found poem titled ‘Caste’ brings women’s voices together to describe the various ways in which caste came up in their one-to-one conversations.

Found poem, *Caste*.

In the Indian context,
caste plays a huge role
and manifests in people's names,
in the regions they come from,
the religion they practice.
Gujaratis used to think
Fijian-Indians are just lower caste.
She denied me the friendship
because I was not Gujarati,
because I was Fiji-Indian and Hindu.

“Nandita” expressed that “*She denied me the friendship because I was not Gujarati*”. Caste hierarchy was seen as a blocking factor to friendship. “Nandita” had tried to make friends with a Gujarati who was from a higher caste than her. She felt somewhat accepted by other Indian women while studying at university as she was perceived to be successful and had some family status due to her father having a business. “Nividita” would notice a difference in tone when others discovered a region of India she came from and how she spoke. She provided a further function of caste as she described it in the following quote:

I think we've been so busy in trying to push ourselves forward ...but if you're stepping on someone else's back, that's not progress (“Nividita”).

Here she observes that, because the dominant narrative in society portrays women of colour as low down in the hierarchy, South Asian women in Western countries tend not to challenge this narrative. Instead, they sometimes behave poorly towards other women of colour, particularly working-class women who might clean our houses. “Nividita” went on to share that it did not matter whether they were Black or brown women. Additionally, this observation seems to interweave not only caste, but also class, internalised oppression, and racial hierarchies.

“Anita”, while growing up, was encouraged not to play with Bangladeshis as they were considered “less than” Indians. When sharing, “Amay” expressed difficulty in being in relationships with some women from her community because of caste and class. Her description was that they wanted to be white and wanted to participate in white power structures as opposed to dismantling them.

“Amay” pointed to a particular demographic within her community that aspired to being white people.

Because we share very similar patriarchal culture that’s dominated by class and caste (“Amay”).

She reflected that there were groups of women who had embraced the value systems of class and caste and aspired to ascend that racial and social hierarchy.

5.3.2.6 Internalising colonial narratives

In the women's descriptions, numerous ways were described in which the oppressive systems of racism, casteism, patriarchy, and colonialism have been internalised and reproduced, affecting their relationships with other racialised women. The reader is invited to approach the following sections with compassion and care. Words can easily be weaponised and taken out of context, particularly for those from marginalised communities. The findings are presented again as a blend of found poetry and descriptions, illuminating the various means by which internalising colonial messages of self-hate and lack of agency creates a space for competition, division, and the perpetuation of racism.

Believing colonisers’ myth of superiority

Indian colleagues at “Amay’s” workplace generally believed that British colonisation benefited South Asians. These were often well-educated women who benefited from systems regardless of the harm they caused to others. Ultimately, women unable to reflect on themselves and critique presented barriers to solidarity.

“Rani’s” experiences of trying to connect with other South Asian women in the workplace have been fragile. It was suggested to “Rani” that she exuded the confidence of someone born in Aotearoa, New Zealand, by another Indian woman at work. This was not meant as a

compliment. “Rani” felt she could not engage this person in a frank conversation and reflected on the violence this can perpetuate:

I think there's so many things that we don't talk about in New Zealand for the sake of keeping the peace. We're all actually deeply lacking peace (“Rani”).

“Anita” reflected on how people shaped by colonisation on their own lands made them “more inside the lines.” What “Anita” appeared to be ruminating on here is how it might be easier to assimilate and simply look after themselves.

Competition

Competition was raised repeatedly as a barrier to being in solidarity with other racialised women by numerous research participants. In the following found poem this was expressed in multiple ways by the women.

Found poem: *Competition*

I felt a weird competition
with people always thought we were really similar,
because I don't know,
it almost feels like there's a quota of brown girls
you can have at a party.
There's this mindset as we've grown up
that we are in competition
with other brown people,
especially other brown women.
Lack of opportunity to be seen
or be heard or be deemed as a valuable employee
or whatever that means
Pacific women, young women I enjoy.
Dare I say, a lot of South Asian women elbows.

Pushing our way forward but do not necessarily think
about bringing other women with us.

I do know

the people who have cheered me on
are actually not women of colour,
not from South Asia.

Every single person
who I have told,
only the white ones actually cheered me on.

And not just white. Others too.

Taught to compete with one another,
to be better than one another.

And it has set the rules
of what it means to be better.

Competition emerged in various ways, including praise being withheld by other South Asian women and the use of “South Asian women elbows,” as Nividita aptly captured. Both she and others also described the competition as involving “gatekeeping” from other South Asian women who had gained power within their own community and mainstream society, and how they used this to exclude other South Asian women.

She also mentioned that even though she found joy in being around other South Asian women, she couldn’t quite explain why these same women could not be happy for one another.

I don’t know what the right word is, sabotage (“Nividita”)

“Nividita” expressed this as sabotage and the need for women always to be in front of one another. She felt that maybe the women had not had the opportunity and space to engage in conversations where they are open to learning from one another without needing to compete.

“Hina” reflected that the women who cheered her on “*are actually not women of colour, not from South Asia*”.

“Nandita” reflected that being a “*token brown person*” who had made it because a white person had helped them came with its benefits, leading them to compete with other brown people to maintain that status. What she alludes to here is the system of white supremacy and how it has set the rules for how we engage with one another as racialised people, if we allow it by believing in a scarcity mindset.

Racial stereotypes and hierarchies

Internalised colonialism narratives also showed up in the racial stereotyping of individuals who were not classified as white, leading to behaviours of exclusion stemming from these ingrained beliefs. The following found poem illustrate the profound harm that clinging to such narratives can inflict on oneself and others.

Found poem: *Racial merry go round*

We always got taught.
Chinese people
were dirty,
It's the way they used to live in Fiji.
But there was also this idea.
Chinese people are very clever.
We just kind of gladly accept.
Thank goodness we're not Black.
Thank goodness we're not Māori.
Thank goodness we're not Pasifika.

It's so deeply ingrained,
and yeah, I had internalised racism.
I'll say I'm racist against myself.

“Nandita” commented on how stereotypical talk in her community appeared, who were relieved they were not “*Black*”, “*Pasifika*”, “*Māori*”. This was some of the talk she heard. “Saraswati” acknowledged her own racism, saying, “*yeah, I had internalised racism. I’ll say I’m racist against myself*”. In recognising this for herself, she embarked on her own decolonisation journey.

For “Bibi,” even though she felt a connection from being from the Pacific herself, she sensed that her Samoan team leaders stereotyped her as not quite fitting the description of what a Fijian should look like. She was able to navigate this because she knew a few words in Fijian, and the Fijian food she brought to work was recognisable. She tried to fit in.

Internalised racism and hierarchy demonstrate how cultural attitudes reinforce divisive systems and affect the capacity to engage in solidarities. The following found poem, ‘*Exclusion*’, highlights exclusion based on colourism, sexuality, and status.

Found poem: *Exclusion*

"Oh, you're so black."
I was still trying to fit in.
I was the darker person in the group.
The thing is, Indian women
don't welcome you into their communities,
because I'm queer, and I'm also a solo mum.
They don't welcome me because they're like, who are you?
...I'm not married to an Indian man.

“Arundhati” felt this when trying to connect with other Indian women and Indian spaces. She remarked “*I’m queer, and I’m also a solo mum. They don’t welcome me because they’re like, who are you? ...I’m not married to an Indian man*”. To further illustrate the harm of internalising colonial narratives, “Nividita” recalled the immediate response from another Indian woman who was looking for a medical practice, whose immediate reaction was “no” when she had recommended a Māori health provider.

What these examples of lived experiences from the South Asian women in this project convey is the complexity and diversity of their experiences. Often there were multiple barriers interacting that women were having to navigate.

5.3.3 Routes to conscientisation

This final section covers the various pathways that women took towards conscientisation. Conscientisation refers to understanding ourselves beyond our own identity. Practising self-awareness, fostering solidarity with oneself, embracing spirituality, and engaging in collective community care are the subsections that are addressed.

5.3.3.1 Practicing self-awareness

Self-awareness is best described as experiencing ourselves, reflecting on our value systems, our belief systems, and how we navigate the world around us. Most women expressed the importance of being able to reflect on themselves and interrogate their belief systems and sites of internalised oppression.

Reclaiming own histories, cultures and identities

Participants shared the need to decolonise their own thinking and to critique cultural practices that they engaged in and observed within the community. Women recognised how British colonisation of their heritage countries had distorted and erased both cultural practices and their own histories. To express solidarity, “Sarawati” understood that she also needed to learn about her country’s history of oppression and her role in it.

How can I not speak about the fascists and all the stuff that’s going on in India (“Sarawati”).

It was only by educating herself that she felt she could be much more empathetic and understanding towards all the different people and their backgrounds.

Being reflexive

Having Māori, Fijian-Indian, and Pākehā whakapapa, “Karuna” always endeavoured to focus on who she was inside, recognising that her inner self held more value than the persona she presented to society. “Karuna” found journaling to be a valuable activity for reflecting on

how she understood and came to know herself. Through this process, she was able to reconnect with herself, which also supported her in building a relationship with herself.

Taking away those lines, taking away those structures that are imposed on us as individuals and society by those who colonised us (“Anita”).

“Anita” had recognised over the years all the imaginary boundaries, or lines as she described them, drawn in her life. These boundaries were established either by her Indian father, who was unhappy with her having Bangladeshi friends (as a group, they were considered lesser), or by some of the myth-making about Māori that she encountered while travelling around Aotearoa on holiday, visiting various historical sites. “Anita” believed that Aotearoa had been colonised peacefully, with Māori treated well in the process. Reflecting on her initial views, “Anita” realised she had to unlearn this perspective by intentionally educating herself on Māori history.

“Saraswati” realised that she was discriminating against her ex-partner's parents because she considered them to have working-class jobs. She felt discomfort when she recognised the judgements she’d made. She also mentioned how the deeply ingrained desire to be seen as white in an all-white friend group, where she was the only brown person, led her to be racist against herself. In her own words, she *“rebranded herself to fit in with white people”*.

Through engaging in deep work, supported by therapy, she has sought to unlearn some of the harmful internalised practices that had been part of her life and that had otherwise prevented her from being in a relationship with herself.

For “Arundhati”, reflexivity is part of her life both personally and professionally. It is a space where she also questions whose knowledge and history she needs to pay attention to.

I think upholding the treaty actually just ... means being respectful and acknowledging that everyone on this land is actually a visitor. You know, and in the work that I do in the way that I raised my children, you know, I make sure they know that. Make sure that the history they know is not a history that is read by white, white authors, you know. I make sure they understand that keeping te reo Māori alive is important for ensuring the continuity of the culture. I make sure that we uphold Indigenous practices as much as we can...everyone knows how to do the pepeha in our family, you know. Those are ways that I do in my home (“Arundhati”).

“Nandita” understood that when she reflects on her feelings and understands herself, she is in a much better position to grasp other people's perspectives more easily.

Many informal conversations that took place during the collaging sessions, along with unspoken sentiments shared in one-on-one discussions, highlighted the diverse ways in which all the women needed to heal from the various forms of ‘isms’ they faced, as well as acknowledging their own participation in whiteness. “Arundhati” recognised her own “wounds,” as she had described in her collage in the previous section, but also noted that there was no space to be. Healing will be explored more fully in the discussion section.

5.3.3.2 Pathways to solidarity with self

Being in solidarity with yourself came up as a recurring theme. This was expressed in a number of ways that included being intentional about who women spent their time with.

“Karuna”, saw that embracing her internal self beyond external appearances created a sense of empowerment to engage with others on a deeper level. By reflecting on cultural identity and personal histories, women can affirm each other's experiences, thus building solidarity that transcends superficial differences (see Ahmed, 2017,2022,). This recognition of identity as fluid and multifaceted allows women from diverse backgrounds to connect in ways that honour their complexity. Solidarity is rooted not only in shared struggles but also in a shared commitment to self-empowerment and authenticity.

5.3.3.3 Joyful practice

Joyful practice came with an awareness for some women in describing how they maintained boundaries around their personal energy and what they chose to deliberately invest their time in. Looking after one's own body was a practice that included taking regular naps and rest as a way of honouring oneself, enjoying massage, and not feeling the need to be ‘overproductive’. “Ghazal” engaged in the practice of deliberate attention to food preparation, working with the rhythms of her day and being present. Spending time with family and children, enjoying nature, going for walks, singing to oneself, and listening to music were other ways that women experienced joy. Particularly for “Karuna”, singing and listening to music made her feel more connected to her ancestors. Joy was also expressed in making memories with someone else who supported them being seen.

5.3.3.4 Practising Spirituality

Having a spiritual practice and believing in a higher power were important to many women and emerged naturally in conversations. “Diya” shared her spiritual awakening as a Hindu and how she felt that she was not taught as much as she may have liked about her faith. “Diya” describes how she connected with other South Asian women who are Muslim and with Māori on their spiritual journeys and recognised connections such as the covering of heads, meditations, and prayers.

Something that she did stuck with me because she does [Māori wahine] karakia (prayer) to open and close sessions (“Diya”).

“Diya” recognised the various ways in which she could form relationships with other women who were racialised through the pathway of spiritual practice. “Hina” recognised the balance of being both a Muslim and human, which compelled her to be of service to the good of others. Being in solitude, reading spiritual scriptures, and being in places of worship where one wasn’t judged were important ways in which many women connected with their gods. “Bibi” attends a mosque that welcomes Māori reverts, Africans, Indonesians, Arabs, Pakistanis, and many other ethnic groups. This is a place where both she and her daughter felt welcome. “Nandita” shared that as a Hindu, she read books written by monks at a Buddhist temple she attended.

5.3.3.5 Practising collective community care

What became apparent throughout the conversations with the women was how they created and/or supported a sense of community they wanted to see. This included mentoring, supporting, caring for others and community accountability.

“Karuna” shared that being able to openly share struggles without feeling shamed or judged supports solidarities. Recognising how valuable these spaces are, “Karuna” runs a monthly hui for Māori and Pasifika young people to connect. There was nothing available for these students before this. “Nadia,” who was mentored by Māori women in the community space, passes on her knowledge and experience to mentor young women from refugee and working-class migrant backgrounds. Attending “brown” events to show solidarity was another way to practice community care.

*I see this is an initiative by a South Asian, this initiative by a woman of colour.
I don't care if you're Māori or Pacific, I don't care which part of the world
you come from, I'm going to support you ("Hina").*

Creating community also meant speaking out loud the names of others doing good work and uplifting everyone simultaneously. For “Nadia” and “Rani”, this also meant being part of global communities learning about global struggles. Many of the women were engaging in creating alternative communities where they were modelling what they envisioned. It was in these spaces that they also experienced joy.

Some women were aware of being excluded from their communities if they engaged in critique. Those who felt they could openly critique often sat on the margins of their communities or were no longer part of them. This sometimes offered them a safe distance to speak back. “Rani” reflected on the lack of knowledge that also existed among South Asian women and women of colour here in Aotearoa, around Black, Indigenous, and women of colour feminisms and how this needed to change. She considered this a barrier to solidarity that needed to be attended to more fully. In some of the work “Rani” engaged in, it was rarely safe to critique; however, she would form strategic alliances with other women she trusted to try to bring about a shift in understanding of other women of colour. The following summary of the themes is again offered here for the reader before this chapter moves into the discussion.

5.4 Discussion

As South Asian women and communities, we are settlers in Aotearoa. While binaries such as Māori/tauiwi and coloniser/colonised are experienced as othering, reinforcing white supremacy and rendering South Asian women invisible, it is important to recognise that we can also be complicit. This discussion will consider how we can respond to our own internalised oppression and reflect on our roles as settlers of colour and the part we may play in engaging with our ethical responsibilities to the broader political project that seeks to build alternative worlds outside of colonialism and white supremacy.

This chapter addressed the research sub-questions:

- **What do the experiences of relationships that South Asian women have with other racialised women, including Māori women, tell us about solidarities?**

- **What possible pathways and strategies exist for strengthening solidarities between South Asian women with other racialised women including Māori women?**

These questions support the overarching question of this thesis which is: How do women of South Asian descent in Aotearoa experience solidarities with other racialised women, including Māori women?

One-to-one conversations were held with 15 South Asian women. These conversations were recorded over Zoom and then transcribed. The transcripts were analysed using inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006), and three themes were extracted. In presenting the findings within the themes and combination of quotes, four found poems were also created to express the women's voices. The three themes extracted were **Solidarity with others**, which included the subthemes of mutual growth and respect, abundant mindset and engaging with love; **Barriers to Solidarities**, which included the subthemes of binary thinking, values clash, structural barriers at places of learning and work, hetero-patriarchy, Indian Caste system, Internalising colonial narratives, which included (believing coloniser's myths of superiority, competition, racial stereotypes and hierarchies); and **Routes to conscientisation** with subthemes of practising self-awareness (reclaiming own histories/rituals/identities, being reflexive), pathways to solidarity with self, joyful practice, practicing spirituality, practicing collective community care as mentoring, supporting, caring for others and community accountability.

Solidarity with others

The first theme extracted was Solidarity with Others, which included the subthemes of mutual growth and support, abundant mindsets, and engaging with love. This theme is consistent with the theory and practice of Black feminism that ultimately remind us of the lessons of the radical process of care (hooks, 2000b, 2015d; Lorde, 1984).

For us as racialised women, to care about other women, for Māori women and our respective families and communities, is what it is to be human. Having an abundant mindset was highlighted in the findings by women as a way to be in solidarity with others. In other words, there is enough for everyone mindset, we do not need to compete with one another. Women had also recognised that colonisation had shaped their identities, what they thought of themselves and how they lived their lives and with whom.

There is a centrality of love that hooks (2000b) notes, framing care as a love ethic. A love ethic that assumes everyone has a right to be free to live in the fullness of who they are. “Embracing a love ethic means that we utilise all the dimensions of love, care, commitment, trust, responsibility, respect, and knowledge - in our everyday lives” (p.94). Although women did not use the word ‘love’ during their one-to-one conversations, the actions they engaged in, such as mentoring others, speaking up and showing up in solidarity for others, can be considered acts of love. When centring love, it is worthwhile to consider what love asks us to be. And who love can put in our way? Care, attentiveness, and a desire to listen deeply to one another's stories. In this regard, love asks us to see more, to make connections, and to grow by grieving what we have lost.

Love has the transformative power to reshape our relationships with one another. According to bell hooks (2000b), love is defined as encompassing “care, commitment, trust, responsibility, respect, and knowledge” (p. 94). For women, love emerged as a commitment to themselves, a way of honouring their ancestors, and a means of reconnecting with heritage and knowledge systems. Hooks presents her concept of love as one that has agency and actively influences change.

Recognising that we have personal power is essential. Oppressive systems can regulate our emotional and spiritual expression. Our ability to express our anger and rage in response to unjust systems is crucial. When we do, our emotions are weaponised against us, especially those of us who are Indigenous, Black, or women of colour. Audre Lorde (1984) in ‘Uses of the Erotic’ acknowledges this as a pathway to turning inward to create one's own power, emphasising the importance of working on our internal selves as a way to understand that the personal is also political. Understanding love as power in this way can also help us see our bodies and being as political.

Barriers to solidarities

The second theme extracted was Barriers to Solidarities, which included the subthemes of binaries, values clash, structural barriers, heteropatriarchy, caste, and internalised colonial narratives (colonial supremacy, competition, racial stereotypes).

These findings reflected a cocktail of experiences as shared by the women in this study. The women's conversations demonstrate the multiple forces at play internally, interpersonally and within the larger systems of settler colonialism, white supremacy, Indian Casteism and

heteropatriarchy: forces that impact women's relationships and solidarities with each other. The findings also show how these experiences were recreated in some of their relationships with other racialised women.

As stated in the literature review, solidarity cannot be assumed from shared marginalisation and sharing an ethnic identity, as South Asians can simultaneously experience racism, while also perpetuating caste based harm (See Dutta, 2025a, 2025b).

Binary thinking, or only having two options, reinforces white supremacy by upholding racial hierarchies (see Bonds & Inwood, 2016; Fanon, 1963). The women in this study experienced biculturalism as one that excluded them and made them feel recolonised. This aligns with existing literature on how biculturalism privileges Pākehā and serves as a potential site for racism when engaging in Pākehā-led Te Tiriti education, consistent with observations made by Azarmandi (2017, 2022) and Terruhn, (2015). Simon (2022) questions biculturalism's usefulness as a term and describes it as a 'zombie concept'; an idea that is dead yet persists, benefiting only Pākehā. I argue that having such experiences, where Pākehā have set the terms of engagement and mediating relationships, can impact South Asian women's ability to make connections with Māori. This discussion is expanded on in Chapter 6.

Having similar racialised experiences and shared historic roots does not necessarily equate to being in solidarity with one another. The internal divisions that exist across the Indian diaspora are shaped by caste, class, religion, and migration history, which interfere with solidarities. Caste serves as a barrier to solidarities and is reflected in people's perceptions of one another as existing within an imagined social hierarchy. This aligns with the literature (see Prashad, 2000; Sarwal, 2018; Sampath, 2015). Vidya Shah and Jeewan Chanicka's (2023) research investigated the challenges and possibilities of cross-racial solidarities between South Asian and Black communities in North America. To overcome the obstacles created by internal divisions shaped by caste, class, religion, and migration histories, South Asian communities were urged to confront their own complicity and acknowledge the ongoing violence faced by Black communities, as well as the persistent historical injustices. They advocated for transformative solidarity that seeks to dismantle the oppressive structures binding both communities, while also emphasising healing and self-reflection. This is consistent with my findings outlined in Chapter 4, which highlighted the need for spaces where South Asian women can come together, initially to reckon with our need to heal and to

engage with the realities and ethical responsibilities we face in addressing our own internalised colonial and caste programming.

Sneha Singh (2025, May 19) shared her personal experiences, reflecting on her background as a Dalit (considered untouchable, based on the Indian caste system) who experienced caste discrimination while living in Aotearoa and navigating communities. She mentions: “*Caste does not just magically vanish in diasporic spaces as expected; it is like a chameleon that shapes and colours. It manifests through Hindu festivals and casual colourism that marks caste identities*” (para. 19).

The findings in this study highlight the diversity of experiences and views presented by the women. South Asian women are not a monolith. These findings also demonstrates how colonisation can intersect with the caste system. This exacerbates the social divisions by leveraging off the ‘divide and conquer’ tactics of colonialism. There appeared to be greater awareness of Indian casteism among the group of women. Some of these women tended to be marginalised within their communities, either due to their working-class backgrounds or additional marginalised identities. This observation aligns with the work of Bhardwaj (2021), who found that South Asian activists from caste-oppressed, working-class, marginalised faith, and other backgrounds were often the ones who engaged in solidarity with movements for prison abolition and economic justice. Further research by Mishra (2016) noted that South Asian migrants to America tended to have more shared political impacts with Black Americans than with other South Asians due to divisions on class and caste within their home countries.

Those who settling have a desire to belong and South Asians living in Aotearoa, New Zealand are no different. This desire can cause settlers of colour to align more with Pākehā governance frameworks than with Indigenous sovereignty claims (see Saranillio, 2013).

Being able to engage in critical reflection where individuals are able to confront the truth that they are also settlers by reflecting on their own migration histories, privileges and how they can benefit from settler colonialism, is a step in the right direction for building alliances with Indigenous people (Phung, 2019). Settlers of colour can also engage in the dispossession of Indigenous people (see Prashad, 2000; Saranillio, 2013; Simon, 2022,2023; Trask, 2000).

Internalised oppression as *internalised colonial narratives* appeared in many of the women's conversations and served as a barrier to solidarity. Internalised oppression occurs when a

group that is oppressed adopts the negative beliefs of the dominant group about themselves (Fanon 1963). This finding aligns with the literature (Khanna, 2022; Fanon, 1963; Saad, 2020), highlighting the necessity for internal work in decolonising the mind. Internal oppression inflicts a disfigurement that not only impacts our internal world and disconnects us from our true selves, but can also distort our histories (Fanon, 1963). I would argue that this not only poses a barrier to engaging with others in solidarity but also obstructs solidarity with ourselves. Ahmed (2006, 2017) notes that our identities can be shaped by our histories in relation to the dominant structures of colonialism, whiteness, and patriarchy. So much so, that our identities are also shaped by internalised oppression, which denies us our humanness (see Fanon, 1963; Grosfoguel, 2016). Fanon (1963) also shares that to successfully engage in decolonisation can bring profound transformations of self, community and governance structures.

Routes to Conscientisation

The third theme extracted via thematic analysis was Routes to Conscientisation, which included the subthemes of self-awareness (reclaiming histories and identities, and reflexivity); solidarity with self; practising spirituality; joyful practice and collective community care . These findings are consistent with the literature (Fanon, 1963; hooks, 2000a; Lorde, 1984; Murphy, 2019).

The findings from both Chapter 4 and this chapter firmly illustrate that similarity does not make for solidarities. As Chandra Mohanty (2003) writes “ simply being a woman, or being poor or black or Latino, is sufficient ground to assume a politicised oppositional identity” (p.77). Rata et al. (2021) argue that building solidarity requires reflexivity and positionality, where we also have the chance to engage with who we are and our own genealogy.

Testimonials, life stories and oral histories are an important way to remember and record struggles, not just for the current generation, but so that they can be left as records for future generations to learn from, to draw strength from and act on. This involves learning about our own histories, which have been intentionally distorted and erased. Remembering family stories of colonial British rule that impacted our families, their resistance, and recovering these memories to make them visible is a ‘refusal’ to be historically erased. It is an act of resistance. Remembering our histories supports our imagination and ability to act. This

remembering invites a broader view of who we truly are, to remind ourselves of our own power to create transformative solidarities.

Routes to Conscientisation, includes being in solidarity with self and care of oneself. Audre Lorde (1984) maintains that caring for the self and the spirit is a necessary political act, especially for those who are trained to constantly care for and about others while being taught by society that they are of no value. Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley (2008) -describes care as a way of 'feeling and feeling for' (p.192) in nurturing the spaces that we disavow within ourselves. Saidiya Hartman (2019) situates care as an 'antidote to violence'⁶. The findings illustrate how women were intentional in how they spent their time and who they spent time with as a expression of caring for their own spirits and having boundaries around how they protected their personal energy.

Shah and Chanika (2023) remind us that racialised communities have always found ways to be together. Bhardwaj (2021) describes communities of care where people find alternative political homes and people over transactional relationships. Participants in this project recognised this understanding that such spaces are central to solidarity, can be transformative and provide alternative ways of being that also celebrate joy, humanity, song, prayer, ceremony and art. Participants also recognised the need for more spaces as women to come together.

In their thesis on Chinese–Māori solidarities, feminist scholar, Mengzhu Fu (2025) contends that political consciousness is not necessary and that practice can precede theory. Very few women in this research had detailed knowledge of Māori histories however understood that they lived on Māori land and that the crown had never honoured Te Tiriti o Waitangi, so they did what they could to show solidarity to Māori both through their thinking, words and actions.

Location and proximity to Māori or anyone else matters if we want to build genuine relationships of care and solidarity. In this thesis, many of the women couldn't articulate their

⁶ Saidiya Hartman gave this famous quote at an event entitled, "In the Wake: A Salon in Honor of Christina Sharpe," on February, 2, 2017, sponsored by the Barnard Center for Research on Women.

relationships with Māori women because they had little to no contact with them in their own lives. All the women live or grew up in urban areas of Auckland, often in suburbs with few Māori. Also, when you don't meet Māori students at school and form relationships, or feel separated from them, this becomes a barrier to solidarity

In considering my own experiences that will be picked up in the autoethnographic chapter of this thesis, where I share stories about my own relationships with Māori women, it is possible to suggest that this finding is a structurally produced condition. The literature review establishes the racialisation of Asian communities in Aotearoa by means of processes of Asianisation places different groups into hierarchies that work against the formation of cross-racial relationships (see Mok, 2022). Biculturalism, as Simon (2022) describes, also functions as a zombie concept that sets the terms of engagement on Pākehā terms, thereby mediating and, in some cases, foreclosing the possibility of direct relationships between tauīwi of colour and Māori. When considering Te Tiriti spaces where Pākehā are central to the conversation, rather than creating genuine pathways to also being part of the conversation, some women have further distanced themselves because of the racism they experience. It is also important to recognise that participants are navigating institutional spaces structured by whiteness. This navigation is expected as settler colonial structures manage and contain relationships across racialised communities (see Azarmandi, 2022). The absence of a relationship with Māori that many women named is a finding that requires further structural analysis beyond the scope of this current project (see Chapter 6).

In summarising this chapter, we cannot understand solidarity of South Asian women with other racialised women, including Māori women, outside of the political context in which it happens. The literature review in this project shows that solidarity here in Aotearoa is governed by our obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. It suggests that South Asian women must be accountable to more than their own communities. It requires an active understanding of our positioning as settlers of colour within a settler colonial structure that continues to dispossess Māori of their own land. Solidarity, as used in this thesis, is a relational practice that is foreclosed if we do not name the structure and take political action against the ways in which Māori sovereignty can be obscured by our own presence and positioning here in Aotearoa. The findings in this section have explained where there is accountability and where solidarity is limited by just being a shared feeling, or foreclosed by internalised colonial narratives, caste and heteropatriarchy.

5.5 Implications

Several implications emerge from this chapter. It is crucial for South Asian women not to be entangled in the settler colonial logics of divide and conquer. Colonialism and white supremacy are battling for our imaginations in a bid to trick us into thinking that we have no power. As Black feminist Ruha Benjamin (2024) writes “The most effective ideologies are those that need no police to enforce them, because we internalise and perpetuate them ourselves” (p.75). This is how colonialism and white supremacy flourish while our collective existence suffers. There is an essential need to reclaim the term 'biculturalism' from the white centrality and dominance it often signifies to tauwi of colour (see Lee, 2016). Let us position ourselves in a way beyond the confines of this term and take on our relational responsibilities towards Māori, as we have a legitimate relationship and responsibility that must not be erased. There are also opportunities for South Asian women to root ourselves in Indigenous, Black, and women of colour feminisms, where we can continue to learn from stories of resistance, relationality grounded in love and care, and our accountability to one another.

The findings of this study can be used to extend the whakawhanaungatanga framework, offered by Rata and Al-Asaad (2019) as a Māori approach to Indigenous and settler of colour relationship building, which describes how solidarities can be built through these groups making connections between histories of racialisation and oppression. This will be picked up fully in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

A final implication from this chapter is to politicise our identities, understanding that they are linked to political struggles rather than solely cultural ones, which often render us powerless, passive, and assimilated into the settler colony.

5.6 Applications

There are a number of applications that emerge as a result of these findings. It is important to have collective community and healing spaces where South Asian and Māori women are able to engage in intercultural dialogues around the sharing of ancestral and ritual practices for healing and resistance work. These could look like creative making spaces that also engage in restoring memories, stories and histories that can also serve as archiving opportunities, in restoring knowledges that can also be passed down to the next generation.

Developing decolonial educational opportunities that bring South Asian and Indigenous knowledge systems into dialogue is a practical way to learn about Indigenous and South Asian feminist practices. This also opens the door to intergenerational storytelling and spiritual work that involves recognising the need to grieve the impacts of losses, and understanding ourselves as those with politicised and powerful identities find opportunities to engage in campaigns such as anti-racism, food security, housing justice and workers' rights as examples for class consciousness, understanding of oppressive structures (patriarchy, colonialism etc), and joint political projects.

What both the implications and applications point to is to intentionally turn away from whiteness, and engage in deliberate acts of decolonising our relationships with one another (Simpson, 2017a, c; see LB Simpson & Martineau, 2017).

5.7 Limitations

One of the limitations of this study was that additional data could have been collected to better support the findings regarding the class positions of the 15 South Asian women. This could have included information such as family class background, the industry they work in (which emerged naturally as women shared), and whether they had relationships with other racialised women in their communities. This is relevant because caste was found to be a barrier to forming solidarities, and there is an intersection between class and caste. The results of this study could potentially be generalised more broadly to South Asian women if it were repeated with a larger sample size. An alternative data collection method, such as an online survey, could also be used to gather qualitative insights into relationships and solidarities. This would also create the opportunity to gather additional ideas on how women navigate and strengthen solidarities.

Another limitation of this study was the focus on testimony from South Asian women. What would complement and provide a more holistic picture would be to also gather the experiences of other racialised women, including Māori women, alongside Māori women co-researchers and other researchers. This would also create an opportunity to strengthen solidarity between these groups in an applied way.

5.8 Future research opportunities

This study highlights opportunities for further research in the field of South Asian diaspora—Indigenous solidarities. South Asian diasporic identities remain an under-explored area in the context of Aotearoa, especially as their importance increases with the growing South Asian population, the Indian diaspora now being the third-largest group behind Pākehā and Māori. Additionally, there is a need to better understand caste and class identities of South Asians and what potential implications that this can have for Māori solidarities in Aotearoa, as a settler colony.

5.9 Conclusion

This study set out to explore the experiences of South Asian women in relationships with other racialised women, including Māori women, and to explore pathways to strengthen solidarities through one-to-one conversations.

The results identified three themes, extracted using inductive thematic analysis. The first theme was **Solidarity with others**, which included the subthemes of mutual growth and respect, an abundant mindset, and engaging with love. Love was central to forming decolonial relationships with each other and recognising the inherent power we have as racialised women. The second theme extracted was **Barriers to Solidarities**, which included the subthemes of binary thinking, a clash of values, structural barriers in places of learning and work, hetero-patriarchy, the Indian caste system, and internalising colonial narratives, such as believing the coloniser's myths of superiority, competition, racial stereotypes, and hierarchies. Here colonialism and white supremacy work in multiple ways to disrupt our relationships on a daily basis. Making these disruptions nameable and identifiable supports us in being able to engage in refusing whiteness in our own lives. The final theme was **Routes to conscientisation**, with subthemes including practising self-awareness (reclaiming own histories, rituals, identities; being reflexive), pathways to solidarity with self (healing from internalised oppression), practising spirituality, and collective community care (mentoring, accountability in community, joyful practices).

What this study demonstrates is that we do have power as racialised women. We can step into our politicised bodies, which travel beyond the cultural body that colonialism and white

supremacy confine us to (hooks, 2000b; Lorde, 1984; Pihama, 2005; Murphy, 2019; Smith, 2012; Watego, 2021).

Resisting systematic oppression, being pitted against other women who are racialised, and against Māori when it suits, not to mention the internalised oppressions faced as a result of the impacts of colonisation, requires lifelong work.

While this can be challenging, the work can also be liberating. The women who have lent their voices to this project have illuminated pathways of embracing education, community collective care, solidarity with self and care, and reclaiming their histories as ways to resist intersecting oppressions of colonialism, heteropatriarchy, and racism to create ways of being in solidarity that reject hyper-individualism but are grounded in collective care.

Chapter 6: Reflections of an ‘ungrateful’ (im)migrant

I was so excited to meet Fiji-Indian women in the department where I began teaching. I’d only just arrived from the UK. Maybe I was a bit too eager, but I wanted to connect and get to know them. I stopped trying after a while. They seemed more interested in connecting with the white woman who had also come from the UK, as was the whole department.

I used to think there was something wrong with me. Gaslighting myself. But over time, I began to realise other things were going on.

6.1 Introduction

Developing a critical consciousness that involves deep engagement with our inner worlds as racialised women is essential if we wish to open pathways of knowledge, power, and collective transformation that motivate us towards meaningful social action (Collins, 1990; hooks, 1993). A critical consciousness that resists binary thinking (e.g., white/non-white; New Zealand-born/migrant; settler/native) and embraces ambiguity and transformation strengthens our ability to challenge the binary modes of thought that colonisation imposes on us (Anzaldúa, 1987). Our internal consciousness can serve as a space that offers freedom, self-knowledge, and self-empowerment (Collins, 1990). It is also a foundation where self-recovery can underpin social transformation, integrating spiritual, political, and emotional dimensions. This process is often described as decolonisation (hooks, 1993).

The aim of this thesis was to explore how South Asian women in Aotearoa experience solidarities with other racialised women, including Māori women. This chapter investigates the sub-question:

How has the process of completing this research and writing this thesis offered insights and learning for my own life and practice?

The autoethnographic findings discussed in this chapter are governed by the structural analysis established in the literature review. The four themes that were extracted were: historical remembering, unsettling colonial narratives, resisting co-optation, and being in solidarity. These are not simply a sequence of personal experiences but serve as a map of my own movement through the conditions that British imperialism and settler colonialism in Aotearoa produces: the structural erasure of South Asian colonial histories (see Sanghera,

2021), the racialisation of Asian communities through model minority positioning, the management of tauwiwi of colour relationships through Pākehā-led biculturalism, and the conditional nature of solidarity when it is not grounded in Te Tiriti obligations and Māori sovereignty (Azarmandi & Fu, 2023; Jackson, 2020; Tuiono & Dutta, 2019; Ngata & Dutta, 2023).

The seeds of this thesis emerged from various experiences in my own life over the past 20 years of living in Aotearoa, New Zealand. As a British Bangladeshi woman residing on Indigenous lands, my experiences of connecting and building solidarity with other racialised women, including Māori women, in the workplace, Tangata Tiriti spaces, and community have not always been straightforward. This has also included interactions with Pākehā women, particularly within educational and Te Tiriti contexts. There is a gap in the literature that explores how South Asian women in Aotearoa, New Zealand, contextualise their relationships with other racialised women, including Māori women, and what this could mean for solidarity. The purpose of this thesis is to address this gap.

Decolonial thought and Indigenous, Black and women of colour feminism are the theoretical lenses I employ in this chapter, as my autoethnography is not only about individual reflections but also aims to interrogate whiteness, white supremacy, and settler colonialism in Aotearoa, New Zealand (see Collins, 1990; hooks, 1994; Lorde, 1984; Smith, 2012; Spry, 2001). My reflections also focus on my experiences as a racialised woman and researcher. Hooks (2000b) reminds us of the powerful perspectives that racialised women can hold from the margins and what they can teach us about systems of oppression, as they often have insights and access to knowledge that those benefiting from systems of whiteness and white supremacy may overlook.

In this chapter, I employ autoethnography by drawing on field notes, journal entries, and reflective pieces published during this research, which are presented as interludes throughout this thesis. I outline the justification for this method and describe the process I followed. I then discuss the key findings of 'Historical remembering,' 'Unsettling settler colonial narratives,' 'Decolonising mindsets,' and 'Being in relation,' presenting these as a decolonial framework. This is followed by a discussion of why these findings are significant, including

their implications and applications. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research and a summary.

6.2 Methods

In this section, I justify my use of autoethnography as a method and address its critiques in explaining how I applied it. I started researching this topic in mid-2021. This involved discussing experiences with other South Asian women, including sharing my own. These conversations triggered memories of my own experiences and interactions. It was partly these discussions and my reflections that shaped the initial research question and sub-questions, which were refined over time. I aimed to highlight the meaning making that arises from a person's lived experience and positionality, which also generates new knowledge and insights (Coffey, 1999; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). For this purpose, I found autoethnography to be a useful method. Autoethnography is a qualitative method that offers a way of using personal experiences to extend our sociological understanding (Wall, 2008). Researchers who engage in autoethnography – where auto (self), ethno (the sociocultural connection), and graphy (the research process) can have varying emphasis – sometimes lean more into one of these dimensions (Reed-Danahay, 1997). I lean into the 'graphy' aspect of this method. Ellis and Bochner (2000) consider a personal narrative as an autoethnography. Ellis (2009) notes that autoethnographies can be based on researchers' everyday experiences of their research topic, which they work through to generate new knowledge and insights about their work. In this way, the researcher also engages in a learning process of their own; a process that values more than just logical thinking, involving also the body and emotions. By engaging with this method, I have 'found' knowledge that was previously covered up, as 'opposed' to creating new knowledge, which has reinforced for me as a researcher, and on reflection for my participants, that we have all 'found' knowledge about ourselves. I have also learned that autoethnography has supported me in creating shifts in my worldview and in engaging in action (see Holman Jones, 2005; Spry, 2001, 2011).

Autoethnography is not about capturing a stream of consciousness from the researcher; it must be structured in a way that supports the researcher in gaining knowledge and insights, and for others to learn from the researcher's story. To achieve this, autoethnography needs to be reflective for both writer and reader. This means the researcher must deeply engage with their narratives, including their thoughts and feelings, in a way that makes the story meaningful. For the reader, it involves being able to connect with the writing, which can

support their own learning. These criteria, offered by both Bochner (2000) and Ellis (2000), serve to evaluate narratives and learnings, which I have adopted. Essentially, my autoethnography functions as a two-way conversation with the literature, through which I have learnt from my own experiences of relationships I have shared, as well as from the research I have engaged with. Duncan (2004), who argues that autoethnography is just as rigorous and legitimate a method as other qualitative approaches. Others contend that it is a method used to connect personal experiences to the existing literature (Holt, 2001; Sparkes, 1996).

Within academia, autoethnography is not seen as a ‘real science’ that can stand alone as a valid source of knowledge. It is only sometimes recognised as a method for researchers to reflect on their own role and examine their biases (Ploder & Stadlbauer, 2016). In their paper ‘Strong reflexivity and its critics’, they argue that autoethnography can blur the distinction between research and personal writing. It is not merely a logical process but also one that acknowledges the human side, with feelings and emotions behind the research. Critics also contend that autoethnography does not provide clear answers and theories, unlike positivist scientific research methods.

Coffey (1999) comments that when we are engaged in fieldwork studying other people, we are also involved in the act of memory. The researcher’s writing is shaped by what they remember. In my own autoethnography, when sharing experiences with other racialised women, details of these experiences came from my own memory, which was jogged when I was asking myself the same questions I posed to the women in this project. I did not write these memories down verbatim but used prompts to remind myself of them. These memories also provided access to my feelings and thoughts on what and what not to share about my own story and those of the women. Wall (2008) shared her ethical dilemma as a researcher in sharing her autoethnography. This centred around sharing her and her partner’s journey through the adoption of their son. Although she gained ethics approval, and had consent from both her child and partner to share their family story, she felt this was inadequate to share her story as part of academic work. She raised an important tension that is also supported by Ellis (2000), who asks us to consider in sharing a story what potential it has for making a valuable contribution, over the harm it could do to others. This reflection has also tempered and shaped how I have shared, and what I have shared, about my own positionality and the dimensions of my personal stories.

The most common lines of critique that autoethnography receives are solipsism (self-centredness) and narcissism; that results are open to interpretation and unclear; and that the work cannot be critiqued by other researchers because it is too personal. Finally, some argue that researchers can turn their personal stories into academic products through autoethnography, which can be considered unethical (see Ploder & Stadlbauer, 2016).

In considering these critiques, as a racialised woman, I offer a voice in this chapter that has shifted from the margins onto the main page. As bell hooks (2000b) and standpoint theory remind us, there is much to learn about the dynamics of domination from those who are often pushed to the margins. I found myself reflecting on the same questions that I had asked my participants, and the research data that I was collecting. These reflections appear as interludes throughout this thesis, as dispatches on my own experiences written from the margins between chapters, that connect to broader themes examined in this thesis, including whiteness, white supremacy, and lateral violence. I write as someone who is also impacted by the social structures that I explore as I recognise that my own insights add to this thesis.

Process

I kept a reflective journal as I began the collaging data collection, which was open and generative. Observations included how women felt in the space created for them, how they responded to each other's stories, and how they listened to one another and what other conversations the women were having. I also noted my reflections throughout the one-on-one conversations. Often, these were immediate observations that struck me about these conversations.

Reflective journaling is an approach I have used personally since I was a teenager, and it has helped me understand myself and my experiences. It can serve as a way to write and (re)discover who we are at different stages in life (Morrison, 2015). Journaling also offers a space where no one will check or correct your grammar, and where what you record reflects your truth as you write (Dillard, 2012). It is a place where a racialised woman's voice is neither monitored nor corrected.

Throughout this reflective journal keeping, I was also trying to make sense of both the academic literature on the impacts of colonialism and white supremacy and how they affect people who have been colonised, as well as the teachings offered by Indigenous, Black, and women of colour feminism. It was from the perspective of the literature and my own lived

experience that I journaled. I then began to compile these reflections, writing them up for e-Tangata, an online Māori and Pasifika magazine in Aotearoa, New Zealand. What this method of writing externally beyond this thesis offered was the opportunity for a potential relationship with a wider audience. I will expand more on this in the discussion section of this chapter.

This practice also served as a method, where the four reflective pieces I wrote have become interludes throughout this thesis. This approach departed from traditional academic writing, which was important, because the way they have been written and the language used is accessible; the knowledge is not gate-kept and can foster more immediate connections to the everyday lives of racialised people (LB Simpson, 2025). These also acted as methodological pauses, which are elaborated on below. These are not just personal stories. The four interludes that appear in this thesis are as follows:

Interlude 1, “Celebrating while colonised,” explores the impacts of British rule over India and highlights that both South Asians and Māori have suffered at the hands of the same colonial power; however, the British did not leave Aotearoa, New Zealand, in the same way they left India. An analysis here reveals that the difference between India and Aotearoa isn't just historical variation but reflects two *modes* of colonialism: one that extracted resources and left (i.e. franchise colonialism, Sanghera, 2021), and one in which the rightful owners have been dispossessed of their land and continue to be, with the colonisers never leaving (Jackson, 2020; Wolfe, 2006).

Interlude 2, “Connecting through our colonised histories”, is a personal reflection on how colonisation has affected my family history, and the identity shifts my parents had to navigate during the Indian partition and the genocide associated with the birth of Bangladesh as a nation, along with what it means to remember. Both franchise colonialism and settler colonialism conscript us into amnesia, in forgetting who we are and fragmenting us from ourselves (Fanon, 1963; Wolfe, 2006; Rodríguez & Gabi, 2023).

Interlude 3, “Hīkoi mō Te Tiriti: Walking into the future,” explores the tension we experience as settlers of colour and how we can seemingly both benefit from and face discrimination by the same settler colony that dispossessed Māori. It prompts us to consider which systems truly benefit from us not connecting the dots in our interconnected struggles. As tauīwi of

colour, we can be easily fooled by the lies of settler colonialism and lies it propagates about Indigenous peoples, while dispossessing them from their own land (Jackson, 2020).

Interlude 4, “Model minorities”, examines how the model minority stereotype functions as a colonial tool to divide us from other racialised groups and is part of the colonial programming imposed by the state that pits us against Māori. It also looks at how this stereotype damages our own South Asian communities. Divide and rule is a well-used tool of settler colonialism (Wolfe, 2006).

Each interlude cumulatively adds to how settler colonialism organises our lives and identities, and how we can be pitted against and separated from each other through stereotypes and myth takes (Wolfe, 2006; Jackson, 2020).

I also reflected on how I resisted settler colonial narratives, and reclaimed family stories and practices. This gave me a space to examine my own biases and blind spots. I began writing in long form as a method of working through my thoughts. I never consciously thought that I was writing these as part of my thesis or that I would have them published. This became a natural process that emerged as I grew in my own understanding of who I also was, here in Aotearoa.

Because writing never occurs in a vacuum, these pieces also served as reflections on what was happening socially and politically in Aotearoa, New Zealand. I began structuring and organising my thoughts as I continued my research, and one of my supervisors encouraged me to submit a piece I had written about my own identity in relation to colonial rule in India by the British to the online magazine. I explained why it was important for South Asians living in Aotearoa to recognise this colonial violence to support the connections of colonisation here.

Analysis

As a researcher, I am conscious of how my own positionality, experience, and the skills I bring to this project have influenced the questions I’ve posed, the design of this thesis, and how it has been executed. I acknowledge that this project has been an ongoing iterative

process, where I have shaped the project, and in turn, the project and its findings have shaped me.

In this realisation, I also needed to consider how I am both an insider and an outsider to this research. A full insider is a researcher who shares multiple identities with their participants, while being a partial insider means sharing one or more aspects of identity with the research participants. Ergun and Erdemir (2010) and Lavis (2010) also recognised that multiple other identities can emerge during the research process; for example, my class identity, which became relevant to this research only over time. My class identity became significant as I realised that one of the key ways I have found ease in relationships with other racialised women, including Māori, is through a working-class lens. This will be expanded on in the discussion. If I had considered this from the start, I might have adjusted my criteria to be more specific about recruiting South Asian women with particular class identities to see whether this also inhibited or facilitated relationships and solidarities with other women. Herod (1999) and Kusow (2003) noted that a researcher may experience varying levels of ‘insiderness’ depending on the situation. De Andrade (2000) states that how the participants view the researcher impacts their ‘insider’ status. In this context also, I had multiple feelings of insiderness with the participants based on the stories that they trusted me with.

The lens through which anyone interprets data is not neutral. To do this analysis, I needed to revisit my own worldview and positionality to identify any blind spots I should be aware of when interpreting my interludes and reflective notes during the course of this thesis. As I reflected, other identities I had, which I had not considered previously, became visible. The following is an excerpt from my journal titled ‘Invisible Identities’.

Invisible identities

As a British Bangladeshi woman born and raised in the UK, who now lives in Aotearoa, I am aware of the visible and invisible identities I carry that can shape how I make meaning from the data that I have collected. My social location of being a mother, (im)migrant, educator and a part of various racialised and faith communities also provides me with both proximity and distance to my research participants. This also comes with blind spots about how I may approach and interpret my data.

I am aware that my visible identities of race, ethnic group, gender and the tone of my skin provided me with moments of connection with my research participants. With some of the

participants, I was mindful not to over-identify when I heard stories of the same cultural references we had growing up, noting that we were also from the same generation. Reflecting during the research gathering process I was able to recognise when this did happen, which would prompt me to talk through my findings with a 'peer researcher buddy', and I also had opportunities to talk through my findings with my supervisors.

Reflecting on my own invisible identities, I recognise that my faith identity and its significance surface in a way that is depending on the context. It did not necessarily emerge when I viewed myself as a researcher. During my initial analysis of one-on-one conversations, I overlooked some faith dimensions that some women shared. When discussing the findings with my supervisors, I realised I had missed this aspect and revisited my data to identify it. I also have a marginalised identity within the broader South Asian diaspora here in Aotearoa that is linked to my faith.

During this period, I also recognised that the environment where the women lived and worked could influence how they experienced relationships and solidarity with other racialised women. Since one of the findings from this research was that South Asian women found it difficult to articulate their relationships with Māori women, I wondered how many of the women lived in neighbourhoods alongside other Māori families? Also, how does class facilitate or hinder our experience of relationships with each other? Had I considered class as an additional criterion in the initial call for South Asian women to be part of this project, this might have uncovered other insights not currently included. This points to further research that could build on the findings of this thesis.

Another insight I personally gained was that I tend to connect with people from different social classes because of my own background and upbringing. When I reflect on my relationships with both racialised women and white women in the UK, we all came from working-class backgrounds. We were all different from each other; however, we shared some understanding of each other's material realities.

We also lived in the same or nearby communities, so we are also part of each other's social imagination.

To reduce blind spots and bias, I consulted two peers, separate from my supervisors, to discuss my findings and analysis. I also held two online Zoom sessions to share initial findings of this project with the women involved. During these sessions, the women were

asked for feedback based on their own transcripts or anything that arose during our discussions, in case there was anything they wanted to add that I may have not considered. I did not receive any additional comments. These sessions were invitational, giving the women the choice to participate if they wished. I also presented my findings at a couple of conferences, sharing my work with a broader audience.

The feedback I received from these conferences was positive. Feedback also shared from one South Asian woman was that she was not interested in connecting with her own history but was more focused on living her life here in Aotearoa. I connected with this woman during the conference, and she later shared that she preferred to dissociate herself from her Indian identity and instead identified more with her faith. This reaffirmed to me how colonisation works to disconnect and disrupt identities. I also recognised that rejecting fundamental parts of ourselves can be a consequence of internalised colonialism and racism. Other South Asian women shared that their own relationships with other South Asian and other racialised women were hard, and they were not sure why this was until being able to consider these relationships through the lens of colonialism and white supremacy. This can be confronting self work, however in doing the work, and recognising the multiple ways that we have also been silenced as racialised women there becomes opportunities to advance our solidarities with one another.

For the study in this chapter, the analysis of autoethnographic data involved identifying themes in my reflective notes taken throughout this project, the interludes, and from my own life experiences. The four themes extracted are described below.

6.3 Findings

This autoethnographic study addresses the research question: **How has the process of completing this research and writing this thesis offered insights and learning for my own life and practice?** Four key themes were identified from the interludes in this thesis: **Historical remembering, Unsettling settler colonial narratives, Resisting co-optation; and Being in solidarity.** These themes are described in detail, and are followed by a discussion of my key insights and learnings as a researcher, and about this research process and how it has changed me.

Table 3 *Decolonial framework*

Themes	Description	Applications
Historical remembering	Learning about our own colonial histories	Critically remember our histories. Engage in learning about the impacts of Empire. Recording oral histories and creating spaces to archive and remember.
Unsettling settler colonial narratives	Rejecting stereotypes,	
Resisting co-optation	- Resisting being co-opted by colonialism - Exposing the ways that migrants are co-opted into settler narratives - Rejecting the model minority myth	Spaces to come together and dialogue
Being in solidarity	Practicing solidarity with Tangata whenua	Refusing settler colonial logics

6.3.1 Historical remembering

The first theme extracted was historical remembering. Through my own observations and interactions within South Asian communities, I have noticed a lack of opportunity to critically engage with our own histories of colonisation that involve British colonial rule of India. Remembering such histories not only helps us to understand our own position but also reveals the ongoing impacts of colonisation that have disconnected us from our past.

Since arriving in Aotearoa, I have regularly returned to my hometown in the UK. Over this 20-year period I have witnessed the shift in South Asians in the UK wanting to know more about their own histories of their arrival in Britain. This growing interest was also supported by government funding that supported programming for mainstream radio and television that discussed the partition of India and began discussing the impacts of colonialism. I had begun learning about the history of the partition of India back in 2018, which was largely prompted

by the visibility of this part of history that I was never taught at school. During this period I began noting my own thoughts on what this history meant for me. This was also juxtaposed with my own experiences here in Aotearoa, where there were no discussions about the history of partition. It was as if the British never went to India. All that was visible were celebrations of Indian and Pakistani independence, and there was an amnesia about anything else. Through these experiences and observations my first piece for E-Tangata was an attempt for me to remember, and to make the unspeakable speakable and knowable (interlude 1: celebrating while colonised). It was also an attempt to record a history of living in a settler colony. It was through this remembering of my own history that I came to understand, on an intellectual level, how my own parents had ended up in the UK.

This was further confirmed by my visit in 2023, when I had the chance to see the first South Asian gallery in the UK, which had opened in my hometown. The gallery collaborated with local South Asian artists, community members, and researchers. It was the first time in my life that I saw a part of my own communities' history displayed in a mainstream physical space. We were not just represented as South Asians, but as Bangladeshis, Sri Lankans, Pakistanis, Afghans, Indians, and other distinct identities within the gallery. Not as a homogenised, flattened group of people.

The history of colonial rule of British India was also made visible in the mural at the entrance of the gallery. This artwork included a remembering of British colonial policy that caused the starvation of three million Bengalis in 1943 (see Figure 19). Winston Churchill was the Prime Minister of Britain who made this decision, which features in the artwork along with emaciated Bengali bodies.

Figure 19 *The Bengal Famine, 1943, Manchester Museum [personal collection, 2023]*



The mural also captured the rebellion of Indian citizens, resistance and movement making.

Remembering my own history and making links to my own family's story also helped me to think about how colonialism had impacted my family and my parents' shifting identity of firstly being Indians, then Pakistanis and then Bangladeshis (interlude 2: connecting through

our colonised histories). Writing this offered me a sense of compassion and a new understanding of how difficult my own parents' lives were because of their evolving identity that was manufactured through colonial borders.

On a personal level, this thesis has also had an impact that has changed me. I had been disconnected from the history, rituals, and knowledge of my people. I hadn't realised how much this was part of my life until I started researching my family background and how my parents came to live in the UK. I had always known some things, but not much about my parents' lineages. My parents had not been able to remember many details of their own lives, and during the process of gathering research data, I came to understand why. The following is a journal entry I made after a conversation with my mother.

I had only been told remnants about the partition of India. I had learnt little from my parents as they had shared that they did not want to remember the bad stuff. It was only in 2024 that I learned from my mum that they never found my grandfather's (father's side) body in Mumbai (formerly known as Bombay) in the Bombay dock explosion of 1944. He had been a sepoy (Indian sailor) and engineer on British ships in India. There were no details available at the time that could be shared, as the British had censored much of what had happened. However, upon reviewing news reports, I discovered that the SS Fort Stikine had docked in Bombay Harbour on April 14, 1944. It had been carrying 1,400 tonnes of explosives, including a large quantity of high explosives, ammunition, and cotton bales. A disaster waiting to happen, and of course, it was mainly brown bodies that were killed. Piecing things together, my grandfather was killed on this day, and they were never able to locate his body. The British promised the wives and families of all those killed a pension for life. This never happened, and after partition, the Indian government did not honour what had been agreed.

As a consequence, my father's family suffered greatly. My grandmother died of a broken heart, leaving all the children orphaned and having to fend for themselves. I know that my father never got over his father's death.

I can understand why my father would have never wanted to remember this painful loss along with a family unable to grieve without a body. But to not remember does not serve healing. I borrow the word 'map' and its understanding from Canadian poet and novelist Dionne Brand (2001). In her book, A Map to the Door of No Return, she remembers the painful history of her people in Africa. She argued that moving on from such histories is difficult as

they have not been relegated to the past. They are very much present in the lives of colonised people. She speaks to such things as genocides faced by populations of people, Indigenous land loss and the dehumanising legacy of enslavement of Africans and how these histories need to be remembered by Canadians as part of their country. Her work also reminds us how the violence of colonialism and imperialism creates destruction of cultural memory. As an example of this, Dionne's grandfather could not remember where he was from in Africa: a survival response from her grandfather as a way to protect himself from trauma. This lack of remembering or forgetting is a coloniser's tool over the colonised, as it does not wish its subject to remember. By forgetting, the loss happens on many levels.

My parents had to form multiple identities: Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi British, shifting the view of who they were both internally and physically through movement, also as a way to survive. They had to survive the legacy of the British Empire and were now part of the UK colonies. Being raised as their adult child in this context has given me a much deeper understanding of why my parents, over the years, have not been able to remember people, places, names, and locations in their homeland. I thought there was something wrong with our family. We lived in grinding poverty within the walls of the working classes in the UK. There is so much I understand now in the wider context of the British Empire and being in the diaspora. I meet this understanding with loss. A loss that I never knew I needed to process until I began this journey with my thesis two years ago. Understanding now, as Brand also argues, that forgetting continues to be a way to maintain control over the lives of those impacted by colonialism. What is clear is to remember. Remember that we can find ways back to ourselves. We don't have a physical map. However, we can retrace and remap in a way that makes sense of our lived realities. Moana Jackson (2020) chooses the phrase '... ethics of restoration' (p.149), a term used instead of decolonisation as it held a more expansive view. He spoke not only about dismantling colonial structures and being culturally sensitive but also about acknowledging people's self-determination, being able to live their own lives, and understanding their interdependence with others. Moana Jackson also reminded us to contribute to the well-being of those around us in our communities instead of being too focused on personal success. It is within this understanding that I add that to be engaged in the 'ethics of restoration' is to also restore ourselves by re-mapping those aspects of ourselves that colonisation has stolen from us, which includes the ways that we are in relationship with each other.

Being at the South Asia gallery back in 2023 also reminded me of the rich and deep artistic history of the region of Bangladesh my parents come from, but seeing the rickshaw (see Figure 2) which is still a common mode of transport in cities, brought back memories only of the many trips I have made on rickshaws.

Figure 20 Bangladeshi Rickshaw, Manchester Museum [personal collection, 2023]



This act of remembering also enabled me to return to places, people and my own memories. Fu's (2025) celestial solidarity framework includes remembering and returning to histories, places and ancestors as one of the framework's tenets. This is a helpful insight, as when I began remembering, I also began to see other things. On my last visit to Bangladesh, the monuments that marked the birth of Bangladesh in 1971 came into my own line of vision along with the ethnological museum in Chattogram, which kept artefacts, stories and images of the Indigenous tribes of Bangladesh. I had never noticed these things before, but they had

been always there. What also came into view were the multiple monuments that testified to the many lives lost so that Bengalis were able to have sovereignty and determination over their own lives as an independent state. I wondered about the role that resourcing/investment can play in making our own histories and stories visible around us and what this can spark in raising our own consciousness in wanting to know who we are, which can support our own positioning in relationship to each other and Tangata Whenua.

In summary, the absence of critical engagement with South Asian histories of British colonial rule both within communities in Aotearoa and in the broader settler-colonial context is neither a coincidence nor an oversight. Settler colonialism operates as a structure that actively manages and contains the histories of those it incorporates (see Jackson, 2020). The amnesia that surrounds partition histories within South Asian communities in Aotearoa, the silence around British colonial rule of India, and the forgetting that shaped my parents' lives and identities are structurally produced effects of colonialism rather than personal or community failings. As Dionne Brand (2001) reminds us, forgetting is a coloniser's tool; it does not wish its subjects to remember. The epistemic erasure of South Asian colonial histories in Aotearoa is therefore part of the same structure that dispossesses Māori.

Drawing on the literature review's framing of reclaiming the sacred and epistemic recovery (see chapter 1), the acts of remembering documented in this chapter, visiting the South Asian gallery, tracing family histories, and reconnecting with the history of partition and the Bengal famine are understood here not as personal milestones but as political and epistemic acts. They constitute a refusal of the structural forgetting that settler colonialism depends upon, and a return to ways of knowing that colonialism has worked to sever us from. Reclaiming the sacred is a turning away from the false promise of belonging offered by assimilation and approximation to whiteness, and a return to ancestral knowledge and knowing the totality of British rule and the destruction it brought, and continues to bring as a source of political orientation.

6.3.2 Unsettling settler colonial narratives

The second theme extracted was unsettling colonial narratives. This involves rejecting stereotypes about others and being able to challenge our own internalised colonialism by reflecting on our own attitudes, beliefs, ways of thinking, about ourselves and others.

This theme recognises that we need to break the cycle of internalised colonial narratives, as failing to do so will hinder our ability to build the relationships and solidarities with others that white supremacy seeks to marginalise.

I lacked the words to describe some of my experiences until I started researching and realised that our relationships are also deliberately being disrupted to promote disconnection and isolation. This is how settler colonialism operates (Fanon 1963). I have experienced a variety of interactions from other racialised women, which have included comments such as “*You sound white*,” “*You’re not one of us*,” or “*You’re one of the colonisers*. ” These comments influenced my own relationships with the women who made them. They affected my trust and whether I wanted to connect with these individuals. The comments created a divide between us, and I often felt “othered. ” Judgements were based on my visible identities of gender, race, and ethnicity, as well as my way of speaking and my name. People also often assumed things about my name ‘Ara’ and attributed a Māori identity to me, which led to issues of “othering, ” such as being asked whether I belonged in ethnic community spaces or being told “*this was not for Māori* ”. When I attended a workplace to deliver wellbeing training after communicating via email, the organiser was disappointed. They had assumed that I was Māori and had communicated this to all the participants before my arrival.

In interlude 4, model minorities, I shared how the model minority stereotype can harm both South Asians and Māori communities. It is a stereotype that praises certain racialised groups for adapting to the hard-working demands of capitalism (Shui, 2020). The mythical belief that Māori are given more rights than others is also a familiar narrative that is shared across racialised communities (see interlude 4). This belief disconnects Māori from their status as the Indigenous people of Aotearoa and that they were promised tino rangatiratanga, control of themselves and their taonga in their own land. This myth is also weaponised under the call of ‘equal rights for all’, by prominent members of the Indian community, such as Indian Act MP, Dr Parmjeet Parmar. She has also used this to attack Māori initiatives at universities (see interludes 3 and 4).

As I continued to reflect while collecting the data, I realised that I hadn’t recognised the extent to which ‘internalised colonialism’ can contribute to keeping us apart, and understanding that this is a tool of colonialism. This understanding began to offer me some compassion regarding some of the experiences I had with other racialised women, including Māori women. In listening to the women during the collaging day, I noted that several

women had shared similar experiences of being ‘othered’ by other women, due to their caste, skin tone or perceived superiority. To understand that your own experiences are not isolated and are not limited to you was important. Being able to join the dots in this way is not only important in being able not to internalise such experiences but in being able to attribute what we might be experiencing to larger systems of oppression that are at work (Combahee River Collective, 1977).

I also started realising that some of my own experiences were not about me but about the need for other racialised women to seek legitimacy from the state. This desire to approximate whiteness far outweighed any wish to build meaningful relationships. To me, it was an indicator of internalised colonialism and how we can also be complicit with settler colonialism.

Racialisation of Asian communities in Aotearoa through processes of Asianisation places different groups into hierarchies that are actively weaponised against each other in the service of the settler state (Mok, 2022). The comments and exclusions documented can be considered as the structural effects of this process. Internalised colonialism, as Fanon (1963) argues, not only wounds the self. It distorts how we see and relate to one another, reproducing colonial hierarchies within and across racialised communities. The framing of model minority positioning as a mechanism for maintaining whiteness is directly relevant here (Wong et al. 1998). When racialised women position other racialised women as too white, not authentic enough, or as colonisers, this is not simply identity policing. It is the structural logic of divide and conquer, made interpersonal. A reproduction of the very hierarchies that settler colonialism depends upon to prevent solidarity from forming.

6.3.3 Resisting co-optation

The third theme extracted was resisting co-optation. Being able to make visible settler colonial narratives is important if we want to resist them. Colonialism offers us a false sense of logic, suggesting that if we believe in its messages, we will somehow be safe from the logics of white supremacy. In New Zealand discourse, South Asians are praised for being model citizens who are also economically productive and passive. This trope of the ‘model minority’ positions us in opposition to Māori, as it also reinforces the idea that racism can be overcome through values such as meritocracy and disconnects from the wider systemic issues

of white supremacy (Ahmed, 2012). What this also suggests is that identities assigned by the settler colony encourage us to assimilate and approximate whiteness, with an example being that prominent Indians in the South Asian community also adopt settler-colonial language of ‘diversity and inclusion’. Often, these individuals are from privileged caste and class backgrounds and are frequently called to sit at government and community decision-making tables (see Interlude 4, model minorities). As Rata and Al-Asaad (2019) rightly highlight, not only does the term ‘diversity and inclusion’ flatten racialised communities’ social locations and political histories, but these groups are also considered interchangeable. Within this framing, Māori are also considered as just another ethnic group. This not only works directly against Māori but also against other racialised communities. This can serve to reinforce individualism and individual success over collective care for each other and the community.

A further example that becomes a barrier to resisting co-option is in how diversity is selectively curated by others in positions of power because of their status within the workplace. Working in the educational sector, I had encountered several instances where I was prevented from developing my working relationships with Māori women by both Pākehā and Māori women. At a couple of my workplaces, Māori women invited Pākehā women, who were considered allies, into a Māori group that involved regular overnight stays on a marae to build bonds. I remember asking if I could join, and I was told that “*the Pākehā women had proven themselves,*” which is why they were included. I was already isolated as the only racialised woman in the organisation who was neither Māori nor Pasifika, amidst a predominantly Pākehā workforce. Another experience I had was that we, as educators, were encouraged to write blog posts for the organisation. In 2020, I wrote a piece to share with educators about the potential of tauiwi of colour and Māori solidarities. A Pākehā woman told me that “*there was no appetite or interest in my perspective.*” Only Pākehā perspectives on their relationships with Māori were ever published. These decisions were also supported by a Māori woman, as they were part of the Māori–Pākehā leadership team, which was the organisation's way of demonstrating they were a bicultural organisation. This also demonstrated for me how ‘biculturalism’ also created exclusion and can function as settler colonial logic needing to be unsettled.

These were not the kinds of experiences I had with other racialised women in the UK, knowing that the UK was also not a settler colony. What I was clear about was that, as a British Bangladeshi woman, I was a recognised person where I came from, and what I felt

was happening to me here was that I was being pressured to fit into a box that suited others. I felt that in Aotearoa, New Zealand, I was facing a dual response, not only being ‘othered’ by racialised women but also ‘othered’ within the context of biculturalism, how that was understood, and how it functioned.

Having perspectives on tauwi of colour and Māori solidarities silenced, and watching Pākehā women be positioned as proven allies, while remaining invisible as a tauwi of colour, are not isolated failures. They are structural illustrations of what the literature review theorises around biculturalism (see Simon, 2022, 2023). When institutional biculturalism positions Pākehā women as the legitimate mediators of relationships with Māori, it does not simply exclude South Asian women; it reproduces the settler colonial logic it claims to unsettle. Again, the model minority framing is operating in these spaces. South Asian women are simultaneously praised as models and rendered invisible with nothing else to offer. As Rata and Al-Asaad (2019) identify, diversity and inclusion functions here as a mechanism of co-optation, absorbing tauwi of colour into settler institutional frameworks while foreclosing the possibility of solidarity grounded in Te Tiriti obligations and Māori sovereignty.

6.3.4 Being in solidarity

The fourth and final theme extracted was being in solidarity. Being in solidarity with Māori means actively rejecting settler colonial logic and calls for assimilation. To engage in solidarity is not a call to engage in charity but to participate in a politics of refusal, as asserted by Audra Simpson (2017), who states that we can look to each other to be recognised and that legitimacy from the state is unnecessary.

As a researcher, I had not realised the range of skills and expertise I possess as an educator, trainer, Positive Psychology practitioner, and community arts curator. My knowledge and abilities have often been underestimated and dismissed by others; however, these were the resources I drew upon when designing the collage section of this research and in my capacity to curate spaces. The skills of racialised people are often dismissed, as we are frequently portrayed as individuals who have nothing to contribute beyond our labour and as a diversity mascot (see Ahmed, 2012; Razack, 2002). I was also influenced by Indigenous, Black, and women of colour literature: I was reading about the importance and vital need for such spaces (Chilisa, 2020; see Ahmed, 2022; Lorde, 1984; hooks, 1993, 2000a, 2000b, 2015b).

Through this deeper understanding, I have also come to appreciate the many ways my parents resisted white supremacy and fought against fascism. My conversations, especially with my mother, revealed how they attended protests, often telling us they were just going to the shops. They wanted to protect us from what was happening around them, which included the murder of Ahmed Iqbal Ullah, a 13-year-old Bangladeshi boy in a Manchester school playground in 1986. I had attended the school next door to where Ahmed had been murdered by another student. This experience of writing has also reminded me of the various ways in which I observed both the Bangladeshi community and broader South Asian communities and their allies engaging in acts of resistance.

The insights I had throughout this research process and the project itself also began shaping the creative community space, Manawaka Ao, I founded in 2021. Manawaka Ao was initially created for ethnically diverse women to come together, learn about Te Tiriti o Waitangi and foster connection with each other. Both the name and a Karakia (Māori prayer) was gifted to the space by Pa Riikau Terry Karapa (Tūhoe). I'd known Pa for some time from working alongside each other at a school.

Figure 21 *community space [personal collection]*



LEGACY MAKING PROJECTS

INTERGENERATIONAL CARVING



SAT 28TH MARCH 2026

353 BLOCKHOUSE BAY ROAD 10-2PM

Weaving the strands of Community Together




MANAWAKA AO

Calling our South Asian diaspora

Come join us for Waitangi
Friday 6th February
12-3pm
Hoani Waititi Marae, Glen Eden, West Auckland



TOITŪ: VISUAL SOVEREIGNTY

SPECIAL Q&A SCREENING

BEING IN RELATION

COME JOIN US IN CONVERSATION WITH NIGEL BORELL



SUN 1ST MARCH 2026

CAPITOL CINEMA BALMORAL 11-3PM





COMMUNITY YARNING

KNIT AND CROCHET TOGETHER

Want to learn?
Already know how?
Come along to craft, chat, and connect with community!

When: Sunday October 19, 2-4 pm
Where: Mt Roskill, Tāmaki Makaurau
More details in the caption. Sign-up form here!





INDIGENOUS CARVING EXPERIENCE



SAT 29 APRIL 2023
10AM TO 5PM

LUNCH PROVIDED
REGISTRATION ESSENTIAL




MANAWAKA AO
PRESENTS

EVERYDAY SOLIDARITIES

FREE EVENT • FOOD • FILM • MUSIC

SUNDAY 19 FEB • 12.30PM - 4.30PM

HOLLYWOOD CINEMA
20 SAINT GEORGES ROAD, AVONDALE, TĀHAKI MAKĀURAU

PANELISTS
HON MARAMA DAVIDSON • MERVIN SINGHAM
ADORATE MIZERO • RAFIQAH ABQULLAH
SUVEEN SANIS WALGAMPOLA

GUEST DJ : EMPRESS NAIMA

PANEL DISCUSSION ON STRENGTHENING SOLIDARITIES BETWEEN ETHNIC COMMUNITIES AND TĀNGATA WHĒNUA FOLLOWED BY THE SCREENING OF WHĒNUA



Healing solidarity circles





MANAWAKA AO
EMBRACING FREEDOMS
PRESENTS

SOUTH ASIAN SOLIDARITIES

SUPPORTING TINO RANGATIRATANGA

SUNDAY 25TH FEB 2024

HOLLYWOOD CINEMA • 11AM-3PM
20 SAINT GEORGES ROAD, AVONDALE, TĀHAKI MAKĀURAU

FREE EVENT • TALK • FOOD • FILM

PANEL DISCUSSION ON STRENGTHENING SOLIDARITIES BETWEEN SOUTH ASIAN COMMUNITIES AND TĀNGATA WHĒNUA FOLLOWED BY THE SCREENING OF MURU




LEARN ABOUT THE 9 STARS OF MATARIKI AND HOW TO USE MARAMATAKA (MĀORI LUNAR CALENDAR) IN YOUR OWN LIFE

**MATARIKI
WANANGA**

WITH PA RIIKAU TERRY (TŪHOE)

SATURDAY 22 JUNE
10AM TO 2PM • LUNCH PROVIDED

ROSEBANK COMMUNITY HUB
(TE KURA O PĀTIKI - ROSEBANK SCHOOL GROUNDS, ENTER THROUGH GATE D)

REGISTER VIA LINK IN BIO

**WEAVING
FLAX BASKETS**

SUNDAY 23RD JUNE | 2PM TO 5PM
HAVEN (1855 GREAT NORTH RD, AVONDALE)

LEARN ABOUT HARVESTING HARAKEKE WITH NAT ROSE AND WEAVE YOUR OWN BASKET TO TAKE HOME WITH YOU

 SCAN QR CODE TO REGISTER

EMBROIDERING TAPA

**TAPA SU'I
EXPERIENCE**

WITH JASMINE TUIĀ

SATURDAY 6 JULY

11AM-2PM • HAVEN • REGISTRATION ESSENTIAL
1855 GREAT NORTH ROAD, AVONDALE

EMBARK ON A SOULFUL EXPLORATION

**COLLAGE YOUR
ANCESTORS
ALTAR**

SATURDAY 4 MAY 2024
10 AM TO 2PM • HAVEN
(1855 GREAT NORTH ROAD, AVONDALE)

REGISTER VIA THE PROVIDED LINK

In sharing what I had been learning, and learning from each other as a group of racialised women, which has involved support from Māori and Pasifika artists, it has been possible to create opportunities for anyone who felt called to engage in the panel discussions we have offered, and creative opportunities to carve Pounamu and connect meaningfully with each other that did not involve extraction, but connection. These initiatives have provided portals to learn about Mātauranga Māori from Māori artists and come into closer proximity with each other on topics that matter.

This process also kickstarted an initiative with a small number of Bangladeshis in my own life.

Figure 22 *South Asian banner making [personal collection]*



Noticing that there had never been a South Asian banner as a visible symbol of South Asians supporting the honouring of Te Tiriti, we spent late 2024 together creating a banner to take to future events. This effort was consolidated by the protests across Aotearoa New Zealand against the government's Treaty Principles Bill, which aimed to strip Māori of their rights and

sovereignty. We gathered input and support from friends in the Sri Lankan Tamil, Sinhalese, Indian, Afghan, Pakistani, and Punjabi communities and took the banner to Waitangi in 2025. Through this engagement, I also recognised that I was engaged in praxis, with a clear demonstration that the personal is also political.

Solidarity is not a feeling of connection or a shared experience of marginalisation. It is a relational practice that is conditional on naming the structure of settler colonialism, understanding our positioning within it as settlers of colour, and taking political action that upholds rather than obscures Māori sovereignty. The founding of Manawaka Ao in 2021, a space initially created for ethnically diverse women to come together, learn about Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and foster connection, is understood as an enactment of that governing definition. The space is not charity, nor diversity programming. Drawing on Audra Simpson's (2017) politics of refusal, it serves as a deliberate rejection of settler-colonial logic and its demand for assimilation.

6.4 Discussion

While writing this thesis and reflecting on its findings, I have come to realise how various relationships with other racialised women and Māori women operate, and the barriers they face. I had not realised the constant messaging of being ‘othered’, and how resistance to such messaging must be a daily act.

Fanon (1963) writes that colonial rule not only involves the state, but also the ability to persuade, either indirectly or directly, the colonised to identify with the settler state and broader society. In this context, being recognised as citizens and included in New Zealand society in tokenistic ways maintains the asymmetrical power dynamics. Fanon also understood the power the state holds over people by encouraging them to adopt the colonisers' worldview, making them complicit. This is how tropes such as the ‘grateful (im)migrant’ and ‘model minorities’ promote ways of keeping racialised communities under control. These identities also serve to reinforce individualism over collectivism and suggest that racism and racist systems can be overcome through hard work, while maintaining the concealment of whiteness and white supremacy (see Ahmed, 2012; Fanon, 1963; Sankar, 2022).

For racialised communities, colonial violence also occurs in Tangata Tiriti spaces because there is a failure to discuss how racism operates within these spaces and an inability to confront the elephant in the room regarding the level of distrust that exists between tauwi of colour and Pākehā Treaty workers or facilitators (see Azarmandi 2022; Omura 2014; Pio 2010, Pickering, 2024).

New Zealand classifies racialised people under broad terms like ‘Asian’. South Asians are grouped within this wider category, which intentionally aims to erase and flatten both identities and histories. This provides ample cover for colonialism to racialise different groups in various ways. As discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2), East Asian peoples are racialised differently from South Asians by settler colonial states (Mok, 2022; Saranillio, 2013). An example of this is when New Zealand National Party politicians made race-based comments about potential Chinese and Indian candidates, sharing that, "Two Chinese would be more valuable than two Indians" (RNZ, 2018, para.5). This comment revealed that Chinese candidates were racially preferred and considered superior to Indian candidates solely based on ethnicity. Mok (2022) describes this as Chinese being temporarily closer to whiteness, using the term ‘White’ Asians, compared to South Asians, who are perceived as racially lower down the fictional hierarchy and referred to as ‘Black’ Asians.

I argue that this mindset influences Tangata Tiriti spaces, similar to the fictions of exceptionalism that hinder discussions of racism in these spaces. These spaces often only tolerate ‘singular Asian voices’ which are seen as reassuring, as opposed to raising critiques that move us beyond conversation about more Asians and (im)migrants participating in Te Tiriti workshops, and highlighting cultural similarities between Māori and other ethnically diverse groups. Some of these critiques include how might we also tackle the racism that shows up in Tangata Tiriti spaces? Having spaces where a plurality of different ‘Asian’ voices can be shared not only moves us away visually from the flattened category of ‘Asian’ but also brings in other discussions that do not rely on Te Tiriti workshops and similarities in culture being the only responses. Being able to listen to perspectives from working class voices from our communities would also be powerful.

I have also witnessed multiple acts of racism from well-meaning Pākehā in Tangata Tiriti spaces, who wish to support Māori, but inflict racism by excluding tauwi of colour. A personal example involving exclusion was when I was contacted to come along to a Tangata Tiriti panel. When I asked who was on the panel, they mentioned just Pākehā and Māori

individuals. I queried that perhaps the panel may be for Pākehā and potentially using Tangata Tiriti was a little misleading.

I have found other more inclusive spaces run by Māori and tauwi of colour race scholars and activists that understood the ways that colonialism, whiteness and white supremacy functioned. What these spaces naturally did was to draw on multiple racialised voices that speak power from the margins that also crossed class boundaries. What I have found these spaces do particularly well is to not flatten people's experiences or identities but name them. This is consistent with observations made by Audre Lorde (1984) and the Combahee River Collective (1977) in that to understand each other, we must also learn about the materiality and existence of each other's lives.

The limits of the word 'Asian' also harm 'Asian' peoples. It can perpetuate the myth of the 'model minority' (see Dennis, 2018). For instance the term 'Asian' can mask class inequalities between workers of different Asian migrant groups⁷. Often, people in unstable situations, such as difficult work conditions, seek safety and camouflage because survival and solidarity with others are not always their priorities. In these cases, a space can open up for working-class South Asians and Māori, who also face oppression based on class, to come together. An educational perspective highlights how the term can be harmful. The use of the word 'Asian' can reinforce stereotypes about specific groups. In this context, 'Asian' can suggest that certain students excel in particular subjects. For example, 'Asian' students are often seen as good at maths and science (Ho, 2016). I argue that this also sustains racial stratification, or what Bonilla-Silva (2004) calls 'new racism'. By pointing out the limits of the category 'Asian', it becomes clear how this label can uphold myths of meritocracy and the model minority, creating barriers to solidarity with others who are considered 'Asian'. This can also obscure the diverse lived realities of different groups and lead to division, even pitting these groups against Māori. South Asians are classified as Asian in official statistics, yet it is East Asians that tend to come to mind for people here in Aotearoa when they hear the term 'Asian', which renders South Asians invisible, and often 'represented' by East Asians.

⁷ See Migrant workers association Aotearoa, Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/migrantworkersassociationaotearoa/>

What is necessary is that these politics of recognition be rejected. Audre Simpson (2017) advocates for a politics of refusal, which actively dismisses such recognition but seeks to assert, in this case, the self-determination of Indigenous peoples without needing recognition from the settler colonial state. This also applies to our South Asian communities. I have often noticed at both South Asian and broader ethnic community events the tendency for our communities to focus on the voices of government officials and, as individuals and groups, to strongly pursue photos with those officials. As Dutta (2025a) reminds us when speaking about upper caste Indian women in the diaspora who claim victimhood based on their race and gender while also approximating to whiteness, we cannot play victim and be complicit in settler colonialism. We also need to be accountable and responsible to Tangata Whenua.

In these observations, Audre Simpson (2017) also builds on Coulthard's (2014) critique that the politics of recognition by the settler state (so-called Canada, and by extension New Zealand) functions as a way for it to maintain control rather than offer Indigenous self-determination: a trap into which racialised communities are also co-opted. Simpson highlights that such politics of recognition neutralise Indigenous rights, as these get absorbed into liberal democratic frameworks that undermine the genuine need for decolonial possibilities that prioritise the self-determination of Indigenous peoples. In this way, we are also encouraged to engage in 'generative refusal,' which allows us to build relationships outside the settler colonial state —relationships that are life-affirming and through which we see each other as human (LB Simpson, 2017c).

In summarising the discussion so far, it has become clear that messages that the settler colony of New Zealand is in some way exceptional, how we are flattened within the 'Asian' category, and the way we can be treated in Tangata Tiriti spaces, all serve to disrupt our relationships with one another, and with Māori. This is structural, and part of the settler colonial toolkit.

What I turn to now is the decolonial framework (Table 3) offered in this chapter that can support South Asian women, and more broadly South Asian communities, recognising the self and engaging in decolonisation practices that offer an alternative way to relate to one other. This comes with the understanding that white supremacy will never accept anything other than the 'white' body as the norm and everyone else as the 'other'. I contend that this also plays out in Tangata Tiriti spaces and ethnically diverse spaces where whiteness remains unnamed.

The decolonial framework outlined in the findings includes themes of '**Historical remembering**', '**Unsettling settler colonial narratives**', '**Resisting co-optation**', and '**Being in solidarity**'. This aligns with existing literature on developing critical consciousness, decolonisation, and solidarities beyond settler colonialism (Benton et al., 2013; Beltran & Mehrotra, 2015; Brown, 2017; Das et al., 2022; Fanon, 1963; Jackson, 2020; Rata & Al-Saad, 2019). Additionally, this framework adds nuance by highlighting how (im)migrants are continually targeted with messages that co-opt them into settler state narratives, making active resistance vital to reject such messaging. When combined with the expanded Whakawhanaungatanga model (to be discussed further in chapter 7), which builds on Rata and Al-Saad's (2019) work, it can serve as a set of 'decolonial tools' for South Asian communities.

While writing this thesis, I have come to understand the importance of recognising our own positionalities and how our identities have been shaped by colonialism (Fanon, 1963; see also Sium et al., 2012; Snelgrove et al., 2014). What has become clear to me is how significant my own class identity has been and how my working-class upbringing has shaped my political awareness, which I have outlined in my positionality statement.

I learnt about Te Tiriti directly from Māori families themselves, not through a Te Tiriti workshop. It was also my experience working with many Māori students and their families – first as a teacher, then as a specialist in learning and behaviour within the education system, health, social services, and justice – that taught me about the material realities and the multiple intersecting ways in which Māori students and their families are continually dispossessed. These insights also extended to my work with Pasifika and former refugee families. On reflection, all of these were working-class families, where class is a social hierarchy where individuals are ranked according to their access to education, work, income, homeownership, and social status (see Phillips, n.d.).

As a researcher, when setting the criteria for the South Asian women included in this study, I had not considered class. I reflected on why this might be and realised that in Aotearoa, New Zealand, there is more of a focus on identity groups (Māori, Pasifika, Asian, women, youth) than on class categories. This has muted class consciousness, which has also been encouraged alongside another New Zealand myth that it is an egalitarian society that also emphasises cultural and ethnic diversity and meritocracy (see Phillips, n.d.).

This focus solely on identity groups might also explain why my own supervisors asked me how I identified as a South Asian woman. This was something I had struggled with, as I had always considered myself to have a distinct identity as a British Bangladeshi woman, which I could articulate more easily than simply being South Asian. Perhaps I have always unconsciously understood that through my own distinct identity and sense of difference, I have found ways to connect with others beyond a flattened identity, as my own way of resisting the politics of recognition. I reflect on several solidarities I share with other racialised women, including Māori women, and how we understand each other's lives and the struggles we face both individually and collectively.

The act of writing for myself and then being able to share my thoughts via an online magazine with a wider audience has been powerful. Not only because I had been blocked in doing so in previous employment by a Pākehā woman because of my own perspectives as tauiwi of colour, but also because one of my Māori supervisors both encouraged and connected me to a Māori and Pasifika platform, commenting that these are important perspectives that need to be shared. It epitomises what can happen for individuals when we do see each other as part of each other's social imagination. Since beginning to share my writing in 2022, I have discovered that my writings on reconnecting with our own histories have made it into reading lists for university students, reading lists for South Asian creative art groups, Network Waitangi (2024) and educational newsletters. People have also contacted me sharing that they had never considered themselves as 'settlers of colour' and prompting others to reconnect with parts of their own histories. Writing, for me, has created this other space from which to speak and connect in fostering relationships that move beyond identity.

Finally, I aimed to gain insights into my own life and experiences with other racialised women and Māori. During this research, I was also undergoing my own decolonising journey. Discovering how disconnected I have been from much of my history and fragmented family memories has been bittersweet. I now see why my parents could not recall details and stories about people and places and why we have so few photo memories. That was something that really hurt me, as we mainly have oral stories at this stage.

This process has given me a lot of compassion and understanding towards my parents and what they had to endure, as well as towards myself and my siblings. Throughout this study, I've reconnected with art practices I used to do and rediscovered my love for poetry. I didn't expect to recover memories and practices from my own life, but I've come to understand in a

visceral, embodied way what it might be like to engage in my own recovery work. Work I didn't realise I needed. That is the trick of colonialism.

6.5 Implications

Developing a critical consciousness is essential for South Asian women and racialised communities if we are to challenge colonialism. There is no alternative. It is crucial to understand that we cannot claim victimhood based on how we are treated by the settler colony but also remain complicit in the dispossession of Māori.

This chapter highlights the significance of finding ways to discuss the racism present in Tangata Tiriti spaces beyond academia, and to promote open community conversations on how to navigate this collaboratively with others. If this issue continues, it will remain a disruptive force in relationships between tauwi of colour and Pākehā.

Another implication is the need to explore ways to deepen the understanding of class consciousness more broadly within communities. This consciousness could also create opportunities for dialogue between communities, where we can come together beyond our individual identity groups. This provides a basis for working together, not necessarily for the sole purpose of solidarity, but as a shared political project.

6.6 Applications

The decolonial framework outlined in this chapter can serve as a guide for South Asian women to come together and explore what the specific themes might mean for them, both individually and collectively.

Part of this process could also involve women sharing their personal stories through writing. Currently, there is not enough representation of South Asians in Aotearoa writing about their experiences in ways that are generative and life-affirming, beyond viewing themselves as victims. This could also include exploring what relationship and solidarity mean for them with Tangata Whenua. These writings could take shape as community zines. After reflecting on this study, I have also realised the importance of archiving family stories, practices and rituals for my own children, mother, and siblings lack family history and stories to pass down.

6.7 Future research

Future research could consider whether differences such as class impact the way South Asian women are in relationships with other racialised women, including Māori women, and whether the decolonial framework offered in this chapter is useful for other racialised communities.

6.8 Conclusion

The focus of this chapter was to explore How has the process of completing this research and writing this thesis offered insights and learning for my own life and practice? The methods employed in this chapter were autoethnography and writing publicly for a wider audience. The process involved reflective journaling and recording field notes throughout the research gathering process. Engaging in autoethnography helped me identify potential blind spots when interpreting my data for this thesis, but also linked to my own experiences, making sense of what I was finding and linking this to wider socio-political histories and literature. This process revealed to me that aspects of my own class identity have been subsumed by identity categories due to New Zealand having more of a focus on identity groups (Māori, Pasifika, women, youth) and how this has influenced my relationships with other racialised women, and how I am perceived. To support my thinking and learning as part of this thesis, I wrote four articles that appear as interludes throughout this thesis. Through this, I have been able to recover my own voice, which, as I have recognised, sits at the margins.

A key finding that recurs throughout this thesis is the need to tackle our own internalised colonialism if we are to develop the critical consciousness that enables us to be in decolonial relationships with each other outside of the settler colonial gaze. This also helps us to both name and turn away from the way the settler state may recognise us, as a way to provide the illusion that we belong and are valued in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Themes extracted in this chapter were: **Historical remembering, Unsettling settler colonial narratives, Resisting co-optation, and Being in solidarity.** These findings together create a decolonial framework that has the potential to be used in South Asian communities. Using autoethnography as a method I recognised how my own life and the lives of my family have been impacted by colonisation. Recognising that I have also had to negotiate my own transnational identity within the relationships that I have with other women and not neatly

fitting into a box that New Zealand has for me which is Asian, Migrant, ethnic, Immigrant, I have also understood why I have refused these terms or selectively used them to make myself understood in a country that only wishes to flatten and erase who I am.

The aim of this thesis was to explore how South Asian women can resist white supremacy and the effects this might have on building solidarities with other racialised women, including Māori women. What the findings have revealed within this broader topic is how, as a British Bangladeshi woman who lives in Aotearoa New Zealand, reclaiming aspects of my identity has strengthened both my voice and my relationship with myself. Refusing the politics of recognition is a way to unsettle the status quo of white superiority and find ways to strengthen solidarity with the self. It is these relational internal worlds that also help us to build relational external worlds away from the colonial gaze.

Chapter 7: Towards decolonial relationships and futures – Reflections, Implications, and next steps

To accept one's past – one's history – is not the same thing as drowning in it: it is learning how to use it. An invented past can never be used; it cracks and crumbles under the pressures of life like clay in a season of drought (James Baldwin, 1963, p. 95).

7.1 Introduction

The findings in this thesis show that the relationships we have with each other matter beyond our individual connections with each other, at a societal level. The ways in which we have these relationships with each other also matter. Despite the multiple barriers, there is cause for hope. Women who contributed to this thesis talked about mutual respect, abundant mindsets, and engaging in collective care as ways of being in solidarity with others. The women provided examples of mentoring other women and deliberately both celebrating and supporting others. This did not come without difficulty.

As South Asian women, our relationships with each other are not straightforward or easy and we have to navigate obstacles deliberately placed in our path by white supremacy and colonialism, which aim to divide us and keep us isolated from one another. This has been demonstrated throughout this thesis. In the opening to this chapter, Baldwin (1963) urges us to remain vigilant and understand how colonialism has sought to distort our lives. With this wisdom, we need to work on intentionally building decolonial relationships with one another, which includes addressing our own internalised colonialism and avoid being fooled by the false recognition that whiteness offers.

This research aimed to explore how South Asian women in Aotearoa experience solidarities with other racialised women, including Māori women, with the sub-questions:

1. How do South Asian women make sense of their own experiences of colonisation?
2. What are the experiences of relationships that South Asian women have with other racialised women, including Māori women?
3. What possible pathways and strategies exist for strengthening solidarities between South Asian women and other racialised women, including Māori women?

4. How has the process of completing this research and writing this thesis offered insights and learning for my own life and practice?

The theoretical lenses used across this thesis were liberatory, Indigenous and Black and women of colour feminist theory. The rest of this chapter will highlight the key findings, followed by the broader implications, and the strengths and limitations of this research. I conclude by discussing the significance of this study, as well as future research directions.

7.2 Key findings across this thesis

This thesis set out to study how South Asian women in Aotearoa experience relationships with other racialised women, including Māori women. What has been demonstrated across chapters 4, 5 and 6 is that solidarity is not a natural outcome of shared marginalisation, shared identity, or shared experience of racialisation. It is a relational practice that is structured, conditional, and sometimes foreclosed by the intersecting dynamics of settler colonialism, caste supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and internalised colonial narratives. This is the central empirical finding of this thesis, and it has been demonstrated through three distinct but interconnected sites of inquiry: the collaging process, the one-to-one conversations, and the autoethnography. Each of these studies highlighted different aspects of the same structural conditions.

The internal work of solidarity through reclaiming histories, healing from internalised oppression, reconnecting with ancestral knowledge and spiritual practices is not a precondition to political action but a dimension of it. Epistemic recovery and healing are necessary but insufficient on their own. Decolonisation in Aotearoa requires political action that is accountable to Māori sovereignty and Te Tiriti obligations. For South Asian women, this must also mean that solidarity extends beyond community healing and identity reclamation to include an active and ongoing commitment to the political project of tino rangatiratanga and Tiriti-based constitutional transformation. Activist spaces are where solidarity is strong. It's in deliberate community building, in the refusal of model minority positioning, as there is an orientation towards larger political commitments rather than the false promise of inclusion within settler-colonial frameworks.

The methodological contribution of this project is the arts-based methods that have made the complexity and diversity of South Asian women's relational lives visible in ways that conventional qualitative approaches cannot. The collaging process, found poetry, storytelling, and autoethnography together constituted not just a toolkit of methods but a decolonial methodological orientation. The collaging method adds to the literature by engaging racialised women in community, and centres women's knowledge that has been marginalised. This is also a method that can be used more broadly in racialised communities and 'Asian' activist spaces to explore our own nuanced views around identity and positionality. Being able to attend to something that is missing in our spaces gives us opportunities to learn more about each other and strengthen our relationships with one another, and to appreciate how we are also different. The approach centred women's knowledge, honoured the complexity of their experiences, and refused the extractive logic of research that positions racialised communities as subjects rather than knowledge holders. This methodology provides a practical contribution that can be taken up in community and activist spaces.

Sharing the complex experiences of the women in this study also provides an empirical contribution, and also locates caste supremacy in Aotearoa. Caste supremacy disrupts relationships between South Asian women and other women. This highlights the urgent need for South Asian communities to begin talking about the harmful role that caste supremacy plays in our communities. Caste supremacy exists in Aotearoa, New Zealand and is linked to Hindutva (right wing ideology) (See Dutta, 2025a). As articulated by tauwi of colour researcher Nabilah Abdul Rahman (2025), being able to draw on our own experiences also provides a call to action in tackling the rise of fascism in India which provides fuel for Hindutva ideologies. These ideologies are rooted in Islamophobia and have been recorded in the Indian diaspora here in Aotearoa. This further cements the findings that affirm that Hindutva is here in Aotearoa (Dutta, 2025b; Shingade, 2024, see New Zealand Herald, 2010).

The conceptual contribution of this thesis lies in two interconnected frameworks. The extension of the whakawhanaungatanga framework, as outlined by Rata and Al-Asaad (2019). The dimensions of restoration and of reconstruction were added. This provides South Asian women and tauwi of colour communities with a model that connects the internal work of identity reclamation to the external work of joint political struggle. There was also the creation of the decolonial framework (Chapter 6).

This whakawhānaungatanga framework describes how solidarities can be built by Indigenous and tauwiwi of colour making connections between histories of racialisation and oppression. The findings from Chapters 4, 5 and 6 offered insights on how to extend the framework to develop a model specifically for South Asian women, incorporating the dimension of reconstruction that focuses on practising self-awareness by reconnecting with histories and rituals, engaging in practices that promote solidarity with oneself, and reconnecting with spiritual practices.

Rata and Al-Asaad's (2019) model includes four dimensions: positioning, power sharing, dialogue and cultural practice. Their dimension of Positionality involves sharing an individual's pepeha (tribal sayings referencing specific geographic features and ancestors). This locates the person within land and community and demonstrates their relationship to the natural world. Power-sharing is discussed within the subthemes of manaaki (mutual respect), aroha (compassion, love, charity), and koha (reciprocal support). The Dialogue component of the model highlights the importance of engaging in conversations that support building good relations, aligning with Jo-Anne Lee's (2016) emphasis on intentional dialogue that moves beyond superficial talk between Indigenous and racialised groups, as these conversations are often absent. She notes that if people listen closely enough in these spaces, "... we will receive a gift of decolonizing logics not presently imaginable" (p.14). This insight is significant because it isn't just about having discussions between Indigenous and racialised peoples; it's about holding space and listening deeply enough for new tactics and strategies to emerge and be imagined. This is political dialogue without the settler gaze, moving beyond the often-superficial conversations of celebration and diversity typical of settler state discourses these communities are expected to have. The final dimension is **Cultural practice**, which involves the building of relationships through the sharing of stories and proverbs. The model highlights what Māori participants valued in forging solidarities more generally with tauwiwi of colour.

Adding to this model provides a valuable pathway forward that enables South Asian women to define themselves and form connections with one another and Māori, thus advancing solidarities. This is conceptualised in Table 4 (below) with additional details from the findings of this thesis, which offer further signposts to how each of the dimensions can be further understood. The two dimensions be added to this model have been named restoration and reconstruction (see highlighted dimension below).

Table 4 *Adding to Whakawhānaungatanga model*

Framework	Current understanding of dimension as per (Rata & Al-Asaad, 2019).	Expansion using the findings
Positioning	Locating to land and people	Reconstruction and Identity
Restoration	Reclaiming identity	- Practising self-awareness a. Reclaiming own histories/rituals/identities b. Being reflexive - Pathways to solidarity with self a. Healing from internalised oppression - Practicing spirituality
Power sharing	Mutual respect, Love, compassion, reciprocal support	- Resistance to colonial narratives - Mutual growth and respect - Abundant mindset - Engaging with love
Dialogue	Space to listen and share with each other.	Resistance to colonial narratives. Imagining political possibilities beyond the white settler gaze
Cultural practice	Understanding and sharing stories, cultural proverbs	- Healing and reclaiming space - Practising collective community care b. Mentoring others c. Critiquing community d. Joyful practices
Reconstruction	Building the world that we want together	- Political projects and joint struggle

Note: The first two columns are summarised from Rata, A., & Al-Asaad, F. (2019). Whakawhanaungatanga as a Māori approach to Indigenous-settler of colour relationship building. *New Zealand Population Review*, 45, 211–233.

Thus, in expanding this framework based on the findings of this study, adding the dimension of restoration highlights the importance of South Asian women reclaiming their identities, engaging with their own histories, and restoring cultural and spiritual practices. It also recognises that healing from internalised oppression is part of the journey that helps strengthen solidarity with oneself. The dimension of reconstruction is also added to this framework recognising the need to be engaged in building the world together that we want to see through political projects and joint struggle.

This describes how solidarities can be developed by these groups establishing connections between histories of racialisation and oppression. The expansion of this framework includes the dimensions I have named as restoration and reconstruction.

Restoration involves practising self-awareness that supports the reclaiming of our own histories, rituals, and identities. It also includes being reflexive, which pertains to how we engage and behave towards others. Additionally, this dimension recognises the need for us to heal from internalised oppression and acknowledges that the spiritual aspects of our lives are a vital part of who we are, offering support we can lean into. This dimension highlights how we can strengthen solidarity with ourselves to support our relationships with others in life-affirming and decolonial ways. The dimension of reconstruction involves recognising the need to be engaged in joint political struggle together, such as fighting for workers' rights in Aotearoa. Both provide pathways for reconfiguring our relationships and represents an important finding of this project, as well as a novel contribution to the tauwi of colour–Māori solidarities literature.

Findings from Chapter 6 illuminated the role of “deliberate acts of remembering” (Atallah et al., 2022, p. 263) that can also politicise acts of solidarity. In my own journey researching this thesis, I had not realised the extent to which colonialism had impacted my own life and the trajectory of my family in the UK. The decolonial framework developed in chapter 6 offers a further set of signposts for how South Asian communities in Aotearoa can begin the necessary work of critically remembering colonial histories, confronting caste supremacy, rejecting model minority positioning, and building solidarities that are accountable to Māori sovereignty rather than being absorbed into settler-colonial institutional frameworks. Together, these frameworks represent a novel contribution to the tauwi of colour and Māori

solidarities literature, specific to the Aotearoa context, governed by Te Tiriti obligations, and also pay attention in this case to the internal hierarchies of caste, class, and gender.

The decolonial framework set is reintroduced briefly below (Table 3) is another new contribution to the decolonial literature. This involves critically remembering our histories, engaging with the impacts of empire, rejecting the model minority myth, creating spaces for honest dialogue, and working in solidarity that refuses settler colonial logics. This framework can also offer a way for us to start these conversations between different Asian communities, given that political solidarity among us is not particularly strong (Mok, 2022). This point is also highlighted in the findings in this project.

Table 5 (already introduced in Chapter 6) *Decolonial framework*

Themes	Description	Applications
Historical remembering	Learning about our own colonial histories	Critically remember our histories. Engage in learning about the impacts of Empire. Record oral histories and create spaces to archive and remember.
Unsettling settler colonial narratives	Rejecting stereotypes	
Resisting co-optation	- Resisting being co-opted by colonialism - Exposing the ways that migrants are co-opted into settler narratives - Rejecting the model minority myth	Spaces to come together and dialogue
Being in solidarity	Practicing solidarity with Tangata whenua	Refusing settler colonial logics

I have not approached this study as a detached, unbiased outsider, but as someone also shaped by the social structures. This doctoral journey has highlighted the need for me to deliberately remember and start archiving our family stories, as told by my mother, not only for my children but also for my siblings, nephews and those in our lineage yet to come. My own working-class background and understanding of class consciousness has fundamentally shaped my relationships with others. It has helped me to make sense of why I had always been very deliberate about the types of schools I worked in (often state schools in working-class areas) and the type of work I engaged with. This tended to bring me into close contact with young people and families from these backgrounds. This finding only became salient after completing Chapter 6. Had class been a prior consideration I may have included this as an additional criterion for the participants in this project. Through this research I have come to understand that discussions of identity often overshadow conversations about class and class consciousness. This overshadowing also hides other sites for potential relationships and solidarity that function beyond our ethnic, cultural, racial, and gender identities.

This thesis ultimately argues is that solidarity among South Asian women and between South Asian women and Māori is possible, but it is not guaranteed. Nearly three-quarters of the women in this study, representing a diverse range of ethnic, cultural, and linguistic heritages and age groups, found it difficult to articulate their relationships with Māori women, as they were seldom in each other's lives. Noted exceptions included women who engaged in activist spaces or worked in the social development sector. These finding highlights that fostering such relationships requires proximity and purpose, which will support having us in each other's social imaginations. It suggests that solidarity is not automatic and requires intentional spaces created across common struggles and politically aligned contexts. It must be built deliberately, sustained politically, and governed by an honest reckoning with the internal and external structures that both connect and divide us. That reckoning begins with remembering who we were before colonialism (Rodríguez, 2023). And that colonialism does not end until the structures that continue to dispossess Māori are also dismantled. As Moana Jackson (2020) reminds us, the ethics of restoration ask us not only to dismantle colonial structures but to restore our relationships with ourselves, with each other, and with the land on which we all now live.

7.3 Broader implications

To conclude, this research also provides examples of solidarity and ethical care, involving ways to restore self that are grounded in the ethics of love for self and one another. The personal is political and poetic. We have the power to choose the relationships and solidarities we wish to grow, understanding that the state is not the place to look to for recognition. The purpose of this project is to advance our relationships and solidarities with one another. The broader implications are considered in this context.

There is a need for our ‘Asian’ communities to speak more openly about our different positionalities and histories, impacts of internalised colonialism, and how we are also differently racialised. This is crucial for building strong relationships and solidarity with one another. Considering the wider implications of these findings, the question arises about the type of self-reflection needed within racialised communities to confront internalised colonialism and the ways we are racialised as ‘Asians’ in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Dealing with our own internalised colonialism, identity, and positionality is also part of the work. If neglected, it can also cause division among us as ‘Asians’ more broadly, as highlighted in the participant findings and the literature review. This also becomes clear when Asian groups have different understandings of human rights, imperialism, communism, and lack awareness of each other’s ‘Asian’ histories (see Aotearoa Alliance Progressive Indians, 2024, for example). While these groups acknowledge the importance of honouring and centring Māori voices in their struggle, it is equally vital that ‘Asian’ activist groups also respect and amplify the voices and expertise of those ‘Asians’ whose struggles are directly impacted. It is imperative that we attend to our own internal worlds and understandings of each other, which will not only strengthen our relationships with ourselves and each other, but also strengthen our foundations in engaging in our responsibilities to support tino rangatiratanga.

In strengthening relationships between different ‘Asian’ groups there is also an opportunity to also move beyond labels such as ‘Asian’ that homogenise and erase and can shape or disrupt our relationships with one another. We also need to address the interethnic dynamics and racialisation processes within our communities that influence how we relate to each other, shaped by our different racial identities as Asian groups. For example, although South Asians are classified as Asian in official statistics, it is often East Asian people who come to mind

when people hear the term 'Asian', meaning South Asians (and other Asian groups) often remain invisible and are 'represented' by East Asians.

The Chinese community and their solidarities with Māori offer a useful case study that South Asian communities can learn from in strengthening solidarities. When we consider Asian-Māori solidarities, the 'Asians' that usually come to mind are Chinese and East Asian communities. Through tireless advocacy the Chinese community sought an apology for the long history of discrimination they have faced as a result of legislation such as the Chinese Immigration Act of 1881, which imposed a poll tax and a restrictive immigration levy affecting Chinese immigrants. This apology was achieved in 2002. Through modest reparations the community invested in promoting a greater understanding of the history of Chinese in New Zealand (Satellites (n.d,b). This educational awareness-raising within the community also created space for Chinese and Māori relations to feature more prominently in each other's social imaginations, with several 'Going Bananas' conferences held between 2004 and 2014. These conferences provided intentional forums for discussions about Chinese-Māori relations, educating the community on Chinese New Zealand history, and offering platforms to guide the younger generation. Māori also supported these efforts. Prominent scholars and Māori Party co-leaders, including Professor Margaret Mutu and the Honourable Dr Pita Sharples, participated in the events (Satellites, n.d.a). Dame Tariana Turia also spoke on the benefits of Māori and Chinese communities supporting each other in becoming more visible and politically active (New Zealand Herald, 2007).

It is also useful to consider that if we want to strengthen the 'Asian' category as a political force that can better support Māori, then Chinese and South Asian populations should work together strategically to increase each other's visibility to honestly reflect the vast diversity, social locations and political histories that exist with the colonial 'Asian' category that has been used to label us.

As a South Asian, I notice a disparity in how the state disproportionately responds to different communities grouped under 'Asian'. It has also become clear that we need to discuss class and caste within our South Asian communities and how these can open up new spaces for us to engage with and understand each other's material and lived experiences. This creates important opportunities to build joint political projects across racial boundaries, which may help to improve material conditions for families and workers' rights.

7.4 Limitations

I did not intend to produce research representative of all South Asian ethnic groups. I was interested in analysing the rich stories of a small number of South Asian women. This is not feasible with large sample sizes. As a result, women with Nepali, Bhutanese, or Maldivian heritage did not self-select to participate in this research. If this study were to be extended, future work could focus on the experiences of these women. As I worked through this thesis, I also realised that a woman's class, the work they do, and whether they live near Māori may have influenced their relationships not only with other racialised women but also with Māori women. Future research could explicitly explore the role of class and neighbourhood ethnic composition on the relationship-building experiences of South Asian women.

7.5 Further research and recommendations

Throughout this research, other questions have arisen that merit further investigation. These include: How do Māori women experience relationships with South Asian and other racialised women? What role do gender and class play in shaping solidarities across cultural lines between Māori and racialised groups? Is there a difference in how South Asian–Māori solidarities are experienced in rural versus urban areas? How might caste supremacy influence these solidarities? Future research could also involve collaborations between South Asian and Māori scholars in Aotearoa and transnational contexts, fostering comparative, solidarity-based decolonial research.

South Asian communities should seek an apology from the state, considering the significant anti-Indian racism and legislation that have affected Indians since their first arrival in 1769 (see Literature Review). This could provide a way for communities to record their own South Asian–Māori stories. It could not only help the South Asian community foster a sense of belonging to Aotearoa outside the colonial framework but also could enable South Asian and Māori communities to see each other in their respective imaginaries. This can help challenge white supremacy, which often erases our histories in Aotearoa by making them invisible.

7.6 Conclusion

This is the first study in Aotearoa, New Zealand I am aware of that explores the experiences of South Asian women and their relationships with other racialised women, including Māori women. This project involved more than collecting data from these women. It also supported the forging and strengthening of relationships with self and each other that gave back to the participants. They not only created a piece of art for themselves, but also gained new insights into their own lives, and were able to connect some of their experiences with other women and create new meaning, understanding and friendships with one another. Such experiences affirm that we are inherently valuable, human and sacred.

7.7 Final Remarks

This project does not claim that its findings represent the experiences of all South Asian women living in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Instead, it offers insights that are connected to broader systems of colonialism, white supremacy, and casteism – features embedded in our lives – and highlights the key signs of how these operate.

Our relationships and solidarities require us to actively and intentionally engage. This is not something to leave to chance. We must also commit to avoiding the reproduction of these oppressive systems and resist homogenising what it means to be ‘Asian’ here in Aotearoa. We should reject labels that invisibilise certain ethnic groups at the expense of others.

These words are a message in a bottle for you, the reader. I hope this project, born from my own experiences living here in Aotearoa, offers you something as well. It may present itself as a question, helping you recognise an experience you might have also had or perhaps providing a different perspective or explanation that brings you some compassion. This work is a committed act of solidarity which is part of wider struggles for healing and transformation that refuses colonial erasure and insists on building futures we want together.

References

- Adams, W. C. (2015). Conducting semi-structured interviews. In K. E. Newcomer, H. P. Hatry, & J. S. Wholey (Eds.), *Handbook of practical program evaluation* (pp. 492–505). John Wiley & Sons. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119171386.ch19>
- Ahmed, S. (2004). *The cultural politics of emotion*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Ahmed, S. (2006). Declarations of whiteness: The non-performativity of anti-racism. *Borderlands*, 5(3).
- Ahmed, S. (2012). *On being included: racism and diversity in institutional life*. Duke University Press.
- Ahmed, S. (2013, September 11). Making feminist points. *Feministkilljoys*. <https://feministkilljoys.com/2013/09/11/making-feminist-points/>
- Ahmed, S. (2017). *Living a feminist life*. Duke University Press.
- Ahmed, S. (2022). *The feminist killjoy handbook*. Duke University Press.
- Alam-Simmons, A. (2024, March 10). Connecting through our colonised histories. *E Tangata*. <https://e-tangata.co.nz/comment-and-analysis/connecting-through-our-colonised-histories/>
- Anae, M., Iuli, L., & Tamu, L. (Eds.). (2015). *Polynesian Panthers: Pacific protest and affirmative action in Aotearoa New Zealand 1971-1981*. Huia Publishers.
- Anderson, A., Binney, J. & Harris, A. (2015). *Tangata whenua: A history*. Bridget Williams Books.
- Anzaldúa, G. (1987). *Borderlands: The new mestiza = La frontera*. Aunt Lute Books.
- Aotearoa Alliance Progressive Indians. (2024, October 19). *Aotearoa Alliance Progressive Indians* [Post]. Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/progressive_indians_aotearoa/
- Arvin, M., Tuck, E., & Morrill, A. (2013). Decolonizing feminism: Challenging connections between settler colonialism and heteropatriarchy. *Feminist Formations*, 25(1), 8–34.

- Asians Supporting Tino Rangatiratanga (n.d.). <https://asians4tino.weebly.com/about.html>
- Atallah, D. G., Kessi, S., Seedat, M., & Suffla, S. (2022). Reflections on radical love and rebellion: Towards decolonial solidarity in community psychology praxis. In *Decolonial enactments in community psychology* (pp. 75–97). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-75201-9_5
- Azarmandi, M. (2017). *Colonial continuities. A study of anti-racism in Aotearoa New Zealand and Spain*. [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Otago].
- Azarmandi, M. (2022). The limits of Pākehā Treaty work: Why race matters to anti-racism. In A. Tecun, L. Lopesi, & A. Sankar (Eds.). *Towards a grammar of race in Aotearoa New Zealand* (pp. 138–150). Bridget Williams Books.
- Azarmandi, M., & Fu, M. (2023, February 4). *To centre constitutional transformation for Asian tangata tiriti*. <https://tetangiateruru.org/2023/02/04/to-centre-constitutional-transformation-for-asian-tangata-tiriti/>
- Baldwin, J. (1963). *The fire next time*. Dell.
- Bandyopādhyāya, S., & Buckingham, J. (Eds.). (2018). *Indians and the antipodes: Networks, boundaries, and circulation*. Oxford University Press.
- Barker, A. J. (2009). The contemporary reality of Canadian imperialism: Settler colonialism and the hybrid colonial state. *American Indian Quarterly*, 33(3), 325–351.
- Bhashkaran, S. (2023). *Indian migrant women managers' experiences of the glass ceiling in New Zealand*. [Master's Thesis, Auckland University of Technology].
- Bailey, M. (2010, March 14). *They aren't talking about me... The Crunk Feminist Collective*. <http://www.crunkfeministcollective.com/2010/03/14/they-arent-talking-about-me/>
- Bayly, C. A. (2016). *Caste, society, and politics in India from the eighteenth century to the modern age*. Cambridge University Press.
- Beliso-De Jesús, A. M., Pierre, J., & Rana, J. (2025). *The anthropology of white supremacy*. Princeton University Press.

- Beltrán, R., & Mehrotra, G. (2015). Honoring our intellectual ancestors: A feminist of color treaty for creating allied collaboration. *Affilia: Journal of Social Work and Women*, 30(1), 106–116. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886109914531958>
- Benjamin, R. (2024). *Imagination: A manifesto*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Benton, R., Frame, A., & Meredith, P. (2013). *Te Mātāpunenga: A compendium of references to the concepts and institutions of Māori customary law*. Victoria University Press.
- Bhardwaj, M. (2021). Queering solidarity: South Asian diasporic partnership with Black liberation movements in the US and the UK. *Kohl: A Journal for Body and Gender Research*, 7(1). <https://kohljournal.press/queering-solidarity-black-liberationmovements>
- Bhattacharyya, B. (2013). How can we live with ourselves? Universities and the attempt to reconcile learning and doing. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36(9), 1411–1428. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2012.748210>
- Bhopal, K. (2010). Gender, identity and experience: Researching marginalised groups. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 33(3), 188–195. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2010.02.010>
- Binte Abdul Rahman, N. (2025). *Power, position and practice: Conscientisation and decolonial solidarity of Southeast Asian migrants in Aotearoa* [Doctoral dissertation, Victoria University of Wellington].
- Bishop, R., & Glynn, T. (1999). *Culture counts: Changing power relations in education*. The Dunmore Printing Company.
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2004). From bi-racial to tri-racial: Towards a new system of racial stratification in the USA. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 27(6), 931–950. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0141987042000268530>
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2000). “This is a white country”: The racial ideology of the Western nations of the world-system. *Sociological Inquiry*, 70(2), 188–214. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-682X.2000.tb00905.x>

- Bonilla-Silva, E. (1997). Rethinking racism: Toward a structural interpretation. *American Sociological Review*, 62(3), 465–480.
- Bonds, A., & Inwood, J. (2016). Beyond white privilege: Geographies of white supremacy and settler colonialism. *Progress in Human Geography*, 40(6), 715–733. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132515613166>
- Bochner, A.P. (2000). Criteria against ourselves. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 6(2), 266-272.
- Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. K. (1997). *Qualitative research for education*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Borland, E., (n.d.-b). *Standpoint theory*. Britannica Academic. Retrieved June 5, 2025, from <https://academic-eb-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/levels/collegiate/article/standpoint-theory/607855>
- Brah, A. (1996). *Cartographies of diaspora: Contesting identities*. Routledge.
- Brah, A. (2022). *Decolonial imaginings: Intersectional conversations and contestations*. Goldsmiths Press.
- Brand, D. (2001). *A map to the door of no return: Notes to belonging*. Doubleday Canada.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589-597. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021a). Can I use TA? Should I use TA? Should I *not* use TA? Comparing reflexive thematic analysis and other pattern-based qualitative analytic approaches. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 21(1), 37-47. <https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12360>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021b). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis? *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 18(3), 328-352. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1769238>

- Broughton, C.(2019). Being kiwi racism survey results. *Stuff*.
<https://interactives.stuff.co.nz/2019/12/being-kiwi-racism-survey-results>
- Brown, A. M. (2017). *Emergent strategy: Shaping change, changing worlds*. AK Press.
- Burgess, D., & Painting, S. (2020). Onamata, anamata: A whakapapa perspective of Māori futurisms. In A.-M. Murtola & S. Walsh (Eds.), *Whose futures?* (pp. 207–233). Economic and Social Research Aotearoa
- Butler-Kisber, L. (2002). Artful portrayals in qualitative research: The road to found poetry and beyond. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 48(3), 229–239.
- Butler-Kisber, L. (2010). *Qualitative inquiry: Thematic, narrative and arts-informed perspectives*. SAGE Publications.
- Butler-Kisber, L., & Poldma, T. (2010). The power of visual approaches in qualitative inquiry: The use of collage making and concept mapping in experiential research. *Journal of Research Practice*, 6(2), 1–16.
- Byrd, J. (2011). *The transit of empire: Indigenous critiques of colonialism*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Byrd, J., Tuck, E., Caspari, M., Daly, R., & Macklin, R. (2023). ‘On being committed to Indigenous feminist interventions’: Jodi Byrd and Eve Tuck in conversation. *Parallax*, 29(2), 229–247. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13534645.2023.2271735>
- Calman, R. (2012). *Māori education – mātauranga - The native schools system, 1867 to 1969*. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand. Retrieved June 13, 2025, from <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/maori-education-matauranga/page-3>
- Capous-Desyllas, M., & Morgaine, K. (2018). What brought us here. In M. Capous-Desyllas & K. Morgaine (Eds.), *Creating social change through creativity: Antioppressive arts-based research methodologies* (pp. vii–xix). Springer Nature.
- Cassim, S., Khan-Janif, J., & Martiarini, N. (2023). Building enduring relationships for a shared sense of belonging: Culturally derived solidarities between Muslim migrants and Māori. In J. Terruhn & S. Cassim (Eds.), *Transforming the politics of mobility and migration in Aotearoa New Zealand* (pp. 157–172). Anthem Press.

- Chambre, H., & McLellan, D.T., (n.d.-a). *Marxism*. Britannica Academic. Retrieved June 5, 2025, from <https://academic-eb-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/levels/collegiate/article/Marxism/108467>
- Chan A, & Spoonley P. (2017). The politics and construction of identity and childhood: Chinese immigrant families in New Zealand. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 7(1):17-28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2043610617694730>
- Chan-Green, M. (2020, July 12). COVID-19: Human rights commission records 30pct spike in racially motivated attacks. *Newshub*. <https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/new-zealand/2020/07/covid-19-human-rights-commission-records-30pct-spike-in-racially-motivated-attacks.html>
- Chang, H. (2008). *Autoethnography as method*. Left Coast Press.
- Chaudhary, N. (2024). A tale of two generations: Indian and Pakistani immigrant women's negotiation of femininity. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, 15(4), 308–318.
- Cheng, A. A. (2001). *The melancholy of race: Psychoanalysis, assimilation, and hidden grief*. Oxford University Press.
- Chilisa, B. (2020). *Indigenous research methodologies*. SAGE.
- Clarke, K., & Yellow Bird, M. (2021). *Decolonizing pathways towards integrative healing in social work*. Routledge.
- Coffey, A. (1999). *The ethnographic self: Fieldwork and the representation of identity*. SAGE.
- Collins, P.H. 1990. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Routledge.
- Collins, P.H. (2002). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment* (Rev. 10th anniversary ed.). Routledge.
- Collins, P.H. (2022). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

- Combahee River Collective. (1977). *The Combahee River Collective statement*.
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f7f97cdb9c1451c46fef5a8/t/65ee7f2ca76bdc05f9d23f96/1710128944008/The+Combahee+River+Collective+A+Black+Feminist+statement.pdf>
- Commeyras, M., & Montsi, M. (2000). What if I woke up as the other sex? Batswana youth perspectives on gender. *Gender and Education*, 12(3), 327–346.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/713668303>
- Coulthard, G. S. (2014). *Red skin, white masks: Rejecting the colonial politics of recognition*. University of Minnesota Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctt9qh3cv>
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241-1299.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE.
- Culpitt, I. (1994). Bicultural fragments – A Pākehā perspective. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, 2, 48–62.
- Dam, L. (2022). Be(com)ing an Asian tangata tiriti. *Kōtuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online*, 18 (3), 213-232. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1177083x.2022.2129078>
- Dam, L. (2024). *Be(com)ing ethically responsible relations: Asian communities and Te Tiriti o Waitangi* [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Auckland].
<https://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/handle/2292/70377>
- Daniels, S. (2022). *The anti-racist organization. Dismantling systematic racism in the workplace*. Wiley.
- Das, D., Semaan, B., Barbosa, S., Appert, C., Lampe, C., Shamma, D. A., Yatani, K., Drucker, S., & Williamson, J. (2022, April 29). *Collaborative identity decolonization as reclaiming narrative agency: Identity work of Bengali communities on Quora*. [Conference Proceedings, 1-23]. 2022 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, City, State, Country. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3491102.3517600>

- Davis, A. Y. (1990). *Women, culture & politics*. Vintage.
- Day, I. (2016). *Alien capital: Asian racialization and the logic of settler colonial capitalism*. Duke University Press.
- De Andrade, L. L. (2000). Negotiating from the inside: Constructing racial and ethnic identity in qualitative research. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 29(3), 268–290. <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124100129023918>
- Deerchild, R., Whyte, K. P., & Hunt, S. (2018, February 25). The politics of citation: Is the peer review process biased against Indigenous academics? *Unreserved podcast, CBC Radio*. <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/unreserved/decolonising-the-classroom-is-there-space-forindigenous-knowledge-in-academia-1.4544984/thepolitics-of-citation-is-the-peer-review-process-biasedagainst-indigenous-academics-1.4547468>
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. Sage.
- Dennis, E. (2018). Exploring the model minority: Deconstructing whiteness through the Asian American example. In G. J. Sefa Dei & S. Hilowle (Eds.), *Cartographies of race and social difference* (Vol. 9, pp. 33–48). Springer.
- Department of Internal Affairs/Office of Ethnic Communities (2020). *Conversations with Aotearoa New Zealand's Muslim Communities: Growing Understanding after the Christchurch Terror Attacks on March 15, 2019*. <https://www.ethniccommunities.govt.nz/assets/Resources/3d54832fdd/ConversationswithAotearoaNewZealandsMuslimcommunities.pdf>
- De Souza, R. (2020, November 15). Conversations on Tangata Whenua and Asian solidarity. *Ruth Desouza Blog*. <https://www.ruthdesouza.com/2020/11/15/conversations-on-tangata-whenua-and-asian-solidarity/>
- De Souza, R., & Cormack, D. (2009). Returning the indigenous to the centre: A view from Aotearoa/New Zealand. *Diversity and Equality in Health and Care*, 6(4), 219–221. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/returning-indigenous-centre-view-aotearoa-new/docview/2671587052/se-2>

- Didion, J. (2005). *The year of magical thinking*. Knopf.
- Dillard, C. B. (2012). *On spiritual strivings: Transforming an African American woman's academic life*. State University of New York Press.
- Duncan, M. (2004). Autoethnography: Critical appreciation of an emerging art. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 3(4), Article 3.
http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/3_4/html/duncan.html
- Dutta, M. (2025a, January 22). Upper caste Indian women in the diaspora, DEI, and the politics of hate. *Culture-Centered Blog*. <https://culture-centered.blogspot.com/2025/01/upper-caste-indian-women-in-diaspora.html>
- Dutta, M. (2025b, April 11). Anti-Māori racism and Indian migration into Aotearoa New Zealand. *Culture-Centered Blog*. <https://culture-centered.blogspot.com/2025/04/anti-maori-racism-and-indian-migration.html>
- Eisner, E. W. (2002). *The arts and the creation of the mind*. Yale University Press.
- Elder, H. (2020). *Aroha: Māori wisdom for a contented life lived in harmony with our planet*. Penguin Books.
- Elers, C. H., & Jayan, P. (2020). “This is us”: Free speech embedded in whiteness, racism and coloniality in Aotearoa, New Zealand. *First Amendment Studies*, 54(2), 236–249.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21689725.2020.1837654>
- Ellis, C. (2000). Creating criteria: An ethnographic short story. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 6(2), 273–277.
- Ellis, C. (2009). *Revision: Autoethnographic reflections on life and work* (1st ed.). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315420776>
- Ellis C., & Bochner A. P. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 733–768). Sage.

- Ellis C., & Bochner A. P. (2003). "Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Researcher as subject." In Denzin N. K., Lincoln Y. S. (Eds.), *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials*. Sage.
- Ergun, A., & Erdemir, A. (2010). Negotiating insider and outsider identities in the field: "Insider" in a foreign land; "Outsider" in one's own land. *Field Methods*, 22(1), 16-38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X09349919>
- Ewick, P., & Silbey, S. S. (1995). Subversive stories and hegemonic tales: Toward a sociology of narrative. *Law and Society Review*, 29(2), 197-226.
- Fanon, F. (1963). *The wretched of the earth*. Grove Press.
- Fanon, F. (2008). *Black skin, white masks*. Grove Press.
- Fleras, A. (2009). *The politics of multiculturalism: Multicultural governance in comparative perspective*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fleras, A., & Spoonley, P. (1999). *Recalling Aotearoa: Indigenous politics and ethnic relations in New Zealand*. Oxford University Press.
- Fontaine, J. (2013). *Components of emotional meaning: A sourcebook*. Oxford University Press.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Continuum.
- Fu, M. (2025). *Translating celestial solidarity: Diasporic Chinese alignments with Indigenous struggles in Aotearoa New Zealand and so-called Canada*. [Doctoral Dissertation, York University].
- Furman, R., Collins, K., Langer, C., & Bruce, E. A. (2006). Inside a provider's perspective: Using practitioner poetry to explore the treatment of persons with mental illness. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 33(4), 331–342. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2006.04.003>
- Gingrich-Philbrook, C. (2005). Autoethnography's family values. *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 25(4), 297–314.

- Grosfoguel, R. (2013). The Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities: Epistemic racism/sexism and the four genocides/epistemicides of the long 16th century. *Human Architecture*, 11(1), 73–90.
- Grosfoguel, R. (2016). What is racism? *Journal of World-Systems Research*, 22(1), 9–15.
<https://doi.org/10.5195/jwsr.2016.609>
- Gray, C., Jaber, N., & Anglem, J. (2013). Pākehā identity and whiteness: What does it mean to be white? *Sites: A Journal of Social Anthropology and Cultural Studies*, 10(2), 82–106.
<https://doi.org/10.11157/sites-vol10iss2id223>
- Guha, R. (1989). *Subaltern studies VI: Writings on South Asian history*. Oxford University Press.
- Gunn-Allen, P. (1991). *Grandmothers of the light: A medicine woman's sourcebook*. Beacon Press.
- Hage, G. (1998). *White nation: Fantasies of white supremacy in a multicultural society*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203819470>
- Hall, S. (1989). Cultural identity and cinematic representation. *Framework*, 36, 68–81.
- Hall, S. (2000). ‘Conclusion: The multicultural question.’ In Barnor Hesse (Ed) *Un/settled multiculturalisms: Diasporas, entanglements, transruptions*. Zed books.
- Hamad, R. (2020). *White tears/brown scars: How white feminism betrays women of color*. Catapult.
- Harding, S. (2016). *Whose science? Whose knowledge?: Thinking from women's lives* (1st ed.). Cornell University Press. <https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501712951>
- Hartman, S. (2019). *Wayward lives, beautiful experiments: Intimate histories of social upheaval*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Harwood, V. (2004). Telling truths: Wounded truths and the activity of truth telling. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 25(4), 467–476.
- Hayano D. M. (1979). Auto-ethnography: Paradigms, problems and prospects. *Human*

Organizations 38 (1): 99–104.

Hemphill, P. (2024). *What it takes to heal: How transforming ourselves can change the world*. Penguin Random House.

Herod, A. (1999). Reflections on interviewing foreign elites: Praxis, positionality, validity, and the cult of the insider. *Geoforum*, 30(4), 313–327. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0016-7185\(99\)00024-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0016-7185(99)00024-X)

Hill, R (2009). *Māori and the state: Crown-Māori relations in New Zealand/Aotearoa 1950-2000*. Victoria University Press.

Ho, C. (2016, Oct 27). Hothoused and hyper-racialised: The ethnic imbalance in our selective schools. *The Guardian*.
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/oct/27/hothoused-and-hyper-racialised-the-ethnic-imbalance-in-our-selective-schools>

Hoagland, S. L. (2007). Denying relationality: Epistemology and ethics and ignorance. In S. Sullivan & N. Tuana (Eds.), *Race and epistemologies of ignorance* (pp. 95–118). State University of New York Press.

Holman Jones, S. (2005). Autoethnography: Making the personal political. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 763–791). SAGE.

Holman Jones, S. (2016). Living bodies of thought: The ‘critical’ in critical autoethnography. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 22(4), 228–237. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800415622509>

Holt, N. L. (2001). Beyond technical reflection: Demonstrating the modification of teaching behaviors using three levels of reflection. *Avante*, 7(2), 66–76.

hooks, b. (1993). *Sisters of the yam: Black women and self-recovery*. South End Press.

hooks, b. (1994). *Theory as liberatory practice*. In *Teaching to transgress* (1st ed., pp. 59–75). Routledge.

hooks, b. (1996). *Feminism as a persistent critique of history: What's love got to do with it?* In A. Read (Ed.), *The fact of blackness*. Bay Press.

- hooks, b. (2000a). *All about love: New visions*. William Morrow.
- hooks, b. (2000b). *Choosing the margin as a space of radical openness*. In I. Borden, B. Penner, & J. Rendell (Eds.), *Gender space architecture* (pp. 219–225). Routledge.
- hooks, b. (2012). *Writing beyond race: Living theory and practice*. Routledge.
- hooks, b. (2015a). *Ain't I a woman: Black women and feminism* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315743264>
- hooks, b. (2015b). *Feminism is for everybody: Passionate politics* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- hooks, b. (2015c). *Feminist theory: From margin to center* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- hooks, b. (2015d). *Sisterhood: Political solidarity among women*. In b. hooks, *Feminist theory: From margin to center* (3rd ed., pp. 43–67). Routledge.
- Hordyk, S. R., Soltane, S. B., & Hanley, J. (2014). Sometimes you have to go under water to come up: A poetic, critical realist approach to documenting the voices of homeless immigrant women. *Qualitative Social Work*, 13(2), 203–220.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325013491448>
- Houston, J. (2007). Indigenous Autoethnography: Formulating Our Knowledge, Our Way. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 36(S1), 45–50.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1326011100004695>
- Huang, Y.T. (2015). *Between sovereignties: Chinese minor settler literature across the Pacific*. [Doctoral Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles].
- Human Rights Commission. (2022, November). *Maranga Mai!* <https://tikatangata.org.nz/our-work/maranga-mai>
- Huygens, I. L. M. (2007). *Processes of Pakeha change in response to the Treaty of Waitangi*. [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Waikato].
- Irwin, K. (1991). Towards theories of Māori feminisms. In R. D. Plessis (Ed.), *Feminist voices: Women's studies texts for Aotearoa/New Zealand* (pp. 1–21). Oxford University Press.

- Iseke, J. (2013). Indigenous storytelling as research. *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 6(4), 559-577. <https://doi.org/10.1525/irqr.2013.6.4.559>
- Jackson, M. (2019). In the end "The hope of decolonization." In L. Tuhiwai Smith & E. McKinley (Eds.), *Handbook of Indigenous education* (pp. 101–110). Springer Nature.
- Jackson, M. (2020). Where to next? Decolonisation and the stories in the land. In A. Hodge (Ed.), *Imagining decolonisation* (pp. 133–155). Bridget Williams Books.
- Jackson, M. (2020b, December 11). Stories of Māori and Chinese solidarity: An excerpt from Dr. Moana Jackson's talk. *Te Tangi A Te Ruru*.
<https://tetangiateruru.org/2020/12/11/stories-of-maori-and-chinese-solidarity-an-excerpt-from-dr-moana-jacksons-talk/>
- Jafri, B. (2007). *Theorizing coalition building between indigenous peoples and people of colour in Canada*. [Master's thesis, University of Toronto].
- Jain, R. K. (2001). Culture and class in Indian diaspora: India vs Bharat. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 36(17), 1380–1381.
- James, C. (2004, January 27). *The indigenisation of Aotearoa-New Zealand: The politics of the Treaty of Waitangi*. Colin James. <http://www.colinjames.co.nz/2004/01/27/the-indigenisation-of-aotearoa-new-zealand-the-politics-of-the-treaty-of-waitangi/>
- Jehangir, A. (2021). [Review of the book *My grandmother's hands: Racialized trauma and the pathway to mending our hearts and bodies*, by Resmaa Menakem]. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 24(6), 980–983. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2021.1976760>
- Jemal, A., Melendez, D., Hunte, O., Ballesteros, D., & Mehrotra, G. R. (2023). From the margins to the center: Cultivating collective healing with Soulcial Work Praxis. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 93(2–4), 130–159.
- Jones A., & Jenkins K. (2008). Indigenous discourse and the material: A post-interpretative argument. *International Review of Qualitative Research* 1(2): 125–44.
- Jones, D., Larasi, M. (2019). Revolutionary spaces?: [Re]imagining and transforming work to end violence against Black women and girls. In S. Nayak & R. Robbins (Eds.),

- Intersectionality in Social Work* (1st ed., Vol. 1, pp. 107–121). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315210810-9>
- Jones, S. H., Adams, T., & Ellis, C. (2016). Introduction: Coming to know autoethnography as more than a method. In T.E. Adams, S.H. Jones, & C. Ellis (Eds.), *Handbook of autoethnography* (pp. 17-48). Routledge.
- Kapa, J. (2009). *Ko te papa kōrero mō te aupōuri: Three generations walking through the whenua*. [Master's thesis, University of Otago].
- Keane, B. (2012, June 20). *He Whakaputanga – Declaration of Independence: Background to the Declaration*. Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand. Retrieved June 13, 2025, from <https://teara.govt.nz/en/hewhakaputanga-declaration-of-independence/page-1>
- Kennedy, J. (2008). Leadership and culture in New Zealand. In J. Chhokar, F. Brodbeck, & R. House (Eds), *Culture and leadership across the world: The globe book of in-depth studies of 25 societies* (pp. 397–432). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Khanna, S. (2022). *A journey towards allyship: How middle-class, second generation South Asian Canadian mothers challenge anti-black racism*. [Master's thesis, University of Toronto] <https://utoronto.scholaris.ca/server/api/core/bitstreams/7d10cb49-2703-4ce9-be17-a3f82e71fde8/content>
- Kim, C. J. (1999). The racial triangulation of Asian Americans. *Politics & Society*, 27(1), 105–138. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329299027001005>
- Kim, J., & Hsieh, B. (2022). *The racialized experiences of Asian American teachers in the US: Applications of Asian Critical Race Theory to resist marginalization*. Routledge.
- Kimmerer, R. W. (2020). *Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge, and the teachings of plants*. Penguin Books.
- Kinouani, G. (2021). *Living while Black: The essential guide to overcoming racial trauma*. Penguin.
- Lawn, J. (1994). *Pakeha bonding*. *Meanjin*, 53(2), 295–304.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/356985002_Pakeha_Bonding

- Lethabo King, T., Navarro, J., & Smith, A. (2020). Beyond incommensurability: Toward an otherwise stance on Black and Indigenous relationality. In T. L. King, J. Navarro, & A. Smith (Eds.), *Otherwise worlds: Against settler colonialism and anti-Blackness* (pp. 1–23). Duke University Press.
- Kovach, M. (2005). Emerging from the margins: Indigenous methodologies. In L. A. Brown & S. Strega (Eds.), *Research as resistance: Critical, Indigenous, & anti-oppressive approaches* (pp. 19-36). Canadian Scholars' Press.
- Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts* (1st ed.). University of Toronto Press.
- Kukutai, T., & Rata, A. (2017). *From mainstream to manaaki: Indigenising our approach to immigration*. Bridget Williams Books.
- Kusow, A. M. (2003). Beyond indigenous authenticity: Reflections on the insider/outsider debate in immigration research. *Symbolic Interaction*, 26(4), 591-599.
- Lange, R. (1999). *May the people live: A history of Maōri health development 1900-1920*. Auckland University Press.
- Lavis, V. (2010). Multiple researcher identities: Highlighting tensions and implications for ethical practice in qualitative interviewing. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 7(4), 316-331. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780880902929506>
- Lawrence, B., & Dua, E. (2005). Decolonizing antiracism. *Social Justice*, 32(4), 120–143.
- Lê Espiritu, E. (2018). Vexed solidarities: Vietnamese Israelis and the question of Palestine. *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory*, 29(1), 8–28.
- Leahy, B. (2019, June 17). Destiny church leader Brian Tamaki attacks Muslims but others slam him for hate speech. *New Zealand Herald*.
<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/destiny-church-leader-brian-tamaki-attacks-muslims-but-others-slam-him-for-hate-speech/T4PXATKJSS73BHPEHR23ZTVX3I/>
- Leckie, J. (2021). *Invisible: New Zealand's history of excluding Kiwi-Indians*. Massey University Press.

- Lee, J.-A. (2016). Non-white settler and Indigenous relations: Decolonizing possibilities for social justice. *Lectora: Revista de Dones i Textualitat*, (22), 13–26. <https://doi.org/10.1344/Lectora2016.22.2>
- Lee, S., & Cain, T. (2019). Diversity Dividends and the Dehumanisation of Immigrants in the News Media in Aotearoa New Zealand. *New Zealand Population Review*, 45, 185–210.
- Liu, J. H., & Mills, D. (2006). Modern racism and neo-liberal globalization: The discourses of plausible deniability and their multiple functions. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology* 16(2): 83–99. <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.847>.
- Liu, L., & Lu, J. (2008). Looking at the other: Chinese and Māori youth perspectives. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 17(2), 221–230. <https://doi.org/10.1177/011719680801700205>
- Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches*. Crossing Press.
- Lyons, K. (2008). Understanding and writing the world. In M. Cahnmann-Taylor & R. Siegesmund (Eds.), *Arts-based research in education* (pp. 79–82). Routledge.
- MacLeod, L. (2021). More than personal communication: Templates for citing Indigenous elders and knowledge keepers. *KULA: Knowledge Creation, Dissemination, and Preservation Studies*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.18357/kula.135>
- Marya, R., & Patel, R. (2021). *Inflamed: Deep medicine and the anatomy of injustice*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- May, V. M. (2014). “Speaking into the void”? Intersectionality critiques and epistemic backlash. *Hypatia*, 29(1), 94–112. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hypa.12060>
- Meihana, P. (2023). *Privilege in perpetuity: Exploding a Pākehā myth*. Bridget Williams Books.
- McKie, B. (2020, October 22). Decolonizing citations. *University of British Columbia, Centre for Teaching, Learning, and Technology*. <https://doi.org/10.14288/1.0396037>

- McKinnon, M. (1996). *Immigrants and citizens: New Zealanders and Asian immigration in historical context* (p. 19). Institute of Policy Studies.
- McMurchy-Pilkington, C. (2001). Māori education: Rejection, resistance, renaissance. In V. M. Carpenter, H. Dixon, E. Rata, & C. Rawlinson (Eds.), *Theory in practice for educators* (pp. 161–187). Dunmore Press.
- Mead, H. M. (2003). *Tikanga Māori: Living by Māori values*. Huia.
- Melamed, J. (2006). The spirit of neoliberalism from racial liberalism to neoliberal multiculturalism. *Social Text*, 24, (4(89)), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-2006-009>.
- Menakem, R. (2017). *My grandmother's hands: Racialized trauma and the pathway to mending our hearts and bodies*. Penguin Random House.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (2012). *Phenomenology of perception*. Taylor & Francis Group.
- Mikaere, A. (2004). Are we all New Zealanders now? A Māori response to the Pākehā quest for indigeneity. Bruce Jesson Foundation. <https://www.brucejesson.com/ani-mikaere-2004-are-we-all-new-zealandersnow-a-maori-response-to-the-pakeha-quest-for-indigeneity/>
- Miller, E., & Brockie, L. (2015). The disaster flood experience: Older people's poetic voices of resilience. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 34, 103–112. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2015.05.003>
- Mills, C. W. (1997). *The racial contract*. Cornell University Press.
- Ministry for Culture and Heritage. (n.d.). *Te Puea Hērangi*. New Zealand History. Retrieved December 2024 from <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/te-puea-herangi>
- Ministry for Culture and Heritage. (2023, October 26). *Old-age pensions act becomes law 1 November 1898*. New Zealand History. Retrieved 29 May 2024 from <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/old-age-pensions-act-passes-into-law>

- Ministry for Culture and Heritage. (2025, February 13). *Parihaka ploughing campaign begins*. New Zealand History. Retrieved 29 May 2025 from <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/parihaka-ploughing-campaign-begins>
- Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment. (2018). *Settling in New Zealand: Migrants' perceptions of their experience – Results from the 2012-2017 migrant surveys*. <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/assets/c9490026c0/settling-in-New-Zealand2017-v2.pdf>
- Mishra, S. K. (2016). *Desis divided: The political lives of South Asian Americans*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Moeller, C. J. (2019). “bell hooks made me a Buddhist”: Liberatory cross-cultural learning—or is this just another case of how white people steal everything? In G. Yancy & E. McRae (Eds.), *Buddhism and whiteness: Critical reflections* (pp. 181–205). Lexington Books.
- Moewaka Barnes, H., & McCreanor, T. (2019). Colonisation, hauora and whenua in Aotearoa. *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand*, 49(sup1), 19–33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03036758.2019.1668439>
- Mohanty, C. T. (2003). *Feminism without borders: Decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity* (1st ed.). Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822384649>
- Mok, T. M. (2022). Black Asian, White Asian: Racial histories and East Asian choices in the white settler state. In A. Tecun, L. Lopesi, & A. Sankar (Eds.), *Towards a grammar of race in Aotearoa New Zealand* (pp. 126–137). Bridget Williams Books. https://doi.org/10.7810/9781990046636_11
- Morris, K. (2016) Decolonizing solidarity: Cultivating relationships of discomfort. *Settler Colonial Studies*, 7(4), 456-473. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2016.1241210>
- Murphy, N. (2019). *Te ahi tawhito, te ahi tipua, te ahi nā Mahuika: Re-igniting Native women's ceremony*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Waikato].
- Nakhid, C., & Devere, H. (2015). Negotiating multiculturalism and the Treaty of Waitangi. In G. Ghosh & J. Leckie (Eds.), *Asians and the new multiculturalism in Aotearoa New Zealand* (p. 62). Otago University Press.

- Nachowitz, T. (2018). Identity and invisibility: Early Indian presence in Aotearoa/New Zealand, 1769–1850. In S. Bandyopadhyay & J. Buckingham (Eds.), *Indians and the Antipodes: Networks, boundaries and circulation* (pp. 26–61). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199483624.003.0002>
- Narayan, U. (1997). *Dislocating cultures: Identities, traditions, and third-world feminism*. Routledge.
- Nayak, A. 2007. Critical whiteness studies. *Sociology Compass*, 1(2): 737–755.
- Network Waitangi Otautāhi. (2024, April 14). Snippets: Treaty news from around the network. *Network Waitangi Otautāhi*. <https://nwo.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Snippets-2024-No-3.pdf>
- New York Times Magazine (2015, April). *Video interview with Toni Morrison I know how to write forever*. <https://www.nytimes.com/video/magazine/100000003614477/toni-morrison-i-know-how-to-write-forever.html>
- New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference. (n.d.). *Te Tiriti o Waitangi – The Treaty of Waitangi*[Conference session]. New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference. <https://www.catholic.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Te-Tiriti-O-Waitangi-The-Treaty-of-Waitangi.pdf>
- Ng, K. E. (2017). *Old Asian, new Asian*. Bridget Williams Books.
- Ng, W. (2010). *Racing solidarity, remaking labour: Labour renewal from a decolonising and antiracism perspective*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto].
- Ng, R. (1996). *The politics of community services: Immigrant women, class and the state* (2nd ed.). Fernwood Publishing.
- Ngata, T. (2019). *Kia mau: Resisting colonial fictions*. Rebel Press.
- Ngata, T. (2021, October 10). Te Tiriti and vaccination rates. *E-Tangata*. <https://e-tangata.co.nz/comment-and-analysis/te-tiriti-and-vaccination-rates/>
- Ngata, T., & Dutta, M. (2023, July 28). Māori - Migrant solidarities in resisting white supremacy (*CARE white paper: Issue 18*). CARE. <https://carecca.nz/wp->

- Ngo, H. (2016). Racist habits: A phenomenological analysis of racism and the habitual body. *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 42(9), 847–872.
- O’Loughlin, L., & Rastogi, P. (2022). Global South Asian and Black relationships. *South Asian Review*, 43(1–2), 132–135.
- O’Malley, V. (2014). *Beyond the Imperial frontier: The Contest for colonial New Zealand*. Bridget Williams Books.
- O’Sullivan, D. (2007). *Beyond biculturalism: The politics of an Indigenous minority*. Huia.
- Olufemi, L. (2020). *Feminism, interrupted: Disrupting power*. Pluto Press.
- Olufemi, L. (2021). *Experiments in imagining otherwise*. Pluto Press.
- Omura, S. (2014). *The Treaty of Waitangi and Asian immigrants in Aotearoa: A reflective journey*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Waikato].
<https://hdl.handle.net/10289/8833>
- Orange, C. (2012, June 20). *Te Tiriti o Waitangi – the Treaty of Waitangi*. Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand. Retrieved June 13, 2025, from
<http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/te-tiriti-o-waitangi-the-treaty-of-waitangi>
- Patrick, L. D. (2016). Found poetry: Creating space for imaginative arts-based literacy research writing. *Literacy Research: Theory, Method, and Practice*, 65(1), 384–403.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2381336916661530>
- Phillips, J. (n.d.). *Class*. Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand. Retrieved on 4 July 2025, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/class/print>
- Phung, M. (2019). Indigenous and Asian relation making. *Verge: Studies in Global Asias*, 5(1), 18–30.
- Pickering, D. (2024). *Settlers against colonialism? Education, organising and the Tiriti workers' movement*. [Doctoral dissertation, Victoria University of Wellington].

- Pihama, L. (2005). Mana wahine theory: Creating space for Māori women's theories. In P. Leistyna (Ed.), *Cultural Studies: From Theory to Action*, (pp.360-374). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Pihama, L., & Johnston, P. (1994). The marginalisation of Maori women. *Hecate: Special Aotearoa/New Zealand Issue*, 20(2), 83–97.
- Pio, E. (2010). *Longing & belonging: Asian, Middle Eastern, Latin American and African peoples in New Zealand*. Dunmore Publishing.
- Pitt, H. (2021, March 22). Getting good. *Kolaj*, (31).
<https://kolajmagazine.com/content/issues/kolaj-31/>
- Ploder, A., & Stadlbauer, J. (2016). Strong reflexivity and its critics. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 22(9), 753–764. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800416658067>
- Porges, S. W. (2011). *The polyvagal theory: Neurophysiological foundations of emotions, attachment, communication, and self-regulation*. Norton Publishing House.
- Prashad, V. (2000). *The karma of Brown folk*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Prendergast, M. (2009). “Poem is what?” Poetic inquiry in qualitative social science research. *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 1(4), 541–568.
<https://doi.org/10.1525/irqr.2009.1.4.541>
- Princeton University Art Museum. (n.d.). *Contemporary stories: Revisiting South Asian narratives*. Retrieved June 12, 2025, from
<https://artmuseum.princeton.edu/story/contemporary-stories-revisiting-south-asian-narratives-0>
- Puwar, N. (2004). *Space invaders: Race, gender and bodies out of place*. Berg.
- Rae, B. (2010, July 17). Doco highlights hidden caste discrimination. *New Zealand Herald*.
<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/entertainment/doco-highlights-hidden-caste-discrimination/CXBGXUZ3ARKZQQPBAR53FERAP4/>

- Rahman A. (2019, Mar 17). Islamic Women's Council repeatedly lobbied to stem discrimination. *Radio New Zealand*. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/onthe-inside/384911/islamic-women-scouncil-repeatedly-lobbied-to-stemdiscrimination>
- Rahman, N. H. B. A. (2025). Power, position and practice: Conscientisation and decolonial solidarity of Southeast Asian migrants in Aotearoa. [Doctoral dissertation, Victoria University of Wellington].
- Rata, A., & Al-Asaad, F. (2019). Whakawhanaungatanga as a Māori approach to Indigenous-settler of colour relationship building. *New Zealand Population Review*, 45, 211–233.
- Rata, A., Fu, M., Mio, J., & Case, E. (2021). Ko wai tēnei e tū ake nei? Activating collectivity and accountability through grounded positioning. *Counterfutures*, 12, 55–79. <https://ojs.victoria.ac.nz/counterfutures/article/view/7721>
- Rata, A., Waitoki, W., & Binte Abdul Rahman, N. H. (2025). Takarangi: Developing a framework for a large program of research towards decolonisation and racial justice. *First Nations Health and Wellbeing - The Lowitja Journal*, 3, Article 100067. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fnhli.2025.100067>
- Razack, S. (Ed.). (2002). *Race, space, and the law: Unmapping a white settler society. Between the Lines*.
- Rege, S. (2006). *Writing caste, writing gender: Reading dalit women's testimonios*. Zubaan.
- Reed-Danahay, D. E. (1997). *Auto/ethnography: Rewriting the self and the social*. Berg.
- Rei, T. & Hamon, C. (2018 [1993]). *Te Kōhanga Reo*. *NZ History*. Retrieved June 14, 2025, <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/women-together/te-kohanga-reo>
- Reid, J., Rout, M., Tau, T., & Smith, C. (2017). *The colonising environment: An aetiology of the trauma of settler colonisation and land alienation on Ngāi Tahu Whānau*. University of Canterbury Ngāi Tahu Research Centre.
- Reilly, R. C., Lee, V., Laux, K., & Robitaille, A. (2018). Using found poetry to illuminate the existential and post traumatic growth of women with breast cancer engaging in art therapy. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 15(2–3), 196–217. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2018.1429863>

- Rich, R. (2023). Found poetry, found hope: A creative and powerful method for sharing health research. *Journal of Poetry Therapy*, 37(4), 1–10.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08893675.2023.2285269>
- Richardson, L. (1994). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 516–529). Sage.
- RNZ. (2018, October 18). Bridges, Ross comments labelled ugly and racist. *Radio New Zealand*. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/368902/bridges-ross-comments-labelled-ugly-and-racist>
- RNZ. (2020, July 13). Two cultures bonded over a monument. *Radio New Zealand*. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/programmes/the-detail/story/2018754229/two-cultures-bonded-over-a-shipwreck>
- RNZ. (2024, March 17). Indian population leapfrogs Chinese to become third-largest ethnicity in New Zealand. *Radio New Zealand*.
<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/indonz/529761/indian-population-leapfrogs-chinese-to-become-third-largest-ethnicity-in-new-zealand>
- RNZ. (n.d). Highlights of the Ventnor documentary. *Radio New Zealand*.
<https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/ventnor>
- Rodríguez, C. O., & Gabi, J. (Eds.). (2023). *Who are you without colonialism?* Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://bookstore.emerald.com/who-are-you-without-colonialism-hb-9798887304274.html>
- Rodríguez, C. O. (2021). *Who Are You Without Colonialism?: Pedagogies of Liberation & Radical Imagining: Call for contributions and public pedagogical address*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZhW8AweUa0E>
- Romero, N., Estellés, M., & Grant, W. (2023). Theorizing Māori-Philippine solidarities through agential realism and punk rock pedagogy. *Research in Education (Manchester)*, 115(1), 47–63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00345237221110917>
- Ruíz, E. (2024). Structural trauma. *Meridians*, 23(1), 29–50.
<https://doi.org/10.1215/15366936-10926944>

- Saad, L. F. (2020). *Me and white supremacy: Combat racism, change the world, and become a good ancestor*. Sourcebooks.
- Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Salmond, A. (1991). *Two worlds: First meetings between Maori and Europeans, 1642-1772*. Viking.
- Sampath, R. (2015, June 19). Racial and caste oppression have many similarities. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/racial-and-caste-oppression-have-many-similarities-37710>
- Sanghera, S. (2021). *Empireland: How imperialism shaped modern Britain*. Penguin Random House.
- Sankar, A. (2022). The intimacies of four continents – and a sea of islands. In A. Tecun, L. Lopesi, & A. Sankar (Eds.), *Towards a grammar of race in Aotearoa New Zealand* (pp. 61–75). Bridget Williams Books.
- Santamaría, L. J., & Hoskins, T. K. (2015). Embracing the tension: Treaty responsiveness and decolonizing pedagogies in Aotearoa New Zealand to inform education in the United States and similar countries. In G. Jean-Marie, S. Sider, & C. Desir (Eds.), *Comparative international perspectives on education and social change in developing countries and Indigenous peoples in developed countries* (pp. 65–82). Information Age Publishing.
- Sapara Barton, C. (2024). *Tending grief: Embodied rituals for holding our sorrow and growing cultures of care in community*. North Atlantic Books.
- Saranillio, D. I. (2013). Why Asian settler colonialism matters: A thought piece on critiques, debates, and Indigenous difference. *Settler Colonial Studies*, 3(3–4), 280–294.
- Sarwal, A. (2018). Class and caste consciousness: The narratives of Indian subcontinental diaspora in Australia. In S. Bandyopadhyay and J. Buckingham (Eds.), *Indians and the Antipodes: Networks, Boundaries, and Circulation*. Oxford Academic. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199483624.003.0010>
- Satellites. (n.d.-a). The Going Bananas conferences. *Satellites Blog*. <https://www.satellites.co.nz/archive/moments/going-bananas>

- Satellites. (n.d.-b). Government apologises for the poll tax. *Satellites Blog*.
<https://www.satellites.co.nz/archive/moments/poll-tax-apology>
- SEEDS for Change. (2021). *Who Are You Without Colonialism?* Public pedagogical series convened as part of CTL1333H – Settler Colonialism. University of Toronto.
- Scobie, M., & Sturman, A. (2024). *The economic possibilities of decolonisation*. Bridget Williams Books.
- Shah, V., & Chanicka, J. (2023). Brown identities, complicities, and complexities: Towards Brown-Black solidarities. *Journal of Critical Race Inquiry*, 10(1), 1–26.
- Sharma, N., & Wright, C. (2008–2009). Decolonizing resistance, challenging colonial states. *Social Justice*, 35(3), 120–138.
- Sharma, S. L. (2004). Perspectives on Indians abroad. In N. Jayaram (Ed.), *The Indian diaspora: Dynamics of migration* (pp. 44–65). SAGE.
- Shashwati, S., Kansal, P., & Sethi, D. (2022). Exploring artistic representations in psychological research: A step-by-step guide for using found poetry. *The Qualitative Report*, 27(8), 1621–1637. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5446>
- Shepherd, N. (2007, Aug 19). Chinese may aid Maori. *New Zealand Herald*.
<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/kahu/chinese-may-aid-maori/NH23C3R5ZQGIHLXYZSYL2JLKDI/>
- Shingade, B. (2024). Propping up pride: The intervention of Hindutva in the Indian diaspora's negotiations of belonging in Aotearoa/New Zealand. *Knowledge Cultures*, 12(2), 152–170. <https://doi.org/10.22381/kc12120249>. Shohat, E., & Stam, R. (2014). *Unthinking eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the media*. Routledge.
- Shui, M. (2020, July 20). Māori-Asian solidarity in Aotearoa can be game-changing. *Re:News*. <https://www.renews.co.nz/maori-asian-solidarity-in-aotearoa-can-be-game-changing/>
- Shuster, S.M., & Westbrook, L. (2024) Reducing the joy deficit in sociology: A study of transgender joy. *Social Problems*, 71(3), 791–809.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spac034> Simon, H. (2022). The critical

- juncture in Aotearoa New Zealand and the collective future: Policy issues in settler/invasor colonial Zombiism found in “Biculturalism.” *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*, 15(2), 119–142.
<https://doi.org/10.5204/ijcis.2329>
- Simon, H. (2023). Settler/invasor identity and belonging in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Ethnic Studies Review*, 46(3), 95–127.
<https://doi.org/10.1525/esr.2023.46.3.95>
- Simpson, A. (2017). The ruse of consent and the anatomy of ‘refusal’: Cases from Indigenous North America and Australia. *Postcolonial Studies*, 20(1), 18–33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2017.1334283>
- Simpson, L.B. (2014). Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation. *Decolonization: indigeneity, education & society*, 3(3).
- Simpson, L. B. (2017a). *As we have always done: Indigenous freedom through radical resistance*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Simpson, L. B.(2017b). Land as Pedagogy. In L.B. Simpson, *As we have always done*. University of Minnesota Press
- Simpson, L. B. (2017c). “I see your light”: Reciprocal recognition and generative refusal. In L.B. Simpson, *As we have always done: Indigenous freedom through radical resistance* (pp. 175–190). University of Minnesota Press.
<https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctt1pwt77c.13>
- Simpson, L. B. (2025). *The theory of water: Nishaabe maps to the times ahead*. Haymarket Books.
- Simpson, L. B., & Martineau, J. (2017, Summer). Spiralling into a deeper level of connection. *Canadian Art*, 34, 100–103.
<https://ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/magazines/spiralling-into-deeper-level-connection/docview/1912934516/se-2>
- Simmonds, N. (2011). Mana Wahine: Decolonising politics. *Women’s Studies Journal*, 25(2), 11–25.

- Singh, S. (2025, May 19). Humko power mei nhi aane denge: An autoethnograph of our caste histories. *Awa Wahine Blog*. <https://www.awawahine.com/blog/autoethnography-of-our-caste-histories>
- Sium, A., Desai, C., & Ritskes, E. (2012). Towards the ‘tangible unknown’: Decolonization and the Indigenous future. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1, I–XIII.
- Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonising methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples* (2nd ed.). Zed Books.
- Snelgrove, C., Dhamoon, R. K., & Cornassel, J. (2014). Unsettling settler colonialism: The discourse and politics of settlers, and solidarity with Indigenous nations. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 3, 1–32.
- Soundararajan, T. (2022). *The trauma of caste: A Dalit feminist meditation on survivorship, healing, and abolition*. North Atlantic Books.
- Sparkes, A. C. (1996). The fatal flaw: A narrative of the fragile body-self. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 2(4), 463–494.
- Spivak, G. C. (2003). Can the subaltern speak? *Die Philosophin*, 14(27), 42–58.
- Spry, T. (2001). Performing autoethnography: An embodied methodological praxis. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7, 706–732.
- Spry, T. (2011). *Body, paper, stage: Writing and performing autoethnography*. Left Coast Press.
- St. Denis, V. (2007). Aboriginal education and anti-racist education: Building alliances across cultural and racial identity. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 30(4), 1068–1092.
- Stats NZ. (2023, April 4). 2023 Census population counts by ethnic group, age, Māori descent, and dwelling counts. *Statistics New Zealand*. <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/2023-census-population-counts-by-ethnic-group-age-and-maori-descent-and-dwelling-counts/#:~:text=New%20Zealand's%20population%20continues%20to%20diversify>

[&text=In%20the%202023%20Census%20we,8.9%20percent\)%20as%20Pacific%20peoples](#)

Stephenson, P. (2003). New cultural scripts: Exploring the dialogue between Indigenous and 'Asian' Australians. *Journal of Australian Studies*, 27(77), 57–68.

Suaalii-Sauni, T. M., Tuagalu, I., Kirifi-Alai, T. N., & Fuamatu, N. (2018). *Su'esu'e Manogi: Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi and the Samoan Indigenous Reference* (1st ed.). Huia Publishers.

Sullivan, A. M. (2000). Summer notes from a marine biologist's daughter: On the art and science of attention. *Harvard Educational Review*, 70(2), 211–227. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/10.17763/haer.70.2.x8601x6tn8p256wk>

Sullivan, K. (1994). Bicultural education in Aotearoa/New Zealand: Establishing a tau iwi side to the partnership. *New Zealand Annual Review of Education*, 3, 191–222.

Swarbrick, N. (2015, March 1). *Story: Indians. Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*. <https://teara.govt.nz/en/indians>

Takagi, D. Y. (2005). Faith, race, and nationalism. *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 7(3), 271–288.

Tan, K. (2016). Voices of Chinese international students on racism at a New Zealand university. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338844416_voices_of_chinese_international_students_on_racism_at_a_New_Zealand_university

Taonui, R. (2012). *The Native Land Court*. Te Ara Encyclopaedia of New Zealand. <https://teara.govt.nz/en/te-ture-maori-and-legislation/page-3>

Taylor, R. (2004). *British logistics in New Zealand wars 1845-66*. [Doctoral dissertation, Massey University].

Te Ara. (n.d.-a). *Kōrero Indians*. Te Ara Encyclopaedia of New Zealand. <https://teara.govt.nz/mi/indians/page-2>

- Te Ara. (n.d.-b). *Immigration regulation – 1881-1914: Restrictions on Chinese and others*. Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand. <https://teara.govt.nz/en/immigration-regulation/page-2>
- Tecun, A., Lopesi, L., & Sankar, A. (Eds.). (2022). *Towards a grammar of race in Aotearoa New Zealand*. Bridget Williams Books.
- Terruhn, J. (2015). *Being Pākehā: White settler narratives of politics, identity and belonging in Aotearoa/New Zealand*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Auckland]
- Tervalon, M., & Murray-Garcia, J. (1998). Cultural humility versus cultural competence: A critical distinction in defining physician training outcomes in multicultural education. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 9(2), 117–125.
- Tinsley, O. N. (2008). Black Atlantic, queer Atlantic. *GLQ*, 14(2–3), 191–215. <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2007-030>
- Togiaso J. (2017). *Narratives of Samoan women who established a 'oga Amata in Christchurch New Zealand*. [Master's thesis, University of Canterbury].
- Tolbert, M. A. (1995). When resistance becomes repression: Mark 13:9–27 and the poetics of location. In F. F. Segovia & M. A. Tolbert (Eds.), *Reading from this place: Social location and biblical interpretation in global perspective* (pp. 331–346). Fortress Press.
- Tomaselli, K., Dyll, L., & Francis, M. (2008). “Self” and “other”: Auto-reflexive and indigenous methodologies. In N. K. Denzin, Y. S. Lincoln & L. T. Smith (Eds), *Handbook of critical and Indigenous methodologies*. (347-372). Sage.
- Trask, H.-K. (2000). Settlers of color and 'immigrant' hegemony: 'Locals' in Hawai'i. *Amerasia Journal*, 26(2), 2–4.
- Tuck, E. (2009). Suspending damage: A letter to communities. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(3), 409–427. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.79.3.n0016675661t3n15>
- Tuck, E., & Yang, K.W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1(1), 1–40.

- Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2014). R-words: Refusing research. In D. Paris & M. T. Winn (Eds.), *Humanizing research: Decolonizing qualitative inquiry with youth and communities* (pp. 223–248). Sage.
- Tuiono, T., & Dutta, M. (2019, August 29). *Solidarity in anti-racist struggles: A culture-centred intervention* (CARE white paper: Issue 5). CARE. https://carecca.nz/wp-content/uploads/sites/68/2021/11/CARE_White_Paper_Issue_5_29_August_2019.pdf
- Vasil, R., & Yoon, H.-k. (1996). *New Zealanders of Asian origin*. Institute of Policy Research.
- Venkatraman, S. (2021, October 6). *Brown, Desi, South Asian: Diaspora reflects on the terms that represent, erase them*. NBC News. [https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/brown-desi-south-asian-diaspora-reflects-terms-represent-erase-rcna1886​:contentReference\[oaicite:1\]{index=1}](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/brown-desi-south-asian-diaspora-reflects-terms-represent-erase-rcna1886​:contentReference[oaicite:1]{index=1})
- Visram, R. (2002). *Asians in Britain: 400 years of history*. Pluto Press.
- Waitangi Tribunal. (2007). *The Ngāi Tahu Report 1991*. https://web.archive.org/web/20071022154002if_/http://www.waitangi-tribunal.govt.nz/reports/viewchapter.asp?reportID=D5D84302-EB22-4A52-BE78-16AF39F71D91&chapter=132
- Walker, R. (2004). *Ka whawhai tonu mātou: Struggle without end*. Penguin.
- Wall, S. (2008). Easier said than done: Writing an autoethnography. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 7(1), 38–53. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690800700103>
- Wang, L. (2008). Myths and realities of Asian American success. In N. Tewari & A. N. Alvarez (Eds.), *Model minority myth revisited: An interdisciplinary approach to demystifying Asian American educational experiences* (pp. 21–43). Information Age Publishing.
- Wang, A. J. (2023). Asian tauiwi and tangata whenua: Māori-Asian relationships and their implications for Aotearoa New Zealand’s constitutional future. *Journal of New Zealand Studies*, NS36, 161-177. <https://doi.org/10.26686/jnzs.iNS36.8333>

- Wang, Y. (Ingrid). (2025). Listening to young Asian sexual violence survivors' voices through found poetry. *Journal of Poetry Therapy*, 1–17.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08893675.2025.2449958>
- Ward, C., & Liu, J. H. (2011). Ethno-cultural conflict in Aotearoa/New Zealand: Balancing indigenous rights and multicultural responsibilities. In D. Landis & R. Albert (Eds.), *Handbook of ethnic conflict: International perspectives* (pp. 45–69). Springer US.
- Waskul, D. D., & Vannini, P. (2006). The body in symbolic interaction. In D. D. Waskul & P. Vannini (Eds.), *Body/embodiment: Symbolic interaction and the sociology of the body* (pp. 1–18). Ashgate.
- Watego, C. (2021). *Another day in the colony*. University of Queensland Press.
- Watson, J., & Hamilton, F. (2022). Found poetry: A creative approach to illuminate the findings of qualitative research. *British Journal of General Practice*, 72(724), 538.
<https://doi.org/10.3399/bjgp22X721121>
- Weems, M. (2003). Public education and the imagination-intellect: I speak from the wound in my mouth. Peter Lang.
- Wells, K. (2004). Safe in my heart: Found poetry as narrative inquiry. In J. McNinch, & M. Cronin (Eds.), *I could not speak my heart: Education and social justice for gay and lesbian youth* (pp. 7–18). University of Regina.
- WERO (n.d.). *Working to end racial oppression website*. <https://wero.ac.nz/>
- Whitinui, P. (2014). Indigenous autoethnography: Exploring, engaging, and experiencing “self” as a native method of inquiry. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 43(4), 456–487. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241613508148>
- Wilbur, M., & Keene, A. (Hosts). (n.d.). *All my relations podcast*. Retrieved from <https://www.allmyrelationspodcast.com/>
- Wilkerson, I. (2020). *Caste: The origins of our discontent*. Random House.

- Williams, P. J. (1992). *The alchemy of race and rights*. Harvard University Press.
- Wilson, G. J., Acuff, J. B., & Kraehe, A. M. (2022). *A love letter to This Bridge Called My Back*. University of Arizona Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2jhjw3g>
- Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods*. Fernwood Publishing.
- Wolfe, P. (2006). Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8(4), 387–409. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520601056240>
- Wolfe, P. (2013). Recuperating binarism: A heretical introduction. *Settler Colonial Studies*, 3(3–4), 257–279.
- Wong, P., Lai, C. F., Nagasawa, R., & Lin, T. (1998). Asian Americans as a model minority: Self-perceptions and perceptions by other racial groups. *Sociological Perspectives*, 41(1), 95–118.
- Zakaria, R. (2021). *Against white feminism*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Zhu, A. (2020). *Asian Family Services New Zealand Asian Mental Health and Wellbeing Report 2020: A snapshot survey*. Retrieved November 25, 2022, from New Zealand Chinese Media Share of Audience Overview May 2020 Asian Family Service. https://www.asianfamilyservices.nz/media/bbjkz4qa/asian_family_services_-_new_zealand_asian_mental_health__wellbeing_report_2020_-_trace_research_-_lite_version.pdf

Appendices

Appendix A: Letter of introduction to the project

Research Information Sheet

Te Kāhui Manu Tāiko
Human Research Ethics Committee
Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao
E-mail: fmis@waikato.ac.nz

Private Bag 3105
Hamilton 3240
Phone: 64-7-838 4737

Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Will you join us? Uncovering everyday relationships, ruptures and solidarities

Research Information Sheet

Tēnā koe,

My name is Ara Alam-Simmons. I am a facilitator, Positive Psychology practitioner and accredited coach experienced in holding safe spaces for both individuals and groups. I am conducting research called *Will you join us? Uncovering everyday relationships, ruptures and solidarities* in which we bring women of South Asian descent together to engage in an anti-racist kaupapa to respond to colonial processes that can often divide us from each other and divide us from Tangata Whenua. This project is part of a broader programme of research funded by MBIE, called WERO (Working to End Racial Oppression).

This project aims to research ways in which we can reconnect to our ancestral herstories, locate our experiences within (neo)colonial/imperial systems of oppression, and seek solidarities across racialised differences

The research will involve a one-day collaging session (5 hrs.), An Artist will facilitate the art process. This may involve a follow-up one-to-one storytelling and discussion (if you agree to this), which is a one-to-one conversation lasting no more than 90 minutes. The follow-up conversations would be set at a time and place convenient for you

During the collaging session, stories shared at the end will be audio recorded and photos of your collage will be taken. These will be done with your consent and will be transcribed for research purposes. You have the right to (among other things)

- refuse to answer any particular question.
- ask any further questions about the study that occurs to you during your participation.
- withdraw your material and participation at any time.
- receive to change and comment on the summary transcript of your interview.
- be given access to a summary of the findings from the study, when it is concluded.

Stories from all the participants in the collaging session and one to one storytelling and discussion will be analysed together and grouped into themes. Quotes from participants will be selected and used to respond to the themes extracted. Participants can choose whether they want to be named if a quote from them is used, or whether they would like to participate on a confidential basis, in which case the participant will choose a pseudonym (made up name).

I expect the major outcome from this research to be peer-reviewed journal articles, conference presentations, community presentations, and a toolkits for relating across racialised differences. A summary of the research findings will be sent out to you. Thank you very much for your time and help in making this study possible. If you have any queries or wish to know more please phone me or write to me at:

Ara Alam-Simmons

Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao - Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies

Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato - The University of Waikato

Private Bag 3105

Hamilton, New Zealand

Email: aa1459@students.waikato.ac.nz

Phone: 021402109

NB. For students you will need to include details for your supervisor (e.g. see below)

For any queries regarding ethical concerns please contact my supervisor:

Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao – Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies

Supervisor: _____

Email: _____

Office phone: _____

Appendix B: Participant consent

Research Information Sheet

Te Kāhui Manu Tāiko
Human Research Ethics Committee
Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao
E-mail: fmis@waikato.ac.nz

Private Bag 3105
Hamilton 3240
Phone: 64-7-838 4737

Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies



Will you join us? Uncovering everyday relationships, ruptures and solidarities

Consent Form for Participants

I have read the Participant Information Sheet for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out on the Participant Information Sheet.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Participant Information Sheet.

I consent/do not consent to be part of the follow-up one-to-one storytelling session (that will be held at a different date to the collaging day).

I consent/do not consent to the information collected for the purposes of this research study to be used for any other research purposes. (Delete what does not apply)

Participant's Signature: _____

Participant's Name: _____

Ethnicity: _____

Age: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's Name and contact information:

Ara Alam-Simmons

aa1459@students.waikato.ac.nz

Supervisor's Name and contact information: (if applicable)

Dr Waikaremoana Waitoki

moana.waitoki@waikato.ac.nz

Appendix C: one to one conversation : Semi structured questions

Research Information Sheet

Te Kāhui Manu Tāiko
Human Research Ethics Committee
Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao
E-mail: fmis@waikato.ac.nz

Private Bag 3105
Hamilton 3240
Phone: 64-7-838 4737

Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies



Will you come join us? Uncovering everyday relationships, ruptures and solidarities

Semi- structured questions and discussion for researcher use

Part 1: Collaging session

Two reflective questions will guide the collaging.

1. Who are you without colonisation? (Rodriguez, 2023)
2. Who are your ancestors and what do you think they are whispering to you?

Part 2: One to one: storytelling and discussion (semi structured)

1. What would you like to share with me about who you are, your values, and journey to Aotearoa if applicable?
2. What would you like to share with me about your day to day relationships with other racialised women? What do these relationships mean to you?
 - ➔ Prompt (depending on answer given): specifically in relation to other South Asian women
 - ➔ Prompt (depending on answer given): specifically in relation to other tauiwi women of colour
 - ➔ Prompt (depending on answer given): specifically in relation to Māori women

3. What does Solidarity mean to you? What do your day to day solidarities look like with other women?
4. What things help form solidarity with other women of colour, and what makes solidarity harder with other women of colour?
 - ➔ Prompt (depending on answer given): specifically in relation to other South Asian women
 - ➔ Prompt (depending on answer given): specifically in relation to other tauiwi women of colour
 - ➔ Prompt (depending on answer given): specifically in relation to Māori women
5. What are some of the ways in which you look after your wellbeing ?
 - ➔ Prompt (depending on answer given): what does experiencing joy look like for you?
 - ➔ Prompt (depending on answer given): What does recovery and rest look like for you?

Appendix D: Ethics Approval

Ethics approval was received on 28th March, 2023.



Te Kāhui Manu Tāiko: Human Research Ethics Committee

Faculty of Māori & Indigenous Studies

Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao

Tuesday 28 March, 2023

Ethics Approval

Tēnā koe e te manu tāiko e rere atu nā i ngā huarahi o te rangahau.

This letter is to confirm that Ara Alam-Simmons has received ethical approval for the study, *“Will you join us? Uncovering everyday relationships, ruptures and solidarities”*.

The ethics application was reviewed by members of Te Kāhui Manu Tāiko and was signed off by the chair of the committee on 28 March 2023. Good luck as you embark on your research.

Mahia te mahi hei painga mō te iwi – Nā Te Pua Herangi.

Ngā manaakitanga. _____

Dr Haki Tuaupiki

Convener, Te Kāhui Manu Tāiko

Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao

Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Faculty of Māori & Indigenous Studies

The University of Waikato

Appendix E: Book recommendations

The following curated reading list has been compiled over the duration of my thesis. Words and voices that have provided joy, comfort, wild imaginings and critique. I share them here with the reader.

1. A Love Letter to This Bridge Called My Back – edited by Gloria J. Wilson, Joni Acuff, Amelia Kraehe
2. A Map to the Door of No Return – Dionne Brand
3. All About Love – bell hooks
4. Always Italicise: How to Write While Colonised – Alice Te Punga Somerville
5. And Still I Rise – Maya Angelou
6. Another Day in the Colony – Chelsea Watego
7. Before the Winter Ends – Khadro Mohamed
8. Big Fat Brown Bitch – Tusiata Avia
9. Braiding Sweetgrass – Robin Wall Kimmerer
10. But What Will People Say? Navigating Mental Health, Identity, Love, and Family Between Cultures – Sahaj Kaur Kohli
11. Communion: The Female Search for Love – bell hooks
12. Community as Rebellion – Lorgia Garcia Pēna
13. Dear God, Dear Bones, Dear Yellow – Noor Hindi
14. Dream Count – Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
15. Emergent Strategy – Adrienne Maree Brown
16. Experiments in Imagining Otherwise – Lola Olufemi
17. Feminism Interrupted – Lola Olufemi
8. Feminist Killjoy - Sara Ahmed
19. Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center - bell hooks

20. For Brown Girls with Sharp Edges and Tender Hearts: A Love Letter to Women of Color – Prisca Dorcas Mojica Rodríguez
21. Heal Your Way Forward - Myisha T. Hill
22. How Europe Underdeveloped Africa - Walter Rodney
23. Imagining Decolonisation – BWB Texts – Moana Jackson et al.
24. Imagination: A Manifesto – Ruha Benjamin
25. Invisible No More – Andrea J. Ritchie
26. Let the Light Pour In – Lemn Sissay
27. Living a Feminist Life – Sara Ahmed
28. Living While Black: The Essential Guide to Overcoming Racial Trauma – Guilaine Kinouani
29. Manifesto – Bernardine Evaristo
30. Mornings in Jenin – Susan Abulhawa
31. Minority Rule - Ash Sakar
32. No More Police - Mariame Kaba and Andrea J. Ritchie
33. Partition Voices - Kavita Puri
34. Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good – Adrienne Maree Brown
35. Race as Technology by Ruha Benjamin
36. Practicing New Worlds – Andrea J. Ritchie
37. Rehearsals for Living – Robyn Maynard & Leanne Betasamoke Simpson
38. Sister Outsider – Audre Lorde
39. Sisters of the Yam – bell hooks
40. Survival is a Promise – Alexis Pauline Gumbs
41. Survival Takes a Wild Imagination – Fariha Ro'isi'n

42. Tending Grief – Camille Sapara Barton
43. Talkin’ Up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism – Aileen Moreton-Robinson
44. The Book of Disappearance – Ibtisam Azem
45. The God of Small Things – Arundhati Roy
46. The Life and Opinions of Karti Popat – Brannavan Gnanalingam
47. The Ministry of Utmost Happiness – Arundhati Roy
48. The Trauma of Caste: A Dalit Feminist Meditation on Survivorship, Healing, and Abolition – Thenmozhi Soundararajan
49. The White Woman and the Indigenous Feminist: Talkin’ Up to the White Woman – Aileen Moreton-Robinson
50. Viral Justice – Ruha Benjamin
51. Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments – Saidiya Hartman
52. We Do This ‘Til We Free Us – Mariame Kaba
53. We Should All Be Feminists – Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
54. White Tears, Brown Scars – Ruby Hamad
55. Wawata – Dr. Hinemoa Elder
56. Your Silence Will Not Protect You – Audre Lorde
57. Towards a Grammar of Race in Aotearoa New Zealand – edited by Arcia Tecun, Lana Lopesi, and Anisha Sankar
58. Women, Race & Class – Angela Y. Davis
59. When I Reach for Your Pulse – Rushi Vyas
60. Race as Technology - Ruha Benjamin

