Middle Eastern Children in New Zealand Early Childhood Centres: Parental Expectations, Teacher Practices, and Children's Experiences

By

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Abstract

This is the first systematic study of the experiences of Middle Eastern children and their parents in the context of New Zealand early childhood centres. Using a two-phase sequential mixed-method approach involving an online questionnaire sent to Middle Eastern parents across New Zealand followed by four qualitative case studies, I investigated: Middle Eastern parents' expectations for their children's early education; early childhood teachers' practices and perspectives with respect to Middle Eastern families; and the challenges faced by Middle Eastern children in New Zealand early childhood centres. Using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis, and drawing on constructs from hybridity theory (Bhabha, 1994), critical multiculturalism (May & Sleeter, 2010), and funds of knowledge (González et al., 2006), I argue that there is a lack of congruence between the early childhood discourses promoted by the New Zealand teachers and Middle Eastern parents' expectations for their children's early education. Interviews indicated that Middle Eastern parents' expectations were often dismissed and silenced while the dominant early childhood discourses were reinforced by teachers, indicating that some of the teachers were not prepared, or knowledgeable about how, to embrace Middle Eastern families' funds of knowledge. Additionally, teachers had different approaches for accommodating Middle Eastern families' needs. While some teachers were keen to learn about Middle Eastern families and implement practices that were reflective of their individual needs, there were teachers who expressed essentialised views and perceived Middle Eastern families as a homogenous group with similar needs. My findings also show that Middle Eastern children at times struggled to express themselves in English and teachers adopted specific practices to support children in this regard. While most of these practices helped children develop linguistic and social competence, some social competencies promoted by the teachers – such as ways of responding to peer conflict – were incongruent with the families' practices. Possible implications for early childhood pedagogy are suggested to meet the needs of increasingly ethnically and culturally diverse early childhood educational contexts.

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List of Acronyms

Early Childhood Education……ECE

Early Learning Information……..……..…..ELI

Ministry of Education……...…….....MoE

Originally in Arabic……Orig.A

Originally in English……...Orig.E

Originally in Farsi…….. Orig.F

Uniform Resource Locator……...…… URL

United States…….……US

List of Appendices

1. Introduction

New Zealand is a culturally diverse country with an estimated population of 5.1 million (Statistics New Zealand, 2021), of which 16.7% are indigenous Māori. Prior to the immigration policy reforms of 1986, immigrants to New Zealand were mostly from Britain and Ireland (Ministry of Social Development, 2008). Today, the inward flow of migrants is from a much more diverse range of countries including China, India, South Africa, Korea, as well as Middle Eastern countries. According to data presented in the New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings (Statistics New Zealand, 2018), major ethnic groups in New Zealand are Europeans (70.2% or 3,297,860 people), Asians (15.1% or 707,600 people), Pasifika (8.1% or 381,640 people), and Middle Easterners/Latin Americans/Africans (1.5 % or 70,330 people).

One consequence of the increasing flow of migrants is that New Zealand's educational settings are growing in cultural and linguistic diversity. In 2020, there were 190,348 enrolments/attendances in licensed early childhood services across New Zealand, 47% of whom identified as European, 24% as Māori, 17% as Asian, and eight percent as Pasifika, with the remaining four percent identifying with other ethnicities (Ministry of Education (MoE), 2020a).

New Zealand's founding document, *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, is seen to be inclusive of all non-indigenous settlers in Aotearoa and this has implications for all of society across the board, including in the education sector (MoE, 2017) where the treaty's three principles of partnership, participation, and protection provide a sound foundation for teachers' pedagogy. Within the early childhood education (ECE) sector, the commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi is apparent in *Te Whāriki*, the national early childhood curriculum (Ritchie, 2018), reflected above all in the protection of children's cultural identity (Reedy & Reedy, 2013, as cited in MoE, 2017). Recognising that New Zealand is becoming increasingly multicultural, *Te Whāriki* urges all stakeholders in the ECE sector to respond to the changing demographic landscape and adopt pedagogical practices that value the different cultures represented at the services. This puts the onus on educational researchers to explore the experiences of diverse groups in New Zealand early childhood services and enable educators and policy makers to be more responsive to the needs of these groups.

Researchers have, over the years, paid increasing attention to the experiences of different cultural groups within the context of New Zealand early childhood services (e.g., Chan, 2014; Guo, 2010; Schofield, 2011; Zhang, 2012). However, no research has yet focused on the experiences of Middle Eastern children in New Zealand ECE settings and the ways in which teachers work with them and their families. According to the late census figures (Statistics New Zealand, 2018), the Middle Eastern population in the country has grown almost threefold since 2001 (Figure 1). With a growing population has come the need to understand the experiences of Middle Easterners in New Zealand, including the experiences of Middle Eastern children attending ECE and care services.

My thesis addresses this gap through a mixed-method study focused on the hitherto neglected experiences of Middle Eastern children and their parents in New Zealand early childhood centres.

1.1 Research Questions

This study is an investigation of: Middle Eastern parents' expectations for their children's early education; early childhood teachers' practices and perspectives with respect to Middle Eastern families; and the challenges faced by Middle Eastern children in New Zealand early childhood centres.

My position as a Middle Easterner has informed the topic of my research. I arrived in New Zealand in 2018 to pursue my PhD in ECE. As a newly arrived Middle Easterner, my interactions with the community here led me to realise that they were not always at ease with their experiences using ECE for their children—they spoke about challenges they were experiencing with their children in early childhood centres. This led me to want to understand the overall challenges within the experiences. That challenges exist has been well substantiated in the literature on the experiences of children in ECE centres. Dalli (2001), for example, talks of the starting childcare experience as a challenging process that involves children being separated from their mothers, developing trust with new people, and gaining familiarity with new routines. If we add to these the challenges specifically faced by immigrant children as demonstrated in the literature (De Melendez & Beck, 2018; Guo, 2005a; Mitchell et al., 2020; Rogoff, 2003; Ryu, 2004), such as the difficulties of communication in an unknown language and culture, we see the extra and different challenges that immigrant children might encounter during this experience. This is what led me to investigate the following three research questions:

1. What are Middle Eastern parents' expectations for their children's early education in New Zealand?
2. What are early childhood teachers' practices and perspectives with respect to Middle Eastern families?
3. What are the challenges faced by Middle Eastern children in New Zealand early childhood centres?

These questions were addressed through a two-phase sequential mixed-methods research design. In Phase one, I surveyed the views of Middle Eastern parents across New Zealand via an online questionnaire to identify the boundaries of the experiences relevant to the above three research questions. Having asked for volunteer participants from the survey respondents for more in-depth follow-up case studies, in Phase two, I undertook a qualitative case study in each of four early childhood centres. Data gathering in the case studies involved observation of four Middle Eastern children in their early childhood centre, and interviews with their parents and teachers in a major city in New Zealand. To answer the first two research questions, I drew on data collected from the survey and from the longer discursive answers provided in the parent and teacher interviews during the four case studies. To answer the third research question, I relied on the data collected from the survey, parent and teacher interviews, and my observations of the case study children.

I analysed the data collected from both phases using a combination of descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. I used descriptive statistics for analysing the responses to the close-ended questions of the survey, while thematic analysis was used for analysing the responses to the open-ended questions of the survey as well as data collected through the interviews and observations. The details of the data collection and analysis process are explained as part of the thesis methodology in chapter three.

I have discussed the findings using the twin concepts of 'third space' and 'in-between space' as articulated in Bhabha's (1994) hybridity theory. I also used ideas from critical multiculturalism (May & Sleeter, 2010) and funds of knowledge (González, 2005) to discuss the importance of critical engagement with families and incorporation of their knowledge in early childhood programmes.

1.2 Middle Eastern Families in Context

Since this study is focused on the experiences of Middle Eastern immigrant children and their parents in New Zealand early childhood centres, it is useful to begin with some background information about the Middle East, demographic information about the Middle Eastern population in New Zealand, and a brief outline of ECE in New Zealand.

1.2.1 The Term 'Middle East'

According to Cleveland and Bunton (2018), 'Middle East' is a loose term which was originally used to refer to any country between the 'Far East' (i.e., China, Japan, Korea, and other countries in East Asia) and the 'Near East' (i.e., the region once dominated by the Ottoman Empire). However, the term 'Middle East' now refers to the geographical region located primarily in Western Asia, but also in parts of Northern Africa and South-Eastern Europe. It mainly includes Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

Arabic is the most commonly spoken language in the Middle East, major exceptions being Iran, Turkey, and Israel where the predominant languages are Persian, Turkish, and Hebrew. Minority languages hold high status in many Middle Eastern countries. In Iraq, for example, Assyrian is a culturally and politically important language for its speakers. Other examples are Kurdish and Arabic in Iran, and Kurdish in Turkey. Moreover, the varieties of Arabic spoken in different Middle Eastern countries can be quite distinct, indicating the diversity in the region.

A large percentage of Middle Easterners are born Muslim, but that does not mean that they continue practising Islam when they grow up. This is an important point to consider because religious stereotyping is the root cause of many misunderstandings directed at Middle Eastern populations (Welch, 2019), some of which will be discussed within this thesis. Exceptions to the Muslim-majority rule are Lebanon and Israel, which have a large percentage of people of the Christian and Jewish faiths, respectively.

Middle Easterners have long been misrepresented and stereotyped in Western media (Qutub, 2013) and families who belong to this ethnic group might experience stereotyping in educational settings. The terrorist attacks on two Christchurch mosques in March 2019 was the extreme outcome of

such misrepresentations. For months, life in New Zealand was overshadowed by the attacks, described by many as 'the end of New Zealand's innocence' (Hartevelt, 2019). The New Zealand prime minister, Jacinda Ardern called March 15 "one of New Zealand's darkest days" (Ardern, 2019). Although the Islamic Friday prayers were the main target of these attacks, minorities of all backgrounds were shocked around the country. On the first anniversary of the attacks, the prime minister pointed out that the main challenge facing New Zealand society was going to be: "ensuring in our everyday actions, and every opportunity where we see bullying, harassment, racism, discrimination, calling it out as a nation" (Ardern, 2020).

1.2.2 Middle Eastern Population in New Zealand

According to the latest Census of Population and Dwellings in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2018), almost 28,000 people in the country identify with the Middle Eastern ethnicity (Figure 1). This figure is almost three times larger than the same figure in the 2001 census, and 25% larger than the one in 2013. As reported in the census, 78% of those who identified as Middle Easterner had arrived in New Zealand in the preceding 19 years, which fits with the timeline presented above.

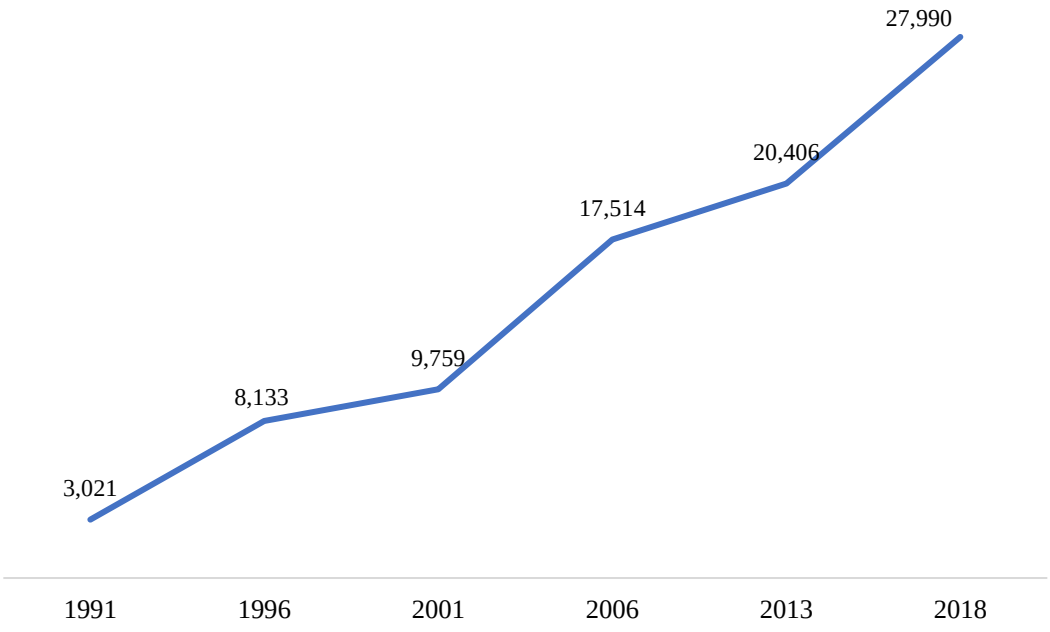
Several reasons can be mentioned for the steep rise of the Middle Eastern population in New Zealand, but the most obvious are the political crises that have unfolded in the Middle East since the beginning of the 21st century. The United States' (US) attack on Iraq, the rise of the terrorist group ISIS in Iraq and Syria, and the violent suppression of civil unrest in several Middle Eastern countries are just some instances of the aforementioned crises. Many people in the affected countries, especially those who belong to minority groups, have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. Turkey, Jordan, France, and Germany have hosted many refugees, but other countries also accepted Middle Eastern refugees in accordance with their international commitments. New Zealand is among the destinations of Middle Easterners who flee their homes in the hope of finding safety and new opportunities. Most of the refugees who have ended up in New Zealand have fled from Syria and Iraq (Spoonley & Terruhn, 2017). According to the census (Statistics New Zealand, 2018), these refugees were resettled in regions across New Zealand, but prominently in the Auckland Region (61%), Wellington Region (14%), Canterbury Region (7%), and Waikato Region (5.5%).

The 2018 census provides interesting insights into the religious orientations of Middle Easterners in New Zealand. According to that data, 45.3% of Middle Easterners expressed an affiliation with Islam, 22.6% with Christianity, 3.4% with Judaism, and 3.5% with other religions. Of the remaining respondents, 18.4% selected 'no religion' and 6.9% objected to answering. In 2018, almost 30% of the Middle Eastern population in New Zealand were aged 25 to 39, while 19% were between birth and 9. These data indicate that young families with children constitute almost half of this ethnic group in New Zealand. These families require access to a range of services, one of which is ECE.

In the next section, I provide an overview of ECE in New Zealand, followed by the outline of the thesis.

Figure 1

Middle Eastern Population in New Zealand



1.2.3 ECE in New Zealand

Early years education refers to a diverse range of services provided for children under five years old in New Zealand (MoE, 2017). These facilities fall into two major groups, namely parent-led/whānau-led and teacher-led/kaiako-led services. Parent-led services consist of playcentres, playgroups, and ngā kōhanga reo (centres provided with the aim of immersing children in Māori language and culture). Teacher-led services comprise kindergartens, education and care services, and home-based education (MoE, 2020b). Although these services are distinct from each other, they are all expected to use the early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, as the basis of their programmes. In this sense, *Te Whāriki* plays a unifying role by providing a framework for curriculum development to a diverse set of services.

Te Whāriki, the first bicultural and bilingual curriculum in New Zealand, was first published by the MoE in 1996. It is regarded as "one of the first formal curriculum documents for ECE, not only in Aotearoa New Zealand, but throughout the Western world" (Farquhar, 2010, p. 77). According to Ritchie (2012), the curriculum reflects the bicultural nation of Aotearoa New Zealand, consisting of both Māori (the indigenous people of New Zealand) and Pākehā (New Zealanders of European decent). The te reo Māori version reflects conceptualisations of te ao Māori, the Māori worldview, and it is not a translation of the English version (Scrivens, 2002), even though it is based on principles and strands conceptually derived from te ao Māori. The curriculum was revised in 2017 to acknowledge the changes in population, policy, and knowledge of ECE over the past two decades in New Zealand (MoE, 2017).

The curriculum is built upon four broad principles and five strands. The four principles are empowerment/whakamana, holistic development/kotahitanga, family and community/whānau tangata, and relationships/ngā hononga. Under the 'empowerment' principle, children should experience a curriculum that empowers them to learn and grow to their full potential. As stated in the curriculum, "in an empowering environment, children have agency to create and act on their own ideas, develop knowledge and skills in areas that interest them and, increasingly, to make decisions and judgments on matters that relate to them" (MoE, 2017, p. 18). These statements place emphasis on promoting children's sense of agency and child-initiated learning.

The principle of 'holistic development' emphasises children's right to experience a curriculum that encourages different aspects of their learning (i.e., cognitive, social, emotional, physical, cultural, and spiritual). According to the curriculum, "these dimensions need to be viewed holistically, as closely interwoven and interdependent" (MoE, 2017, p. 19).

The principle of 'family and community' highlights the pivotal role of families in children's learning and development. This principle places the onus on teachers to find ways to build meaningful relationships with children's families. The stated rationale for this approach is that "children learn and develop best when their culture, knowledge and community are affirmed and when the people in their lives help them to make connections across settings" (MoE, 2017, p. 20). Building relationships with families enables teachers to understand the "beliefs, traditions, and child-rearing practices" of each individual family so that they can "build on the knowledge and experience that children bring with them" (p. 20).

The 'relationships' principle indicates that children learn through "responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places, and things" (MoE, 2017, p. 21). Teachers are encouraged to provide children with opportunities to experience physical and psychological cultural tools that enable them to participate in and contribute to their world.

The five strands of the curriculum are: wellbeing/mana atua (children's emotional and physical wellbeing should be acknowledged), belonging/mana whenua (children should experience a sense of continuity between home and early childhood service), contribution/mana tangata (children should experience an environment where they can participate and their participation is valued), communication/mana reo (children's languages should be promoted and children should learn to express themselves in different ways), and exploration/mana aotùroa (children should learn through active exploration of the environment). As the last strand of *Te Whāriki*, exploration introduces the concept of learning through play and explains that children learn "by doing, asking questions, interacting with others, devising theories about how things work and then trying them out and by making purposeful use of resources" (MoE, 2017, p. 46).

To meet the learning outcomes of each strand, the curriculum recommends teacher practices for infants, toddlers, and young children (MoE, 2017). These practices, however, are not prescriptive and they serve as general guidelines (Ritchie, 2012). As for assessment, early childhood teachers are expected to document children's learning based on the principles and strands of *Te Whāriki*,

primarily using the narrative learning stories approach (Carr, 2001). Children's learning stories are usually collected in individual portfolios, some of which are now compiled electronically. This type of assessment can be challenging for immigrant parents, most of whom are used to outcome-based assessment (Scrivens, 2002; Wu, 2009).

Te Whāriki, a Māori term translated as the woven mat, is metaphorically used to indicate that the four principles are interconnected with the five strands (MoE, 2017). With the woven mat as its metaphor, the curriculum encourages teachers, parents, and children to collaboratively weave the principles and strands based on their own context, creating a local curriculum that suits their own distinctive characteristics. In line with its inclusivity aspiration, the curriculum "supports children from all backgrounds to grow up strong in identity, language and culture" (p. 7). More specifically, it affirms that all children should enjoy the rights "to equitable access to learning opportunities, to recognition of their language, culture and identity and, increasingly, to agency in their own lives" (p. 12). According to the curriculum, "learner identity is enhanced when children's home languages and cultures are valued in educational settings and when kaiako are responsive to their cultural ways of knowing and being" (p. 12).

> *Te Whāriki* holds the promise that all children will be empowered to learn with and alongside others by engaging in experiences that have meaning for them . . . Offering an inclusive curriculum also involves adapting environments and teaching approaches as necessary and removing any barriers to participation and learning . . . Teaching inclusively means that kaiako will work together with families, whānau and community to identify and dismantle such barriers. (MoE, 2017, p. 13)

1.3 Outline of the Thesis

My thesis comprises seven chapters. Each chapter is briefly described here to provide an overall context.

Having started by outlining the focus of the study, contextualising the Middle Eastern population in New Zealand, and the ECE sector in this country, in Chapter two, I review and analyse literature relevant to this study. This includes an analysis of literature related to the experiences of immigrant children and their parents in New Zealand early childhood settings. The chapter also provides a

critical review of research on early childhood teachers' pedagogical practices with immigrant families; immigrant children's challenges in educational settings; international studies focused on the experiences of Middle Eastern children in educational settings; and childrearing practices valued by Middle Eastern parents.

Chapter three describes the theoretical and methodological foundations of the study, including its research design. It provides a separate discussion of the data collection process, research participants, and methods of data analysis. It also discusses the ethical considerations of the study, as well as the (de)limitations and credibility of the study.

Chapter four presents and discusses the results pertaining to Middle Eastern parents' expectations of their children's early childhood centres, both as these were articulated by the parents in the survey and the case study interviews, as well as from the point of view of the case study teachers. Chapter five presents and discusses early childhood teachers' practices when working with Middle Eastern families as reported by the participating parents as well as the case study teachers. It also discusses statements by the teachers that give an insight into their perceptions of Middle Eastern families.

Chapter six presents and discusses the results related to Middle Eastern children's challenges in New Zealand early childhood centres as these were identified from the national survey data and data from the four case studies. Chapter seven concludes the study with a synthesis of the arguments of this research. It also highlights the contributions and limitations of the study. Some suggestions for future research are also provided.

2. Review of the Literature

In this chapter, I first present an analysis of literature relevant to my research questions under the following five headings: (i) experiences of immigrant children and their parents in New Zealand early childhood settings, (ii) early childhood teachers' pedagogical practices with immigrant families in New Zealand, (iii) immigrant children's challenges in educational settings, (iv) international studies focused on the experiences of Middle Eastern children in educational settings, and (v) childrearing values of Middle Eastern parents.

2.1 Experiences of Immigrant Children and Their Parents in New Zealand Early Childhood Settings

As noted in the introductory chapter, one result of New Zealand's increasingly diverse population has been an influx into early childhood services of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Guo, 2015). Consistent with *Te Whāriki*'s principles and strands, these services are expected to be responsive to the needs of families from diverse cultural groups. To help teachers and educators achieve this aim, a number of researchers have explored the experiences of diverse children and their parents in New Zealand early childhood services from different perspectives and with varied objectives. I review these studies in the following sections.

2.1.1 Studies Focused on the Experiences of Immigrant Children

One of the earliest studies of immigrant children's experiences in New Zealand early childhood centres was Guo's (2005a) preliminary study of whether the language barrier of children from non-English speaking backgrounds could impact their holistic development in New Zealand early childhood settings. Using the learning stories framework, Guo described the learning experiences of a four-year-old Taiwanese immigrant boy through child observations and parents' and teachers' interviews. Her findings indicate that the nature of activities (e.g., individual or group activities) impacted the child's involvement behaviour. The child was more involved in solo activities and in areas where other children were present. The child was also more involved in activities organised by teachers rather than peers and struggled to make friends at the centre. Guo suggested that the child's limited English had impacted his holistic development and encouraged teachers to

purposefully set up social activities for non-English speaking children, devise activities for them that require little verbal communication, and work closely with parents to engage them in children's early childhood experience.

Five years later, Guo (2010) investigated the learning experiences of eight Chinese immigrant children in New Zealand early childhood services. Again, she focused on children's language and interpersonal relationships. Guo interviewed and observed the participant children and conducted interviews with parents and teachers. She analysed her data using the sociocultural ideas proposed by Vygotsky and Rogoff, together with the notions of multiculturalism and cultural diversity. A major theme of her research was the mediating role of Chinese culture and language in the learning experiences of these children. Chinese children used culturally familiar tools that were accessible to them in the centre as a base for their learning. For instance, in centres where there was more than one Chinese child present, these children actively used Chinese language with their Chinese-speaking peers. While Guo observed positive learning experiences among the participating children who could have access to both Chinese and New Zealand cultural tools, she reported struggles in the experiences of those children who could not make any connection to their home culture in the centres.

In another doctoral study, Schofield (2011) investigated the English language-learning experiences of 12 children (i.e., Cambodian/Thai, Tongan, Indian, Mandarin, Greek, Afrikaans, and Korean) attending three early childhood centres in New Zealand. Focusing on the participants' interactions with teachers and peers, Schofield designed a longitudinal, mixed methods study that involved child observations and teacher and parent questionnaires. Schofield found that the English language acquisition of children was dependent on the frequency and quality of teacher-child interactions, therefore she encouraged teachers to either minimise the time they spend on tasks that prohibited them from interacting with children or involve children in those activities. Also, she emphasised the role of peer interactions and encouraged teachers to assist non-English speaking children in forming friendships with their native English-speaking peers by pairing these children together. She also emphasised the role of children's first language in their second language acquisition and prompted teachers to acknowledge this in their daily practices.

The above three studies focused on the learning experience of immigrant children, mainly from Asian backgrounds, in New Zealand early childhood services. More specifically, children's

language-learning experiences or experiences affected by language barrier are the foci of these studies. The findings suggest that lack of access to English and familiar cultural tools negatively influenced the learning experiences of the participant children. Although children's language barrier was found to negatively impact their interactions with peers and teachers, the above studies suggest that having such interactions is an important predictor of English language acquisition. Recommendations for overcoming this issue included setting up social activities for children (Guo, 2005a), equipping children with strategies that support their interactions (Guo, 2010), and assisting them in forming friendships with peers (Schofield, 2011). In section 2.2, I will elaborate on studies that investigated teachers' facilitation of immigrant children's English language acquisition (e.g., Beauchamp, 2016; Mustafa, 2014).

2.1.2 Studies Focused on the Experiences of Immigrant Parents

The literature on the experiences of immigrant parents whose children attend New Zealand early childhood services is divided into two sections: (i) parents' involvement in their children's early childhood centres and with teachers (ii) parents' expectations from New Zealand ECE.

Immigrant Parents' Involvement in Their Children's Early Childhood Centres and with Teachers

One of the principles of *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017) is "family and community/whānau tangata", which emphasises the importance of parents' participation in children's early childhood experiences. This principle also highlights teachers' responsibility to develop these relationships: "It is important that kaiako develop meaningful relationships with whānau and that they respect their aspirations for their children…" (MoE, 2017, p. 20). The curriculum further states that "all cultural groups have beliefs, traditions, and child-rearing practices that place value on specific knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions" (MoE, 2017, p. 20), and that children thrive when they experience culturally appropriate practices. This principle has clear pedagogical implications for early childhood teachers. Research has shown that parents and teachers can develop a better understanding of children's needs when they form a true partnership with one another (Billman et al., 2005; De Gioia, 2013). Moreover, parent-teacher coordination allows children to experience a continuity between home and centre and make the most out of their early childhood experience.

Parental involvement can also benefit parents, particularly immigrant parents, by helping them expand their social networks and experience a sense of community (Ward, 2013). The focus of the following five studies is parents' involvement with their children's services and factors that influence their involvement.

Guo (2005b) interviewed six Asian immigrant families and 26 early childhood teachers to explore their views about parent-teacher partnerships in children's early education. The selected Asian families were from China, Taiwan, Korea, Indonesia, and India. Throughout her study, Guo uncovered some general differences between New Zealand and Asian cultures such as differing attitudes about education and different communication behaviours with Asian parents usually having high academic expectations for their children and seeing learning as requiring formal teaching approaches with children engaged in tasks and organised exercises. She also indicated that to some Asian parents, teachers have full authority and responsibility in educational contexts. Thus, although some participant parents held different expectations to teachers, they did not think it was appropriate to discuss them with teachers whom they viewed as authority figures. Instead, the parents enacted their educational expectations for their children at home. As an example, some parents chose to engage their children in extracurricular activities such as math and science. Overall, Guo found that Asian parents in her study either did not want to play an active role in early childhood services or did not know how to play an active role. The parents' non-involvement was mainly attributed to their lack of confidence in working with teachers, unfamiliarity with the New Zealand education system, and their language/cultural barriers. Guo also indicated a lack of willingness from some participant teachers to work with Asian families as they viewed themselves as experts who knew what was best for all children. Reflecting on this finding, Guo suggested teachers put more effort into building relationships with families.

Applying Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory, Wu (2009) interviewed eight Chinese skilled immigrant mothers regarding their children's ECE in New Zealand. These mothers reported that the main reason they sent their children to mainstream early childhood services was to overcome the existing ethnic divide and mingle with the mainstream. Despite their efforts, however, they reported that ethnic and social divides persisted and impacted their involvement with the centres. More specifically, the participant mothers mentioned that language and cultural barriers decreased their confidence in their relationships with teachers. In line with Guo's (2005b) findings discussed

earlier, Wu found that although the participant mothers did not agree with certain teacher practices, they decided to provide what they perceived as the best education and care for their children at home, rather than make their expectations known to the teachers. Furthermore, and similarly to the participants in Guo's (2005b) study, these mothers also expressed mixed feelings towards the concept of learning through play which they saw as going against their traditional Chinese teaching practices.

Three years later, Zhang (2012) also investigated Chinese immigrant parents' involvement in children's early education. However, Zhang took a step further and compared the involvement behaviour of 120 Chinese immigrant parents with that of 127 English-speaking parents in New Zealand. This comparative perspective was generated by administering questionnaires and conducting separate interviews with the participating parents from both groups. Zhang found that the Chinese parents were less likely to become involved within the centres and their low involvement was attributed to a number of reasons, including no perceived opportunities for involvement, language/cultural barrier, lack of knowledge of the host country, and different perceptions about the nature of the parent and teacher role. Zhang highlighted that relative to non-Chinese parents, Chinese parents felt less welcomed when entering the centres, less comfortable when talking to the teachers, less encouraged to participate in kindergarten activities and thus saw themselves as having fewer opportunities for involvement. Like Guo (2005b), Zhang explained that a major contributor to Chinese parents' low involvement was their view of teachers as absolute authority.

In line with the objectives of the previous two studies, Chan (2014) investigated Chinese immigrant parents' involvement in children's early education and the factors that influenced their involvement. However, unlike earlier studies which adopted a broader definition of 'Chinese', Chan's study only considered parents who were born and brought up in the People's Republic of China. She interviewed ten Chinese parents at three kindergartens in Auckland and analysed the findings using the theoretical constructs of critical multiculturalism, hybridity theory, and funds of knowledge. Like Guo (2005b) and Wu (2009), Chan found that the parents were keenly involved in their children's activities in out-of-kindergarten contexts, but they had minimal involvement with teachers. She reported multiple reasons for the parents' non-involvement, including language barriers, mismatch between parents' and teachers' expectations, and parents' sense of

disempowerment due to the priority of the dominant early childhood discourses over their expectations. This latter reason led parents to come up with hybrid practices. For instance, due to the dominant discourse of 'learning-through play', these parents enrolled their children in extracurricular activities and supported their children's formal learning in private spaces.

Two years later, Chan and Ritchie (2016) addressed the notion of parent-teacher partnership by looking at national evaluative reports and research projects which focused on the experiences of Māori and Chinese families within New Zealand early childhood services. For this purpose, they applied hybridity theory and the idea of funds of knowledge to reinforce the need for teachers to move beyond the hegemonic safe zones of traditional teacher-dominated practices towards spaces of dialogic, fluid engagement with families whose backgrounds differed from their own. The authors found that most teachers adopted static and predominantly Western, monocultural early childhood discourses within their programmes. Where teachers acknowledged immigrant families through the adoption of culturally responsive practices, Chan and Ritchie's findings indicated that parents became more engaged in the programme. Moreover, they found that teachers often had a narrow view of parental involvement and expected parents to actively participate in the activities of the services without considering different conceptualisations of partnership. For instance, some immigrant parents held a teacher-centred view of education, meaning that for them the idea of engaging with teachers was considered to be disrespectful and inappropriate. Reflecting on these findings, Chan and Ritchie encouraged teachers to engage in genuine dialogues with parents from diverse backgrounds to identify their knowledge and incorporate it into the curriculum.

Overall, the above studies of immigrant parents' involvement in their children's early education indicate that parental involvement is negatively affected by language and cultural barriers, unfamiliarity with the New Zealand education system, lack of perceived opportunities, differing parent-teacher expectations, and teachers' unpreparedness to transform their practices. A common finding from the above studies is some immigrant parents' view of teachers as authority figures. Holding this view leads some parents to disengage from the centres and instead - actively engage in their children's learning at home. The above studies highlighted the importance of teachers' openness to initiating conversations with families, building genuine relationships with them, and finally revising their practices to incorporate parents' knowledge into the curriculum.

Immigrant Parents' Expectations from New Zealand ECE

Like the literature on immigrant parents' involvement in their children's early childhood centres, research on immigrant parents' expectations for their children attending New Zealand early childhood services is not extensive. However, studies focused on parental expectations have looked at a broader range of family ethnicities including Indian, Syrian, Lebanese, Palestinian, Afghani, Chinese, Taiwanese, Russian, Eritrean, Sudanese, and Assyrian parents in Broome and Kindon's (2008) study; Congolese parents in Mitchell and Ouko's (2012) study; Pasifika parents in Singh and Zhang's (2018) study; Chinese, Indian, Korean, Japanese, Pakistani, Vietnamese, and Indonesian parents in Ho et al. (2017) study.

While the main method of data collection in all four studies was interviews, visual methodologies were also used in two of the studies (i.e., Broom & Kindon, 2008; Mitchell & Ouko, 2012). More specifically, a participatory diagramming technique (Broom & Kindon, 2008) and drawing (Mitchell & Ouko, 2012) were used to facilitate in-depth discussions during the interviews.

Overall, research on immigrant parents' expectations for their children in the context of New Zealand ECE indicates three main types of expectations: developing language competence; developing cultural competence; and providing structured learning opportunities.

The expectation that children should develop language competence was not simply about English language development, but for some parents extended to the wish for their child to progress in their heritage language development. For example, all parents in Broome and Kindon's (2008) study and in Ho et al. (2017) study mentioned preserving children's heritage language as a priority, but only some of the parents in the former study expected to receive support from teachers. The majority of the parents in both studies viewed children's heritage language maintenance as a parental responsibility. With respect to English language development, all parents in Ho et al. (2017) study as well as some of those in Broome and Kindon's (2008) study expected teachers to support children's English language learning and prepare them for mainstream English-language schools.

Across all four studies the parents expressed an expectation about enhancing children's understanding of cultural diversity and heritage cultural values. Parents in all four studies expected teachers to provide opportunities for children to develop an understanding of their heritage cultural

values. Respect for elders and authorities was mentioned as an important value by all parents. The participating parents in Singh and Zhang's (2018) study also expected teachers to provide children with an in-depth understanding of cultural diversity through celebrating cultural events, among other things.

Immigrant parents' expectations can sometimes be different from dominant early childhood discourses promoted by teachers. This was the case for some of the parents in both Broome and Kindon's (2008) study and in Ho et al. (2017) study who expected teachers to engage their children in academic learning activities.

Looking at the reviewed literature on the experiences of immigrant families and their children in New Zealand early childhood services, one cannot miss the fact that certain populations, such as East Asians, have been researched more frequently than others. This research trend probably reflects the 50% growth of the Asian population in New Zealand between 2001 and 2006 (Statistics New Zealand, 2007) and its projected increase to comprise 22 percent of the total population by 2038 (Statistics New Zealand, 2017). As much as the extant literature provides invaluable information about the studied populations, it also highlights that other ethnic populations have received much less attention, a gap to which my thesis speaks.

The following section presents a review of the literature on New Zealand early childhood teachers' pedagogical practices with immigrant children and their families.

2.2 Early Childhood Teachers' Pedagogical Practices with Immigrant Families in New Zealand

Research on the topic of New Zealand early childhood teachers' practices in interaction with children from diverse ethnic background indicates two main types of practices. First, practices that aimed at maintaining the connection children have with their country and culture of origin and creating a sense of belonging in their new environment (Mitchell et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2018). The second group of practices provided language support for children and their families (Beauchamp, 2016; Shuker & Cherrington, 2016).

With respect to the first type of practice, the incorporation of visual arts into teacher practices has been mentioned by Mitchell et al. (2020) and Smith et al. (2018), the aim of which is to provide

immigrant children with different ways of expressing themselves, exploring their cultural identities, and forming a deeper sense of belonging. The role of cultural artefacts in enhancing children's sense of identity was also mentioned by Mitchell et al. (2020). They indicated that by encouraging children and families to talk about their cultural artefacts, teachers can discover what is significant to them and identify points of connection. "These connections allowed artefacts to work as a pedagogical tool, where invitations to share, the bringing of artefacts, and the telling of stories created a sense of belonging" (Mitchell et al., p. 12).

Another practice reported by Mitchell et al., (2020, p. 14) is "walking and storying the land" which entails teachers' collaboration with children to find out about Aotearoa New Zealand and the home country of immigrant children. For instance, teachers can take children to regular outdoor walks and tell them stories to broaden their knowledge of New Zealand. Also, teachers can work with children using the internet to virtually explore the children's home countries while inviting parents to share stories about their countries. Lees and Ng (2020) argued that this practice not only fosters children's sense of belonging, but it also encourages children to (re)connect with their home countries.

Serving food from different cultures (Mitchell et al., 2020; Mitchell et al., 2017), wall displays with images from children's home countries (Mitchell et al., 2020), music from different cultures (Shareef, 2020; Shuker & Cherrington, 2016), and celebrating important events from cultures represented at centres (Shareef, 2020; Shuker & Cherrington, 2016) have also been mentioned as valuable teacher practices. With respect to the second set of practices which aimed at providing language support for children and their families, Beauchamp's (2016) findings from interviews with 11 early childhood teachers in New Zealand demonstrated that teachers largely facilitated children's English language acquisition through supporting their social-emotional development. The surveyed teachers in Shuker and Cherrington's (2016) study mentioned using translators, using words from children's home languages, and facilitating children's interactions with peers.

These practices connect to those outlined by Guo (2005a) and Schofield (2011), among others. In the same vein, Mustafa (2014) investigated the practices of early childhood teachers in supporting English language acquisition of Asian immigrant children. For this purpose, she interviewed seven early childhood teachers and observed six Asian immigrant children. She reported that teachers facilitated children's English language acquisition by using mediational tools such as gestures and

children's home languages, by affording children with guided participation and helping them in forming friendships with peers. Employing language assistants from various ethnic groups and involving families for language and cultural support have been mentioned by Mara (2006) as effective practices (see Shuker & Cherrington, 2016 for a similar discussion).

The body of knowledge about effective pedagogy with immigrant children and their families might be growing, but some teachers are unwilling to implement an inclusive curriculum. Shareef (2020) interviewed six early childhood teachers to identify how they implemented the bicultural teaching philosophy of *Te Whāriki* in their programme. She found that the interviewed teachers spoke about being committed to biculturalism and aligned their practices to the requirements set out in *Te Whāriki*. Shareef also reported that the teachers did not know how diverse families could fit within a bicultural ECE. In a similar vein, Chan (2009) stated that one of the barriers of implementing multiculturalism within New Zealand early childhood services is its bicultural curriculum and the fact that it does not recognise diverse ways of learning and partnership that are upheld by ethnic minorities. In 2019, Chan conducted another document analysis to identify how the revised version of *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017) responds to the concept of superdiversity. According to Chan, "the notion of 'local curriculum' suggests that *Te Whāriki 2017* aspires to empower teachers to implement the curriculum fluidly in a context-relevant manner" (p. 256). She continued that "*Te Whāriki 2017* has provided a platform for wide-ranging diversities to co-exist, but it relies on teachers to enact its aspirations in a contextually relevant and meaningful manner, so that its commitments to diversity and/or superdiversity are put into action, and not only on paper" (p. 258).

2.3 Immigrant Children's Challenges in Educational Settings

As their first experience outside home, starting early childhood programmes can be a demanding experience for all children. Beyond dealing with separation from their mothers, children must adjust to a new environment and establish trust with unfamiliar people (Dalli, 2001). Immigrant children are likely to struggle with additional challenges such as communicating in a different language and/or adjusting to new cultural norms (Ryu, 2004). Research indicates that struggling with language and culture potentially creates other challenges in educational settings (e.g., see De Melendez & Beck, 2018; Guo, 2005a; Mitchell et al., 2020; Rogoff, 2003; Ryu, 2004).

Several researchers (e.g., Ebbeck et al., 2010; Nemeth & Brillante, 2011; Ren, 2015) have found that immigrant children can sometimes engage in disruptive behaviours out of frustration of not being able to communicate their needs. According to Ebbeck et al. (2010) and Renwick (1997), immigrant children might make extensive use of expressions of frustration such as screaming, kicking, grabbing, and knocking things over to overcome the communication barrier that they face. The following excerpt by Nykiel-Herbert (2010) exemplifies this situation:

> A highly intelligent child with lots to say, Beyar was frustrated with his inability to participate in what his class was doing, because he could not express his thoughts satisfactorily in English. Instead of modelling the language for him so that he could express himself better, the teacher gave him reading and writing assignments … that were appropriate for a 4-to-5-year-old American child, but not for a 9-year-old Muslim child…. Beyar did what the teacher required of him, but his anxiety, frustration, and boredom manifested themselves in boisterous behavior that labelled him as a troublemaker. (p. 6)

Expressing frustration and disruptive behaviour has been reported to contribute to hampering the development of social relationships for immigrant children (Ebbeck et al., 2010; Grünigen et al., 2010; Guo & Dalli, 2012). According to these studies, the lack of second-language skills might put children in a vulnerable situation where they become easy targets for bullying and/or rejection by peers. Likewise, other scholars (e.g., Nemeth & Brillante, 2011; Sims et al., 2000) have suggested that immigrant children with language difficulties appear more isolated in classrooms and struggle to make friends. Onchwari et al. (2008) highlighted that immigrant children tend to develop a low self-esteem due to their limited language skills. Rice et al. (1991) went as far as likening immigrant children with language difficulties to children with speech impairments on the basis that both are susceptible to being shy and showing low initiative in interactions.

In a report about the experiences of immigrant children during their early school years (i.e., prekindergarten through third grade), Adair (2015) mentioned discrimination and stereotyping as one of the challenges for immigrant children in the US. Adair noted that discrimination might be direct (e.g., comments that are explicitly racist or draw attention to someone's appearance) or indirect (e.g., questions about why their parents do not speak English). Instances of both types of discrimination are abundant in the relevant literature. For example, Salili and Hoosain (2014) highlighted the harassment of Muslim children by their non-Muslim peers because of their

appearance (see Renwick, 1997, p. 21 for a similar harassment of Korean children in New Zealand early childhood settings). Genishi and Dyson (2009) indicated that immigrant children might hear comments about their accent, home language, or references to television shows that negatively portray someone who looks like them. Also, they may watch as a parent is repeatedly ignored in the school office or struggles to understand forms that are provided only in English (Genishi & Dyson, 2009). Ahmed (2014) said:

> I arrived at this country [United Kingdom] at age five and was immediately enrolled in school. My earliest school memory is of children calling me and my sister stupid as we did not understand them when they tried to talk to us . . . I did not 'belong', and other children recognized this, leaving me socially isolated. (p. 320)

In a similar vein, Shaheen (2009) highlighted the prevalence of Muslim and Arab stereotyping in Western societies, epitomised in the perception of all Middle Easterners as Arab/Muslim.

Studies also indicate that some teachers' lack of engagement with immigrant families to find out about their values has created challenges for immigrant children (e.g., Chan, 2006, 2014; Ebbeck & Glover, 2000; Guo, 2004; Hoot, 2011; Kunjufu, 2002; Obeng, 2007; Shuker & Cherrington, 2016). Alaca (2017) presents a nuanced account of these challenges by recounting the experiences of a girl from Saudi Arabia who had recently arrived in Canada. Being unaware of the religious background of the child's family, one of the kindergarten teachers paired her with a male reading buddy, causing discomfort for the child. In the context of New Zealand, Mustafa (2014) found that the participant early childhood teachers encouraged Asian children to use their words to express their feelings without knowing that this practice was incongruent with the communication style and values of obedience among some Asian families. Focusing on an "Upstate New York urban school", Nykiel-Herbert (2010) mentioned that some practices in American schools were incongruent with the values of Iraqi students. For instance, the different norms around religious observances as well as dress and food preferences led the Iraqi students to behave in ways that were misinterpreted by the American teachers as neglectful, apathetic, or rude.

> To avoid activities in physical education classes that may have led to physical contact with boys, girls regularly 'forgot' their sneakers … to the frustration of the physical education teacher, who believed that these students needed to 'act American'. The cultural tension,

> which the teachers failed to fully acknowledge, was causing the Iraqi students distress in academic learning as well. (Nykiel-Herbert, 2010, p. 5)

On another occasion, one of the teachers reportedly complained that a Kurdish girl in her classroom appeared stubborn and repeatedly refused to read a children's picture book. Having delved deeper into the circumstances around this incident, Nykiel-Herbert made the following observation:

> As it turned out, the story depicted a scene of a little girl washing her pet dog in the family bathtub. As a Muslim, Nigar knew that dogs were unclean and were not supposed to be touched and let inside the house, let alone allowed to use personal hygiene facilities intended for people … but the cultural norm of respecting teachers prevented her from an overt refusal. Her English language skills were insufficient at that point to explain to the teacher why she could not read the book. (p. 5)

Overall, my analysis of the relevant literature, reflected in the above studies, indicated that immigrant children are more likely than their non-immigrant peers to experience a range of challenges in educational settings, most of which stem from differences in language and culture. These challenges often lead to children behaving in way that might be perceived as disruptive, such as are excessive frustration and lack of confidence, both of which are exacerbated by low peer acceptance, discrimination, and stereotyping.

2.4 International Studies Focused on the Experiences of Middle Eastern Children in Educational Settings

While no study has yet focused on the experiences of Middle Eastern children in New Zealand's educational settings (from ECE to secondary education), a number of overseas studies have shed light on the experiences of this population. These studies have mainly been conducted in the US and in the context of primary schools (e.g., Alnawar, 2015; Derderian-Aghajanian & Cong, 2012; Md-Yunus, 2015; Nykiel-Herbert, 2010).

Runions et al. (2011), for example, explored the experiences of young children from Middle Eastern backgrounds in several Australian schools. The authors reported that the studied children experienced discriminatory acts on a regular basis, resulting in aggressive behaviours. Badiee (2004) interviewed six Middle Eastern mothers and five teachers with a focus on Middle Eastern

children's experiences in the context of US ECE settings. The majority of mothers were appreciative of teachers' efforts in facilitating children's social development. However, they were not completely satisfied with teachers' efforts to incorporate Middle Eastern parental knowledge in the programme. Most of the teachers acknowledged their limited knowledge of Middle Eastern cultures while recounting their efforts in fostering cultural awareness in classrooms.

According to Brockway (2007), most educators lack basic knowledge about Middle Eastern and Islamic cultures and should "examine their own perceptions and expectations of their students" (p. 37). This knowledge gap has resulted in some teachers making assumptions and reinforcing stereotypes about Middle Easterners which can negatively impact students' academic and social progress (Amin, 2015; Nykiel-Herbert, 2010). In the context of an elementary school (ages 8 through 11) in the US, Nykiel-Herbert (2010) found that teachers' lack of awareness of Iraqi children's cultural backgrounds and experiences isolated the children and hindered their academic and social progress. The gap between home and school culture also created distressing experiences for the children and forced them to navigate the conflicting expectations single-handedly. Nykiel-Herbert's study suggests that there should be greater awareness and acknowledgement of Middle Eastern students' identity in educational settings.

To enhance teachers' knowledge of Middle Eastern cultures, Amin (2015) provided 29 teachers, half of whom were kindergarten teachers, with a cultural training course on how to represent Middle Easterners in the context of American schools. Amin encouraged teachers to utilise authentic cultural literature and picture books to effectively challenge dominant stereotypes about Middle Easterners. As stated by Said (1994), the most challenging aspect of working with Middle Eastern and/or Muslim families and their children is for teachers to move past the deep-seated and damaging stereotypes.

Researchers have also highlighted that the differences between the educational systems in Middle Eastern and Western countries have impacted Middle Eastern children's experiences in Western educational settings (e.g., Albannai, 2017; Derderian-Aghajanian & Cong, 2012; King, et al. 2014; Md-Yunus, 2015). Derderian-Aghajanian and Cong (2012), for instance, interviewed two Middle Eastern elementary students residing in the US and reported that the students found the student-centred and less-structured teaching style challenging and different to their previous experiences. Sonleitner and Khelifa (2005) described students in Arab state schools as "in general expected to

regard the teacher as an absolute authority, not to ask questions, and to memorise facts. This kind of teaching/learning environment inhibits freedom to explore and discover" (p. 6). Similarly, Jadayel-Faour et al. (2006) noted that "school curricula in Arab countries continue to encourage submission, obedience, subordination and compliance, rather than critical thinking" (p. 10, see Alabdali, 2017 for a similar discussion on Middle Eastern education system).

One of the differences between the educational systems in Western and Middle Eastern countries concerns the involvement of parents in their children's educational setting. According to King et al. (2014), "while in the ME [Middle East], parents have a less active role in their children's education, parents in the U.S. are expected to be partners with the schools" (p. 27). As Faour (2012) has put it:

> Many Arab schools do not encourage parents to get involved in school affairs. Some do not even allow parents to speak directly to their children's teachers. Instead, parents speak to school administrators who serve as the communication link between parents and teachers. The school parent relationship is often formal and restricted…. (p. 23)

Similarly, Moosa et al. (2001, p. 21) noted that "Arab parents consider the school the sole authority governing their children's education, further inhibiting participation". Such commentaries by insider researchers provide useful pointers to the possible dynamics that might explain the differences Middle Eastern children and their parents encounter in Western schools. Nonetheless, it is important to note that a significant portion of the available literature on Arab parents' relationships with educational institutions is dominated by subjective observations. Even Faour's argument is largely based on data for one variable: "Percentage of students whose schools reported that they ask parents to serve on school committees" (2012, p. 24) when it is clear that parents' presence on school committees is only one of the many indicators of parental involvement, some of which cannot be readily captured and quantified. Thus, in as much as these commentaries can help illuminate the situation with regards to parental involvement in Middle Eastern educational settings, overall, they lack substantive empirical evidence to support their claims. By contrast, my study deliberately addresses this research gap; in seeking to document Middle Eastern parents' views of the ECE system in New Zealand relative to their expectations as Middle Eastern parents. I adopted a mixed-method research design that started with a national survey of Middle Eastern parents who had children enrolled in early childhood centres across New Zealand and led to case

studies in four early childhood settings in which a data-informed interview schedule was used to gather a fuller qualitative understanding of Middle Eastern parents' experiences.

In the following section, I provide a brief account of the available literature on Middle Eastern families' childrearing practices. This will provide a context for interpreting the views shared by the Middle Eastern parents who participated in my study.

2.5 Childrearing Values of Middle Eastern Parents

The role of culture in shaping societal and familial values, including child-rearing practices, is well-established (Bornstein, 2012; Mogro-Wilson, 2008; Sen et al., 2014). Parents have been shown to rely on their own socialisation experiences when raising children, thus perpetuating cultural practices (Bornstein, 2012; Chao, 2000; Garg et al., 2005; Kayrakli, 2008).

The Middle East is home to people with different languages, ways of life, and religious orientations. Accordingly, studies focusing on parenting practices in different Middle Eastern countries have revealed a range of parenting styles on the individualistic-collectivistic spectrum (e.g., See Al-Hassan et al., 2021; Al-Hassan & Takash, 2011; Dwairy et al., 2006). For instance, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Palestine are reported to be more collectivistic than Lebanon (Dwairy et al., 2006), while Jordanian families are understood to lean towards collectivistic parenting as they place high emphasis on respect, interdependence, loyalty, and harmony (Al-Hassan et al., 2021). Turkish parents have been reported to value interdependence while discouraging assertiveness and autonomy (Sunar, 2002), while other studies (e.g., Kayrakli, 2008; Nacak et al., 2011) have suggested that individualistic and collectivistic parenting values coexist in Turkish society. The same seems to be true for Israel (see Scharf, 2014). Iranian parents are understood to largely endorse collectivist child-rearing values (Mousavi et al., 2020; Shahaeian et al., 2011).

Generally speaking, Middle Eastern parents prefer to see their children grow as interdependent members of the family "based upon the belief that the bond between individuals is crucial for dealing with the adversities of life" (Sharifzadeh, 1998, p. 326). Thus, instead of encouraging their children to be independent, "Middle Eastern parents focus on fostering the bond between the children and the people in their environment" (Sharifzadeh, 1998, p. 326). According to Sharifzadeh (1998, p. 326):

> Middle Eastern mothers … do not press for their children to eat, bathe, or put on their clothes independently at an early age. Thus, Middle Eastern children may differ from American children in the chronology of self-help skills. This should not be interpreted as a deficiency in the child but as a difference in parental attitude toward the child's independence. (see Abadeh, 2006 for similar childrearing practices of Middle Eastern parents)

Besides providing instrumental support, family is generally considered the primary source of psychological and social support among Middle Easterners (Ghane'eerad, 2017; Moghadam, 2004). Children are taught to look within the family for solutions, and separation is not encouraged with many adult children continue to live with their parents until they are married (see Abadeh, 2006; Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000). In return for the support they receive, children are expected to have a lifelong respect for the older members of the family (Dwairy, 2004). Rostami and Madandar (2011) conducted a comparative study of childrearing values in Central Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa. They found respecting elders to be one of the primary values instilled in Middle Eastern children.

According to the cultural norms around family unity, Middle Eastern children are taught from an early age that their actions are a reflection upon the family, and shame and honour are greatly stressed (Haboush, 2007; Mourad & Carolan, 2010). Families feel a sense of shame if their children behave badly since they perceive it as reflecting negatively on them. As Harik and Marston (2003, p. 154) have put it, "a person from the Middle East often identifies with his or her family". The emphasis on maintaining family honour also means that expression of emotions is often strongly discouraged (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000; Shahaeian et al., 2011). As an integral part of the tight-knit family unit, children are expected to conform to the norms of their elders and to avoid acts that could cause embarrassment for the family (Coleman & Ganong, 2014). According to Jadayel-Faour et al. (2006), "the image of the Arab child is often that of a 'good' child, one who is polite, obedient, disciplined, *should be seen but not heard* [original emphasis], and conforms to the values of the group" (p. 9).

In a typical Middle Eastern society, educational achievement is viewed as a source of familial and personal honour (Gregg, 2005). Most middle-class Middle Eastern parents tend to have high educational expectations of their children, which often leads to over-timetabling them (Dwyer et

al., 2008). According to Fernea (1995), for Middle Eastern parents the emphasis is often on the serious business of preparing children for their roles in the world of adulthood.

Childrearing practices are slowly changing in the Middle East, partly thanks to the education of women who are prospective mothers (Moghadam, 2004). However, older childrearing patterns still exist and can be seen in many families (Moghadam, 2004). Due to their exposure to the norms of host cultures, Middle Eastern immigrant parents tend to modify some of their original childrearing practices and develop Westernised styles of parenting (Nesteruk & Marks, 2011; Wrobel, 2013). Abu Al Rub (2013) surveyed 49 immigrant Arab parents living in the US and interviewed five of them to explore their childrearing views and how these had changed since moving to the US. According to Abu Al Rub's findings, the surveyed parents had largely changed their childrearing practices from being strict and controlling to being more flexible under the influence of the US culture. On the other hand, some Middle Eastern immigrant parents might send their children to private schools to maintain their heritage language and religious/cultural values true to their culture of origin (Wrobel, 2013).

2.6 Chapter Overview

The present study investigates the hitherto neglected experiences of Middle Eastern ethnic group in New Zealand early childhood centres using an online national survey and four follow-up case studies. In this chapter, I reviewed the literature pertaining to the aims of the present study. At the outset of the chapter, I reviewed the experiences of Middle Eastern children and their parents within the context of New Zealand early childhood centres. The final section of the chapter entailed a discussion of Middle Eastern parents' childrearing values and reflected themes of family unity, respect, interdependence, and harmony.

The available literature indicates that immigrant children's struggle with the English language negatively affects their experiences, particularly as they relate to relationships with peers and teachers. A close examination of the literature on the experiences of immigrant parents revealed that language and cultural barriers, unfamiliarity with New Zealand's education system, perceptions of a lack of opportunities, and differing parent-teacher expectations prevent immigrant parents from active involvement with teachers. Research on the topic of teachers' practices with

immigrant children and their families indicates practices that aimed at connecting children with their home countries and cultures, as well as practices that provided language support for children and their families.

Analysis of the literature suggested that immigrant children are more likely than their non-immigrant peers to experience a range of challenges, most of which stem from differences in language and culture. The international studies on the experiences of Middle Eastern children revealed that teachers' limited knowledge of Middle Eastern cultures and the differences between the educational systems in Middle Eastern and Western countries created challenges for Middle Eastern children in educational settings.

The review of the relevant literature reveals that no study has yet focused on mapping the experiences of Middle Eastern children and their parents in New Zealand early childhood centres. The present study intends to address this research gap by adopting a mixed-method research design. The next chapter provides a detailed account of the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the study, the adopted research design, and the methods used to address the outlined research questions.

3. Theoretical and Methodological Frameworks of the Study

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the theoretical and methodological frameworks used in the study, which utilises a two-phased sequential mixed methods research design. I will begin by explaining the theoretical constructs used in the study and a discussion of the methodological design. The latter incorporates a discussion of the data collection processes, research participants, and methods of data analysis. I also discuss the ethical considerations of the study, the (de)limitations, and the credibility of the study.

3.1 Theoretical Constructs

My study is informed by ideas from critical multiculturalism, hybridity theory, and funds of knowledge. Before introducing these underpinning theories, I briefly touch on some background information that indicates how the adopted theories are connected. These points of connection are further highlighted in the following sections.

Global migration trends mean that the number of individuals moving between countries and continents has surged in recent decades (Castles & Miller, 2003). Approximately, 244 million individuals live somewhere other than their birthplace (Connor, 2016). As a consequence, the population of many countries including New Zealand is becoming increasingly ethnically diverse (Hugo, 2001; Ortman & Guarneri, 2009; Statistics New Zealand, 2019; Vertovec, 2007). One of the likely outcomes of globalisation and intercultural contact is the emergence of new and mixed practices in many spheres of life (González et al., 2001; Grant & Sleeter, 2007), including educational settings.

Such trends notwithstanding, educational researchers have argued that teachers are likely to draw on dominant discourses and institutionalised epistemologies in their day-to-day practices (e.g., Chan, 2014; Irvine, 2003; Rosebery et al., 2001). Furthermore, some teachers might generalise information about families and children from different cultural backgrounds, thereby failing to address diversity, dynamism, and hybridity within cultural groups (Hogg, 2011). As a result, children and families from ethnic minority backgrounds might become disadvantaged by a fundamental lack of alignment between their funds of knowledge and those of the teachers

potentially resulting in children experiencing an unfamiliar, uncomfortable, and alienating educational setting (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006).

Critical multiculturalism, hybridity theory, and funds of knowledge provide useful analytic tools for the current thesis as they highlight the significance of collaborating with diverse families. In addition to creating a communication channel between teachers and parents, this collaboration can facilitate power-sharing and mutual decision-making. Building upon the findings from the literature reviewed in the previous chapter (see section 2.1.2) which indicate a tension between the practices of some immigrant parents and dominant early childhood discourses promoted by teachers in New Zealand, the three selected theories are pertinent to understanding the experiences of Middle Eastern parents and their children in the New Zealand early childhood landscape.

3.1.1 Critical Multiculturalism

The ideals of multicultural education sprang from the aim of reforming educational settings so that diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and gender groups could experience educational equality (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995). Over the years, however, these ideals have become trivialised by narrow tokenistic practices such as the incorporation of holiday celebrations and ethnic foods into the dominant curriculum with no other meaningful systemic changes introduced to address inequality (Banks, 2009; May & Sleeter, 2010). This limited conception of multicultural education has been dubbed "ineffective" by many scholars, mainly because it conceptualises culture as static and one-dimensional (Banks, 2009; Banks & Banks, 2019; May & Sleeter, 2010; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995). In a critique of multicultural education, May (1999) wrote that "multicultural education has had a largely negligible impact to date on the life chances of minority students and the racialised attitudes of majority students" (p.1). A year later, May (2000) criticised multiculturalism for undermining individual differences and personal autonomy by considering each minority group as a legal entity whose members behave homogenously. Along the same lines, Rhedding-Jones (2002) considered multiculturalism as promoting ethnocentric, stereotypical, and universal representations of ethnic groups.

The discourse of critical multiculturalism developed from these critiques, with many scholars and educators calling for a more *critical* approach in working with children and families from diverse backgrounds (May & Sleeter, 2010; Rhedding-Jones, 2010, 2002; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995). As

Nieto (1999) stated, critical multiculturalism, a postmodern form of multicultural education, is the preferred pedagogy as it is grounded in social justice and does not perpetuate the existing stereotypical views of ethnic minority groups. Hence, critical multiculturalism was a reaction to the shortcomings of traditional multiculturalism.

Within the new approach of critical multiculturalism, culture and identity are viewed as fluid and dynamic rather than static, which means that they change all the time (Kirova, 2008; May & Sleeter, 2010). In other words, critical multiculturalism contests cultural homogeneity, advocating instead for cultural heterogeneity, uniting people of different classes, ethnicities, and genders (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2004). It also emphasises such concepts as voice, dialogue, and power that are often ignored by multicultural education (May & Sleeter, 2010). According to Hall (2006), "a discourse is a way of talking about or representing something. It produces knowledge that shapes perceptions and practice" (p. 173). However, not all discourses share equal power (Hall, 2006). As Sleeter and McLaren (1995) have put it, "western language and thought are constructed as a system of differences … and as binary oppositions" (p. 45), and that the very term 'ethnic minorities', for example signifies and perpetuates the 'minor' status of certain ethnic groups by positioning their culture, identity, and knowledge against the dominant status of the 'majorities'. In this regard, critical multiculturalism challenges the existing institutionalised inequities and the unequal power relations between the dominant and the dominated groups (Giroux, 2001; May & Sleeter, 2010; Rhedding-Jones, 2010; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995).

As Berlak and Moyenda (2001) argue: "Central to critical multiculturalism is naming and actively challenging racism and other forms of injustice, not simply recognising and celebrating differences and reducing prejudice" (p. 92). For this purpose, it encourages educators to engage in genuine dialogues with diverse groups, an approach which opens the door to the recognition of epistemologies that lie outside the mainstream (Rhedding-Jones, 2010; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995). These new epistemologies can then be used to challenge and change the dominant discourses, to promote justice, and to cater for different individuals and ethnic groups (Giroux, 2001; Kincheloe, 2008; May & Sleeter, 2010). Having this aim in mind, critical multicultural education puts the onus on educators to be open to including the newly acquired knowledge to the curriculum, rather than just being transfixed on the mainstream discourses (Banks, 2009; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995). This is because, as researchers have put it (Banks, 2006; May, 1999), dominant education

discourses are not universally applicable, making a one-size-fits-all approach inadequate in a diverse learning environment.

In line with its main value of emancipating and empowering the marginalised, critical multicultural pedagogy not only accepts diverse and even conflicting epistemologies, but it also seeks to abolish the hierarchy of values, beliefs, and practices between different groups (May, 2009). In other words, the approach aims to incorporate authentic knowledge of diverse groups into the curriculum and provide opportunities for their involvement. Importantly, it further aims to involve teachers and diverse families in shared, democratic, and collaborative decision-making regarding institutional matters and policies (Banks, 2006, 2009).

In the context of New Zealand ECE, *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017) recognises cultural diversity as one of its core values. How this value is understood and how it informs the daily practice of early childhood teachers is of huge significance for the experiences of diverse cultural groups. May (2009) challenged teachers to deconstruct cultural and/or ethnic essentialism and to "engage critically with all ethnic and cultural backgrounds, including (and especially) their own" (p. 44). In the same vein, Chan (2011, p. 70) stated that it is crucial for early childhood teachers to critically analyse their practices "which so often turn into unchallenged and taken-for-granted routines", and to connect with families on a personal level so that they can learn about their aspirations for their children. "By collaborating with diverse families and including their voices, teachers of each ECE setting can create a local curriculum that is responsive to members of the setting's community" (Chan, 2020, p. 10). Chan argued that teachers must share the power of decision making with families if they are to weave a programme that is genuinely responsive to their needs.

Research indicates that within ECE, immigrant parental knowledge and practices are often measured against the mainstream norms and are perceived as subordinate to professional knowledge (Arzubiaga et al., 2009; Baraldi, 2015; Chan, 2014; Chan & Ritchie, 2016; Reiff et al., 2000; Rhedding-Jones, 2001; Ukpokodu, 2003). Chan (2009) highlighted how some early childhood teachers do not see themselves as the ones who need to change:

> Some may even believe that they are living in a very *tolerant* country, denying the existence of racism or any other forms of discrimination because they have not experienced any in their life! The term 'tolerant' contains negative connotations – if you do not perceive my beliefs and practices as inferior to yours, why would you need to *tolerate* them? (p. 33)

This issue of marginalisation might apply to the experiences of Middle Eastern parent participants in the current study. As citizens of a multi-ethnic society, early childhood teachers in New Zealand need to practise critical forms of multiculturalism in order to uphold the principles and aspirations embedded in *Te Whāriki*. In the next section, I introduce hybridity theory as it relates to the objectives of this study.

3.1.2 Hybridity Theory

The term *hybridity* originates from biology and in its most basic sense refers to blending and mixing. According to Young (1995), a hybrid is technically a cross between two species and therefore the term *hybridisation* indicates both the botanical notion of interspecies grafting and the "vocabulary of the Victorian extreme right" which regarded different races as different species (p. 9). The latter sense of hybridity in Young's statement first appeared in the 18th century when colonisers "feared" the contamination of their assumedly superior White European race by the races they colonised (Kraidy, 2002). Knox was alluding to this ideology when he stated that hybridity was "a degradation of humanity and was rejected by nature" (1850, p. 497, quoted in Young, 1995, p. 14).

Hybridity began assuming more positive connotations in the wake of the decolonisation movements that commenced in 19th century (Kraidy, 2002). Therefore, the notion of hybridity shifted from the racial realm to the cultural realm. In this new sphere, hybridisation is broadly defined as the merging of cultural practices to create new hybrid practices (Weng & Kulich, 2015). In the postcolonial era, Ashcroft et al. (2006) argue, "hybridity commonly refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonisation" (p. 118). The experience of hybridity, however, does not always involve the relation between the colonising and colonised cultures. Broadly speaking, the term hybridity refers to a state where individuals belong to more than one culture (Barry, 2000). The cultures might be that of the host culture and the origin culture as produced by migration (Ashcroft et al., 2006). Living in host countries creates a sense of in betweenness and belonging-to-more-than-one-culture for immigrants and they develop a new hybrid identity because of this experience.

One of the major postcolonial theorists associated with cultural hybridity is Homi Bhabha. Bhabha (1994) conceptualised hybridity as the third space, a conceptual space where two cultures meet,

and their identities are challenged and negotiated. In the third space, the dominant culture encounters the newness of the other culture, a situation which causes the dominant cultural practices to be interpreted anew, questioned, and revised (Bhabha, 1994). Since dominant discourses and cultures tend to exercise power in relation to other discourses and cultures, Bhabha (1994) suggests a dialogic approach that involves "negotiation rather than negation" to articulate cultural hybridity (p. 25). This dialogic approach values multiple perspectives and helps hybrid agents engage in open interactions to negotiate differences and create new knowledge (Mila-Schaaf, 2010). Bhabha (1994) mentions that the two cultures should negotiate with each other, rather than negating each other within the third space. Negotiating differences means thinking beyond the static positions by hybridising them (Bhabha, 1994). In this sense, hybridity theory, like critical multiculturalism, counters the universalism, traditionalism, and essentialism of culture, identity, and ethnicity (Um, 2019).

In the same vein, May (2009) argues that individuals experience a continual negotiation and transformation between gender, socioeconomic status, religion, political preferences, and culture. He also believes that each individual has "multiple, shifting, and, at times, nonsynchronous identities" (May, 2009, p. 38) and that there are "significant interethnic differences evident within any given ethnic group" (May et al., 2004, p. 9). Likewise, Rhedding-Jones (2001) adopted the phrase "shifting ethnicities" when describing transnational people with more than one ethnicity, one language, and one set of cultural beliefs and practices (p. 145). She argued that these diverse ways of being and doing project today's ethnic diasporas, and "given sufficient critique, all discourses give way to other discourses, and all practices transform" (Rhedding-Jones, 2002, p. 103).

Hybridity theory provides a particular analytic lens for the current thesis. It guides my analysis of how Middle Eastern parent participants navigate and negotiate their childrearing beliefs and practices through interactions with early childhood teachers and in relation to the prevailing practices in New Zealand early childhood services. It is also important for me to see how the participating teachers embrace the notions of hybridity and fluidity in working with Middle Eastern families and in reaction to Middle Eastern parents' expectations, some of which might contradict accepted discourse within New Zealand ECE. The next section examines how the families' diverse

beliefs and practices can be embraced in a responsive manner through applying the notion of funds of knowledge.

3.1.3 Funds of Knowledge

The term "funds of knowledge" was coined by Wolf (1966) to describe the resources and knowledge that families use to survive economically (e.g., funds for rent and social funds). Drawing on Wolf's definition, Velez-Ibanez (1988) stated that the essential information and practices for supporting survival and wellbeing are developed within all cultures and can be expected to vary in different cultures. Four years later, Moll et al. (1992) defined funds of knowledge as "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and wellbeing" (p. 134).

It is important to note that in the context of funds of knowledge, culture is understood to refer to socio-cultural practices, the experiences associated with these practices, what people do, and how people perceive what they do (Liopart & Esteban-Guitart, 2018). Also, the focus is not on shared culture, but on families' practices and lived experiences (Liopart & Esteban-Guitart, 2018). It is an approach that focuses on the processes of families' everyday lives and takes their daily activities as a frame of reference. Accordingly, instead of assuming a static, homogeneous conception of culture, funds of knowledge consider culture to be hybrid in nature (González, 1995). According to González et al. (2006), the communities' funds of knowledge are not "a laundry list of immutable cultural traits, but rather are historically contingent, emergent within relations of power, and not necessarily equally distributed" (p. 25). Funds of knowledge shares this quality with hybridity theory and critical multiculturalism. In all three frameworks, culture is viewed as dynamic rather than static and homogeneous (Moje et al., 2004).

In the early 1980s, a group of four education scholars – Luis Moll, Norma González, James Greenberg, and Carlos Velez-Ibanez – recognised the applicability of funds of knowledge to school and educational settings (Hogg, 2011). More specifically, the pioneers of the funds of knowledge approach in the educational context aimed to contest the notion of deficit thinking (Hogg, 2011). They suggested that school performance could improve by having teachers visit the families of students, think of them as intellectual resources, identify their skills and knowledge, and incorporate them into the curriculum (Hogg, 2011).

Subsequent funds of knowledge projects also found that educational outcomes of students can improve significantly if teachers forge relationships with families, and utilise the knowledge gained through those relationships to inform the design of culturally sensitive curricular activities (González, 1995; González et al., 2001; González et al., 2006). McIntyre et al. (2001) recounted the experience of two teachers who visited the homes of their students in rural Kentucky to learn about their household practices. As reported by the researchers, the two teachers uncovered the extensive farming knowledge that families owned and accordingly designed a series of relevant lessons to provide meaningful participatory opportunities for the families (McIntyre et al., 2001).

The literature on funds of knowledge has mainly emphasised the positive aspects of familial experiences, such as skills and abilities (Rodriguez, 2013). However, a few scholars (e.g., Templeton, 2013; Becker, 2014) expanded the concept of funds of knowledge by highlighting the weight of difficult experiences in people's lives and suggesting that teachers learn about the everyday living conditions and hardships of their students. Becker (2014) described "funds of (difficult) knowledge" to account for "the emotionally difficult chapters of one's cultural heritage or migration story" (p. 19). Identifying this knowledge may help teachers to understand students' behaviour and modify simple prejudices, stereotypes, and expectations into judgments based on real knowledge (Templeton, 2013).

According to the literature (e.g., González & Moll, 2002; McIntyre et al., 2001; Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011), the main objectives of the funds of knowledge approach are to (a) create mutually trustful relationships between teachers and families; (b) diminish the existing stereotypes by recognising and incorporating families' knowledge within the curriculum; (c) create meaningful opportunities for cooperation; and finally (d) improve the academic performance of underrepresented students.

In line with the ideas of critical multiculturalism and hybridity theory, the funds of knowledge approach has important implications for teacher practice. In this study, I draw on the idea of funds of knowledge to analyse teachers' practices in working with Middle Eastern families and to highlight their important role in bringing about a transformative curriculum that incorporates Middle Eastern parental knowledge and practices.

3.2 Sequential Mixed Methods Research Design

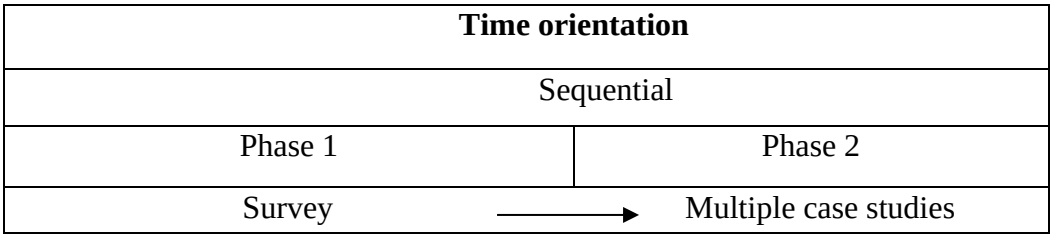
Mixed-methods research studies are those which combine both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Johnson & Christensen, 2020), even if one of the approaches is used only minimally. The current study combined a national online survey of Middle Eastern families in phase one with case study research in phase two in order to achieve both breadth and depth to the research. The rationale for mixing both types of data is their potential for complementing one another and providing a more complete understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Referring to Johnson and Christenson (2020), I located my mixed methods research within a sequential design. In the present study, two distinct data collection phases, one following the other, were used. I first collected the views of Middle Eastern parents across New Zealand via an online questionnaire (numeric and textual data) in order to have a broader perspective on their experiences and to find the boundaries of the experiences. Then, a multiple case study approach involving observation of Middle Eastern children and interviews with Middle Eastern parents and early childhood teachers was used as a follow-up to gain a deeper understanding of the research topic. I analysed the data from both phases separately and brought the results together to have a better understanding of the findings.

The following figure shows the overall diagram of the current study's methodological design using Johnson and Christenson's (2020) mixed methods design matrix.

Figure 2

Sequential Mixed Methods Design



3.3 Research Questions and Data Collection Methods

The data collection methods for addressing each research question are presented in the following table.

Table 1

Research Questions and Data Collection Methods

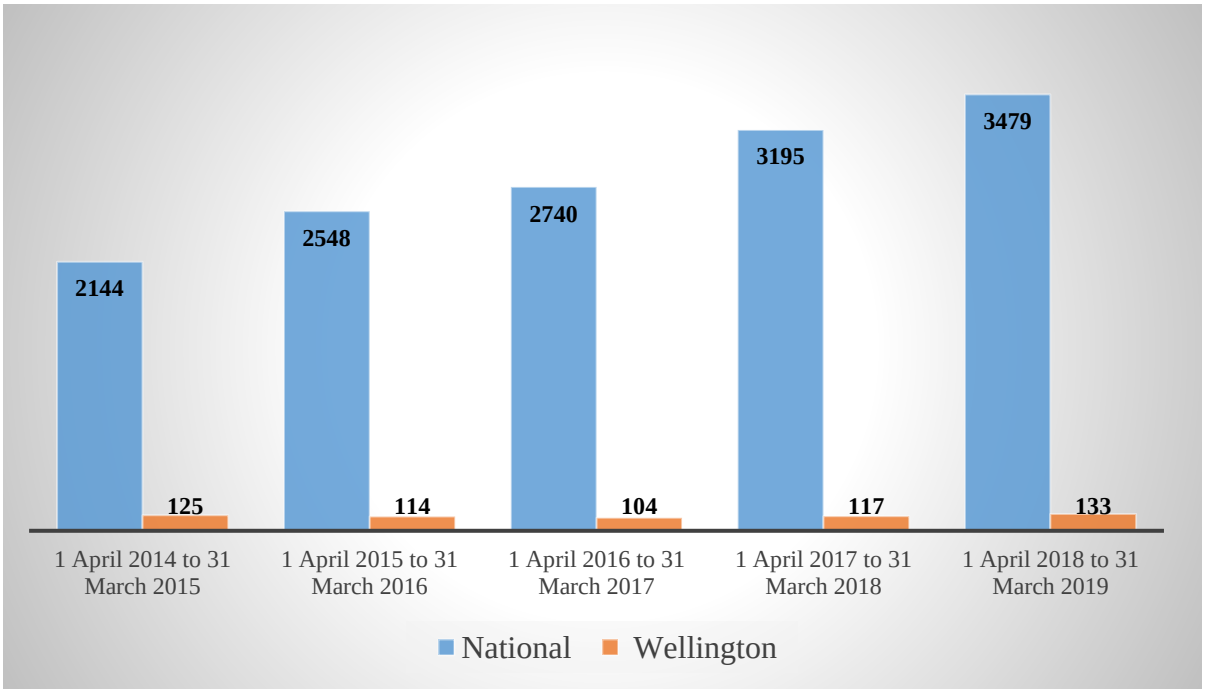
Questions		**Data collection methods**	
		Phase 1	**Phase 2**
1-What are Middle Eastern parents' expectations for their children's early education in New Zealand?		Online survey	-Semi-structured individual interviews with parents of case study children - Semi-structured individual interviews with teachers of case study children
2-What are early childhood teachers' practices and perspectives with respect to Middle Eastern families?	Practices	Online survey	-Semi-structured individual interviews with parents of case study children - Semi-structured individual interviews with teachers of case study children
	Perspectives	———	Semi-structured individual interviews with teachers of case study children
3-What are the challenges faced by Middle Eastern children in New Zealand early childhood centres?		Online survey	-Semi-structured individual interviews with: parents and teachers of case study children -Non-participant observation of case study children in early childhood centres

3.4 Study Participants

In order to reach as many Middle Eastern families as possible whose children attend early childhood services, I requested the number of Middle Eastern children enrolled at early childhood centres across New Zealand from the MoE Statistics division. The MoE provided me information about the population of Middle Eastern children attending New Zealand early childhood services extracted from the Ministry's ECE electronic collection tool- Early Learning Information (ELI) system. Further analysis of this database enabled me to create the following chart (Figure 3) representing attendances in licensed ECE services.

Figure 3

The Number of Middle Eastern Children Attended ECE Services From 2014 to 2019



It should be noted that the number of Middle Eastern children prior to 2014 could not be provided since the Ministry's ELI system was launched in early 2014, with around 40% of early childhood services participating in data collection in that year. In 2017, this figure rose to 78%. It is also worth mentioning that children, or their parents/guardians for that matter, are given the option to

report up to three ethnicities, so the data represent the number of children who had selected 'Middle Eastern' as *one* of their ethnicities. Furthermore, casual education and care services and hospital-based services have not been included in the above chart, because they do not have regular enrolments.

By analysing the information provided by MoE, I identified 2026 early childhood services across New Zealand where one or more Middle Eastern children had attended from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019. Once recategorised by type of service (i.e., education and care centres, kindergartens, playcentres, and home-based services), I omitted playcentres and home-based services on the grounds that these services are run by parents and home-based educators respectively, rather than teachers, and some of the survey items related to teachers and their practices. The resulting list comprised a combination of education and care centres (n= 1,142) and kindergartens (n= 455). The next step was finding the contact details (i.e., email, phone number, and physical address) of all these centres, followed by the addition of the name of kindergarten associations and organisations for each service and their contact details to the list. I needed this information to be able to seek consent and disseminate my survey (see the following section for a detailed description).

The survey included a question asking for volunteers to participate in the case studies. As a result, four case studies were undertaken in the phase two of the study.

3.5 Researcher Positionality

As a Middle Easterner myself, I would best describe my position within this research as both an insider and an outsider. According to Kanuha (2000), insider research refers to when researchers conduct research with populations of which they are also members. In this sense, I was an insider because I come from a Middle Eastern background. I was born in Iran where Farsi is the official language and Islam is the official religion. So, I am familiar with some of the cultural and religious practices of the participants, and this familiarity and shared background helped me build rapport with the participating parents. The following is my reflective note after a meeting with one of the Middle Eastern parents:

> I arranged a meeting with Salma, an Egyptian mother (around 35 years old). At the start of our meeting, she seemed hesitant about sharing her experiences with me. But, when I

> introduced myself and said that I am from Iran, she seemed relieved. She told me that when she first heard my (preferred) name, Mehri, she thought I am Indian, and she was unsure about talking to me. She said she didn't want to share her experiences with someone who is not Middle Easterner as there might be little mutual understanding. She said, "now that I know you are from Iran and you have the same background, I can talk to you". Due to the similar backgrounds, we could build a connection in that meeting.

Given my Middle Eastern background, I was alert to what could be challenging for these families, and how my background could potentially influence my interpretations of findings when looking at the observational data. To overcome this potential bias as much as possible, I was rigorous in keeping the survey findings in sight and this helped me make sense of the experiences of case study children through the lens of their parents.

I was an outsider in the sense that being Middle Easterner is not one thing. I did not assume that because I am from one country in the Middle East, I would be able to identify with everything my participants say. By the same token, I am aware that the term 'Middle Easterner' is problematic. When diverse populations are categorised under one label, it has the potential to have homogenising influences. However, for the purpose of this research, it is used as an overarching methodological mechanism meaning that I used it as a reference point to refer to my participants. I also use this reference point to position myself in the research.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Consideration of ethics is an important part of any research, especially when human subjects are involved as participants (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). Hence, before commencing data collection, I applied for ethical approval from the Human Ethics Committee of Victoria University of Wellington. The approval was granted on 5 June 2019. The study was premised on the ethical principles of respect for the participants and their right to privacy, as well as minimisation of any risk of harm to them.

The documents submitted to the ethics committee included: emails to the participants (Appendices 1-3); information sheets and consent forms for the participants of the first phase of the study: kindergarten associations/parent organisations (Appendices 4 and 6) and centre managers (Appendices 5 and 7); a copy of the survey (Appendices 8-10); information sheets and consent forms for the participants of the second phase: centre managers (Appendices 11 and 16), Middle

Eastern parents and children (Appendices 12, 17 and 18), teachers who had volunteered to participate in the interviews (Appendices 13 and 19), parents of incidentally recorded children (Appendices 14 and 20), incidentally recorded teachers (Appendices 15 and 21); a copy of the interview schedules in phase two (Appendices 22 and 23); the protocols for child consent (Appendix 24); and translators' confidentiality form (Appendix 25). The consent form for children included both pictures and words that were deemed to be understood by children. I asked the parents to help me with the process of gaining consent from their children.

For the first phase, I sent two distinct invitation emails: one to the kindergarten associations and the other to the organisations. Attached to these emails were an information sheet and a consent form to seek their support. Overall, eight kindergarten associations and seven organisations accepted this invitation and returned their signed consent forms to me. Then, I sent an email to the centres under these associations and organisations. The invitation email to the centres similarly included an information sheet and a consent form for the managers' consideration. This process, followed by two reminder emails, yielded a total of 75 consent forms from centre managers across New Zealand in the three-month period between 10 June 2019 and 2 September 2019. Consent letters meant confirmation that the centres had one or more Middle Eastern children enrolled at their centre and that the centre had agreed to disseminate the survey link to the parents of those children.

To distribute the information sheets and consent forms for the second phase, I used a combination of staff and self-distribution. The information sheets and consent forms contained all the necessary information about the participants' rights including the protection of their identity during the study and their right to withdraw their consent at any stage before the end of data gathering in April 2020. Consent forms also included options for giving or withholding consent for the use of visual images. During data gathering, I was attentive and sensitive to any signals (verbal or non-verbal) from the children that showed they were not comfortable with being observed. Families were also encouraged to inform me if their child expressed unease about being observed at the centre or any other actions.

A consideration of the rights of the participants to "be heard, to participate, to have control of their lives" (Brooker, 2001, p. 163) was an important part of the ethical practice of this research. Accordingly, I allowed my participants to choose the time and setting of the interview, in addition

to having control over its duration. Confidentiality issues were also acknowledged and reflected in the decision to use pseudonyms for the participants and the centres. Also, all the collected data were safely stored and inaccessible to anyone but myself and my supervisors. These records will be destroyed ten years after the completion of the study.

3.7 Phase One: Survey

Although many different forms of surveys exist, survey researchers typically collect data using two basic forms: questionnaires and interviews. In the current study, I chose to survey via questionnaire, which is a common research tool in educational research (Mutch, 2005). More specifically, an online questionnaire consisted of close-ended and open-ended questions was employed in the first phase of the study.

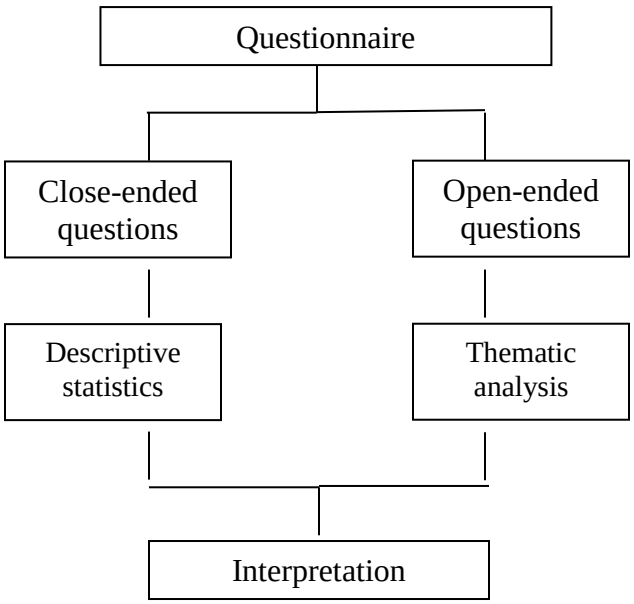
The second dimension in Johnson and Christenson's (2020) typology is paradigm emphasis which concerns the prioritisation and role of quantitative and qualitative components in the study. Creswell (2012) mentions that the emphasis placed on one type of data may result from the researcher's "personal experience with data collection, the need to understand one form of data before proceeding to the next, or the audience reading the research" (p. 549). The role of open-ended questions is very important in my survey data collection, mainly because this is the first nationwide study of the experiences of Middle Eastern children in New Zealand early childhood services and thus, I needed to use methods that would enable me to hear the perspectives of Middle Eastern parents about their children's experience in early childhood services. Accordingly, I aimed to address the general aspects of the parents and children's experiences through the close-ended items, but also provided space so Middle Eastern parents could use their own words to talk about these experiences. As noted by Peterson (2000):

> open-ended questions are used when a researcher literally does not know how study participants will answer a question. By definition, a close-ended question has answers or response categories that are predetermined . . . only the frequencies with which the answers will be given to a close-ended question are unknown. Consequently, open-ended questions are often used in the early (exploratory) stages of a research project to generate ideas or obtain a fundamental understanding of the phenomenon, issue, or topic being investigated when relatively little is known about it. (p. 30)

Accordingly, I set out to analyse the qualitative component of the survey data (i.e., open-ended responses) as it familiarised me with the unique experiences of Middle Eastern children and their parents. Having this understanding was also helpful when analysing the video data and designing the interview questions for the second phase. For these reasons, I prioritised the analysis of the qualitative component of the survey over the quantitative one (i.e., close-ended responses). However, since the survey was going to be completed by Middle Eastern parents across New Zealand, mixing the two components gave me the depth and breadth of perspective I needed to move forward to the next phase.

Figure 4

Diagram Representing Phase One of the Study



3.7.1 Instrument: Online Questionnaire

The type of questionnaire used in this study is online or web-based. It is a convenient way to reach a geographically dispersed sample of a population in a short period of time. For the present study, an anonymous 32-item survey was developed using Qualtrics. The survey was designed to be

completed by Middle Eastern parents whose children attended New Zealand early childhood centres at the time of data gathering and was predicted to be completed in ten minutes. The core of the questionnaire was divided into three sections with an introductory information page that appeared when the respondents first clicked on the questionnaire link. This landing page presented all the necessary information about the research project to the potential participants, explained the reasons they were invited to participate, the amount of time the survey completion was likely to take, and the incentive for the respondents in the form of a supermarket voucher. My contact details and those of my supervisors were also included here in case the respondents had any questions or concerns about the research or related matters. Moreover, the introduction was intended to invite informed consent. As written consent forms are not typically used in survey research (Peterson, 2000), I used this space to inform Middle Eastern parents of the anonymity of the survey data and that by submitting their responses to the survey, they were voluntarily agreeing to participate in the study. The introduction was followed by the survey items which were organised into three sections (see Appendix 8):

- Section one focused on the parents' experiences with their child's early childhood centre and consisted of 12 close-ended questions and two open-ended questions. The close-ended questions asked about Middle Eastern parents' experience with their children's early childhood centre. The open-ended questions asked about Middle Eastern parents' expectations for their children's early education, as well as parents' views of the practices early childhood teachers used when working with their children.

- The second section focused on the parents' perceptions of their child's experiences at their early childhood centre and contained eight close-ended questions and two open-ended questions. The close-ended questions sought Middle Eastern parents' views about their children's experiences at their early childhood centre, while the open-ended questions asked Middle Eastern parents to describe their children's 'challenges'. To account for the potential impact of Christchurch attacks on Middle Eastern parents' perception of their children's well-being at the centres, I devoted a separate open-ended question to this topic.

Both these sections ended with space where parents could add what they wished related to the discussed topics. In order not to limit the parents' responses, the open-ended response fields were

unlimited in terms of the number of words and/or characters, a feature that many respondents took advantage of for posting lengthier comments.

- The third section of the survey included eight demographic questions (e.g., nationality, first language, religious affiliations, etc.)

While some scholars (e.g., Teclaw et al., 2012) have suggested placing demographic questions at the beginning of a questionnaire, others have advised placing them at the end (e.g., Dobosh, 2018). The most important argument from both sides is that acting in one way, or another may increase or decrease response rate. Considering the peculiar features of my survey and given the relatively sensitive nature of some of the demographic questions, I decided to place the demographic questions at the end of the questionnaire, in an attempt to prevent respondent alienation at the start.

After responding to the demographic questions, the respondents had the option to provide their own contact details or the contact details of their child's early childhood centre if they were willing to take part in the second phase of the study. It was also noted that providing their contact details did not imply their consent to participate, and that they could make their final decision when the researcher contacted them and explained the project in more detail. They were also informed that they would be contacted if selected by the researcher. Then by clicking on the 'next-page arrow', all the respondents were redirected to a separate Uniform Resource Locator (URL) where two spaces were provided for them to insert their contact details: one for all the respondents who wanted to enter the draw for the allocated prize (a $50 supermarket voucher), and the other for those who wanted to be considered for participation in the second phase of the study. This feature was added to the survey using JotForm. To keep the responses anonymous, the identifiable information was received separately. The survey ended with an expression of appreciation to the respondents who had completed it.

The survey items were devised based on a review of the previous studies (e.g., Alnawar, 2015; Giger & Davidhizar, 2002; Hoot et al., 2003; McBrien, 2005; Md-Yunus, 2015; Salili & Hoosain, 2014). To develop the items, I considered the BRUSO model (Peterson, 2000). BRUSO stands for 'brief', 'relevant', 'unambiguous', 'specific' and 'objective'. According to this model, effective questionnaire items are to the point, relevant to the research questions, can be interpreted in only one way, are specific and clear. Finally, effective questionnaire items are objective in the sense

that they do not reveal the researcher's own opinions or lead participants to answer in a certain way. These characteristics make it easier for the respondents to understand the items and complete the survey. It was very important for me to develop items that were easy to understand as the survey was aimed to be self-administered and multilingual. I will further elaborate on the preparation of the survey in English, Arabic, and Farsi in the following section.

For rating scales, a four-point Likert-type scale ranging from one (strongly agree) to four (strongly disagree) was used for the close-ended questions. I chose to leave out a neutral response option as I wanted to encourage respondents to think more deeply about their responses and not simply choose the middle option. In the demographic section, in cases where it was not feasible to include every possible category, 'other' category was provided, with a space for the respondents to fill in a more specific response.

3.7.2 Piloting the Survey

After writing the initial pool of questionnaire items, the content validity of the questionnaire was evaluated by my supervisors. Based on their feedback, the survey underwent a process of rewording, addition, and omission of items. This process was repeated a few times before the survey items were finalised. I also consulted and pilot-tested the survey with an expert in survey design and her feedback was similarly taken into consideration. Consequently, I started the survey translation stage. As a native speaker of Farsi with previous experience of translating academic texts, I translated the survey into Farsi myself, but, to satisfy the normal back-translation standards, I also sent the Farsi translation and the original English survey to a professional Farsi translator with high English proficiency and relevant research experience to check its comprehensibility and accuracy. At the same time, I asked a professional Arabic translator with educational research background and high English proficiency to translate the survey into Arabic. The translator suggested using standard formal Arabic, which is comprehensible by almost all Arabic speakers. In this process, the Arabic translator and I talked through the translation problems, including nuances of particular words. The Arabic translation was also back-translated by another translator to check its comprehensibility and accuracy. Following the BRUSO model in developing the survey items, the ultimate goal of translation was to formulate the items in simple language so as to avoid respondent confusion. I then created the Arabic and Farsi versions of the survey into

Qualtrics alongside the English version and provided the option for respondents to choose the language of response themselves.

One of the limitations of using an online questionnaire for data collection is that the researcher does not have the means for explaining the questions (Creswell, 2012). In an attempt to mitigate this limitation, the questionnaire was piloted with nine Middle Eastern parents known to me to evaluate its comprehensibility and identify potential problematic issues of design and format. The nine Middle Eastern parents (i.e., three Arabic, three Farsi, and three who stated they are comfortable to complete the survey in English) were mailed the link to the questionnaire and asked to record any issues they came across during the process of completing the survey. The feedback provided by the pilot study participants resulted in some slight changes to the overall format of the survey, which helped minimise the possibility of misreading the questions. After applying these changes, I published the Qualtrics survey on 10 June 2019 and maintained it open until early March 2020.

3.7.3 Survey Data Collection

As already noted, the participants in the first phase of the study were Middle Eastern parents whose children were attending New Zealand early childhood centres at the time of data collection. I identified the respondents through purposive sampling, in other words by specifying "the characteristics of a population of interest and then [trying] to locate individuals who have those characteristics" (Johnson & Christensen, 2020, p. 364) and using national statistics gathered by the MoE Statistics in May 2019. The link to the survey was sent to the centres on immediate receipt of their consent form together with a prepared email for them to forward to Middle Eastern parents attending their centre.

During this process, I was able to check two types of responses in Qualtrics: the recorded responses (i.e., those who had completed and submitted their responses) and the responses in progress (i.e., those who had either viewed the survey but not started responding yet or had partially completed the survey). The survey remained active until early March 2020; however, the bulk of responses were received during July and August 2019. Overall, I received 129 responses from Middle Eastern parents, 45 of which were incomplete responses. I only considered the complete responses (n=84) during data analysis.

3.7.4 Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents

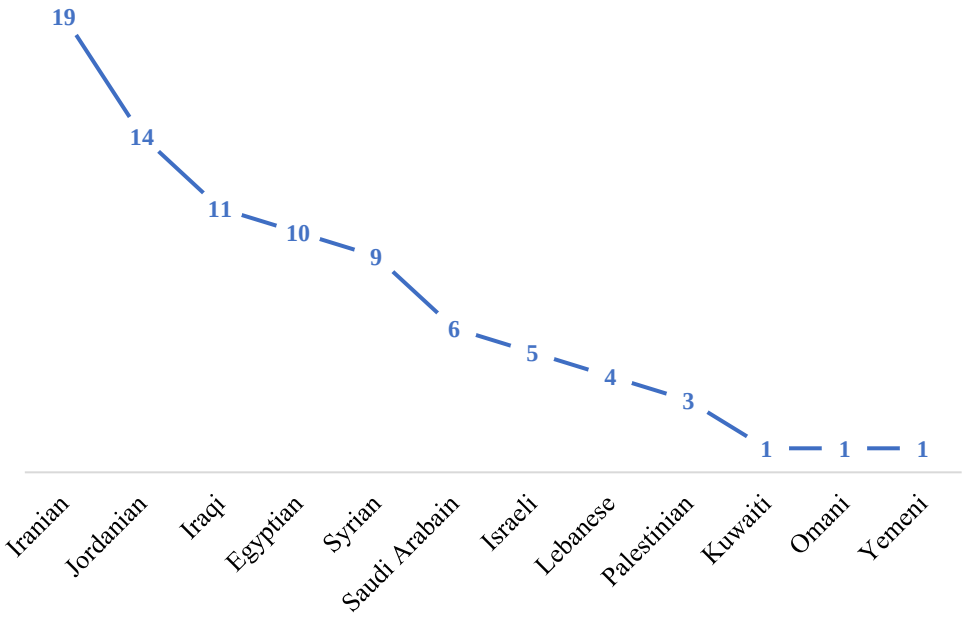
Demographic categories in the survey included parents' relationship to the child, nationality, religious affiliation, first language, length of stay in New Zealand, child's age, child's gender, and the type of early childhood centre attended. The respondents' geographical location presented in this section was produced by Qualtrics.

Of the total 84 submitted responses, seventy-two (86%) were completed by mothers and twelve (14%) by fathers. Forty-seven of the respondents (56%) reported that their children attended kindergartens, while thirty-seven (44%) stated that their children attended education and care centres. The majority of the survey respondents (n=61, 73%) indicated that their children (46 male and 38 female) were between the ages of three to five. The remaining children (n=23, 28%) were under three years of age.

The data suggests reasonable variety in the nationality of the respondents (Figure 5). The top four nationalities among survey respondents were Iranian (n=29, 23%), Jordanian (n=14, 17%), Iraqi (n=11, 13%), and Egyptian (n=10, 12%).

Figure 5

Nationality of the Survey Respondents



Sixty-one of the respondents (73%) identified as Muslim, seven as Christian, and two as Jewish. The fourteen remaining respondents (17%) who had selected the 'other' option, identified as having no religion.

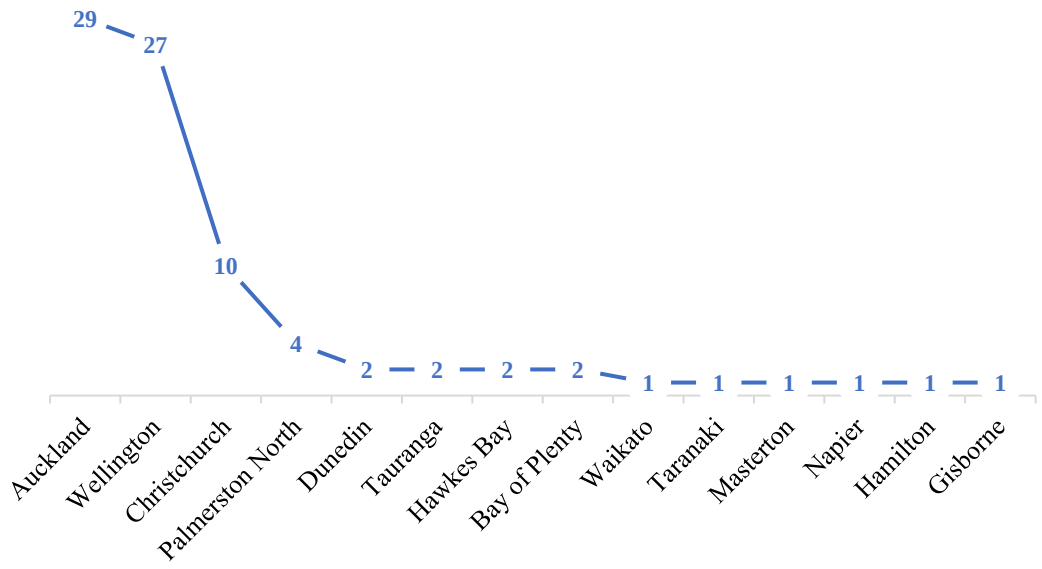
More than half of the respondents (n=45, 53%) nominated Arabic as their first language. The next most common first language was Farsi (n=24, 29%), with the remaining respondents reporting Kurdish (n=7), Hebrew (n=5), Assyrian (n=2), and Turkish (n=1) as their first language.

Respondents who, at the time of completing the survey in mid-2019, had been living in New Zealand for less than five years formed the largest group (n=48, 57%), followed by those who had lived in this country for five to ten years (n=22, 26%). The rest of the respondents (n=14, 17%) had been in New Zealand for more than ten years.

As shown in Figure 6, respondents were spread across New Zealand, for the large part in the three major cities of the country: Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch (29, 27, and 10 respondents, respectively), with most of them based in the North Island. This is in line with the 2018 Census of Population and Dwellings which indicated that the highest number of Middle Easterners live in the three regions of Auckland, Wellington, and Canterbury.

Figure 6

Geographical Distribution of Survey Respondents Across New Zealand



3.7.5 Survey Data Analysis

I started analysing the survey data in September 2019, sometime after sending the second reminder to the early childhood centres. The responses received after this date were added to the data file which was being analysed. The survey data were analysed using both descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. I used descriptive statistics for the close-ended questions and demographic questions, while thematic analysis was used to analyse the responses to the open-ended questions. Qualtrics provides statistics table visualisations which display survey data using the descriptive information of each response. Frequency and percentage statistics were used to report the responses to the close-ended questions in this study.

Text responses to open-ended questions were extracted from Qualtrics into an excel sheet and sorted thematically using the qualitative analysis software NVivo12. Thematic analysis is "a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). In order to identify the themes, I used six phases of thematic analysis suggested by

Braun and Clarke (2006). First, I immersed myself in the data by reading and rereading the responses to each open-ended question separately and noting down some initial thoughts. After familiarising myself with the data, I produced some preliminary codes, described by Tuckett (2005) as meaningful groups of information. Once the codes had been formed, I combined the relevant codes into potential themes, which is a higher-level of categorisation, and then reviewed all the themes to check their coherence. After finalising the themes, I chose a name for each theme and defined it based on its overarching characteristics.

3.7.6 Considerations and Limitations

The major drawback of web-based surveys is the legitimacy of their external validity which concerns the generalisability of the study (Grewenig, et al., 2018). Since online surveys only reach onliners, that is individuals who have access to the world wide web, it is unclear whether results from online surveys can be representative of the entire population (Grewenig, et al., 2018). In order to circumvent this bias, I anticipated that some of the Middle Eastern parents might not have access to an electronic device to fill out the online survey, so I requested the centre managers to let me know if any of the parents at their centre fell into this category. I explained to them that I could mail the printed version of the survey in the language that they had requested to the postal address of the centre, so they can pass it to their Middle Eastern parents. I also reassured them that I would send a pre-paid self-addressed envelope for Middle Eastern parents to send their completed survey back to me. No centre took up this option.

As already discussed, I also translated the survey from English into Arabic and Farsi. This was to remove any language barrier to accessing the survey for Middle Eastern parents who might have had difficulty in fully expressing themselves in English and thus maximise my chances of achieving a higher response rate. The choice of the two languages other than English took account of the fact that Arabic is the major language spoken in the Middle East, while Farsi is the second most spoken language in the region. The recruiting email prepared for Middle Eastern parents was also prepared in English, Arabic and Farsi and the simple procedure of changing the language of the survey to their preferred language was explained in the body of the email. Several other measures were also taken to make the survey as user-friendly as possible. Qualtrics produces an IQ score for each survey, which is an indication of how well it has been structured. It also provides

specific suggestions for improving the survey and increasing the chance of survey completion. The IQ score for this survey was noted as 'very good'. As it was anticipated that some of the Middle Eastern parents might not have access to a computer to fill out the survey, I made sure the survey was optimised for mobile devices as well.

Despite these measures, I was nonetheless aware of other factors that could potentially have a negative impact on the response rate. First and foremost, I did not have direct access to my potential participants and I was therefore reliant on (i) the list of the services provided by the MoE; (ii) the associations/organisations' willingness to participate; and (iii) the centre managers' willingness to disseminate the survey link to their Middle Eastern parents. A number of emails from centre managers saying that they had never had a Middle Eastern child at their centre raised questions about the accuracy of the list provided by the MoE. An example of such an email received from one of the centre managers, is below:

> **Centre manager 1:** Sorry we do not have any Middle Eastern families in our centre. I don't think we have ever had Middle Eastern children.

However, I also received emails that showed there were families who associated themselves with the Middle Eastern ethnicity but did not fit into the list of Middle Eastern countries that I had based my study on. This can result from 'Middle East' being a loose term and the changing nature of countries associated with this ethnicity (Cleveland & Bunton, 2018). The following emails sent by two centre managers exemplify this issue:

> **Centre manager 2:** Just to inform you that the families that we have registered as Middle Eastern are from Afghanistan and are not in the list of countries that you are looking for.

> **Centre manager 3:** We have a family from Serbia. Is this helpful to you? Or is it only Middle Eastern, and in that case, we only have one family and I will chat to them tomorrow. She comes from Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is not located in the geographical area of the Middle East and thus I did not mention it in my email to the centres as among the list of countries associated with Middle Eastern ethnicity. Accordingly, the list of Middle Eastern children provided by the MoE Statistics (n= 3479) was probably a rather rough estimation of this population from the countries I selected. Also, since it

was the centres who forwarded the survey link to their Middle Eastern families, I could not be certain how many parents received the link to calculate the response rate of the survey.

I also received numerous emails from centre managers saying that their Middle Eastern children had left and started school. The following are examples of such emails:

> **Centre manager 4:** The children from those countries have actually left our centre to attend school, so currently we do not have any parents from the countries listed.

> **Centre manager 5:** Unfortunately, although we did have one Middle Eastern child, that child has left for primary school and there is no longer a family here which fits your definition.

Another factor which affected my survey data collection was the unprecedented terrorist attacks on two mosques in Christchurch on 15 March 2019, which had a devastating impact on all minority groups in New Zealand, especially Muslims who were the clear target of the attacks. Having designed my study well before the Christchurch attacks, I was very concerned that both centres and parents would not be willing to participate in my study. Some of the responses received from the centres also reflected the sense of trauma that some Middle Eastern families were going through following the terrorist attacks. The following email was sent by a centre manager:

> **Centre manager 6:** The reason I haven't answered your email earlier, is that the Christchurch shooting was extremely upsetting for our Middle Eastern family, and they stopped attending for a while. They are now attending regularly again and are settling back into centre life. I hope your survey is done delicately as I would not want to cause this family further stress.

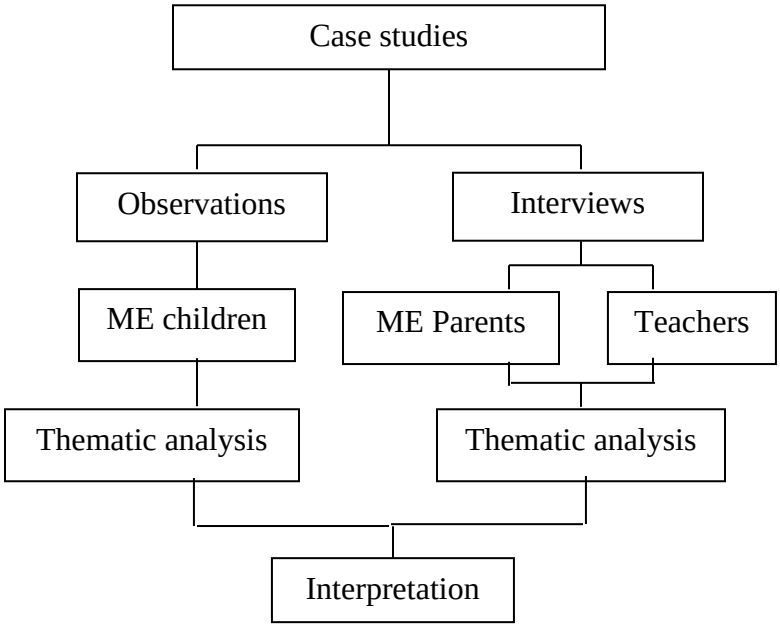
3.8 Phase Two: A Multiple Case Study Design

One of the most common strategies of inquiry in educational research is the use of case studies, through which specific instances or issues of practice are selected and described (Mutch, 2005). Although Stake (2005) asserts that case study research is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied, others consider it a strategy of inquiry as well as a methodology (Denzin

& Lincoln, 2005; Yin, 2011). In case studies, the researcher attempts to understand a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) through several methods of data collection (e.g., observation and interview) and subsequently reports case-based themes (Creswell, 2007). In a case study, the researcher investigates phenomena in depth and within their real-world context (Yin, 2014). It is worth mentioning that a case study should be non-interventional, which means that researchers need to do their best not to disturb the ordinary activity of the case and obtain information through discrete observation (Stake, 1995). Multiple-case designs are variants within the same methodological framework. The present study contains more than one case; therefore, I refer to my approach as a multiple case study one.

Figure 7

Diagram Representing Phase Two of the Study



3.8.1 Participants and Gaining InformedCconsents

I conducted four case studies, one in each of four early childhood centres in a major urban area in New Zealand, with participants comprising: four Middle Eastern children; their parents; and their teachers.

As noted earlier in this chapter, the survey had included a question asking for volunteers for phase two of the study. Out of the 84 survey respondents, 14 parents sent me their contact details via JotForm to show their willingness to participate in the second phase of the study. Six of these resided in the city chosen for the case study research, but the child of one of the families had since started school, and another family (from Jordan) withdrew part-way through the consent process due to a reluctance to being classified as Middle Eastern. The consent process for the case study is outlined in detail in Appendix 26 and involved seeking access from the centre managers of the centres attended by the children, the teachers of those centres and the parents of both the case study children and of the other children in the centre (see Appendices 16-21 for the phase-two consent forms).

Introducing the Participants

The final case study participants were four Middle Eastern children who are referred to by pseudonyms as Ava, Lily, Samar, and Isa. The following table presents key demographic information about the four children, their parents, and their teachers. This information was compiled from the parents and teachers' interviews and from my own field note records. See Table 2.

Table 2

Demographic and Familial Background of the Children

Child	Age[1]	Sex	Home lang	Country of orig.	Length of time at EC service	Prev. exp of ECEC	English level[2]	Parent	Immig. status	Teacher	T. position

[1] At the time of case studies.

[2] Children's English language levels were determined based on parents' and teachers' informal assessment recorded during interviews, supported by my observations of children's language use in the early childhood centres. 'Minimal' means that the children mainly responded with one or two words and were mainly reliant on nonverbal communication. 'Basic' means the children were able to understand the routine, formulaic language used by the teachers and started using frequently heard phrases in a formulaic way. 'Routine-level' means the children were able to respond to nearly all routine conversations in English. Being 'almost competent' means the children were more confident at using English and were less dependent on formulaic language in their conversations.

Isa	3 yrs 7 mths	boy	Arabic	Jordan	1 yr 3 mths	None	Minimal	Noor (Ahmed[3])	Refugee	Sally (Pākehā)	Teacher
Ava	3 yrs 5 mths	girl	Farsi	Iran	1 yr 6 mths	9 mths in NZ	Almost competent	Maryam (Ali)	Skilled migrant	Mia (Pākehā)	Teacher
Lily	3 yrs 3 mths	girl	Arabic	Syria	1 yr 4 mths	None	Basic	Laila	Refugee	Joe (Pākehā)	Teacher
Samar	3 yrs 2 mths	girl	Arabic	Saudi Arabia	9 mths & half	None	Routine level	Reyhan	Skilled migrant	Kelly (Pākehā)	Teacher

3.8.2 Data Collection

Observation

In this phase, I used observation as a data collection tool in order to gain a first-hand understanding of Middle Eastern children's challenges in New Zealand early childhood centres as they unfolded naturally in their setting and with no involvement on part of the researcher (Creswell, 2007). Following Liamputtong (2013) suggestion of unobtrusive use of a hand-held camera to videotape the participants in action, I video-recorded Middle Eastern children's interactions from the drop-off time till lunch time. In addition, I kept extensive field notes. As stated by Johnson and Christensen (2020), field notes are written down by the observer during and after the observations. In this study, I used descriptive field notes to record what I saw or heard at the time that could not be recorded otherwise, as well as reflective field notes right after each observation session to record my thoughts and experiences during data gathering.

I started the observations on the 21st of October 2019. Each child was observed for two mornings each week over a period of four consecutive weeks, yielding a total of 48 hours of observation footage per child. Before beginning the observations of each child, I was introduced to them by either the parents or teachers. During the observations, I tried to maintain a fair distance from the case child, depending on what the child was doing and whether he/she was having conversations during those interactions. When the child *was* having conversations, I tried to get as close as possible to record their verbal interactions, but I was also conscious to get close only to the point

[3] Noor, Isa's mother, was the main interviewee. However, her husband, Ahmed, was also present and commented on a few questions; the same goes for Maryam and Ali.

where my presence would not affect the nature of the interactions unduly. I was conscious that as Aubrey (2000, p.71) stated "lack of contact… does not guarantee no effect of observer presence. Over time the familiar figure in the role of non-participant observer would be less likely to affect children's behaviour appreciably". After each observation session, I typed and saved my notes alongside the visual data of that session to the folder devoted to each case child. I watched the visual data and recorded the time of the interactions, contextual information, dialogues, and my comments in a document file. These records were later used for thematic analyses.

Interviews

Discussing the importance and value of interview as a qualitative method of data collection, Patton (2015) states:

> We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe . . . we cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things . . . The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective. (p. 426)

In my study, semi-structured individual interviews were the appropriate choice to gather the required data from the teachers as well as the Middle Eastern parents. Semi-structured interviews are conversations in which the interviewer knows what she is looking for and probably has a set of questions to cover, but the structure of the conversation is flexible and may vary for different interviewees (Fylan, 2005). For the current study, I prepared a list of questions which were mainly driven by the research questions. However, survey data and the experience gained from the observations also helped me in preparing more informed interview questions. I used these questions as prompts only; the participants' responses guided me in asking individualised follow-up questions that, at times, yielded interesting data.

Since asking good questions is not an easy task, I first checked the questions with the supervisors and then piloted my predetermined list of questions with two Middle Eastern parents (interviews were held in Farsi and in English) who were not among the case-study parents to check the length

of the interview and continuity or natural flow of the conversations. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), pilot interviews are crucial for trying out interview questions. This was also an opportunity for me to practise my interviewing skills. Another prerequisite for a successful individual interview is establishing rapport with the participants while trying to remain neutral. Patton (2015) distinguishes between neutrality and rapport: "Rapport is a stance vis-à-vis the person being interviewed. Neutrality is a stance vis-à-vis the content of what that person says" (Patton, 2015, p. 128). During the early stages of the second phase, I could establish a good rapport with both teachers and parents, so they could trust me and share their experiences as openly as possible.

In the beginning of each interview, I briefly reiterated the objectives of the research and the ethical obligations that I would observe with regards to the collected data, including confidentiality and safe storage. All the interviews were recorded to ensure that everything said would be preserved for analysis. Yin (2014) claims that "audiotapes certainly provide a more accurate rendition of any interview than any other method" (p. 109). The interviews were then transcribed and together with the sound recordings, they constituted the materials for the subsequent analyses.

Parent Interviews

I conducted semi-structured individual interviews (n=4) with Middle Eastern parents after I had observed their children. In two of these interviews, both parents chose to be present, but in both cases, the mothers were the main interviewees and the fathers only commented where they chose to. I asked the Middle Eastern parents to choose a time and setting for the interviews. Two of the parents chose to be interviewed at their workplaces, one parent invited me to their house, and the other parent chose to be interviewed at a private space in the early childhood centre. The duration of the interviews varied depending on how much information the parents were willing to share; Having said that, each interview lasted an average of an hour. All four Middle Eastern parents who agreed to take part in the interviews had English as a second language. Therefore, I asked them to choose whether they want to be interviewed in their mother tongue or in English. As stated by Patton (2015),

> Using words that make sense to the interviewee, words that reflect the respondent's world view, will improve the quality of data obtained during the interview. Without sensitivity to

> the impact of particular words on the person being interviewed, the answer may make no sense at all or there may be no answer. (p. 454)

Three of the parents chose to be interviewed in their mother tongues (one in Farsi and two in Arabic), while one parent said that she is comfortable with English. As Kapborg and Berterö (2002) assert, it would be better if the interviewee and the interpreter share the same culture. Being a native Farsi speaker and having been born and raised in Iran, I conducted the Farsi interview myself. For the interviews where Arabic was the preferred language, I asked the person who had translated the survey into Arabic (native Arabic speaker with high proficiency in English and background in educational research) if she would be able to act as a consecutive interpreter during the interviews, to which she responded positively. I sent the list of questions to the Arabic interpreter, so she could prepare beforehand. When using an interpreter during the interview process, potential threats to validity may arise (Kapborg & Berterö, 2002). In this case, the researcher has to be mindful and take necessary measures to minimise the effect of these threats. Moreover, having another interpreter listen to the audio recordings and confirm the accuracy of what has been interpreted can be reassuring (Kapborg & Berterö, 2002). In order to check the accuracy of the interpreting, I asked another Arabic native speaker to listen to the audio recording of the interview to confirm that what had been interpreted was in line with my questions and the parent's statements during the interview.

The parents' interview schedule consisted of three sections: demographics, general questions, and wrap-up questions. The 'general questions' section was divided into three subsections: opening questions, general questions about the child's experience at the centre, and questions about parents' views and expectations for their child. I had also incorporated some of the notable survey findings in this section and asked the parents to comment on them if they wanted to. Where I had come across something during the case study observations and I needed parents' viewpoints, I included them into the interview schedule under 'questions based on observation'.

Teacher Interviews

I conducted semi-structured individual interviews (n=4) with teachers after I had observed case study children. Considering the busy schedule of teachers, I asked them to choose a time and venue

for the interviews themselves. In all cases the teachers chose to have the interview at their office and each interview lasted for about an hour.

Teachers' interview schedule consisted of the same three sections as the parents' interview schedule. However, the 'general questions' of the teachers' schedule consisted of questions about 'teachers' perspectives', 'teachers' practices' and 'children's experiences'. I kept a record of any questions/issues that arose during observations, and I raised these with teachers for clarification under 'questions based on observation'.

Throughout the data collection process, spontaneous questions arose from the immediate context, in which case I discussed them with the teachers and parents through informal conversational interviews with written notes kept immediately after the event. Informal conversations occurred with the parents at arrival and departure times and with the teachers at a time they nominated as suitable to talk (see Table 3).

Table 3

The Number of Participants and the Number of Observation and Interview Sessions

	Observation	**Interview with parents**	**Interview with teachers**
Child 1	Two mornings each week/ for four weeks	One parent	One teacher
Child 2	//	One parent	//
Child 3	//	Two parents	//
Child 4	//	Two parents	//
Total	32 observation session	4 interview sessions	4 interview sessions

3.8.3 Data Analysis

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis should be the first qualitative method of data analysis that fledgling researchers learn, as it provides some of the core skills that will be useful for conducting many other forms of qualitative analysis. I used an inductive approach to

analysis. Inductive analysis involves moving from the particular to the general and is central to finding regularities or patterns (Miles et al., 2014). In this study, data analysis was undertaken with two purposes in mind: drawing together all the collected data for each case study; synthesising congruence and differences across all cases.

Individual Case Analysis

Getting a Sense of the Data

As suggested by Braun et al. (2019), initially, I watched and re-watched the video data of each case study, read and re-read my field notes and the interview transcripts in order to gain an overall understanding of case study children's experiences. Throughout this process, keeping the survey findings in my sight helped me make sense of the experiences of case study children through the lens of Middle Eastern parents.

Developing Preliminary Codes

After familiarising myself with the collected data for each case study, I reinspected the visual data and the interview transcripts in order to produce codes related to the research questions. This involved extracting the notes and transcripts that directly pertained to understanding children's experiences while putting aside the data that were not relevant. Although certain codes were developed during the preliminary step, the process of topic-coding was dynamic and subject to improvement. The following is the coding of an interaction observed in one of the case studies.

Table 4

Sample Coding of an Observed Interaction

The case study child, Isa (male, three years and ten months), looks at another child, Jack, who is playing with a guitar. He runs toward Jack.	Initiating an interaction
Isa looks at the guitar and says two unclear words.	Speaking incoherently
Jack leans forward and says, "right then?!"	Asking for clarification

Isa nods. Jack "well, someone else dropped it there. I don't know who it was". Isa does not say anything. Jack stands up and shrugs his shoulders.	Remaining silent Ending the interaction

Organising Codes into Potential Themes

The final stage of thematic analysis was to come up with the main themes. I went through the preliminary codes several times searching for patterns and ways they could be linked to develop a theme. For instance, when I put together all the similar codes in the visual data of the above-mentioned case study, the theme became 'struggling with communication'.

Pulling it All Together

After identifying the themes, subsequent data analysis entailed a synthesis of themes from different data sources (observation, parent/teacher interviews). In order to do this, I stepped out of studying the parts and considered the whole picture and how each part contributed to that picture.

Cross-case Analysis

Having completed the individual case analysis, I looked at the datasets in their entirety and began a process of cross-case analyses to identify recurring patterns across the cases and to reveal commonalities and differences across the selected case studies.

3.9 Research Rigour

Research rigour is established when there is trust or confidence in the findings of a research study (Thomas et al., 2011). To maximise the quality and trustworthiness of this research, I sought to triangulate the data through utilising multiple data sources. Triangulation enhances the reliability of a study's findings by bringing several kinds of data together to bear on the same phenomenon (Patton, 2015). The use of survey, child observations, and parents/teachers' interviews allowed a degree of cross checking of the collected data and led to the congruence of interpretation.

Moreover, the research strategies adopted in the study aimed to produce 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) from multiple perspectives to enable readers to evaluate the transferability of the findings. I also provided the interviewees with the opportunity to review the transcripts of their interviews, verify their accuracy, add to them and/or omit any parts that did not reflect their true perspectives, beliefs or experiences. The inclusion of multiple cases in this study and the existing variation across the cases in terms of nationality, gender, and immigration backgrounds, among others, also enhances the external validity of the findings.

The data in this study were gathered from people from two different linguistic and cultural backgrounds: Middle Eastern parents and teachers who were New Zealanders of European descent. The strategy I used in my encounters with both parties was to have open and honest conversations about the topic of the study and clearly explain the research objectives. I had noticed some of the teachers being unsure of whether or not to take part in the interviews, especially because although planned pre-March 2019, the data were collected following the March Christchurch attacks. However, hearing about the ethical rigour of the research appeared to sway their views towards participation.

3.10 Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I presented an overview of the theoretical frameworks employed in this study, namely critical multiculturalism, hybridity theory, and funds of knowledge. These are required to understand the experiences of Middle Eastern children and their parents within the context of New Zealand early childhood centres.

I also discussed the methodological foundations of my study, including the selection of a two-phased, sequential mixed methods research design and the employment of the survey method and multiple case studies. In the first phase, the online survey helped identify the boundaries of the challenges experienced by Middle Eastern children, Middle Eastern parents' expectations for their children's early education, and teachers' practices in interaction with Middle Eastern children and their parents. The second phase of data collection involved multiple case studies, during which I observed four Middle Eastern children in the context of their natural interactions in the corresponding early childhood centres and interviewed the parents and teachers of each case study

child. I have also provided detailed information about the research instruments, participants, and the procedures for data collection and analysis in each phase of the study.

In the following three chapters (4-6), I will discuss my research findings which are organised by research questions, starting with chapter four where I discuss Middle Eastern parents' expectations for their children's early education. In chapter five, I explore early childhood teachers' practices for and perceptions with respect to Middle Eastern families. Chapter six involves discussing the challenges faced by Middle Eastern children in early childhood centres in New Zealand.

4. Middle Eastern Parents' Expectations of Early Childhood Centres

This chapter brings together findings from the survey of a purposively selected national sample of 84 Middle Eastern parents whose children attended early childhood services in New Zealand, and data from the interviews I conducted with four teachers and four Middle Eastern parents in four case study centres. I use these findings to answer the first research question of the study:

- What are Middle Eastern parents' expectations for their children's early education in New Zealand?

All members of a cultural group carry expectations that are part of their shared worldview with other members of their culture (Bourdieu, 2017; McCargar, 1993). In the context of the current thesis, these expectations might include Middle Eastern parents' knowledge of parenting and childrearing, and their goals for the development of their child. By migrating to a new country, thereby experiencing different social norms, parents encounter new childrearing practices and values. This encounter could prompt them to navigate and negotiate across the practices of the cultures of origin and destination (Gonzalez & Méndez-Pounds, 2018).

The findings in this chapter shed light on Middle Eastern parents' expectations of early childhood centres in New Zealand. I discuss these expectations in light of what is known about the dominant childrearing practices in the Middle East as well as the childrearing style advocated by the New Zealand ECE system and through constructs from hybridity theory (Bhabha, 1994), critical multiculturalism (Banks, 2006; May, 1999), and funds of knowledge (Becker, 2014; González et al., 2006; Templeton, 2013).

4.1 Parents' Expectations as Identified in the Survey Data

Sixty-nine (82%) of the Middle Eastern parents who took part in the survey agreed or strongly agreed with the following statement: '*Teachers ask for my expectations regarding my child'*. Only two respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, while 13 respondents expressed disagreement. Later in the survey, I asked the participating parents about their expectations of their child's early childhood centre. The parents' responses to this open-ended question coalesced

around three key themes: early education focused on academic and social skills; routine care activities; and cultural visibility. I discuss each of these expectations in turn.

4.1.1 Early Education Focused on Academic and Social Skills

Sixty (71%) of the submitted responses demonstrated parental expectations regarding the type of early education they would like for their children, making this the most frequently mentioned expectation. Of these responses, thirty-six statements related to parents' expectations around the development of children's academic skills. The remaining twenty-four responses described parents' expectations for children's social skills development.

Academic Skills Development

Thirty-six (43%) of the surveyed parents expected teachers to provide structured learning opportunities for their children and prepare them for school. The following are illustrative responses from this expectation category:

> Teach my child how to read and teach her numbers and shapes. [Orig.A[4]]
>
> Teaching basic alphabet, colours, and animals before going to school. [Orig.E[5]]
>
> Help kids to learn more before school and not just play. Playing is great, but they can't learn everything through play. [Orig.F[6]]
>
> Provide a variety of learning experiences. For example, engage him in play activities, but also some focused academic activities. [Orig.E]

This group of parents placed high value on the development of literacy and numeracy skills, with some prioritising structured over play-based learning, signalling a set of expectations characteristic of the education systems in most Middle Eastern countries (see Jadayel-Faour et al., 2006 for an extended discussion). It is clear from the last two comments that preference for the early development of academic skills, which has been shown to be shared by other cultural groups (see

[4] The comment was produced originally in Arabic.
[5] The comment was produced originally in English.
[6] The comment was produced originally in Farsi.

Guo, 2005b; Chan, 2014 for similar expectations of Chinese immigrant parents), does not necessarily negate the value of play-based learning.

Social Skills Development

Twenty-four (29%) of the respondents looked to the teachers to promote children's social development. More specifically, they expected teachers to help children make friends and develop self-assertion skills. Three of the close-ended survey items asked parents to rate their agreement with statements related to 'social development'. The first item, which read '*My child has a good relationship with other children at the centre*', received overwhelming agreement from the respondents with almost 90% of the surveyed parents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement. The second item, '*My child participates in activities at the centre*', received the same percentage of agreement from the respondents. The third item, which read '*My child feels alone at the centre*', received 90% disagreement from the respondents. This item was the opposite of the first item presented above and the parents' responses thus showed a consistent level of satisfaction with their child's social experience at their centre.

Within the open-ended part of the questionnaire, parents provided further clarification of what they expected from the teachers in relation to their child's social experience with the following illustrative responses:

> I expect teachers to help my child to become more assertive. [Orig.E]
>
> Help him find friends and express himself more. [Orig.F]
>
> They need to provide opportunities for non-English speaking children to find friends. [Orig.E]
>
> I want teachers to help my child become better at self-assertion. [Orig.E]
>
> Finding friends is difficult for him as he cannot speak English, so I expect teachers to help him find friends and express himself more. [Orig.F]

These comments illustrate that their children's social development was a top priority for these Middle Eastern parents who looked to the teachers to empower their children in this regard and promote their assertiveness and social skills with peers. Some of the above parents were of the

view that their children lacked the English language competence to socialise easily with other children and they saw their social development as relying on teachers' intentional efforts to create opportunities for them to interact with other children. Whereas assertiveness and verbal expression are usually perceived as positive traits in Western societies, collectivistic cultures such as most Middle Eastern cultures tend to discourage children from "self-assertive expression of their own independent points of view" (Shahaeian et al., 2011, p. 1240). By encouraging their children to become more socially assertive, these parents moved away from their original childrearing practices. One reason could be that they wanted their children to adjust better to the New Zealand culture.

4.1.2 Routine Care Activities: Eating and Drinking, Toileting

Expectations around routine care activities were the second most frequently cited type of parental expectation. Forty-two (50%) of the submitted responses demonstrate parental expectations regarding children's routine care activities at early childhood centres. Of these, twenty-nine indicated parents' discouragement of early independence in eating and drinking. The remaining thirteen responses referred to special toileting practices, namely cleaning with water after using the toilet, that parents felt were not catered for. One of the close-ended survey items asked parents to rate their agreement with the statement related to 'routine activities': '*My child's needs are met at the centre*'. This item received 85% agreement from the respondents. Only two respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, while ten respondents selected the 'disagree' option.

Eating and Drinking

Twenty-nine (35%) of the respondents expected teachers to attend to their children's routine care needs such as drinking and eating.

> Eating independently is hard for children and I expect teachers to help with such tasks. [Orig.F]
>
> I want teachers to watch my child's food and make sure that she eats sufficient. [Orig.A]
>
> I expect teachers to help my child with eating or drinking. [Orig.E]

The fact that one third of the surveyed parents expected teachers to attend to their children's routine self-care needs for food and drink is noteworthy and suggests higher expectations than were being met by early childhood teachers. It also suggests that Middle Eastern parents' expectations may differ from early childhood teachers' practices with regards to developing self-care skills in children. According to Abadeh (2006), "Middle Eastern parents … do not press for their children to eat, bathe, or put on their clothes independently at early ages" (p. 28). Although from the Western perspective of the teachers these parental practices might be considered as mollycoddling children and not allowing them to develop independent self-care skills (Hodgkinson, 2009), instrumental support is central to what parental support and love mean to many Middle Eastern parents. As Abadeh (2006) stated, many Middle Eastern parents view the emphasis on early independence "as lack of adequate love and neglect in parental duty" (p. 29).

Toileting

Fourteen (17%) of the respondents mentioned a particular toileting practice — using water after toileting— as an area where the expectations of some of the Middle Eastern parents were not met at the child's early childhood centre. Below are sample comments from the surveyed parents:

> As Muslims we use water after toileting, and I want my child to learn this. [Orig.A]
>
> I wish children could use water to clean themselves after using the toilet. [Orig.E]
>
> Personal hygiene i.e., using water for toileting. [Orig.E]

The toileting practice mentioned by these Middle Eastern families is typical of Middle Eastern families especially those who practise Islam. Similar to its role in other religions, water fulfils a purifying function in Islamic rituals (Kuscular, 2008). For this purpose, Muslim homes often have water hoses installed next to the toilet or have water jugs available to facilitate cleanliness. Comments about toileting represent a group of expectations that may be hard to accommodate. Nonetheless, if the expression of *these expectations* were possible, it could lead to deeper conversations about more fundamental issues.

4.1.3 Cultural Visibility

Forty-two (50%) of the responses to the open-ended question about parents' expectations of their child's early childhood centre alluded to the importance of early childhood services in New Zealand including the cultures, and what might be termed the 'funds of knowledge' (e.g., Moll et al., 1992) of Middle Eastern families. Two of the close-ended survey items asked parents to rate their agreement with statements related to ethnic and religious inclusivity. The first item, which read '*My ethnic/racial background is respected at the centre'*, received overwhelming agreement from the respondents with almost 90% of the surveyed parents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement. The second item, '*My religious beliefs are respected at the centre'* received the same percentage of agreement from the respondents. The following are sample open-ended responses:

> I expect teachers to show genuine interest to understand our culture more and respond to our needs. [Orig.E]
>
> I expect teachers to have more practices in line with our culture. [Orig.E]
>
> I expect them to respect his Hebrew knowledge and acknowledge special Jewish holidays.
>
> Also, I want them to engage the kids in activities about Jewish holidays. [Orig.E]
>
> I think the education system [in New Zealand] could be more inclusive of other cultures. [Orig.A]
>
> I want the centre to create and provide a truly inclusive space where all children feel they belong and are valued. A space where they can learn about their local culture, but also learn and share their own culture. [Orig.E]
>
> I want them to consider my child's cultural background and also understand that he has a unique situation and unique difficulties as the child of an immigrant. [Orig.F]

In discussing their expectation that teachers take an interest in their children's cultural background, these parents showed their desire that the teachers would value their children's funds of knowledge and for their practices to be culturally congruent with the children's background. The last parent cited above also expected teachers to acknowledge that the living conditions of immigrant children can be different. This resonates with advice provided by scholars who have written about the notion

of funds of knowledge, urging teachers get to know the everyday living conditions of children to develop an all-round understanding of their behaviour (e.g., Becker, 2014; Templeton, 2013).

It is important to note that Middle Eastern migrants come to New Zealand having already been part of ethnic and/or religious minority groups in their respective countries. Some members of this group may have experienced marginalisation by governments in their home countries and for many of them, these experiences become the root cause of their migration to other countries. This background might in part explain why cultural visibility was such an expectation of Middle Eastern parents who took part in this study; with experiences of exclusion behind them, they are keen to find a place to belong. Moreover, the survey data was collected from Middle Eastern parents across New Zealand, including metropolitan cities like Auckland and Wellington, as well as smaller towns in rural New Zealand. Although the current study does not analyse place of residence as a potential determinant of parents' expectations, other researchers (e.g., see Maxwell, 2019) have suggested that migrants are likely to be treated more fairly in urban areas where diversity is higher. What is also interesting about these comments is the importance of asking parents about their honest thoughts on their children's early education so that they can be brought to the surface thus providing an opportunity to address them by either solving an existing problem or clarifying parents about perceived issues.

As mentioned in several parts of this thesis, the survey findings were used to inform the questions asked during my semi-structured interviews with Middle Eastern parents and early childhood teachers in four case studies. Some of the themes discussed by the interviewees were similar to those mentioned by parents who responded to the survey, while others differed between the two groups. The following section will provide an overview of the themes discussed in the interviews. I will also refer to the available literature to discuss the findings.

4.2 Parents' Expectations as Identified in the Case Study Data

As noted in chapter three, I used semi-structured interviews with the four teachers and four Middle Eastern parents who took part in the case studies to identify parents' expectations of early childhood centres. Through thematic analysis of the interview data, I identified two types of expectations; these expectations were identical in nature to those that emerged from the survey data and will be discussed in this section under the same themes as used for the survey data: early education focused on academic and social skills; and routine care activities. The theme of 'cultural

visibility' was not discussed by the case study participants. When asked to comment on this theme, the interviewed parents briefly mentioned that the centres were inclusive, and they had no expectations in this regard.

4.2.1 Early Education Focused on Academic and Social Skills

I identified expectations about children's early education in all the case study interviews. The following section provides the interviewed parents' comments with respect to this expectation.

Parents' Perspectives

All four interviewed parents expressed expectations of their children's early learning and mentioned how these expectations had changed as a consequence of their life in New Zealand and familiarisation with early childhood discourse of play.

> **Laila (P[7]):** I have learnt that the education for children is much better than the one in my country. I do not expect from a four-year-old to learn letters and numbers. When they go to the school, they learn these things. Teachers give children lots of useful activities here. They teach children how to interact with each other, how to respect each other, and how to listen. I expect Lily to learn social skills and good manners. I find these things very helpful for her. [Orig.A]
>
> **Noor (P):** The education systems are different. In the Middle East, when children go to preschool, they are exposed to letters and things that they have to memorise. So, when children go to school, they don't like it because they started that very early. They are only kids and they will learn those things at school. Now, he is learning how to be disciplined and how to respect and share. I prefer these things now. [Orig.A]
>
> **Maryam (P):** I've become familiar with the concept of learning through play. It's more useful than formal instruction for children. My expectations of her education revolve around learning life skills and social skills. [Orig.F]

[7] (P) stands for 'parent'.

> **Reyhan (P):** In Saudi, they take education more seriously. They teach skills through lessons. Sometimes, they have dictation on the board. They really care about reading and writing. Playing is in their free time when children have nothing to learn. In Saudi preschools, kids can write their names with a nice handwriting. Here, Samar does nice activities as well. For example, I really like the physical activities or when they practise life skills. My expectation of her education is around physical skills, self-confidence, and social skills. I also expect the teacher to teach my child how to hold the pen and how to write in a proper way. Sometimes you see children holding the pen in a very wrong way which will not help them to write when they go to school. They won't have a good handwriting because they cannot hold the pen in a proper way. I think Samar would benefit from these things. [Orig.E]

Such views give an insight into the ways that Laila's, Noor's, and Maryam's understandings of what to expect from the education system were becoming hybridised, in this case towards exhibiting a strong preference for the New Zealand educational system. These parents challenged the suitability of structured learning that had been part of their own experience as Middle Eastern parents and perceived the pedagogy of play as being more beneficial to their children, claiming that their children were too young to practise reading and writing in a structured manner. Reyhan, on the other hand, appeared to be situated within what Bhabha (1994) has called a third space where she was sitting on the edge of two educational systems, creating a new hybrid mix of expectations. In other words, Reyhan negotiated across the Middle Eastern and New Zealand styles of learning to benefit from the strengths of both. She suggested that a mix of instruction-based and play-based learning was beneficial to Samar's education.

Teachers' Perspectives

A recurring theme in my interviews with the four teachers was the perception of the teachers that Middle Eastern parents emphasised the primacy of their children's academic skill development:

> **Mia (T[8]):** some of the parents have mentioned that they would like their children to be learning ABCs and numbers. Our philosophy is that they learn through play. We do not agree with sitting down at a table, listening to the teacher, you must copy this letter or

[8] (T) stands for 'teacher'.

number. It is not the way we believe they should be learning. It should be open-ended. Numbers and letters can be written in the sand, can be painted with water on the ground, does not have to be with pen. Also we have learnt that from the age of babies to five, they need to learn how to socialise and get along with people, how to build their sense of confidence, and how to assert themselves…We value these things over the numbers and letters. [C1[9]/p18[10]]

Sally (T): Academic education is another expectation. We believe that children learn through play and we very much follow the child's lead and extend on it. It is not sit down and learn to write. It is not school. It is getting them school ready. [C4/p17]

Kelly (T): The academic side of learning is quite a high priority. They like their child to be able to do writing and recognise the alphabet and numbers. They sort of do not think about the other skills that are important as well, like social skills and physical abilities, like throwing and catching a ball. The expectation that they are exposed to learning to read and write and that sort of stuff at the very early age can be quite difficult. If a child cannot run, climb and then they can't sit in a chair, it's a definite stage that they have to go through. [C3/p14]

According to the interviewed teachers, Middle Eastern parents tended to prefer instruction over play as a context for their children's early learning and primarily referred to early literacy and pre-math skills as indicators of school readiness. In explaining their understanding of the Middle Eastern parents' expectation, it was notable that the teachers focused on explaining the philosophical underpinnings and values of the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, with its rootedness in child-centred approaches and the valuing of play and creative activities, as opposed to academic work. These statements gave no indication that the teachers were interested in bridging the gap between their values and the parental expectations that were so different from the dominant discourse of play-based learning. From a critical multicultural perspective (e.g., Banks, 2006; May, 1999), the teachers' statements could be read as illustrating a one-size-fits-all approach to

[9] [C] stands for 'case study'.
[10] [P] stands for 'paragraph'.

pedagogy that would not lend itself well to working in a diverse learning environment. As Cannella and Viruru (2004) have argued play represents the biases and values of the West and "the acceptance of play as a universal construct applicable to all creates a corporate structure of normalisation, and consequently, labels for those considered abnormal because they cannot or choose not to play" (p. 108). This is a troubling notion that is worthy of further attention in contemporary superdiverse New Zealand.

Kelly mentioned that Middle Eastern parents "sort of do not think about the other skills that are important like social skills and physical abilities, like throwing and catching a ball" [C3/p15]. Based on the findings of the survey and interviews conducted for this study, this comment is factually incorrect. None of the Middle Eastern parents in my study opposed the skills that Kelly mentioned in her comment nor rejected the importance of learning social and physical skills. However, the parents did hold different views as to the ideal weight that needs to be attached to the different aspects of early education (see the 'academic skill development' section above for an extended discussion). Aside from the potential communication barriers due to the different perceptions of early education among Middle Eastern parents and teachers, language difficulties are likely to have contributed to these misperceptions. Since interpreters and translators were employed in the present research wherever necessary, the findings in my study are likely to be a more accurate representation of the parents' opinions.

Like the above three teachers, Joe commented on Middle Eastern parents' expectations about structured learning. However, in his case, instead of negating parents' expectations and emphasising the dominant discourse of play, the response he gave indicates a more equal valuing of parents' and teachers' funds of knowledge:

> **Joe (T):** Structure of learning is another expectation. A lot of the Middle Eastern families have questions about how their children learn. 'They are just playing. When we come in, we see them running around, so you are not sitting down with them, you are not giving them instructions and having structured learning experiences?' I guess, what education looks like for them is not necessarily represented here. So, I talk to them, explain our approach, and show them how learning happens in play through examples. I explain that literacy happens in the sandpit when they are drawing letters. Literacy happens when they are having conversations with friends because they are practising their words. These

> conversations help us to understand each other better. However, to be responsive to their expectation, we've organised a formalised activity for them that children can sit and do some writing when they enter. [C2/p13]

In explaining the value of play-based pedagogy to the families who come from a different learning tradition, Joe applied a dialogic approach to hear Middle Eastern parents' views about children's learning and understand their funds of knowledge (González et al., 2006), but also to help Middle Eastern families to learn about teachers' funds of knowledge with regard to the value of play. He saw this dialogic approach of engaging in conversations and becoming aware of each other's funds of knowledge as empowering both parents and teachers to not only understand each other better, but also negotiate the differences more effectively. Joe's last statement reveals that the teachers he worked with transformed their practices in an attempt to incorporate Middle Eastern parents' structured learning expectation into the programme. This was done through organising "a formalised activity for them, so that children can sit and do some writing when they enter the centre".

4.2.2 Routine Care Activities: Keeping Clothing Clean During Messy Play, Eating and Drinking, Toileting, Nappy Changing and Modest Clothing for Girls

The interview data showed that the parents held a number of specific expectations about the care of their children that were at odds with the teachers' practices; these expectations were related to: how messy their children's clothing became at the centre during messy play; and practices around children's eating, drinking, toileting, nappy changing, and modest clothing for girls. With respect to the first two expectations (keeping clothing clean during messy play and eating/drinking), I discuss parents' and teachers' perspectives separately. Since expectations around toileting, nappy changing, and clothing were only mentioned by either the interviewed parents or the teachers, I have discussed all the available data under each heading.

Keeping Clothing Clean During Messy Play

Parents' Perspectives

All four interviewed parents had clear, though divergent, expectations about their children's involvement in messy play. Laila and Maryam were supportive of messy play, but Reyhan and Noor were not.

> **Laila (P):** I want her to enjoy herself like Kiwi children and engage in any play activities…Lily loves painting, and whenever I pick her up, she has paints all over her face and clothes and I like that she enjoys herself. [Orig.A]
>
> **Maryam (P):** Actually, I really want her to be relax and get involved in messy and water activities or other outdoor activities, just like Kiwi kids. [Orig.F]
>
> **Reyhan (P):** I do not appreciate when she plays with colours and damages all her clothes. They do not put on coverings to protect her clothes. The colours cannot be removed. It's just wasteful, you know…It is an expectation [that the clothes are protected], but I did not express it to the teachers because I did not want to interfere with their practices. I was just not comfortable. I noticed that all the kids are doing it. I don't want her to feel that she is different. This is why I adapted myself. So, now I have put aside a few specific clothes that she can only wear at school. Now, she can participate in the activities like other kids. [Orig.E]
>
> **Noor (P):** I do not like it when he is all dirty after playing with sand. It's a shame because he does not look clean when I pick him up and walk home and yet I bathe him every day…The teachers told me that they cannot stop him from playing... I try to adapt myself and accept teachers' practices when we are at the centre because I do not want Isa to be isolated, alone, and different from other kids. But when we are at home or outside the centre, I do what I think is right. [Orig.A]

All four parents were keen to see their children participate fully in centre activities. They also wanted their children to fit in within the context of the centres. Laila and Maryam perceived messy play and fitting in with the *Kiwi* way of being a child as beneficial to their children, thus showing openness to embracing the practices of the centres. At the same time, Reyhan and Noor's

statements surfaced some of the issues they were facing as they strove to raise their children to be "like other kids".

Reyhan perceived damaging clothes with paint that did not wash out as less than rational and referred to it as a wasteful behaviour. The use of the term *wasteful* in Reyhan's comment reflects a highly regarded principle in the Middle East, engrained in both Islamic religion and culture, of avoiding wastefulness – or *Isrāf* as it is known in Arabic. Wastefulness is an abhorred act in Islam, with the concept of *Isrāf* described by Kiani (2018) as a general behaviour of consumerism. Islam advises its followers to be moderate in all aspects of life and identifies wasteful consumption through living, eating, dressing, and travelling as prohibited or *haram* (Kaleem & Ahmed, 2010). Such Islamic teachings about the concept of *Isrāf* are supported by multiple versus of Quran (Asad, 2008), and despite the impact of global consumerism, they are still being followed by many Muslims as a guide to life. While researchers, policy makers, environmentalists, and other stakeholders in the Western world have been working relentlessly to create public awareness of the benefits of a moderate and conservative approach to the consumption of natural resources (Van Koppen & Markham, 2007), Muslims tend to view environmentalism as an essential component of their faith (Bilal, 2017). The Middle Eastern cultures share this aspect with Te Ao Māori. Built upon peaceful coexistence with the environment, the Māori worldview does not distinguish between human well-being and environmental well-being (Skerrett & Ritchie, 2020). It "acknowledges a natural order to the universe, a balance or equilibrium, and that when part of this system shifts, the entire system is put out of balance" (Harmsworth & Awatere, 2013, p. 274). While this observation might seem distant from the topic of this research, it captures the tension between the different worldviews coexisting in the New Zealand society.

Noor referred to cleaning Isa every day and it being "a shame [if] he does not look clean". The concept of *Shame* is of significance in collectivistic cultures where the opinions of others matter very much (Grey et al., 2018). Noor regarded cleanliness as an important value and its violation caused her feelings of shame, indicating her concern for the evaluations of others and her fear of losing face. According to Hedayat-Diba (2014), the concerns of some Middle Eastern parents about their children's public appearance in dirty clothes might come from the fear of embarrassment that they may be seen as not being responsible parents. These concerns might also

reflect a wider fear of discrimination against children. For an ethnic group that has been frequently subject to stereotyping, this fear is not entirely irrational.

The value of cleanliness (*taharah*) is highlighted in both Islamic religion and Middle Eastern culture. Rather than being merely a desirable attribute, cleanliness is considered as an indispensable part of Middle Eastern culture. According to Özdemir and Frank (2000), cleanliness has different connotations, including internal cleanliness (i.e., cleaning oneself of sin) and external cleanliness (i.e., physical hygiene). From an Islamic perspective, these two aspects are not separated as cleanliness of body and garments can represent, among other things, a state of spiritual purity (Kuscular, 2008). Muslims have been cautioned through numerous Quranic verses and prophetic sayings that completion of faith is impossible without having a proper sense of cleanliness (Muhammadi Reyshahri, 2009).

In explaining these values of *avoiding wastefulness* and *cleanliness* as central in Middle Eastern culture, I am not necessarily imputing them as motivations for the sentiments expressed by Reyhan and Noor. However, as underlying values of many Middle Eastern cultures, they may help illuminate why some Middle Eastern parents oppose their children's engagement in messy play. According to Liopart and Esteban-Guitart (2018), identifying families' funds of knowledge is not just about uncovering their expectations and practices, but also the intentions behind these practices. In other words, the *why* is as important as the *what*.

As much as Reyhan and Noor attributed importance to the values and norms which informed their motherhood, they chose to negotiate these values to avoid potential feelings of isolation and loneliness in their children. Reyhan navigated between teachers' practices and her own expectation by creating a new practice, putting aside a few specific clothes for Samar to wear to the centre. This new practice again shows Reyhan creating a third space (Bhabha, 1994) of parenting practices to help Samar "participate in the activities like other kids". Noor, on the other hand, chose to accept teachers' differing practices when Isa was at the centre, but she maintained her expectation in other contexts.

Reyhan explained why she did not communicate her expectation to teachers by saying: "I did not want to interfere with their practices. I was just not comfortable" [Orig.E]. This is reminiscent of Middle Eastern parents' tendency to view teachers as authority figures, which is one reason why the idea of questioning teachers is usually considered disrespectful and interfering (Moosa et al.

2001). Reyhan also suggested that she did not feel comfortable to express her expectation to teachers. According to Chan (2014), immigrant parents' avoidance of parent-teacher communication might come from "their sense of powerlessness, because previous intimidating and negative encounters with teachers had taught them not to make any suggestions" (p. 246). Noor, on the other hand, reported that she had communicated her expectation to teachers, but teachers refused "to stop him [Isa] from playing" [Orig.A], suggesting that, even when the teachers were made aware of Noor's expectation, this awareness did not translate itself into pedagogical action which remained true to discourses around children's *independence* and *agency*, which are central to the early childhood curriculum in New Zealand (see Sally's comment below). The following section will provide teachers' perspectives with respect to the 'messy clothes' expectation of Middle Eastern parents.

Teachers' Perspectives

Three of the interviewed teachers, Sally, Kelly, and Joe, commented on Middle Eastern parents' expectations around messy play:

> **Sally (T):** They don't want their children to get wet or messy, so we had to speak to them that this is part of New Zealand ECE curriculum. We cannot stop children if they want to do the activities. 'If they are sick and you know that they are very drawn to water play or messy play please keep them home'… [C4/p11]

> **Kelly (T):** The messy play expectation came up quite often. They got quite upset with messy play. For example, there were children who weren't really allowed to be dirty. Exploring is an important part of early childhood curriculum, they learn about textures and there is a whole bunch of learning experiences. [C3/p18]

These responses show that the teachers had a clear understanding of the parents' views on messy play. Sally's and Kelly's juxtapositioning of the parents' views as sitting in opposition to the early childhood discourses of *exploration* and *independence* embedded in the New Zealand early childhood curriculum clearly demonstrates that the teachers saw the views of the parents as problematic. By taking such discourses as their frame of reference, teachers appear to share their "expert" knowledge with parents without considering that Middle Eastern parents who are not

brought up in New Zealand might not be familiar with these discourses and the rationale behind them. Also, those who *are* familiar might not necessarily agree with the assumptions behind these discourses. Therefore, teachers' (over)reliance on the dominant discourses can function like a tool that can potentially silence and marginalise Middle Eastern families whose worldviews and traditions are different. Broadly speaking, it can advertently or inadvertently marginalise *any* non-dominant and "different" discourse and lead to a forced assimilation into the dominant culture (see Hall, 2006 for a detailed discussion on the notion of 'discourse'). The use of "they" and "we" pronouns in teachers' comments can be read as 'othering' the parents and as positioning them as outsiders. It is also suggestive of the power imbalance in teacher-parent relationships. This process of othering and the percieved marginalised position of Middle Eastern parents here can be connected to colonial ideas that aimed to assimilate the indigeneous populations worldwide, including the Māori in New Zealand. According to Carlsson (2020, p. 274), "It [settler colonialism] strives to *replace* the indigenous with the dominant language and culture of the majority". If we consider New Zealand as a bicultural country that is also home to people from a vast diversity of backgrounds, challenging the dominant discourses in any aspect of life becomes a necessity for fostering a truly inclusive society.

The following statement by Joe illustrates a different approach to the same issue:

> **Joe (T)**: Most of the time, Middle Eastern parents do not appreciate the messy play. I talked to them, and they told me that the sight of coming in and seeing their child with paint all over them freaks them out a little bit. So, from my experience it has been that messy play seems to be ok as long as children are clean when parents come. What I do is that I let them engage in messy play and then I will change them into clean clothes. [C2/p26]

Here, Joe's acknowledgement of Middle Eastern parents' expectations around messy play and his openness to negotiate practices meant that instead of the parents' expectations being silenced and negated the differences were turned into a new hybrid practice of changing the Middle Eastern children into clean clothes after they had engaged in messy play. Joe was also the only one of the three interviewed teachers who could think of an explanation for this parental expecatation:

> **Joe (T):** I think it comes down to learning through play being more familiar here, so for instance when Kiwi parents see their children dirty, they see their child has been playing all day, so they've been learning, so it's more accepted. [C2/p26]

Interestingly, although in his previous comment, Joe touched on the importance of *cleanliness* for Middle Eastern parents, his explanation for the apparent disparities between teachers' and some Middle Eastern parents' views of messy play was limited by his pedagogical lens. Joe's explanation revolved around the concept of messy play as learning and it did not occur to him that an alternative explanation might be families' cultural and religious values, among other things.

In the following section I discuss another expectation that can be linked to and shaped by families' values, this time related to practices around 'eating and drinking'.

Eating and Drinking

Parent's Perspective

Noor was the only interviewed parent who expected teachers to attend to Isa's eating at the centre:

> **Noor (P):** I have always ensured I was meeting Isa's daily needs for him, and I expect teachers to help Isa with food and make sure that he is eating enough food at the centre. [Orig.A]

As already mentioned earlier, Middle Eastern parents tend to show their care and affection to their children through instrumental support and do not often emphasise early independence in self-care skills such as self-feeding (Abadeh, 2006). This is reflected in Noor's statement as she shared: "I have always ensured I was meeting his daily needs for him".

Teachers' Perspectives

Three of the interviewed teachers recounted their view of Middle Eastern parents' expectations related to the routine care activities of eating and drinking:

> **Sally (T):** The other expectation is around routine activities. They are concerned if their children eat enough, drink enough…From teachers' perspective, we cannot force children to eat, we support children to do these activities themselves. [C4/p11]
>
> **Kelly (T):** The other big pattern that I have noticed would be around feeding. We encourage children to feed themselves independently, but there are quite a few Middle Eastern children who do not know how to feed themselves…. So, wanting us to feed their children for instance would be the thing I have noticed most as well. [C3/p18]
>
> **Mia (T):** It might be a personal thing for that person, but it was quite difficult to get one of the Middle Eastern fathers to understand that his child was a little bit more mature than what he thought, and she was capable of doing a lot of routine tasks herself. So, the difficulty was getting him to understand where we were coming from. [C1/p8]

Similar to their response to the messy play expectation, the three teachers took the dominant discourse of *independence* as their frame of reference. When teachers interpret things only from their cultural perspective, they not only misunderstand, but also run the risk of disenfranchising parents' knowledge. This is reflected in the last comment as Mia attributed the Middle Eastern father's behaviour to inadequate knowledge of his child. Previous research has found that immigrants' parental knowledge is often perceived negatively by teachers as deficient and subordinated by professional knowledge (see Reiff, et al., 2000; Chan & Ritchie, 2016; Arzubiaga et al, 2009).

Toileting

Three of the interviewed parents mentioned their special toileting practice as an expectation for their child. In other words, they expected that their children should learn to use water to clean themselves after using the toilet.

> **Noor (P):** Using toilet paper was an issue because we are Muslim and we wash with water. That was an expectation, you know, but he adapted himself, he now wets the tissue and uses it that way. I did not teach him, he learnt this by himself. He said 'mum, there is no water to use so I put water on tissue, then I use it'. I really liked that he could find a way

to adapt himself at the centre. When he comes home, he washes himself because I had taught him to do so. [Orig.A]

Laila (P): About water in toileting…it is different. In the centre, she is trained to use toilet paper, but I taught her to use water at home because that is how we do it as Muslims. [Orig.A]

Reyhan (P): One thing which was not pleasant for me, but it is normal here in New Zealand is the toileting practice…because in Saudi we wash in the toilet, but here they do not wash. Samar cleans herself with tissue paper in the centre, but I insist on using water at home and whenever Samar comes back from school, she takes a shower. [Orig.E]

Although the three parents maintained their special toileting practice at home, they adjusted themselves to the context of early childhood centres and accepted the centres' different toileting practice. Noor explained that Isa wet the tissue and used it to clean himself at the centre whereas he washed himself at home illustrating Isa's awareness of different rules and practices between the two contexts of home and the centre and his ability to differentiate which practice was appropriate in each context. The statement, "Mum, there is no water to use, so I put water on tissue then I use it" suggests that Isa adapted himself by creatively blending aspects of both cultures and creating an effective strategy to replace the existing unworkable practices. According to Guo and Dalli (2012), children sometimes create hybrid practices to participate in cultural communities different from their own.

Interviews with the teachers revealed that they were not aware of this toileting expectation of parents. When I asked parents if they shared this expectation with teachers, they said that they were not comfortable talking about such topics with teachers. Reyhan explained:

Reyhan (P): Because I know that they will find it surprising and think why I ask for that and 'do you think you are clean, and we are dirty! [Orig.E]

Reyhan's reservation clearly shows an element of fear about being misunderstood by the teachers indicating the much-reported sense of lack of security experienced by some immigrant parents (Guo, 2010; Ovando et al., 2002). Middle Easterners and Arabs have historically been subjected to hygiene-shaming. Some have been called uncivilised for having squat toilets instead of

Western-style seats (Dawood, 2020). Being able to talk to teachers about unorthodox topics (e.g., use of water in toileting) can contribute to the creation of a truly inclusive space for Middle Eastern parents and their children. While expectations, such as the toileting expectation, might not be able to be fulfilled due to the dynamics of the New Zealand society, the feeling of *being listened to* without further assumptions can help develop more constructive relationships between parents and teachers, thereby positively impacting children's experiences.

The following statement illuminates Noor's explanation for not communicating her toileting expectation to the teachers:

> **Noor (P):** I don't want to embarrass them. It's their job and they know what to do. I don't want to ask for something that's against their practices [Orig.A]

This is another example of the cultural dynamics that were at play between the Middle Eastern parents and the teachers. Noor's comment clearly reflects her attitude of compliance and conformity to teachers. Her statement, "I don't want to embarrass [teachers]", suggests her concern to save teachers' face and keep intact their respectful image as authorities. For some Middle Easterners, acting to save face is a common cultural practice. This practice sometimes inhibits them from openly confronting people about difficult topics and, in their view, causing people personal embarrassment.

Nappy Changing and Modest Clothing for Girls

Three of the interviewed teachers recounted their understandings of Middle Eastern parents' expectations related to nappy changing and modest clothing for girls:

> **Kelly (T):** We must be mindful about clothing sometimes… because over here children can wear singlets but then some of the Muslim girls are not allowed. For example, one of the girls got wet and did not have any extra clothing apart from a singlet so another teacher thought it would be ok. The mum came in and just explained that she needs to have long-sleeved and long-legged clothing. She was fine. She was really kind at explaining it to the teachers. [C3/p3]

> **Sally (T):** Some Middle Eastern mothers do not want male teachers to change their daughters' nappies or helping with the toilet... These mothers are a little more timid around

men. For example, when one of the Muslim girls was in her nappies, her mum told us that they do not want male teachers to change her. Although this is different from my personal beliefs, but I respected them. [C4/p5]

Joe (T): Quite a lot of Muslim families do not want male teachers to change their daughters' nappies. Personally, I struggle with the whole idea of a man not able to change nappies and that is just because of my own upbringing. That is my own beliefs in gender roles and stereotypes and around what the job of a teacher constitutes, and that is one of the aspects. So, that has been a personal struggle for me, but I respect their values. I just continue to reflect on it and not take it personally. [C2/p11]

Clearly some Middle Eastern parents might have certain requirements around their daughters' clothing and nappy changing which are not consistent with teachers' routine practices and, at times, with their personal beliefs. Kelly appreciated the knowledge and the guidance shared by one of the Middle Eastern parents that her daughter was required to wear "long-sleeved and long-legged clothing". Although young girls are not required to wear hijab in Islam, Kelly's comment indicates that some Muslim families might request a certain dress code for their daughters since the degree of covering they percieve as proper for their daughters might be different, depending on their belief or culture. Sally and Joe shared that some Middle Eastern parents were not comfortable with the idea of men changing their daughters' nappies or tending to their bathroom needs. Sally described such Middle Eastern mothers as being "a little more timid around men". This timidity may come from the conservative Islamic norms that prevent women from interacting freely with the opposite sex and accordingly not allowing their daughters to be touched by a male teacher, particularly for their toileting needs.

The recurrent use of the word "Muslim" in the above comments suggests teachers' awareness that the conveyed expectations stemmed from the religious values of the parents. Although the expectations conflicted with teachers' personal upbringings and routine practices, all three teachers expressed an openness to respecting the parents' wishes and to transforming their practices in line with these wishes. Kelly and Sally's openness in relation to clothing and nappy changing expectations is interesting when compared to their response to the earlier expectations whose rationale they simply negated rather than tried to negotiate. It raises the prospect that greater

openness to different expectations might be possible when there is a better understanding of the reasons behind them.

4.3 Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I have discussed the results pertaining to Middle Eastern parents' expectations of their children's early childhood centres, both as these were articulated by the parents themselves in the survey and the case study interviews, as well as from the point of view of the case study teachers. Although parents' expectations were the main focus of this chapter, I also discussed teachers' practices in relation to the identified expectations. Using thematic analysis of the data, I identified three types of expectations related to: 'early education focused on academic and social skills', 'routine care activities', and 'cultural visibility'.

I have argued that some of the expectations of the Middle Eastern parents were incongruent with the dominant discourses upheld by the New Zealand early childhood teachers in this study. For instance, some of the parents mentioned the importance of incorporating structured educational experiences into early childhood programmes, while others referred to their original culture to question the early independence in self-care skills promoted by the teachers. When I asked the case-study teachers' perspectives, all of them acknowledged the different viewpoints, however, when questioned further, there were no sense that the teachers would be prepared to question their own assumptions in order to accommodate the parents' expectations, with three of the four teachers continuing to emphasise the importance of 'early independence' and 'learning through play'. These teachers effectively dismissed the Middle Eastern parents' expectations on the grounds that they contradicted, or did not fit within, the early childhood curriculum in New Zealand. Two of them seemed to think in terms of "fixing" Middle Eastern parents as they did not reflect Western childrearing values. A notable feature in the teachers' interviews was the repetitive use of the pronoun "we" when explaining their views in relation to Middle Eastern parents' expectations. While the use of "we" seems natural for someone who is representing an early childhood centre, when juxtaposed with the negation of parental expectations, this discourse could signal a top-down, us-and-them approach which could inhibit collaboration with parents. This raises important implications for exploring strategies, both discursive and practical, that might be used to strengthen the trust between Middle Eastern parents and early childhood teachers in New Zealand.

Overall, the pattern that emerged from the teachers' interviews was that of repeated references to their practices as reflecting dominant early childhood discourses and Western/individualistic notions of good child-rearing. While this recourse to dominant discourse acted to support the ideas the teachers put forward, by implication they also negated parents' expectations that were "unorthodox" from the dominantly Western New Zealand perspective. This indicates teachers' lack of criticality and self-awareness that is unhelpful when seeking to bridge cultural divides. It also raises questions about how open the teachers were to work flexibly with the Middle Eastern parents. Recognition that ideas of "good child-rearing" are culturally bound can be the first step to opening the door to other perspectives about the world, including the child-rearing world of Middle Eastern parents. Only one of the teachers, Joe, challenged the dominant discourses: Joe actively engaged in conversations with Middle Eastern parents in an effort to better understand their expectations and help them come to grips with teachers' practices. This approach seemed to help Joe find a middle ground in his practices, enabling him to negotiate the differences, and incorporate families' expectations into the programme. These two different approaches by the case-study teachers have important implications for teacher practices. When teachers apply a third-space philosophy and look at differences as complementary rather than contradictory, or as different points along a continuum, they may be able to address them in a more responsive way. In other words, when teachers consider themselves as partners rather than advisers, it is a step in the direction toward increasing authentic communication and decreasing power differentials.

The findings indicate that most of the Middle Eastern parents were comfortable navigating within their culture of origin as well as that of their country or residence, or the culture of destination. They were moving along a continuum, sometimes they aligned more closely to their culture of origin, while other times they moved closer to their culture of destination. For instance, certain practices such as 'nappy changing and clothing' that were religiously derived were mostly maintained from the culture of origin, but there were indications in the data that facets of personality such as 'self-assertion' might over time develop to fit more closely to the culture of destination. With respect to their special toileting practice, the parents adapted themselves to the context of centres because they wanted their children to fit in, but attributed importance to cultural maintenance in private contexts because they wanted to inculcate their values in their children. Rather than relying on one set of cultural practices, some parents also mixed elements of the cultures of origin and destination and created third-space practices (see Reyhan's practices around messy play and early education).

The findings also indicate that some Middle Eastern parents chose not to communicate their expectations to the teachers. As discussed throughout the chapter, several factors could have contributed to these parents' decision, including parents' cultural attitudes toward teachers as authority figures; the fear of being misunderstood by teachers and other stakeholders at the centres; and previous negative encounters with teachers. The special toileting practice of some of the parents represents a group of expectations that are rarely communicated to the teachers but are important for some Middle Eastern parents. The parents mentioned that their toileting practice was different, but they were uncomfortable to broach the subject with the teachers. It is clear that if teachers are to fulfil their professional responsibility, they need to be aware of the possibility of these dynamics being at play and plan to overcome them. For instance, they need to uncover what underlies parents' discomfort. As I have discussed, some of the challenges that Middle Eastern families face in the context of New Zealand ECE go back to different perceptions of partnership and authority. Therefore, instead of sticking to regular practices, early childhood teachers can benefit from reaching out to parents with the intention of creating authentic and mutually trustful relationships with them. Having open discussions about these uncomfortable topics can create a culture of openness among parents and teachers, which can in turn minimise misunderstandings and foster parent-teacher collaboration.

The next chapter will focus primarily on teachers' practices and perspectives with respect to Middle Eastern families and their children.

5. Early Childhood Teachers' Practices and Perceptions with Respect to Middle Eastern Families

In this chapter, I focus on answering the second research question of the study:

- What are early childhood teachers' practices and perspectives with respect to Middle Eastern families?

As explained in chapter three, I investigated the first half of the above research question – teachers' practices when working with Middle Eastern families – both in the survey and during parent/teacher interviews; I then explored teachers' perspectives of Middle Eastern families – the second half of the question – during my interviews with the case study teachers. In this chapter I bring that data together and discuss it through constructs from hybridity theory (Bhabha, 1994), critical multiculturalism (May, 1999; McLaren, 1995), and funds of knowledge (González, 2005; González et al., 2006; González & Moll, 2002).

5.1 Teachers' Practices: What the Surveyed Parents Thought

The survey included a section in which parents were asked about any practices that were adapted specifically for them in their children's early childhood centres. Twenty-eight (33%) of the respondents stated that they did not perceive the teachers to have adapted their usual practices in any way when interacting with them and their child. I grouped these responses under the heading of 'no specific practices noticed' and I elaborate on them at the end of this section. Fifty-six of the parents reported one or more practices that they felt were specially tailored to respond to them as Middle Eastern parents. I discuss these practices in the first three sections under this heading, grouped around the themes of: celebrating cultural and religious events; accommodating dietary requirements; and learning about Middle Eastern families.

5.1.1 Celebrating Cultural and Religious Events

Thirty-five (42%) of the surveyed parents were appreciative of how their cultural and religious celebrations were acknowledged and included by the teachers and provided positive comments about teachers' efforts in this regard. Comments included the following:

> They celebrate our cultural festivals like Persian New Year, Nowruz[11], and religious events like Eid al-Fitr[12]. I feel included and I really appreciate their efforts for that. [Orig.F]
>
> We celebrate Ramadan and Eid at the centre. I think these are just amazing practices because children, parents and teachers work together and learn from one another. [Orig.E]
>
> They invited us to celebrate Jewish holidays and sing the Jewish Hanukkah song at the time of their Christmas party. [Orig.E]
>
> They celebrate our cultural festivals and the beautiful thing is that they respect the differences between cultures and try to teach those differences to kids. [Orig.A]
>
> The centre shows interest in different cultures and religions and tries to represent those of the children who attend in different ways. For example, last year the centre held celebrations for Eid, Diwali and Christmas and I could build positive relationships with two of the teachers and some of the parents through these events. [Orig.A]
>
> They promote our culture by, for example, asking us to set up a Haft-seen[13] table during Persian New Year. It was an awesome experience for me and my child because everyone was engaged and helped. Also, they told me that they learned a lot and to be honest I learn a lot when they do the same for other cultures. [Orig.F]

This group of parents appreciated that teachers gave them opportunities to celebrate their important events. More important than *celebration* of their holidays, they appreciated that they could "work together", "learn from one another", "build positive relationships", and were "included" in the programme. The parents were happy to have been invited to support teachers in organising the cultural activities by providing resources and insights into their traditions and cultures. They also expressed appreciation when teachers went beyond that to "respect the differences between cultures and teach those differences to kids". Overall, it appears that teachers could use holiday

[11] Nowruz, the Persian New Year, marks the beginning of spring in the Northern hemisphere and begins on the first day of Farvardin, the first month of the Iranian solar calendar.
[12] Eid al-Fitr is a religious holiday celebrated by Muslims worldwide. It marks the end of the month of Ramadan.
[13] Haft-seen ('Haft' is the number seven in Persian; 'seen' is the 15th letter of the Persian alphabet) is an arrangement of seven symbolic items whose names start with the letter 'seen'. It is traditionally displayed at Nowruz, the Iranian New Year.

celebrations as opportunities to bring everyone together and promote parents' sense of community and empowerment. As stated by Bisson (2016), if multicultural teacher practices such as holiday celebrations are reflective of individual families' values and are not handled in a tokenistic fashion, they could open up opportunities for parental involvement and enable teachers and families to build stronger relationships.

5.1.2 Accommodating Dietary Requirements

Eleven (13%) of the respondents mentioned teachers' attention to families' dietary requirements – mainly halal food provision – as one way of including them in the programme.

> They ensure to serve halal food. [Orig.E]
>
> They understand our halal dietary needs. [Orig.E]
>
> I explained my daughter's Islamic dietary requirements and the centre provides the food she can have. [Orig.E]
>
> Teachers first thought that we have dietary restrictions around pork and non-halal items, but I explained to them that we have no such restrictions. However, my child is allergic to certain food items that I informed teachers about and they've been following my instructions ever since. [Orig.A]
>
> I'm not really strict on my child having halal food, but they did it automatically so that's fine. [Orig.F]

The submitted responses mainly indicate teachers' adoption of halal food practices for Middle Eastern families. While providing halal food may be well-intentioned and would seem consistent with providing an inclusive curriculum, adoption of this practice in an unreflective manner runs the risk of stereotypic thinking that perpetuates cultural essentialism, cementing the idea that cultures remain unchanged. In the first three comments above, the parents were appreciative of teachers' provision of halal food; however, the other two parents did not prefer a halal diet for their children. While González et al. (2006) suggested teachers to view everyday practices of families as dynamic and emergent, the last two comments reflect that some teachers' multicultural understandings were based on what might be considered as a stereotypical perception about Middle

Easterners' food preferences. In accordance with this perception, they provided halal food for all Middle Eastern families without inquiring about whether this was what they preferred, or how strictly each individual parent wished to adhere to halal restrictions. This suggests teachers' lack of criticality and their reliance on a surface-level understanding of Middle Eastern culture.

5.1.3 Learning about Middle Eastern Families

Ten (12%) of the respondents expressed an appreciation for teachers' efforts in taking the time to get to know them:

> They meet my expectations when they care about my culture. I really like that they approach me, ask questions and have conversations to gain information about what we do because then they use that information to create a better experience for children. [Orig.E]

> The most important thing for me is when teachers put time and show genuine interest in getting to know us. [Orig.E]

> Teachers make effort to learn about us to then include us more effectively. For example, once they asked me what games we have for children in our culture and when I told them, they incorporated that in the programme. [Orig.A]

The focus of this group of parents was on their appreciation of the genuine and deliberate efforts teachers made to get to know them and their culture. These parents clearly articulated their view that teachers needed to first learn about them to then be able to include them in the programme and "create a better experience for [their] children". As the last parent above said, the specific practices for implementing inclusion will follow from this knowledge. According to González and Moll (2002), one way to move beyond the stereotypes, is for teachers to devote time and learn about each individual family by listening to their input. In this way, they know where to begin and how to move forward.

5.1.4 No Specific Practices Noticed

Twenty-eight (33%) of the respondents did not perceive the teachers to have adapted their practices to respond to particular characteristics of their children. Not all these responses were critical of

such a situation. In fact, some parents showed appreciation for it, as I elaborate on later in this section. But just over half of the parents (n=16) who responded to this question were somewhat critical of what they perceived to be a general lack of interest in them as a particular cultural group. Sample responses from this category are as follows:

> The centre is not placing any emphasis on my culture or religion. [Orig.E]
>
> The centre does not generally include anything from my child's culture. [Orig.E]
>
> They do not have any special practices for us. [Orig.A]
>
> The centre does well to celebrate other children's cultural festivals (for example, through decorations and special morning tea), but I have not yet seen any particular practice associated with Middle Eastern/Muslim culture, which is sad. I and other Middle Eastern parents at the centre were wondering if we should initiate something ourselves or talk to teachers about it but have not felt comfortable doing so just yet. [Orig.E]

Noting that culture is central to children's learning and development (Shareef, 2020), the above comments suggest that some early childhood teachers in New Zealand do not implement a culturally responsive pedagogy, thus leading some families to feel culturally invisible within the centres. In her review of the literature on critical multiculturalism in early childhood settings, Chan (2011) noted a similar trend and argued that there was a general lack of inclusive practices for children and families from diverse cultural backgrounds. In the case of one of the Middle Eastern parents cited above, the lack of inclusive practices for Middle Eastern families was observed to be further noteworthy because it contrasted with the fact that other cultural groups appeared to be better acknowledged by the teachers. This lack of consistency with regards to catering for different cultural groups was a source of sadness for this parent and illustrates that the cultural visibility of selected groups but not others is not only discriminatory but is hurtful to the invisible groups. *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017, p. 12) is promoted as an inclusive "curriculum for all children", but immigrant families' *actual* experience of inclusion is what matters most: "respecting the cultural diversity among the families you serve means recognizing that all have the right to their traditions…. It does mean that you make choices that do not disrespect or leave out any family" (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2019, para. 8).

The parent's comment that "I and other Middle Eastern parents at the centre were wondering if we should initiate something ourselves or talk to teachers about it but have not felt comfortable doing so just yet" reflects a frequent theme discussed throughout the thesis – that parents feel uncomfortable initiating a discussion about their expectations with teachers, a finding reported also by Zhang (2012) about Chinese immigrant parents. This parental discomfort is unlikely to dissipate when parents perceive themselves to be invisible.

Overall, the above comments highlight the importance of teachers' culturally inclusive practices in making parents feel comfortable and encouraged to participate and communicate. Considering Aotearoa New Zealand's bicultural context and its increasingly diverse cultural and ethnic composition, Ritchie (2008) urges teachers to not only "deliver a curriculum that requires inclusive representation of Māori … their language and culture" (p. 202), but also one which goes beyond the Māori-Pākehā dichotomy in order to be inclusive of children from all other backgrounds. Similarly, Chan and Ritchie (2020) indicated that "the multiplicity of Māori, Pākehā, and migrant families' specific linguistic and cultural funds of knowledge should all be recognised and included" (p. 232).

Contrary to the group of 16 respondents who perceived teachers' lack of specific practices as a problem, the remaining 12 respondents saw their family's values as having diverged from their traditional ones and thus they were untroubled by the lack of Middle Eastern cultural content in the programme; instead, they accepted the teachers' practices unquestioningly, and even saw value in this approach:

> Teachers don't have any specific practice, but I personally don't follow my culture and I have no religion, so I don't have any complaints. [Orig.E]

> Nothing, but we are not pushing our child to be religious or follow our culture necessarily because we don't follow them either. So, this is not a concern for us. [Orig.E]

> No practice. I should mention that our family is atheist, so it's completely fine. [Orig.E]

> I cannot think of any special practice. To be honest, I don't have any particular emphasis on those aspects as I don't want my son to be looked at as a different child at the centre. We have to accept everything to be accepted. [Orig.A]

The above comments reflect the diversity among Middle Eastern families and the fact that some of them do not necessarily conform to the norms arising from their original culture or religion. The juxtaposition of the words *Middle Eastern* and *atheism* is nowhere near as common as the combination of *Middle Eastern* with *Islam, religiosity,* and the like. Although there has been an increasing understanding of the differences among Middle Easterners in terms of cultural or religious practices (see Alnawar, 2015; Qutub, 2013), the survey responses help situate these differences within the context of New Zealand early childhood centres. They also point to the way some Middle Eastern families choose to assimilate into the host culture, in this case in New Zealand society.

In the last comment above, the parent's statement that: "We have to accept everything to be accepted" further reveals the compromises parents make in the search for acceptance within their host society. While the decision to assimilate within that society can be one that Middle Eastern families make voluntarily – as in this particular parent's case –it is useful to also consider the circumstances that can lead to such a decision. In the case of Middle Eastern families in New Zealand, or in any other Western country for that matter, some families might find it hard living a normal life without significant assimilation (Phillips, 2007; Stuart, 2012). Certain events can give rise to this situation. The 11 September attacks in the US, for example, rekindled a long-simmering islamophobia within US society and abroad (Giger & Davidhizar, 2002). Muslims living in that society were faced with a dilemma, whether to stick to their traditions or assimilate further into the host society to avoid being targeted by extremists (Cainkar, 2002). The same phenomenon, although slightly differently, played out in New Zealand following the attacks on two Christchurch mosques in 2019. Although the majority of New Zealanders showed great support for the family of victims (Boochani, 2021), the fear from those attacks significantly impacted members of minority groups, including the Muslim community (The Royal Commission, 2020).

While the 2002 attacks in the US fed into Islamophobia, the 2019 attacks in Christchurch displayed how far this Islamophobia can go. Middle Eastern parents who took part in the survey might not have specifically mentioned the impact of the Christchurch attacks on their families' decision to further assimilate into the New Zealand society, but some of them did mention the fear they went through in their daily life, or when sending their children to early childhood centres (e.g., "I had personal challenges after Christchurch attacks, I feel worried people know where we come from"

[Orig.A]; “We, as parents, were very anxious in the first weeks after the attacks to send our children to the centres. We were worried about their safety” [Orig.A]). While some families may even decide to strengthen their ties to their beliefs and traditions in the face of such fears, others may take the opposite path. These complex dynamics illustrate very clearly the critical importance of the key principles of social justice and equity that are the foundations of critical multiculturalism; and their implications for early childhood practice (Chan, 2011). According to Maniatis (2012), critical multiculturalism involves creating a better understanding of other cultures and ensuring that there is equity within society amongst all cultural groups.

5.2 Teachers’ Practices: Perceptions from Case Study Data

As noted in chapter three, I used semi-structured interviews with the four teachers and four Middle Eastern parents who took part in the case studies to identify teacher practices aimed at responding to the particular characteristics of Middle Eastern origin children and their families. Through thematic analysis of the interview data, I identified three types of practices which both teachers and parents understood as deliberate attempts by the teachers to be culturally responsive to Middle Eastern families; these practices were identical in nature to those that emerged from the survey data and will be discussed in this section under the same themes as used for the survey data, and in the same order: celebrating cultural and religious events, accommodating dietary requirements, and learning about Middle Eastern families.

5.2.1 Celebrating Cultural and Religious Events

Teachers’ Perspectives

Three of the interviewed teachers described their attempts at incorporating important cultural and religious celebrations of Middle Eastern families into the programme:

> **Joe (T):** We really make the effort to celebrate their culture. When I first started here, one of the Middle Eastern parents said, ‘we really want to celebrate Eid’ and I was like ‘let’s do it’. We worked really hard with a couple of mums and decorated the whole centre. They came and cooked with us in the kitchen the whole day. We put on music and mums came and danced. It is really important for me and other teachers to make a strong effort to

embrace their culture and this would hopefully show them that we care about their culture and it can be represented here. [C2/p13]

Mia (T): We try to celebrate important occasions. For instance, for the Persian New Year, Maryam helped us in preparing everything. We had the mat time and Ava was able to share that with all of the children, so we try to empower them to be proud of where they come from. [C1/p12]

Sally (T): What we do is to make sure that we celebrate different occasions, like Eids. We want to make sure that we nurture their culture and families usually come and help us in celebrating their culture. [C4/p21]

The above comments suggest teachers' openness to including Middle Eastern families' important occasions in the programme. Joe exhibited this openness when he said: "One of the Middle Eastern parents said, 'we really wanna celebrate Eid' and I was like 'let's do it'". He continued by saying that Middle Eastern families' culture "can be represented here". This is in line with one of the objectives of hybridity theory as elaborated by Bhabha (1994): cultures should negotiate with each other, rather than negating each other. Similarly, the teachers' openness to celebrating Eid suggests that these teachers were implicitly enacting one of the basic principles of critical multiculturalism (Chan 2014): seeking to move away from imposing the ideas of the dominant culture and instead moving towards a sharing of power. In the same vein, Maniatis (2012) indicates that critical multiculturalism challenges "the traditional political and cultural hegemony of the dominant group. Its basic feature is the request for complete restructuring and renegotiation of the relations of power and authority between the cultural groups, confirming in this way its emancipatory character…" (p. 159). Joe expressed his hopes that embracing families' culture would "show them that we care about their culture". Similarly, Mia indicated that the practice of celebrating families' important occasions was a way to "empower them to be proud of where they come from". The above teachers' efforts in observing Middle Eastern families' festive occasions could be a nod to the cultural diversity aspiration of the curriculum (MoE, 2017, p. 15). As Reedy and Reedy have put it, "*Te Whāriki* rests on the theory that all children will succeed in education when the foundations to their learning are based on an understanding and a respect for their cultural roots" (2013, as cited in MoE, 2017, p. 11).

What is also interesting in the above comments is the cooperation between teachers and parents in celebrating families' important occasions. This element of cooperation is reflected in Joe's comment when he said: "We worked really hard with a couple of mums and decorated the whole centre. They came and cooked with us in the kitchen the whole day". Mia stated that Maryam "helped in preparing everything" for the Persian New Year. Also, Sally mentioned that "families usually come and help us in celebrating their culture". These statements suggest that the respective teachers could promote parental involvement by including families' important occasions in the programme. According to González and Moll (2002), one of the objectives of the funds of knowledge approach is creating meaningful opportunities for cooperation between teachers and families.

Kelly was the only interviewed teacher who did not mention celebrating families' important occasions as a practice within her centre. Kelly reflected:

> **Kelly (T):** We have a list of cultural activities that we do, but to be honest I don't believe any of the compulsory ones are…We have a list of compulsory ones that we must include in our programme, we have a list like we get a book…I have a book in here which shows me occasions that we can celebrate and I cannot think of any that would be Middle Eastern. [C3/p10]

Clearly, the festive occasions of Middle Eastern families were not incorporated in the programme at Kelly's centre. One interpretation of this finding could be that Middle Eastern families in the centre had not highlighted or celebrated their festive holidays at all. The presence of frequent pauses in the comment could be an indication of Kelly's uncertainty about Middle Eastern holidays, which could come from a lack of communication about such events between the centre teachers and Middle Eastern families. Moreover, Kelly's reference to "a book with a list of *compulsory* [my italics] cultural activities" might suggest the centre teachers' (over)reliance on a fixed list of cultural activities that need to take place every year. Even if certain activities worked for families in the past, new families in the programme might not celebrate the same holidays. Thus, a list of compulsory cultural activities is of limited use in a diverse learning environment because it takes ongoing communication with families to determine what holidays should be celebrated. According to Bisson (2016), "with each new group of children …comes an opportunity

to reevaluate what we have done in the past, to get to know the children in our classroom and design curriculum with them in mind" (p. 14).

Parents' Perspectives

Although I did not observe any instances of Middle Eastern families' celebrations during my field work, three of the interviewed parents made positive comments about teachers' efforts in acknowledging their festive occasions. The parents also appreciated that they were given the chance to contribute actively to the occasions:

> **Laila (P):** They celebrate different Eids. After the Eid, they have a small party and they invite everybody, parents from all the cultures to share Eid. In such times, I'd like to contribute and help them as much as I can because I feel so grateful. [Orig.A]
>
> **Maryam (P):** They celebrate important events from all cultures. We all attend, and this strengthens the relationship between teachers and parents. Also, they teach children about different cultures, and this improves children's understanding of their own culture and other cultures. [Orig.F]
>
> **Noor (P):** They celebrate Eids. We, parents, go to the centre and help teachers with decorations and cooking and children play and enjoy, which is really amazing. [Orig.A]

Laila, Maryam, and Noor saw merit in teachers' efforts to accommodate the celebrating of important occasions. They were of the view that these efforts promote parent-teacher partnerships, enhance families' sense of belonging, and strengthen children's cultural competence, all of which were mentioned by the participant teachers as ideal outcomes. Laila talked about how teachers' efforts had increased her motivation to become more actively involved at the centre: "In such times, I'd like to contribute and help them as much as I can because I feel so grateful".

In her comment above, Maryam highlighted the difference between *teaching about* different holidays and *celebrating* them. To her, the former approach "improves children's understanding of their own culture and other cultures", while the latter "strengthens the relationship between teachers and parents". This perceptive comment reflects the distinction between tokenistic celebration of festive holidays and deeper engagement with various cultural representations that

has also been noted in the existing literature on this topic. Bisson (2016), for instance, elaborates on this exact distinction stating that teaching about a holiday broadens children's idea of what a holiday is and prepares them for living in a diverse society, while the mere celebration of an event might feed the assumption of one right way of doing so.

5.2.2 Accommodating Dietary Requirements

Teachers' Perspective

All four interviewed teachers reported providing Middle Eastern parents with the opportunity to indicate any dietary restrictions that they wanted observed for their children. In most cases, this information was exchanged at the time of enrolment:

> **Kelly (T):** We do the eating requirements: we ask parents at the time of enrolment, so we make sure that what we are providing is culturally sensitive. For example, we know if this child can't have pork or… [C3/p24]

> **Joe (T):** We ask them if they have any dietary requirements when they start. For example, we provide halal food for some of our Middle Eastern children and their parents. [C2/p16]

> **Sally (T):** Some Middle Eastern families told us that they are not ok with pork products, so we make sure that we provide them with food that they can have. [C4/p18]

> **Mia (T):** Usually when parents enrol their children, we ask if they have any specific dietary needs... [C1/p15]

Teachers indicated that identifying families' dietary requirements was mainly through reaching out to them and asking them directly to share their requirements. According to González (2005), the best way to identify and understand funds of household knowledge is to engage with individual families and learn about their everyday practices, rather than making assumptions based on stereotypes.

Parents' Perspectives

Three of the interviewed parents similarly indicated that teachers' awareness of their dietary requirements was achieved through direct communication.

> **Noor (P):** I have told them that we can only have halal food and whenever there is a celebration or event, they make sure that they provide halal food next to other food for us. This feels really good. [Orig.A]

> **Laila (P):** I told them that we are Muslim, and they know that my child doesn't eat pork sausage. They are very considerate, even when they barbecue, they always start with halal meat, then pork, and other meat. [Orig.A]

> **Reyhan (P):** I think they care about kids and the differences because when I told them that I'm Muslim and Samar cannot have something that contains pork, they cared a lot and instantly started to write notes. One day, I forgot to pack Samar's lunchbox. I was at work and one of the teachers called me and reassured me that I don't need to worry because they have halal food at the centre that they can give to Samar…That day I realised that they genuinely care, and I trust them. [Orig.E]

It appears that these parents were not only appreciative of teachers' acknowledgement of their dietary needs, but also of the *way* they acknowledged these needs. Noor, for instance, mentioned that teachers "always make sure that they provide halal food next to other food" and her sense of appreciation came through when she said: "This feels really good". Similarly, Laila highlighted that "even when they barbecue, they always start with halal meet". Likewise, Reyhan expressed how teachers' *genuine* care made her trust them.

Like the other three parents, Maryam mentioned that teachers inquired about Ava's eating restrictions. However, she was the only parent interviewed who had no halal dietary requirements, and her comment indicates the heterogeneity among Middle Eastern parents.

> **Maryam (P):** The teachers at the current centre asked me about Ava's dietary requirements and if she eats pork products…I told them 'give her whatever you give to other children. She doesn't have any dietary requirements. [Orig.F]

Maryam also shared how teachers in Ava's first centre had mistakenly assumed that she had to follow certain dietary restrictions:

> **Maryam (P):** In the previous centre, they knew that I am from the Middle East, so they assumed that we are Muslim…So, without consulting me, they did not give Ava certain food items. There was once a celebration at the centre, and they were serving food and I noticed that they had all kinds of sausages, sandwiches, and they gave them to all kids but all they had for Ava was toast and butter. I asked one of the teachers and she said, 'Ava is Muslim, and these are pork meat!' and I was really annoyed and told her 'have I EVER told you that she's Muslim or she doesn't eat pork?! Ava can eat EVERYTHING.' She said, 'We thought she cannot eat pork!' [Orig.F]

As stated by Maryam, the simple fact of Ava coming from a Middle Eastern background was enough for teachers to assume that "Ava is Muslim" and "she does not eat pork". Therefore, they went forward with their assumptions and "did not give Ava certain food items without consulting" her parents. Teachers in Ava's first centre had operated with the stereotypic assumption that Middle Easterners are a homogeneous group of Muslims who do not eat pork. This reveals that some teachers can have essentialised views of Middle Eastern culture which lead them to categorise Middle Eastern families as having the same funds of knowledge (González et al., 2006) and identical needs. Maryam's comment not only reveals teachers' problematic approach in identifying Ava's dietary requirements, it also suggests a lack of fluidity and authenticity in their practices. More specifically, the statement "I noticed that they had all kinds of sausages, sandwiches, and they gave them to all kids, but all they had for Ava was toast and butter", suggests that even when teachers assumed Ava could only have halal diet, they failed to provide proper halal food for her.

It was evident from Maryam's facial expressions and her tone during the interview that she was annoyed at teachers for making assumptions based on her ethnicity. Maryam directly communicated how she felt at the time when she said: "I was really annoyed and told her 'have I ever told you that she's Muslim or she doesn't eat pork?! Ava can eat everything". This indicates that as much as parents can be appreciative of teachers' acknowledgment of their dietary requirements, making assumptions about how families live their life without exploring each issue on an individual basis can have an alienating impact on them. Previous research has shown that

the prevalence of stereotypes about a certain cultural group could lead to their segregation and decreased interaction within the host culture (Alkharusi, 2013; Britto, 2008). In this regard, critical multiculturalism encourages teachers to deconstruct cultural and ethnic essentialism and "engage critically with all ethnic and cultural backgrounds, including their own" (May, 1999, p. 33). Such deconstruction would enhance teachers' ability to recognise the dynamics of status, power, and privilege that play out in the interactions between ethnic and cultural groups, and teachers' own ability to take action to redress power imbalances.

5.2.3 Learning about Middle Eastern Families

Teachers' Perspectives

All four interviewed teachers mentioned communicating with Middle Eastern families to learn about them as one of their practices and expressed varying levels of fluidity and compromise in this practice. Joe suggested that they identified Middle Eastern families' values and expectations with the help of the "community navigator" whose role was mainly to bridge the language and culture barriers in teachers' communications with Middle Eastern parents (see 'barriers to Middle Eastern parental involvement' for a more detailed description of the role):

> **Joe (T):** We try to learn about our Middle Eastern families by having several in-depth conversations with them with the help of the community navigator. We sit down and ask them for what they aspire for their children, what their family believes in, and what happens at home. When I learn about their values or expectations, I try to put my upbringing and how I think, to the side for a second and be open and listen to whatever it is they are expecting and try not to judge. It is very easy to judge; try to listen without judgement…We have a key focus every term and we make sure that whatever focus it is, it's represented by their values. For example, we design questions that we put out to these families. Questions about the focus and how they see it in ECE and then we record their voices. Since some families might not speak English, we get the community navigator to translate their voices for us. We then read their voices and cater for the families accordingly. [C2/p21]

The above comment indicates Joe's view of Middle Eastern families as valuable partners in children's early education. It also entails some of Joe's attempts for identifying and incorporating

different aspects of Middle Eastern parents' funds of knowledge. Joe's efforts to learn about Middle Eastern families while suspending his judgements is consistent with the power-balancing objective of critical multicultural pedagogy (May & Sleeter, 2010). Rather than proposing one-way communication practices, Joe understood the importance of engaging Middle Eastern parents in two-way, non-judgmental dialogue to build a trusting relationship. The following comment illustrates Joe's recounting of one such instance:

> **Joe (T):** On a practical level, for example, the teachers meet in the morning and we discuss what kind of environment we gonna set up for the day, so when we think about what is families' value, for example 'structured learning and literacy', we know that that's what they really want, and to be responsive to it, recently we've had the table over there setup as the writing station so when families come in, one of the first activities that children do is to sit down and do some writing and have something quite structured and formalised. It's not necessarily the best representation of our philosophy, but it is an example of how we put their expectations into practice here. So, in my eyes, it's quite restrictive but we are learning about them and building the opportunities for them to be involved in the programme. [C2/p23]

In response to the 'structured learning' expectation of some Middle Eastern parents, Joe mentioned that they negotiated their practices and designed relevant learning activities including "set[ting] up a writing station so when families come in, one of the first activities that children do is to sit down and do some writing and have something quite structured and formalised". The use of 'we' and 'them' pronouns in Joe's comment, "we are learning about them", is different from the 'us and them view' discussed in chapter four. The latter combination was used to negate parental expectations that were different from the dominant discourses, but here Joe was explaining a real difference of expectations that needs to be negotiated. As reflected in Joe's last statement above, this practice was done to "build opportunities" for parents so they can engage in the programme. Overall, Joe described how they moved along the continuum from initiating dialogues with Middle Eastern families to negotiating centre practices and incorporating families' expectations into the programme, even though some of these expectations were not congruent with the dominant discourses of the curriculum.

Mia, another interviewed teacher, also mentioned learning about families as one of their practices:

> **Mia (T):** We talk to our Middle Eastern parents to find out what's important for them. Then we talk in a team about how we would incorporate whatever it was and try to get it in the routine of the day. For example, when Ava first started, her parents told us that she loves dancing to Persian music. So, we incorporated lots of Persian music for her. The first time we put on the music her mum used to play for her at home, she recognised it was familiar and then got really excited and danced…She did it at home and here, so it was promoting her sense of belonging and continuity between the two contexts. [C1/p11]

Like Joe, Mia described the process of learning about families and their children to implement concrete practices. Mia mentioned that making connections with home practices and including experiences that were familiar to Ava were aimed to support "her sense of belonging and continuity between the two contexts" of home and centre. According to González et al. (2006), when the knowledge that children are already familiar with is integrated into the educational settings, learning becomes more meaningful. Another interviewed teacher, Sally, described her centre's strategies for learning about Middle Eastern families:

> **Sally (T):** When they enrol, we've got these aspiration sheets and we ask questions like 'what are you interested in?', 'what do you want for your child?', and 'what are your expectations?'. That's the first step and then we have informal conversations. I personally take the time to get to know them, I sit and chat with them… I make an effort to learn Arabic words and use as much Arabic I know with Middle Eastern children, so I try to represent things that children are familiar with. [C4/p22]

Sally mentioned that the process of learning about families' interests, needs, and aspirations begins at the time of enrolment and continues through "informal conversations". Similar to Joe and Mia, Sally mentioned concrete practices such as "learning Arabic words" and using them with Middle Eastern children "to represent things that children are familiar with" in the programme.

Kelly described their approach for understanding families' goals for their children as a general approach while suggesting a lack of specific awareness of Middle Eastern families' values:

> **Kelly (T):** We sit down and have a chat about their goals and what they want from us while their child is here, and we do activities that help children achieve those goals. So, when they first enrol, we do about six weeks, two months and then we have a catch up. After

> that, the parent-teacher meetings are biannually, and we just talk about where their child's at and maybe some skills that they've grown and we noticed…I'm not sure if Middle Eastern families have been very well communicated about what their values are, so that's something we could definitely work on. I imagine just increasing our knowledge in general and then knowing what questions to ask would be a good place to start. [C4/p34]

The above comment provides more context for Kelly's earlier comment about teachers' lack of knowledge of Middle Eastern families' festive occasions (see Kelly's comment about 'celebrating cultural and religious events'). As indicated by Kelly, they primarily focused on Middle Eastern families' goals for their children and did not delve below the surface to understand the values that underlie those goals. Kelly's suggestion was that they need to develop their knowledge of "what questions to ask" which shows her awareness of their lack of knowledge of Middle Eastern families' values. Engaging families in conversations about their values is difficult under any circumstances, but it is most difficult when parents and teachers come from different cultural backgrounds. According to the survey data (see section 5.1), Middle Eastern parents generally demonstrated an openness and willingness to share their culture when teachers made deliberate efforts to get to know them.

Parent's Perspective

Maryam was the only interviewed parent who commented on teacher practices for 'learning about Middle Eastern families' with her comment illustrating the difference in approach between Ava's previous and current centres:

> **Maryam (P):** Ava's current centre is really good in terms of communication. I'm happy with it. However, the situation was totally different in Ava's first centre. We never had any meetings unless I approached them myself and communicated information about Ava, my concerns or expectations. They did not initiate any sort of communication. [Orig.F]

In line with earlier comments, it seemed that teachers in Ava's previous centre "did not initiate any sort of communication", instead waiting for Maryam to approach them. Once again, this highlights the importance of the intentionality of teachers (see McLaughlin & Cherrington, 2018); teachers ought to, intentionally and proactively, take steps to approach families, rather than waiting

for them to take the steps.

5.3 Teachers' Perceptions: Perceptions from Teachers' Interviews

As noted in chapter three, I used semi-structured interviews with teachers to explore their perspectives of working with Middle Eastern children and their families. The case study interviews showed that the teachers generally had positive perceptions of working with Middle Eastern families and the comments mainly revolved around Middle Eastern parents' involvement within the centres. Although interviews with teachers are the focus of this section, I also draw on survey data or excerpts from my interviews with parents when this helps provide a fuller picture of teachers' perspectives of the Middle Eastern cultural group in New Zealand early childhood settings.

5.3.1 Middle Eastern Families are Open to Involving with Teachers

When I asked teachers about their perspectives of working with Middle Eastern families, three of them described their experiences as generally positive and indicated that Middle Eastern parents were involved in the programme through participating in the centres' cultural events, volunteering to help, communicating with teachers, and being on the parent committees. The teachers' view of Middle Eastern parents' involvement is in line with the survey findings. One of the close-ended survey items asked parents to rate their agreement with the statement related to their 'involvement': '*I like to get involved at the centre'*. This item received almost 90% agreement from the respondents.

The following two comments by Joe and Mia indicate their perception of Middle Eastern families' communication style as open, clear, and direct:

> **Joe (T):** I've worked with 17 Middle Eastern families and my experience so far has been really positive. The families have really wanted to share their culture. I guess one thing that I want to acknowledge is that their communication tends to be more assertive than the stereotypical Kiwi. I personally think it's a really positive thing. They are clear, direct and straight to the point and that's what I like. I've invited them into cultural events like Eid and they've been really keen to jump in and support the team and other parents to

understand their culture more. Laila for example, is an exceptional character, she would come in and help with anything. She cleans, cooks and she's always involved in our community stuff. [C2/p2]

Mia (T): We have four Middle Eastern families here and I would say working with them is quite easy overall. Just the fact that they are really open to share information about their child, for example what they like to do... It helps us understand what their needs are, to then help their child. They open the conversation and are happy to share. The parents also like to be involved and help us with activities, I think they just offer that voluntarily. Maryam was also on our parent committee. [C1/p2]

Joe is touching on an important aspect of the Middle Eastern culture when he says, "the families have really wanted to share their culture." This comment ties in with the willingness of some of the surveyed parents to see their culture represented more strongly at the centres. Also interesting is Joe's observation of Middle Eastern parents being more assertive than "the stereotypical Kiwi". A lot can be unpacked about this comment and whether it fits with Middle Eastern parents' perception of their own communication style. As discussed in other parts of the findings, a few parents mentioned their desire to be more upfront with teachers, but instead took a low-key approach since they did not feel comfortable or confident enough to initiate conversations with teachers, or to express their concerns and make suggestions (see section 5.1.4). Mia's similar opinion about the openness of Middle Eastern parents to share information supports Joe's viewpoint. This might also be at odds with Middle Eastern parents' perspectives about how much they communicated their *less normative* requests, such as those which are likely to create an uncomfortable feeling in both themselves and the teachers. So, Mia's perception of this openness leading to a better understanding of Middle Eastern children's needs may reflect a limited view in the sense that Middle Eastern parents are likely to only communicate the less confronting needs.

Speaking about her close relationship with Middle Eastern families, including refugee families, Sally explained that working with Middle Eastern families had changed her stereotypic perception of this cultural group for the better:

Sally (T): I've worked with more than 20 Middle Eastern families. To be honest, they are my favourite to work with. I come from New Zealand and working with refugee families

> has taught me a lot. The stories they bring are incredible and it has shifted my perception. Because on the news, you see Taliban, ISIS and without being fully aware, you have them all in the same box. Working with these families in the real world, seeing how they live their life and learning about them challenges my perception and makes me realise they are not all ISIS or Taliban, they are people, just like other people. Just because you are one certain race or one certain sexuality, that doesn't define you as a person. I love them and I feel a real sense of warmth from them. Before working with them, I thought I would find it hard to build a relationship with them, but now I find it easy. I see these families, they drop their kids off and pick them up, in and out, and you don't get a chance to build a relationship with them. But I have these Middle Eastern refugee families who have nothing, but they would come in and have a cup of tea with you. They would make you food even though they have nothing themselves. Noor, for instance, whenever she picks up Isa, she makes an effort to talk to each of the teachers and ask how we are. [C4/p3]

Sally describes how, in the past, she had formed her perception of Middle Eastern families based on media narratives and associations of this cultural group with destructive forces such as ISIS and Taliban. Her comment indicates the role of the media in spreading negative stereotypes and ultimately shaping public attitudes towards ethnic groups (see Castaneda, 2018). The first half of Sally's comment reflects the literature (see Amin, 2015; Badiee, 2004) on teachers' stereotypic assumptions about the Middle Eastern ethnic group, which can lead to discriminatory acts against Middle Eastern children. In the same vein, Chan's (2011) literature review around immigrant families identified that early childhood teachers are prone to adopting stereotypical attitudes towards parents and children from certain ethnic groups. Sally noted that working closely with Middle Eastern families and familiarising herself with "how they live their life" led her to notice the stereotypes she had relied on, to reflect on them, and to correct her misperceptions. This highlights the significance of the funds of knowledge approach (González et al., 2006) in helping teachers overcome damaging stereotypes about certain cultural groups. It also highlights the significance of a critical multicultural approach in diverse classrooms as it requires teachers to "engage critically with all ethnic and cultural backgrounds" (May, 1999, p. 33) without perpetuating the existing stereotypical and racist views of ethnic minority children and families. Indeed, teachers who belong to the dominant group must become aware of their conscious and unconscious imposition on others, challenge their assumptions and realise that these assumptions

are shaped by dominant social discourses (Giroux, 2001). If teachers disregard the fluidity of culture and identity and maintain the status quo, they are indirectly supporting the marginalisation of minorities.

A shared aspect of the three comments above is the interviewed teachers' acknowledgement of different forms of parental involvement. Sally, for example, recounted Middle Eastern parents', specifically refugee parents', genuine efforts to contribute to the centre using whatever was at their disposal. This contribution took different forms, such as making food for teachers and taking the time to talk to the centre staff and catching up on what had been happening at the centre. Sally's perspective was almost exactly reiterated by Joe and Mia. The keywords in the above comments are volunteering, involvement, and helping. Another important aspect of the above comments is the reported preparedness of Middle Eastern parents to help organise events, regardless of whether or not the events celebrated their own culture. This is reflected in the last part of Joe's comment above in which he refers to Laila, one of the Middle Eastern mothers at his centre: "She would come in and help with anything. She cleans, cooks and she's always involved in our community stuff".

By contrast, Kelly described Middle Eastern parental involvement as minimal:

> **Kelly (T):** I've worked with 20 to 30 Middle Eastern families… In general, their involvement I would say was minimal. They don't volunteer a lot of information. They don't share a lot of their culture with us…. We do have quite a high expectation in this regard. [C3/p8]

This comment shows how the interpretation of individual experiences is important in forming one's perception of a particular group of people. Whereas Joe, Mia, and Sally pointed to the open communication style among Middle Eastern parents, Kelly provided a very different perspective. Data triangulation can help significantly in cases where points are being made about a specific aspect of a cultural or ethnic group. This triangulation can take place not only with the opinion of several teachers, but also using other forms of data including parent interviews. Following up on Kelly's statement, "we do have quite a high expectation in this regard", I asked her whether they had communicated this expectation to Middle Eastern parents. She responded:

> **Kelly (T):** I think we might have tried subtly so without being like 'we need you to come into the centre', it was more like a 'oh, we've got something for you to sign, come on in'… but that didn't help. I'm not quite sure if it was 'I don't want to' or if the communication was not clear… We don't know all the questions and all the answers, so it's nice to have open communication so then they can come to you and share openly. For example, Samar's drop offs were pretty fast. It was like 'oh, you're here, hello', so Reyhan wouldn't come in or… Quite fast drop-offs and pick-ups. I think she was very busy. She seemed busy. [C3/p9]

Kelly's comment reflects the lack of clarity in teachers' communication with Middle Eastern parents. Kelly mentioned that they were unsure how to get the message across to Middle Eastern families, and she also realised that they probably failed to communicate their expectations fully and clearly. Paradoxically, she did expect Middle Eastern parents to come to them and share openly with them. Kelly was not certain if parents' low involvement emerged from their unwillingness, busy schedule, or perhaps lack of effective communication between centre and parents.

In my observations of the four case study parents during the drop-off times at the centres, Reyhan was the only parent who rushed out after dropping Samar off. During my observations, I did not see teachers and Reyhan communicate about Samar. In almost all the observational sessions, Samar was crying at drop-off times. The interaction between the teachers and Reyhan was usually a smile, a single word 'bye' or 'hi', or a mere hand gesture from teachers to indicate that Reyhan could leave while they were hugging Samar. In my interview with Reyhan, it became clear what one source of the problem was. Reyhan commented:

> **Reyhan (P):** Samar usually cries at the drop-off times. But the teachers grab her from me and just give me a sign that I have to leave now without talking to me, just with their hands, like a wave. I didn't know that the teachers will just take Samar while she's crying. I didn't think that they give her a cuddle and ask me to leave. I thought that they will give me that responsibility to let my child settle, calm her and then leave. This was the idea in my mind. But it's their field and they know better. Even when they ask me to do something with Samar, I do it without negotiation. It's not appropriate to ask questions or suggest things to teachers …So, they just grab her and do their job I think. So, I leave the centre to stay out of their way. And sometimes other teachers followed me and said, 'don't worry, she will

> stop crying in a minute, go to your class'. That's why I just give her to one of the teachers and leave. [Orig.E]

Reyhan's lack of awareness of procedures and what was expected of her in the context of New Zealand ECE is evident in the above comment which also indicates the absence of effective communication between teachers and Reyhan. Reyhan's unfamiliarity could partly explain her limited engagement with teachers during arrival times, and the lack of effective communication led Reyhan to believe that she was doing the right thing by quickly dropping Samar off to "stay out of teachers' way". From Reyhan's perspective, the teachers' behaviours and gestures at her arrival were her signal to depart, while from the teachers' perspective, Reyhan seemed to be busy and wanting to leave quickly. Reyhan also expressed an attitude of compliance and put a large measure of trust in teachers: "It's their field and they know better. Even when they ask me to do something with Samar, I do it without negotiation. It's not appropriate to ask questions or suggest things to teachers". These statements by Reyhan are reminiscent of Middle Eastern parents' tendency to view teachers as authority figures, which is one reason why the idea of questioning teachers is usually considered disrespectful and interfering (Moosa et al. 2001). Parents' attitude of compliance came through in other parts of the study (see section 4.2.2) as one reason they did not communicate their expectations to teachers. For Reyhan, operating with this cultural attitude toward teachers also affected her level of involvement with the centre with the following comment once again signalling the lack of effective communication between her and the teachers:

> **Reyhan (P):** I didn't know if there was anything I could be involved in…there was only Father's Day that I knew about and as Samar's father is not here in New Zealand, we didn't go. They had a party for Samar, we went to that, and I provided them with cupcakes. Sometimes, I wanted to be more helpful, but I didn't know how. [Orig.E]

As indicated, Reyhan was willing to engage more in centre activities if she knew more about them. Cultural barriers, unfamiliarity with the New Zealand education system, and lack of perceived opportunities were also mentioned by Guo (2005a) and Zhang (2012) as the contributing factors to Chinese immigrant parents' low involvement within early childhood settings.

Overall, the findings from both survey and interview data indicate that the participant Middle Eastern parents were mostly willing to be involved in their children's early education. This finding

contradicts the results of earlier studies (Faour, 2012; King et al., 2014; Moosa et al., 2001) which suggested that Middle Eastern parents often do not become involved within their children's educational settings.

5.3.2 Barriers to Middle Eastern Parental Involvement

Unlike Kelly, teachers, Joe and Sally, could articulate the barriers affecting some Middle Eastern families' active involvement in the programme, including issues related to culture, trust, and language – all of which have also been documented as barriers to parental engagement in other studies (Chan, 2014; Guo, 2010; Wu, 2011; Zhang, 2012). Talking about his interactions with Middle Eastern families, Joe explained his view that:

> **Joe (T):** There are barriers for some Middle Eastern families, specifically our refugee families, engaging in early learning services. There is a cultural barrier…there is a barrier of trust and when I say barrier, I mean it exists but it's *our* responsibility to remedy it. It's *our* responsibility to go a little bit beyond what we normally would do to make sure that we are engaging them. [C2/p3]

When I asked Joe's opinion about the possible reasons for families' trust issue, he explained that after engaging in multiple dialogues with Middle Eastern families, he realised that the mistrust mainly came from their transition and settlement experiences in New Zealand. He further elaborated that the government's support of refugee families was limited to a short period after their arrival and ended quite abruptly, which led families to feel abandoned and confused. This finding is in line with Marlowe (2018) and Mitchell and Kamenarac's (2021) analysis of the positioning of young refugee children and their families in Aotearoa New Zealand's resettlement policies.

To understand *why* some refugee parents might choose not to be actively involved in their children's early childhood, Joe made a deliberate attempt to learn about their everyday living conditions and hardships. Identifying this aspect of families' funds of knowledge has been highlighted by the existing literature (see Templeton, 2013).

Joe shared that once the centre had identified the reasons behind some Middle Eastern families' low engagement at the centre, the teachers had taken the initiative to create a "community

navigator role" within their centre which helped them enter into frequent dialogues with families and build trusting relationships with them. He reported that the community navigator was to specifically bridge the language and culture barriers, advocate for Middle Eastern refugee families, help them with completing enrolment documentation and dealing with governmental agencies, and link families with community-based organisations. He also recounted designing a workshop for Middle Eastern families with the help of the community navigator to address some of their concerns and questions about their children's early education in New Zealand.

As Joe stated, "it's *our* responsibility to go a little bit beyond what we normally would do to make sure that we are engaging them". This attitude explains the actions taken by the centre teachers in going beyond their normal practices and seeking to proactively promote Middle Eastern families' involvement and reduce the existing barriers, generating relational trust with them. According to McLaren (1995), critical multicultural educators need to connect with people who are oppressed by issues of power and make sure that supports are provided to those who are marginalised. Similarly, Chan (2020) highlights the role of teachers in providing extra support for immigrant families and children. "It is the teachers' responsibility to find ways to resolve language barriers and to be equitable and inclusive…" (p. 15).

Another interviewed teacher, Sally, mentioned that Middle Eastern parents' low involvement in "certain celebrations" could be due to the barriers of culture and language.

> **Sally (T):** In terms of certain celebrations, we find it really hard getting some Middle Eastern families here. Some of them show interest, but then they don't show up. We had an Arab teacher and she told me that often Middle Easterners do not attend an event when they are not personally invited. I really wanted them to come to one of our cultural events, so I google translated the invitation in Arabic, put them in the parent pockets and approached parents one by one and talked to them in the office. Two of the three parents came, but the other one didn't. That particular parent does not like to attend the Halloween party or… I feel like she might be afraid that she will not be able to communicate with people so maybe that's a bit of a barrier. [C4/p5]

The Arab teacher mentioned the importance of personal invitation among Middle Eastern families and noted that "often Middle Easterners do not attend an event when they are not personally

invited". This might be true for some Middle Eastern families as they tend to view the practice of delivering or receiving personal invitation to events as a sign of respect. After learning about this practice, Sally made a conscious effort to help Middle Eastern families take up the opportunity to participate more actively in the centre: she prepared hand-written invitations and personally gave them to the parents. Sally mentioned that this new strategy worked with two parents, but one of the parents did not attend even after receiving a personal invitation. Sally's explanation for the parent who did not attend revolved around the parent's limited English language fluency: "I feel like she might be afraid not be able to communicate with people so maybe that's a bit of a barrier". An alternative explanation, however, might be the parent's cultural or religious values, among other things. Previous research indicates that some Middle Eastern families might have reservations in exposing their children to holiday celebrations of other cultures or religions due to the pagan origins of certain celebrations (Abdul-Rahman, 2003; Alkharusi, 2013; Hoot et al., 2003). As Sally mentioned "that particular parent does not like to attend the Halloween party". According to Bisson (2016),

> People of different faiths… often possess strong opinions about the religious aspects of holidays. For example, some see Halloween as a rite of childhood, an opportunity for children to do what they love…Others, however, view Halloween as devil worship, a practice against their own beliefs, and they do not feel comfortable participating in the holiday and allowing their children to participate…. (p. 12)

This could be one reason why some Middle Eastern parents choose to disengage themselves from such events. As stated by Bisson (2016), "we cannot create approaches to holidays that work for everyone in our programmes unless we open our hearts and our minds and commit to discovering the values, opinions, beliefs, and convictions that can only be uncovered and understood through dialogue" (p. 25).

5.4 Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I have discussed the early childhood teachers' practices when working with Middle Eastern families and their children from the perspective of the participating parents as well as the case study teachers. I have also discussed statements by the teachers that give an insight into their perceptions of Middle Eastern families. Using thematic analysis, I identified three types of teacher

practices that were aimed at responding to the particular characteristics of Middle Eastern children and their families. These practices include: 'celebrating cultural and religious events', 'accommodating dietary requirements', and 'learning about Middle Eastern families'.

Consistent with the objectives of critical multicultural pedagogy such as deconstructing cultural essentialism (May, 1999), the survey and case-study findings indicated that most of the teachers in my study celebrated Middle Eastern families' important events by reaching out to the parents and inviting them to contribute to organising those events. These teachers took events that were important for the families as an opportunity to enhance children's cultural competence, connect with Middle Eastern families, and promote their sense of empowerment. Parents mentioned similar outcomes for this practice, although some of them were critical of the inconsistency in teachers' incorporation of cultural activities from different groups, suggesting that they saw some of the teachers' practices as discriminatory and as taking a stereotypic approach toward Middle Eastern families' celebrations. One of the teachers mentioned that the centre followed a list of the holidays and cultural events that they "must include in the programme" (see section 5.2.1) and that Middle Eastern families' events were absent from the list. This statement provides some insight into the non-critical approach to holiday celebrations that can occur in early childhood settings; an approach which not only presents a static view of cultures, but also creates experiences of discrimination and exclusion for parents and children whose cultures remain invisible. An approach based on critical multiculturalism, by contrast, would require teachers to develop a multi-perspectival approach to education which promotes cultural inclusion and ensures all cultures are represented within the centre (Maniatis, 2012). In other words, teachers need to reflect on their assumptions and explore areas of improvement. Maniatis (2012) indicates reflection as an essential component of critical multiculturalism; one that enables teachers to explore their prejudices that could be influencing their teaching practice. When teachers acknowledge their assumptions and biases and increase their understanding of cultural heterogeneity, they can develop practices that are respectful, authentic, and free of stereotypes.

The results show that teachers' approaches varied greatly with regards to how they accommodated Middle Eastern families' dietary requirements. For example, some teachers approached families directly and encouraged them to communicate any dietary restrictions that they wanted observed for their children, while others drew upon a static conception of Middle Eastern culture and

removed pork products or other items they perceived as "non-halal" from Middle Eastern children's diet. Adopting a multicultural approach and perpetuating homogenised and essentialised views of Middle Eastern families did not allow the latter group of teachers to respond in culturally responsive ways to the needs of individual families. According to Fullam (2017),

> Applying a culturally responsive lens to our work as educators requires a shift in how we think about students, schools, families and society. But it also requires a shift in how we think about ourselves. Culturally responsive teachers continually interrogate the ways in which our own implicit biases and cultural assumptions shape our beliefs about learning and our interactions with students. (p. 132)

Acting on such cultural assumptions meant that there was no opportunity for the Middle Eastern parents to have an input into the teachers' decision-making, thus creating the type of power-imbalance that a critical multicultural approach aims to dismantle. The association of Middle Eastern families with 'halal food' and 'Islam' exhibits some teachers' lack of recognition of the dynamic nature of values and the diversity of opinions among Middle Easterners. As I have discussed throughout the chapter, the Middle Eastern parents who participated in this study were heterogenous in many of their cultural practices, including dietary ones. While some observed Islamic norms for halal food, others did not. If teachers want to be truly responsive to the needs of children and their families, they need to constantly reflect on their assumptions and how these assumptions affect their practices.

Overall, the findings highlighted the varying degrees to which teachers were willing to learn about Middle Eastern families and their children. One of the teachers, Joe, used the services of a community navigator to familiarise himself with the living conditions and values of the Middle Eastern families. It seemed that Joe's proactive approach had equipped him with a deeper understanding of Middle Eastern families, which in turn led him to constantly transform his practices. He understood the importance of engaging parents in two-way, non-judgmental dialogues in order to build a trusting and respectful relationship. While the other three teachers offered good practices for enhancing children's sense of continuity between home and centre and incorporating families' goals for their children, missing from their comments was an acknowledgement of families' values. By developing the skills of open and non-judgemental

listening, teachers may be able to gain a deeper understanding of the parents' perspectives which can lead to dialogue about effective negotiation of the differences between parents and teachers.

As discussed throughout the chapter, several factors inhibited some Middle Eastern parents' involvement within the centres, including unfamiliarity with the New Zealand education system; lack of perceived opportunities; parents' cultural attitude toward teachers as authority figures; language and cultural barriers; and parents' trust issues. However, I have argued that the main barrier was the lack of effective communication between parents and teachers. While some teachers fulfilled their professional responsibility to identify and remove the barriers to Middle Eastern parents' involvement, others stuck to their regular practices and waited for parents to approach them. This raises important implications for teacher practices. Teachers need to uncover what underlies some families' disengagement in order to know where to begin and how to move forward in establishing reciprocal and respectful relationships.

The next chapter focuses on the challenges encountered by Middle Eastern children in New Zealand early childhood centres.

6. Middle Eastern Children's Challenges in New Zealand Early Childhood Centres

In this chapter, I focus on answering the third research question of the study:

- What are the challenges faced by Middle Eastern children in New Zealand early childhood centres?

Considered holistically, the data indicate that the core challenge for the Middle Eastern children in this study was struggling with the English language. In some cases, teachers' lack of engagement with families resulted in a lack of awareness by both teachers and parents of the principles and practices upheld at home and centre respectively. For some of the children, this lack of awareness resulted in experiences of cultural dissonance which put them in a position of having to navigate between the two sets of cultural practices single-handedly.

I first describe and discuss the challenges faced by the children under four themes identified from the online survey of Middle Eastern parents. In the second part, I will elaborate on two of these challenges which were prominent in the case study data. I will continue looking at findings using the three lenses/perspectives of critical multiculturalism (Tobin et al., 2007), hybridity theory (Bhabha, 1994), and funds of knowledge (González et al., 2006).

6.1 Children's Challenges as Identified in the Survey Data

The national survey sent to Middle Eastern parents included the open-ended question, '*what challenges has your child experienced in the centre?'* Their statements yielded four issues which parents perceived as key challenges for their children: struggling with the English language; peer conflict; struggling with routine care activities; and the challenge of being "unknown". I discuss each of these challenges below, starting from the most frequently mentioned one.

6.1.1 Struggling with the English Language

Fifty-one (61%) of the parents stated that their children struggled with the English language, making this the foremost perceived challenge for this sample of Middle Eastern children in New Zealand. Two of the close-ended survey items asked parents to rate their agreement with the

statements related to 'children's English language learning'. The first item, which read '*I support that my child should learn English at the centre*', received an overwhelming agreement from the respondents with 98% of the surveyed parents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement. The second item, '*My child is learning to use English at the centre*', received 93% agreement from the respondents. The following responses give a sense of the parents' perspectives on this issue:

> The language was a big challenge at the beginning because he was not able to express himself and needed a lot of help from teachers. [Orig.E]
>
> Because of her difficulty with language, she has often felt quite lonely and left out. [Orig.E]
>
> Language barrier in the first year. [Orig.E]
>
> He did not know English when he was younger and that stopped him from participating in the activities, but teachers were supportive with that. [Orig.A]
>
> She can't speak English yet, and this has made her shy and less confident at the centre. [Orig.A]
>
> Usually when I drop him off, he sits quietly in a corner, far from other children. I noticed communicating with others is hard for him, probably because he doesn't know English, so we needed teachers to help him to come out of his shell. [Orig.F]

The respondents mostly indicated that their children struggled with the English language particularly at the beginning of their attendance at their early childhood centre, and that their children required teachers' support during this period. While some of the parents confined themselves to simply stating that English language was a challenge for their children, several others mentioned how lack of English language competence had the flow-on effect of hindering interpersonal communications for their children, and specifically that it caused their children's "shyness, loneliness, and lack of interaction with peers". In other words, they understood the importance of linguistic capital in gaining other forms of capital, such as social capital (Nawyn et al., 2012).

6.1.2 Peer Conflict

Twenty-six (31%) of the parents mentioned conflicts with peers as a challenge faced by their children. Some of the responses from this category included:

> Some incidents with other children hurting him. [Orig.E]
>
> Getting hurt by other kids. [Orig.E]
>
> My son had conflicts with another child several times. [Orig.E]

While parents mentioned peer conflict as a challenge, they did not elaborate on the causes for the conflicts or their responses to children's conflicts. The lack of context in the responses of this group of parents means that it is not possible to know whether the children's peer conflicts emerged from children's struggles with the language or from other reasons, such as the lack of social skills. To shed some light on this issue and explore it further, I relied heavily on the case study data, mainly parents and teachers' interviews. I particularly wanted to see if culture became relevant on the level of parents' and teachers' opinions.

6.1.3 Struggling with Routine Care Activities

Twenty-five (30%) of the respondents mentioned that their children struggled with doing routine tasks such as "eating, toileting, and dressing" independently.

> Doing things like eating and toileting independently without anyone's help. [Orig.E]
>
> At home, I help her with tasks such as eating food, however at the centre, she must do such things independently. [Orig.F]
>
> She must do certain tasks like eating and dressing herself at the centre, while I don't think she's ready. [Orig.E]

As discussed before (see section 4.2.2), the analysis of the survey and interview data indicated a misalignment between the practices of some Middle Eastern parents and those promoted by the early childhood teachers around developing self-care skills in children. Because of the emergence of the 'routine care activities' theme from the survey data, during my case study observations I paid close attention to such activities. However, in the case study observations I could not identify

any noticeable differences between the competencies of the participant children and those of the other children at the centre. This led me to reflect about the different ways that people might interpret the same phenomenon – in this case, the child's behaviour – and how the interpretations might vary depending on one's perspectives, including cultural ones. These different perceptions were evident in the parent's remark that, contrary to the teacher's view, "…I don't think she's ready". For the purpose of this study, it does not matter if this was an actual or a perceived challenge; what really matters is that the above comments signal that certain parental child-rearing practices might at times be inconsistent with the dominant early childhood discourse of 'independence', raising the need for teachers to be alert to such possibilities and plan how to respond to them in the interest of working effectively with Middle Eastern families.

6.1.4 The Challenge of Being "Unknown"

Nine parents mentioned instances of teachers' behaviours that they interpreted as lack of engagement, with some recounting memories of exclusions that they saw as having negative impacts on their children. I present four salient comments from this category of responses to illustrate the challenge for Middle Eastern children of being "unknown". One parent remarked:

> When my older son was attending the centre, I noticed that each kid had a paper on the wall with their country's name. One of the teachers would not put Palestine as my son's country of origin. This made us feel "not belonged" and I had a big argument with teachers about this. When my younger son started there, they automatically did it. [Orig.E]

The above comment shows the hurt experienced by this parent and her child when the child was not allowed to display their country of origin on the centre's wall displays. It was clear that the parent understood this experience as a negation of the child's origin and that both she and her child were invisible. The parent turned the exclusion they felt into "a big argument with teachers" as they had been made to feel like they have "no place to belong". Another surveyed parent recounted a similar incident:

> My daughter had an accident at the centre and lost half of her fingernail. The teachers did not tell me anything [about this]. I saw her finger and I noticed that she had dried blood all over it. I talked to the teachers, and they brought up excuses. I know that incidents happen

> for children and it's not realistic to expect teachers to see everything, but when the manager told me: 'sorry, I didn't know that she speaks Farsi and cannot communicate with us in English', I became incredibly angry and since then I had doubts about some of the teachers. I just could not believe that after three months of her attending, they did not know that she was not speaking English! This made me not trust some of the teachers there. [Orig.F]

It seemed that the manager justified their oversight of the physical injury to the child's lack of competence in English: "sorry, I didn't know that she speaks Farsi and cannot communicate with us in English". It was clear that the parent understood this experience as teachers' lack of care in approaching the child and that the child remained unknown to the teachers "after three months of her attending". The parent then expressed the array of emotions triggered by this revelation: anger, doubt, disbelief, and mistrust. This highlights how important it is that teachers make an effort to deliberately approach families and their children, rather than waiting for them to take the first steps. The following parental account indicates similar problematic early childhood practices with a particular emphasis on teachers' non-cooperation with Middle Eastern parents:

> The teachers thought they knew better than us parents and ignored the information we shared with them. I had informed teachers that my daughter was prone to worrying and overthinking, so I asked them to call us whenever necessary as we lived close by, and my wife could collect her at short notice. Instead, they let her cry hysterically and vomit. When we picked her up, her eyes were terribly bloodshot from crying. When we asked them, they lied to us, and our daughter was the one who said that she had been throwing up and crying the whole time, which they later confirmed. Our daughter was traumatised from that day, and she could no longer sleep through the night as she constantly had nightmares. She did not trust us anymore and felt we had abandoned her. It took a full year before we could get her back to a place where she could go to kindergarten by herself. My daughter still has trust issues, suffers from anxiety and is afraid of being abandoned. [Orig.E]

The opening comment by this parent clearly demonstrates his perception of a power imbalance in his family's relationship with the teachers at his daughter's early childhood centre. In his view, the teachers dismissed "the information shared with them" because they "thought they knew better than us parents". He recalled the incident that made him come to this conclusion and referred to its long-term consequences for his child: being traumatised, feeling abandoned, mistrustful, and

anxious. Such experiences are reminiscent of Tobin et al.'s (2007) argument of the need to disrupt power asymmetries between immigrant parents and early childhood teachers and to adopt the objectives of critical multicultural pedagogy with its focus on collaboration and sharing power with families. While it is understandable that a busy early childhood teacher might not respond as parents might idealistically hope to every individual child at every moment of the day (a point made also by the previous parent), the above comment highlights that dismissing parents' input can leave serious impacts on children's lives. A similar issue is evident in the comment below:

> My daughter's first day was terrible. As immigrants, we do not have any family here to support us with childcare and that day was the first day she was away from the only two people she knew, her dad and me. She was sixteen months old. We knew that it would be difficult for her, so we approached teachers and gave them all necessary information such as her favourite activities, her favourite books, and even words that we used to calm her down. The centre was in a location that we could see it from the top of a hill, within the yard of a public place. When we dropped her off, we waited at that yard just to make sure that she was doing all right. When we left, teachers put her in the stroller and moved it to the outdoor area facing the wall, directly in the sun and left her there. She was crying and screaming her heart out and she was like that for almost an hour. There was no teacher nearby and no one was paying any attention to her as if she was not there. I called, and the teacher said, 'She is watching other children playing and she is fine, don't worry.' I asked her 'can you give her the books? Those are the only things she is familiar with'. We hoped that they would calm her down, but we saw one of the teachers put the books on my daughter's lap and then just left! That day was a difficult day for us, and we were so disappointed that they did not pay any attention to my child and to the information we shared with them. [Orig.F]

Like the previous parent, this parent claimed that teachers ignored their contribution of information about their child, including insights into what could help their child's transition into the early childhood centre. She noted that the absence of support from extended family had made her child more dependent on them as parents and their awareness of their child's intense attachment to them made them very keen to engage with the teachers and give them all the information they thought would help them respond to their child. However, when they found that teachers "did not pay any

attention to the child and to the information shared with them", their "hopes" turned into "disappointments".

The above parental accounts bring up some problematic early childhood practices which clearly left a powerful impact on the parents and children, eroding their trust and sense of belonging. These narratives indicate how difficult developing collaborative relationships with teachers were for some Middle Eastern parents in this study. As evident, rather than engaging with parents and incorporating their funds of knowledge (González et al., 2006), some teachers alienated them. Although the curriculum asserts and advocates an equal partnership between parents and teachers (MoE, 2017, p. 20), this group of parents clearly did not view themselves as really heard as equal partners with teachers. There is a clear implication here that communication between parents and teachers should be two-way and reciprocally respectful.

6.2 Children's Challenges as Identified in the Case Study Data

During the case study interviews with teachers and parents, I took the opportunity to probe further the challenges faced by Middle Eastern children. Thematic analysis of the case study data yielded two types of challenges which also emerged in the survey data: struggling with the English language and peer conflict. When I asked the participants to comment on the other two survey themes, they did not find them relevant in the context of what their children found challenging, which is why the two themes of 'struggling with routine activities' and 'the challenge of being unknown' will not be dealt with in this section.

6.2.1 Struggling with the English Language

The results from all datasets indicated that while the four case study children were struggling, to varying extents, with the English language, teachers implemented a number of deliberate practices to support children to improve their English language competence. In this section, I present parents' and teachers' perspectives and what I observed from children's perspectives to elaborate on the children's struggle with the English language.

Parents' Perspectives

The four parents I interviewed all identified struggling with the English language as a challenge for their children and were very appreciative of the actions taken by the teachers to support their children in this regard:

> **Reyhan (P):** English has definitely been a challenge for her. Something really good was when teachers asked me to give them some Arabic words because Samar couldn't speak English. I wrote down some words and phrases for them such as 'toilet, I'm hungry, etc.' [Orig.E]

> **Laila (P):** She did not have any English when she started, and this was tough. But teachers understand the situation very well and help her. For example, I have noticed that they speak slowly with her and use Arabic words with her. [Orig.A]

> **Noor (P):** He started with little knowledge of English, so I can say that communication has been difficult, but he is learning it now and teachers are supporting him with it. [Orig.A]

> **Maryam (P):** When she started at the first centre, she could not speak English and teachers did not support her English language learning. But I really like that in the current centre teachers speak English slowly with non-English speaking children. They also remind local children that some of their friends are speaking English as a second language, so children have learnt to speak English slowly and clearly with Ava and other non-English speaking children. [Orig.F]

The above excerpts further show that for the most part the teachers did not need to be told by the parents of their children's challenge in speaking English; rather, they proactively took steps to assist them, adopting practices such as incorporating words from the children's home languages and speaking slowly and clearly with them to support their English language acquisition. In the last excerpt above, Maryam compared the approach of the teachers in Ava's previous centre with that of the teachers in the current centre. When I asked her to elaborate, she said:

> **Maryam (P):** In the first centre, Ava and a couple of Chinese children were the only non-English speaking children there. She was very alone and did not have any friends. She was

> always silent at the centre, as if her lips were sealed… I was really concerned about this situation and communicated my concerns with teachers, but they told me that 'this is natural, and she would pick up the language herself'. I noticed that they were not supporting her…they did not support her to participate in activities or play with others. [Orig.F]

The excerpt suggests that teachers in Ava's previous centre saw language as a naturally acquired skill and behaved as if somehow this exonerated them from the responsibility of supporting Ava. In other words, it seems that teachers acted on the strong belief that Ava will "pick up the language" and left her to do this by herself and did not feel the need to incorporate deliberate practices in their approach that would encourage her "to participate in activities or play with others".

Teachers' Perspectives

Similarly to the parents, the four teachers in the case study spoke about struggling with the English language as a major challenge faced by the case study children. All of the teachers shared the view that children will "pick up" the language quickly; nonetheless, they were clear that children were only just "beginning to learn English" and thus needed support. The following statements show some of the specific strategies they implemented:

> **Mia (T):** When she first started, she did not have much English and could not communicate with us, but she is great and picked up English very quickly. We started with using nonverbal language like pointing or facial expressions and asking parents to give us a few key words from their language that might help them settle. [C1/p10]

> **Kelly (T):** It was a barrier for her, but not for that long. Children learn very quickly, and they pick up on things incredibly fast, much faster than adults. We use gestures and really exaggerated pronunciation, so you show in your face and that really works with them. [C3/p43]

> **Joe (T):** Language has been challenging for her, but she is a social butterfly. She can confidently interact with anyone. So, she is picking it up quite nicely…When we speak, we speak slowly and might ask a question and then pause and wait a little bit longer than we

normally would to give them time to respond. We're role modelling language. We would use little strategies like this for children who are beginning to learn English. [C2/p19]

Sally (T): His language is quite limited. He uses two to three words to communicate what he wants, but I can see that he is picking up words and progressing which is good. At the beginning, I wouldn't say a whole sentence, instead of 'would you like a push on the swing?' you might go 'push please'. Simple phrases that they can repeat, and they can build on their language, not having full conversations with them because it will overwhelm them. I ask them 'show me, show me' or I use the Arabic words that I know to support them [C4/p22]

The above comments give an insight into the teachers' perspectives on children's challenges in learning to use English as the medium of communication at the centre. It is clear that teachers understood the challenge that lack of competence in English posed for the children, but they also believed that the children would "pick up" the language "quickly", "nicely", "easily", and "incredibly fast". Teachers also spoke about deliberate practices they adopted in order to support children till they "picked up" the language, such as: modelling language; slowing down the rate of their speech; giving children enough time to respond; using simple language, body language and gestures; using exaggerated pronunciation; and using children's home language in the programme — which are all very appropriate practices when teaching a second language (see Facella et al., 2005).

Observational Data

At the same time, my observations of the case study children suggested that their struggles with the English language were frequently very frustrating for them as was apparent when their inability to express themselves properly in English led them to lose control of their emotions and resort to behaviours such as crying, screaming, or similar vocalisations. This finding is in line with previous research linking children's self-regulation with their language skills (see Ebbeck et al., 2010; Nemeth & Brillante, 2011; Ponitz et al., 2009; Ren, 2015). My observational data also provided evidence of teacher practices to support children in handling their frustrations by acknowledging their feelings, giving them time to express themselves, and providing them with language models

to solve their problems. Although teachers believed that children would pick the language up, they were intentional about providing support as they mentioned in their comments above. When these practices were used, it was clear that children benefited from them. In the following section, I present four excerpts from the observational data to illustrate children's struggle with the English language in interaction with their teachers or peers.

The first episode was recorded during my first observation session in Isa's centre. As illustrated in images in Figure 8, Isa was searching for something in the sandpit. He could not articulate what he was looking for and he expressed his frustration in the form of a low complaining sound.

> **Sally (T)**: What's happening Isa?
> **Isa** looks at Sally but does not say anything. It looks like he is searching for a word. He uses a low complaining sound instead.
> **Sally (T)**: Show me please. What do you want?
> **Isa** (points to one corner of the sandpit): Water…
> **Sally (T)**: Water?
> **Isa**: Pig.
> **Sally (T)**: A pig? Pig the animal?
> **Isa** nods.
> **Sally (T)**: Oh, I think you were playing with it yesterday in the water, didn't you? I think it might be inside (pointing to the building). You liked that, didn't you?
> **Isa** nods and runs inside the building happily. [Isa/1st visit, 12:05 pm]

Figure 8

The First Sandpit Episode

Sally encouraged and assisted Isa to interact with her. She made an effort to understand what Isa was trying to say by listening to him and giving him enough time to respond. She was also trying to make links to her previous knowledge of his actions which means she had been attentive to him the previous day. She was very attentive to Isa's body expressions and encouraged him to show what he wanted. Sally's attentiveness and readiness to assist Isa in the above interaction helped him to handle his frustration and he began to use English words such as "Water" and "Pig" in

responding to Sally's questions. In the end, Isa could communicate both non-verbally and through the words he knew. Sally's support played a prominent part in achieving this successful outcome for Isa. She provided support through responding verbally and supplementing her verbal response with a gesture of pointing to the building. The addition of the embodied communication clearly supported Isa's understanding of the verbal statement and he realised that what he was searching for could be inside the building, so he ran towards the building happily. The above interaction is an example of teachers using good practice with children who are not yet verbal (Facella et al., 2005; Krashen, 1985; Rogoff, 2003).

In another case, a lunchtime interaction between Samar and her teachers caused frustration for all concerned with Samar's intended communication remaining a mystery. It was lunchtime and children were bringing their lunchboxes to the table. As illustrated in the images in Figure 9, Samar sat at the table with her lunchbox in front of her. One of the teachers was helping the child next to Samar open her lunchbox.

Samar (looking at the teacher): I want my ….

1st Teacher (opens Samar's lunchbox and puts it in front of her). Your breakfast?

Samar (repeats): No. I want my ….

1st Teacher: Your what?

Samar (repeats): I want my ….

1st Teacher (shows Samar a spoon): Spoon?

Samar (shakes her head and repeats): No, I want my …

1st teacher looks at the other teacher to see if she understands Samar.

2nd Teacher: Hot?! Is it hot?

Samar shakes her head.

1st Teacher: You want what?

Samar (repeats): I want my …

1st Teacher (points to Samar's food): Is it dirty?!

Samar: No, I want my …

1st Teacher: Your drinking bottle?

Samar: No, I want my …

2nd Teacher brings Samar's bag and gives it to her.

Samar: Not my bag (pushes the bag away and bursts into tears.)

1st Teacher: What's wrong honey? Do you want me to put it (the bag) back?

Samar nods while crying.

1st Teacher (in a reassuring tone): I put it back, okay? Do you want some water?

Samar shakes her head while crying.

1st Teacher (sits next to Samar and speaks in a kind tone): What is wrong? You do not want your lunch?

Samar shakes her head while crying.

1st Teacher (patting her consolingly): Can you say it again?

Samar does not respond. She is not crying anymore.

1st Teacher: Yummy food, wow, taste it, try it.

Samar shakes her head.

1st Teacher (patting her hand): What do you want? You, okay?

Samar does not respond.

1st Teacher (stands up and attends to other children).

Samar eats her lunch after a while. [Samar/4th visit, 11:53 am]

Figure 9

The Lunchtime Episode

In the above interaction, Samar repeated the same sentence several times, but the teachers could not understand what she was saying, resulting in Samar bursting into tears of frustration. I noted that one of the teachers made numerous attempts to emotionally support Samar using a calm tone of voice and gentle physical gestures such as sitting close to Samar, patting her hand, and talking

to her in a slow and kind tone. The teacher's sensitivity to Samar's emotional experience clearly had a positive impact and calmed her down despite her communicative intent remaining unknown.

In a different case study centre, Lily was in the outdoor area where one of the girls was cleaning the swing with a piece of cloth. Lily walked towards the girl, stood next to her, and looked at the cloth in the girl's hand silently for some time. She then made a low frustrated sound. Joe, one of the teachers, was standing close by and saw this interaction:

> **Joe (T)**: Do you want the cloth?
> **Lily** nods and points to the cloth.
> **Joe (T):** Lily, say 'my turn, please'.
> **Lily** (looks at the girl): My turn. My turn.
> **Joe (T)**: My turn, please.
> **Lily**: My turn, please.
> **The girl** gives Lily the cloth.
> **Joe (T)**: There you go. See, it worked. [Lily/6th visit, 10:32 am]

The above episode shows that Lily was in the process of acquiring elements of the English language which occurred naturally for her during the process of functional communication. It was clear that Lily did not have the words to express herself and Joe, the teacher, effectively used the opportunity to support Lily's interaction through providing a language model for her and giving her time to practise the new phrase, which – incidentally – was also part of the centre rules for how to request a turn. In the observations, I noted that teachers normally used these opportunities to support children's English language acquisition by modelling English phrases for them that they could apply in similar situations.

In the next interaction, Ava was sitting at the table with one of the boys, Liam. Ava's teacher, Mia, joined them and gave Ava a small piece of paper on which to write a thank-you letter. Liam was drawing something on a piece of paper.

Ava (to Mia): I'm finished (and carries her letter to the drying shelf).

Liam: Who's that for?

Ava: One for her girl. One for my girl's neighbour. Because he got a girl, too. Because we got a girl too of neighbour. We have a girl neighbour we need another one. I need another one.

Liam (with a confused tone): What?!

Ava (with a frustrated tone): For my, for my…for my grown-up boy one.

Liam shrugs his shoulders.

Mia (T): I think, Ava is writing a thank-you letter for her neighbour.

Ava (looks at Mia): Yes, for my neighbour.

Mia (T) (smiles at Ava): Right.

Ava (to Mia): I need another one.

Mia (T) (points to a piece of paper): Another yellow piece of paper?

Ava: Yes. I want to write on it.

Mia (T) (gives her the paper): What a good idea to write a thank you letter, Ava. That's very polite. Very nice thing to do.

Ava keeps writing on the paper while singing a song to herself. [Ava/3rd visit, 8:33 am]

Ava's attempts to respond to Liam's question did not work as her English speech was not comprehensible to Liam. Liam's tone indicated his confusion and his shoulder-shrugging gesture showed that he could not understand Ava's verbal interaction and was ready to give up on trying to understand. Mia came to Ava's rescue by explaining what Ava was doing, using simple words and talking slowly which seemed to put Ava at ease. It appeared to me that Mia's calm manner helped Ava overcome her frustration and she was able to continue writing while singing to herself at the end of the interaction.

I also observed multiple interactions where teachers used the opportunities to engage the case study children in meaningful interactions that would support their English language acquisition. The four excerpts below, also taken from the observational data, are also salient examples of teachers' efforts in this regard.

The first example, illustrated in Figure 10, occurred during Ava's fourth observation session. Ava was standing next to a table with teacher Mia. Mia had brought different items from home and was

placing them on the table. There were some yogurt lids, tea boxes, and pictures of clothing items. Ava picked up one of the pictures and looked at it attentively. Mia looked at Ava as if noticing that she was interested in the picture. She then took this opportunity to engage Ava in a verbal interaction:

Mia (T) (smilingly): That one is a pretty skirt that looks like a flower.
Ava (looks at Mia and smiles back. She picks up another picture and shows it to Mia): Necklace.
Mia (T): Yes. That's a SHINY necklace.
Ava: Shiny necklace. (She picks up another picture): What is this?
Mia (T): I think that's a long skirt that comes down alllll the way to your feet (points to her feet). I don't have any skirts like that. How about you?
Ava: I don't have it either (She picks up another picture). What is this?
Mia (T) (showing tiny size gesture with her hands): I think it's a tiny tiny CARDIGAN. (Mia then shows the cardigan that she is wearing) I have a LONG cardigan, but this is a very short one. Look Ava, it's REVERSIBLE. You can have it this side or this side (Showing both sides of the picture).
Ava: Reversible. [Ava/4th visit, 8:21 am]

Figure 10

The Clothing Items Episode

Mia stimulated Ava's language development by noticing her interest in the pictures on the table and using that as an opportunity to initiate a conversation with her. Throughout the interaction, Mia worked on building Ava's expressive vocabulary by describing to her what she was seeing and asking her questions. She also used the "extension" strategy (Vygotsky, 1986) meaning that

she added more information to Ava's productive speech repertoire (e.g., Ava: Necklace. Mia: Yes. This is a shiny necklace). Ava's repetition of Mia's words and phrases indicates that she was processing the new information. Vygotsky (1986) argued that "if a person is able to imitate a feature of behaviour under the guidance of another, it is the process of 'ripening' until the person is fully independent and in control of that behaviour" (p. 188). Mia also facilitated Ava's understanding of the language input by using strategies such as gesture, emphasis, and providing her with semantic equivalents.

In another case study, Samar was sitting at the table in the art room doing her collage depicting a flower. Kelly (T) was sitting at the same table cutting a pattern of a butterfly shape. Like Mia (T) in the previous scenario, Kelly took the opportunity to engage Samar in a verbal interaction:

> **Kelly (T):** I'm cutting butterflies. I see you're making a card. Who is this card for Samar?
> **Samar:** For Joy in library.
> **Kelly (T):** Do you live in Anerley?
> **Samar:** Strood.
> **Kelly (T):** Strood, right. Now, I know which one is your library.
> **Samar:** Strood library.
> **Kelly (T):** It's a nice library. It's got a downstairs and an upstairs.
> **Samar:** Downstairs and upstairs. Look, it's got man with snow.
> **Kelly (T):** Oh, Samar, a SNOWMAN. I wish I'd seen it.
> **Samar:** Snowman. Look, it's got coffee shop.
> **Kelly (T):** I know, I know, I've been to that café Samar and had coffee.
> **Samar:** I had coffee.
> **Kelly (T):** Oh, did you try coffee? Did you like it?
> **Samar:** It was dark.
> **Kelly (T):** A strong coffee.
> **Samar:** Yes, strong coffee. [Samar/5th visit, 8:51 am]

Samar expressed herself with the available vocabulary while Kelly introduced new words and terms which Samar then imitated and repeated. The above activity and Kelly's support offered Samar a good opportunity to practise English.

In the next episode, Joe (T) took the opportunity to have a one-on-one interaction with Lily. Lily was sitting at the table next to Joe and there were pictures of different animals and birds in front of them.

> **Joe (T)** (points to the picture of the kiwi bird): Lily, do you know what little kiwi eats?
> **Lily** shakes her head.
> **Joe (T):** Little kiwi has a loooong beak like this (showing the length of the kiwi beak with his hands) and hunts for food like worms with his long beak. Little kiwi has nostrils at the end of his beak (pointing to his own nostrils and says: these are nostrils on my nose. Little kiwi has nostrils on his beak). The nostrils are for smelling (mimicking the act of smelling).
> **Lily** smiles and picks up another picture. [Lily/4th visit, 9:37 am]

In the above scenario, Joe used strategies such as gestures, exaggerated pronunciation, and imitating the action of smelling to ensure Lily's comprehension. Joe provided Lily with multisensory input (Facella et al., 2005) through which Lily could link the spoken word to the activity.

In another case, Isa was sitting on a sofa, next to Sally (T) in the indoor area. He was looking at the pictures of a story book. Sally noticed Isa's interest in the book and started reading it for him.

> **Sally (T)** (pointing to the picture in the book): This is Scott. Haza[14] Scott. This is Scott's father. Haza Scott's baba.
> **Isa** (with an excitement): I got baba.
> **Sally (T)**: What's his name?
> **Isa** does not respond.
> **Sally (T)**: Aismuh[15] baba?
> **Isa**: Ali. (Sally keeps reading the book) [Isa/3rd visit, 11:14 am]

In this scenario, Sally used several strategies to support Isa's understanding of the story. First, she incorporated Arabic words and phrases such as 'haza', 'baba', and 'aismuh' when she was reading an English story for Isa. She also spoke very slowly and enunciated the words clearly when talking to Isa. I noted that Isa was really interested and engaged during this activity. He did not answer the

[14] Haza is an Arabic pronoun meaning 'this'.
[15] Aismuh is an Arabic phrase meaning 'his name'.

English question ‘what’s his name’; however, when Sally repeated the question in Arabic, he responded quickly.

6.2.2 Peer Conflict

Conflicts with peers was another challenge experienced by the case study children, noted by both parents and teachers as well as in my own observations. I use the term peer conflict to refer to children’s verbal, non-verbal disagreements or physical encounters (Shantz, 1987). The analysis of all datasets suggested that the case study children experienced peer conflicts when they struggled with the English language, and also when they tried to merge parents and teachers’ perspectives on how to respond to conflicts.

Parents’ Perspectives

Prompted by the survey finding that peer conflict was perceived by many parents to be an issue for their children, I listened out for whether the case study parents would bring up this matter as one of the challenges faced by their children. Two parents, Noor and Maryam, did so when talking about their children, Isa and Ava, but the other two parents, Reyhan and Laila, said that they had no knowledge of their children’s peer conflicts. My analysis of Noor and Maryam’s comments uncovered two different parental approaches in dealing with children’s conflicts, indicating the dynamics that might be operating in the upbringing of the children at home.

Isa’s mother, Noor, recounted a physical conflict between Isa and one of his peers at the centre:

> **Noor (P):** Once one of the children scratched him really badly at the centre. The teacher called me, apologised, and said that they managed the issue on the spot and separated the boys. I went to the centre and saw the deep scratch under his eyes. I felt sad inside, but they are children, and these things happen between children. That day, I told him that ‘if anything happened to you and if anyone hurt you, be a good boy and don’t react or retaliate at all. Just go to the teacher and ask for help’. Also, when I drop him off, I give him instructions like ‘be a good boy and don’t make me feel ashamed’. I have good relationships with everyone at the centre that’s why I don’t like conflicts. Now, when someone hurts him, he comes to me and tells me everything, but doesn’t react himself at

> all. I talked to the teacher and told her that 'I want my son to learn how to respect and accept the rules'. [Orig.A]

The above comment indicates Noor's view of conflict as something undesirable that must be shunned. She mentioned her "good relationships with everyone at the centre" as one reason for her dislike of conflicts. Accordingly, she expected Isa to avoid any confrontation. This is reflected in her advice to Isa: "if anything happened to you and if anyone hurt you, be a good boy and don't react or retaliate at all". After prohibiting Isa from retaliating, Noor expected Isa to depend on teachers as third-party mediators to resolve his conflicts by urging him to "go to the teacher and ask for help". Noor mentioned twice that she expected Isa "to be a good boy". In this context, her perception of 'a good boy' was one who "does not react to conflicts" and "does not make his parents feel ashamed". The prominence Noor gave to Isa's compliance is evident in her communication with teachers: "I want my son to learn how to respect and accept the rules". Noor's instruction to Isa, "don't make me feel ashamed", reveals her view that Isa's engagement in conflicts reflected negatively on her. Elsewhere Noor said:

> **Noor (P):** Isa and I are one, we are connected. I want him to learn all the good habits and stay away from all the bad habits. [Orig.A]

This reference by Noor to herself and Isa as "one" and her statement that "we are connected" verbalised a sense of unity and collectivity that signal a set of values and practices characteristic of collectivistic cultures (Kim, 2014; Ting-Toomey et al., 2000). Furthermore, they hint at the presence of a cultural dissonance between Noor's practices and those of Isa's teachers around handling conflicts. While Noor expected Isa to be compliant and dependent, children's independence of mind and self-assertive expression is highly valued in New Zealand early childhood curriculum (MoE, 2017). Such dissonance between family and school cultures has been noted before. For example, in offering pedagogical advice on building partnership with families of different cultural backgrounds, the California Department of Education (2016) notes:

> In societies at the collectivist end of the continuum, children are imbued with the sense that their behavior will reflect for the good or the bad on the rest of the group. They may be instilled with a sense of shame if they behave in a way that reflects badly on the group. (p. 39)

In another case study, Maryam, Ava's parent, shared her perspective about a physical conflict that had occurred between Ava and Jojo before the start of this study:

> **Maryam (P):** One of Ava's friends at the centre is a girl called 'Jojo'. Once Ava came home and showed me her hand that had several long red scratches. When I asked her what happened, she suddenly burst into tears and said, 'I was playing inside and Jojo pulled me to the outdoor area by force'. I asked her 'does she do this often?' and she said 'yes'. I noticed that Ava always remained silent and would not defend herself. I talked to the teachers and told them 'I don't want you to punish Jojo or defend Ava. I just want Ava to learn how to use her words to defend herself.' I told them 'I expect you to tell her 'Ava, this is the time you can say 'no, stop'. I don't want you to resolve the conflict for her, I want you to teach her how to resolve her conflicts HERSELF.' The teachers worked on this aspect and now she has become more assertive and more confident to say 'no'. She tells me 'Today, Jojo wanted to play the role of 'mum' herself and I didn't like it, so I played with someone else.' This shows that she can express herself and I love it. I just don't want Ava to be a follower. I want her to make her decisions herself and be independent." [Orig.F]

Ava's experience in the above example is very similar to Isa's, as they both experienced a physical conflict (i.e., getting scratched by their peers). Their responses to the conflicts were also similar as they both started out by remaining silent during the conflicts. However, the point of difference in their experiences was their parents' response to the conflicts. Unlike Noor, Maryam looked at Ava's peer conflicts as opportunities for her to practise self-assertion and self-expression. Maryam gave prominence to Ava's sense of agency when she asked teachers "to teach her how to resolve her conflicts herself", with a particular emphasis on the word *herself*. The above comment suggests that Maryam's practices were more consistent with those of New Zealand culture promoted by early childhood teachers. Overall, the comments produced by Noor and Maryam revealed two different approaches in handling conflicts, indicating the heterogeneity among Middle Eastern parents. It is clearly important to consider what implications arise from these insights for teacher practice.

Teachers' Perspectives

All four interviewed teachers identified peer conflict as a challenge faced by the case study children. Sally recounted Isa's peer conflicts in the following excerpt:

> **Sally (T):** He has frequent conflicts with other children. As teachers, we're working on strategies to help him with using his words and expressing himself, but his language is still limited, and he becomes frustrated very quickly. [C4/p21]

Sally mentioned that teachers were encouraging Isa to "use his words and express himself" to resolve his conflicts. I also noticed that 'use your words' was a common practice at the centres and teachers constantly reminded children to use their words to express themselves. While it may be easier for English-speaking children to express themselves using their first language, children like Isa, who are not proficient in English, are likely to find that more difficult. Sally acknowledged this point when she said: "but his language is still limited, and he becomes frustrated very quickly". It seems that Sally attributed Isa's frustrations solely to his struggle with the English language. Juxtaposing Noor's and Sally's comments, I could see that they were talking past each other (Metge, 1984) as they did not have the same frame of reference. They were each operating from their own particular perspective which resulted in two contradictory approaches for helping Isa handle his conflicts. Unlike Noor's perception that 'being a good boy' meant withdrawing from conflict and following the rules, from the teachers' perspective 'being a good boy' meant for Isa to express himself in words and stand up for himself. Clearly, Isa's frustrations were not helped by his experience of being in-between two different cultural norms and trying to make sense of them. Focusing on Ava's conflicts with Jojo, Mia recounted:

> **Mia (T):** When Ava's friendship with Jojo was just beginning, Jojo dragged Ava here and there and Ava would go home and said to her mum 'I don't like it when she does that' so Maryam communicated that she wants Ava to be able to stand up for herself. So, we started watching her closely and giving Ava some words to use —we always encourage children to use their words — and that really helped Ava as, now, she can communicate. For instance, Jojo says 'oh, I need you to come here' and pulls her and pulls her, but then Ava could say 'actually, no, I don't want to do that'. A while ago she didn't have that confidence to say it and she let herself be pulled. So, with time and with teachers and Maryam

supporting her and reminding her that ‘it’s ok to say no, you still have a friend’, I think all that helped.” [C1/p22]

The above comment reveals the alignment between Mia and Maryam’s approaches in handling conflicts and their shared goal of promoting Ava’s self-expression that came from the open communication between them. As indicated by Mia, this open communication led to a cooperation between both parties which helped boost Ava’s confidence at the time of conflicts.

Like Sally and Mia, the other two case study teachers, Kelly and Joe, elaborated on the practice of encouraging children to use their words and express themselves at times of conflicts:

> **Kelly (T):** We talked a lot about Samar using her words, so she was going through a stage when she was just making ‘uuhhhh’ noises rather than saying ‘no, you can’t have this’, ‘no stop’, or ‘I can’t play with you’. We did a lot of talking and modelling and she started picking up on it. She is learning English fast, so she can now talk to her friends and express herself instead of making those sounds. [C3/p35]

> **Joe (T):** When Lily first started, she couldn’t speak English to express herself. So, through support and encouragement like how to say, ‘my turn’ or ‘no play’, you know, in cases children don’t get along well...it’s still frustrating for her when she can’t use her words to express herself. However, if someone is getting in the way of her play, she is more confident to let them know that it’s time to move away. [C2/p22]

These comments show that Samar and Lily also struggled in interactions with their peers, often needing teachers’ support when conflict occurred. The comments indicate teachers’ understanding that it was essential for the case study children to be supported in acquiring English as the common language used in the centres to then be able to interact more positively with their peers. They both used the language-supporting strategies of modelling simple phrases such as “my turn” or “no, stop” with both Kelly and Joe suggesting that Lily and Samar’s social skills were increasing as their spoken English improved.

Data from teachers’ and parents’ interviews contribute two pieces to the puzzle that is children’s peer conflicts. It is clear that at least some of the case study children’s conflicts could be attributed to (i) their struggle with the English language; and (ii) the cultural dissonance between teachers

and parents' practices. In the following section, I present and discuss some of my observations of children's peer conflicts.

Observational Data

I observed a number of conflict interactions with peers during the four case studies. Throughout the conflicts, I was aware that the Middle Eastern children were struggling to express themselves verbally and, in some cases, resulted in behaviours like crying, screaming, or similar vocalisations indicating that not being able to articulate themselves in English was a very frustrating experience for them. This causal relationship has been noted in several previous studies (see Ebbeck et al., 2010; Nemeth & Brillante, 2011; Nykiel-Herbert, 2010; Ren, 2015). I also observed evidence that is congruent with the explanation above that conflicts were sometimes caused by children's attempts to make two sets of cultural norms match. Illustrative examples of these conflict dynamics are discussed below.

In Isa's case, my observations suggested that he mostly followed Noor's injunction to stay out of trouble and largely complied or acquiesced to his peers' wishes. In other words, he assumed the role of a follower who went along with the play directions of his peers and followed their lead. On those occasions when conflicts did arise, he responded in one of three way: (i) avoiding conflicts by remaining silent or not reacting to his peers; (ii) seeking teachers' help; and (iii) expressing his frustration. On numerous occasions, I noted in my fieldnotes that Isa was not "using his words" to express himself in line with the centre's established norms for dealing with peer conflict, and when the teachers' encouraged him to use his words, he was mostly silent. As I explained in chapter three, Isa's English level at the time of my data collection was minimal, meaning that he mainly responded with one or two words only.

The following interaction occurred during my second observation in Isa's centre. In this interaction, Isa was on the receiving end of a physical conflict, and he responded by seeking a teacher's help, as per his mother's instructions. Isa, the boy in the white shirt in Figure 11, was in the outdoor area. He was following a boy who was pushing a wheelbarrow. When they reached the sandpit area, Isa stood in front of the wheelbarrow, reached out his hands to hold the front part of it, and looked at the boy as if to request a turn with the wheelbarrow. The boy continued to push

the wheelbarrow and deliberately knocked Isa's knees with it. Isa moved out of the way while rubbing his knees. The boy continued pushing the wheelbarrow towards the garden.

Isa (to the nearby teacher while pointing to the boy): Help! Help!

Teacher (gets close to Isa): What happened? What did he do?

Isa points to his knee.

Teacher: Okay. We're going to talk to him. What should we tell him?

Isa does not reply.

Teacher: We should tell him 'Be careful and stop', 'You hurt me'.

Isa looks at the teacher silently. The teacher takes Isa to the garden area where the boy is standing next to the wheelbarrow.

Teacher (to the boy): You didn't stop to say sorry. You need to be careful next time. Okay?

The boy: Sorry.

Isa walks away silently. [Isa/2nd session, 11:10 am]

Figure 11

The Wheelbarrow Episode

During the third observation session, Isa was at the receiving end of yet another physical conflict and this time his response was to walk away without reacting to his peer. Isa was standing next to two boys in the outdoor area and the three of them were looking at a plant in the centre's garden. One of the boys, Sam, pushed Isa away and stood in his space while tightly holding Isa's t-shirt. Isa looked at Sam's hand, but did not react. Sam let go of Isa's t-shirt. Isa touched his t-shirt in the

place where Sam had been holding it and then walked to the other side of the garden. Sam picked up an empty water container and threw the container at Isa hitting Isa on his foot. Again, Isa did not say anything, but he kept on walking. Sam then stood close to Isa and pushed him slowly. Isa did not react this time either. Sam pushed Isa slowly again while looking at him carefully. Isa showed signs of frustration by running away while making low-tone incomprehensible sounds. [Isa/3rd session, 11:20 am].

Isa's passive and submissive reactions could partly explain his constant conflicts with peers. In a context where children are encouraged to use their words to express their feelings, I noted that Isa's submissive reactions created a sort of curiosity in his peers as if they wanted to somehow test Isa's limits. This could explain why, in the above episode, Sam was *carefully* looking at Isa.

I observed the following interaction seventeen days after the previous incident. As illustrated in images in Figure 12, Isa was in the indoor area. He ran towards the playdough table where a girl was sitting. Isa picked up a playdough cutter that was on the table. The girl grabbed the cutter away from him. Isa did not say anything. He stretched his hand to pick up the playdough. The girl snatched the playdough from him. Isa burst into tears. The nearby teacher came towards Isa:

> **Teacher:** What happened Isa? Did you want to use the cutter?
> **Isa** is crying and does not reply.
> **Teacher**: You can use your words and talk to her. Ask her, 'my turn please'.
> **Isa** is crying and doesn't reply.
> **Teacher**: Crying doesn't help the problem. You should try and use your words with your friends. I can see you're a bit frustrated. Come, let me show you something else. [Isa/7th session, 12:30 pm]

Figure 12

The Playdough Episode

The above scenario demonstrates the incongruence between teachers' practice and Isa's cultural practice. The teacher emphasised the importance of using words to Isa when she said: "You should try and use your words with your friends". Hence, she repeated a well-established rule of practice for dealing with conflicts in the centre without knowing that Isa's silence and submissiveness could stem from the cultural practices he encounters at home.

Overall, the observations indicated that the challenge of peer conflict for Isa was mainly an experience of cultural dissonance. This cultural dissonance remained unknown to the teachers and the parent as they both thought they were helping by encouraging him to operate in their own particular way. In other words, Isa was experiencing a sense of in-betweenness (Bhabha, 1994) and was trying to figure out how to navigate his peer conflicts.

In Ava's case, the observations demonstrated that she was experiencing frequent conflicts with one of her peers, Jojo. As Maryam and Mia also reported, I noticed that Ava was being assertive during conflicts. More specifically, Ava showed an ability to take charge during the conflict interactions she was involved in: she asserted dominance and assumed a directive rather than a follower role. The following two interactions demonstrate Ava's assertiveness:

The first interaction occurred during my second observation of Ava in her early childhood centre. In this episode, one of the boys, Jack, was reading a book with Ava and Jojo standing next to him:

> **Ava** (to the boy): Can I read after you?
> **Jack** nods and gives the book to Ava after a while.
> **Jojo** grabs the book from Ava.
> **Ava** (grabs the book back from Jojo): I wanted to read this book after Jack. It's MY turn now. You can read it after me. [Ava/2nd session, 10:59 am]

Similarly, on a subsequent research visit, I recorded a conflict that unfolded about a soft toy that Ava had brought from home. As illustrated in the images in Figure 13, Jojo took Ava's soft toy and handed her another toy in return:

> **Jojo:** Here's the dog.
> **Ava:** No, I want MY toy (and reaches her hand to take the soft toy back).
> **Jojo:** But it's not for you. It was mine (and pulling the soft toy towards herself).
> **Ava** (takes the soft toy back): It's mine. This is MY toy, not yours.
> **Jojo** (pauses for some seconds): But what toy could I have?
> **Ava:** You can play with this toy (selects a toy from the shelf and gives it to Jojo. Jojo accepts the toy and they continue playing). [Ava/ 3rd session, 10:24 am]

Figure 13

The Soft Toy Episode

When I was analysing Lily and Samar's observation records, I noticed episodes where the two could not verbally express themselves to their peers and became overwhelmed, at times acting out in frustration. The following two episodes exemplify such interactions.

The first interaction occurred during my first observation in Lily's centre. Lily was in the outdoor area near the water trough, next to another girl, Penny. Lily picked up a bottle from a nearby shelf and placed it on the ground away from the water trough. She then picked up a cup, filled it with water, walked toward the bottle, and poured the water into the bottle. Lily then walked back to the water trough to refill the cup. In the meantime, Penny walked over to the bottle with a cup in her hand and leaned down to pour the water inside the bottle.

> **Lily** (looking at Penny): HEEEEEEY!
> **Penny** looks at Lily briefly and keeps emptying her cup into the bottle. She then moves toward the water trough.
> **Lily** looks annoyed, moves toward the bottle, and empties her cup into it. She then moves back to the water trough again while looking at Penny.
> **Penny** walks toward the bottle again.
> **Lily** looks annoyed and screams at Penny this time.
> **Penny** pauses for a second but then continues to empty her cup into the bottle.
> **Lily** bursts into tears.
> **Penny** looks at Lily and then moves away from the bottle.

The teacher who was standing close by reminded Lily to use her words:

> **Teacher:** Lily, you can talk to her. Say "stop" whatever you want her to stop doing.
> **Lily** (looks at Penny): Stop it. [Lily/1st session, 10:31 am]

This second episode occurred during Samar's second observation session. As illustrated in the images in Figure 14, Samar was in the outdoor area, climbing the ladder frame. Leo, a younger peer, was climbing the ladder frame from the opposite side. He reached out to Samar's head, removed her hat, and threw it on the ground. About to burst into tears, Samar pointed to her hat. One of the girls picked Samar's hat and gave it back to her. Samar put her hat back on, but Leo removed it again. Samar screamed at Leo and burst into tears. Leo gave Samar's hat back. One of the teachers was watching them.

Teacher: Samar, are you okay?

Samar nods.

Teacher: You can talk to him and let him know. You can say ‘Leo, stop’ or ‘Leo, please give it back’.

Samar: Leo, stop. [Samar/ 2nd session, 12:05 pm]

Figure 14

The Hat Episode

This analysis of Lily and Samar's observational data shows that both were learning how to express themselves in English. I observed multiple instances when Lily and Samar could actively use the teachers' modelled language to regulate their own activity which might suggest that they had internalised the particular language which was once external assistance to them. I present the next two episodes below to demonstrate that the two children had developed greater competence, both socially and linguistically, as they were able to resolve their conflicts with no external support.

The first interaction occurred during my seventh observation of Lily in her centre. Lily was playing with the blocks in the indoor area. A boy of the same age approached her, picked up one of the blocks, and walked away.

> **Lily:** No. stop.
> **The boy** comes back and leans down to pick up another block.
> **Lily** (barricades the blocks by her hands and looks directly at the boy): STOP, stop it!
> **The boy** walks away while Lily keeps playing with the blocks. [Lily/ 7th session, 11:15 am]

The next interaction comes from my eighth observation session with Samar. As illustrated in images in Figure 15, Samar was in the outdoor area. Two boys, one younger and one of the same age as Samar, were standing inside the sandpit. They were throwing the sand out of the sandpit. When they saw Samar approaching, they threw sand in her direction:

> **Samar**: Stop please. It's not okay.
> **The boys** stop throwing the sand. Samar steps into the sandpit and plays next to them. [Samar/ 8th session, 10:38 am]

Figure 15

The Second Sandpit Episode

6.3 Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I have discussed Middle Eastern children's challenges in New Zealand early childhood centres as these were identified from the national survey data, and data from the four subsequent case studies. Using thematic analysis, I identified two main, and related, types of challenge, namely 'struggling with the English language' and 'peer conflict'.

While the early childhood teachers participating in this study considered language to be a naturally acquired skill, my analysis also indicated that the teachers were aware that children needed support not only to develop linguistic competence, but also to be able to interact more positively with their peers. As I have discussed throughout the chapter, all the teachers were intentional about supporting children to acquire competence in English and implemented deliberate practices such as: modelling language; slowing down the rate of their speech; giving children enough time to respond; providing emotional support; using simple language, gestures and other body language; exaggerated pronunciation; as well as incorporating words from children's home languages. Some of the teachers even approached parents and created language support strategies based on the parents' input. These intentional pedagogical strategies had clear positive impacts on the case

study children, suggesting that they could be usefully applied in facilitating second language acquisition in other early childhood settings as well. Despite the proven merit of the above-mentioned pedagogical strategies, they need to be critically reviewed in terms of their contribution to monolingualism in New Zealand, and whether they encourage the learning of children's home languages and the two other official languages of Aotearoa New Zealand – Māori and sign language. According to Jones-Diaz (2014), English-only pedagogies reinforce the hegemony of English as the dominant global language. They also limit bilingual children's potential to exchange and build linguistic and cultural capital. Jones-Diaz (2014) also highlights how children's learning of more than one language facilitates early literacy learning when their home language is included in educational and community settings. In the same vein, Baker (2011) posited educational settings, including early childhood settings, as essential agents in developing the home language of minority children. As Baker and Wright (2021) put it:

> When a child enters kindergarten or elementary school, home language development needs to be formally addressed, irrespective of whether or not that child has age-appropriate competence in the home language. While home language development throughout schooling is important for majority and minority language children, the minority context gives extra reasons for careful nurturance of a minority language, otherwise the majority language may become dominant even to the detriment of the minority language. (p. 286)

'Peer conflict' was identified by the Middle Eastern parents who responded to the national survey as a key challenge for their children and this was echoed also by the parents in the case studies. I have discussed that the parents attributed the children's peer conflicts largely to their difficulties with using English to express themselves; a view validated by my observations. Three of the children in the case studies were developing social skills hand in hand with their expressive language. However, for Isa, self-expression proved challenging and frustrating. A key reason for Isa's frustration appeared to be the dissonance between the instructions he received from his teachers and those he received from his mother. While some of the Middle Eastern parents in this study valued the approach promoted by early childhood teachers which encouraged the use of words for self-expression, Isa's mother discouraged self-expression during or after peer conflicts, instead suggesting that Isa not respond or retaliate but walk away from conflict. The lack of open communication between teachers and Isa's mother put Isa in a state of in-betweenness (Bhabha,

1994) as he tried to navigate between the two contradictory approaches to conflict resolution. Based on my observations, Isa leaned more closely toward his mother's instructions. When asked by teachers or peers to put his frustrations into words, he either resorted to silence, or used other means of expression such as screaming and crying. This finding suggests that the lack of teacher-parent communication often leaves children with little support to handle conflict situations. The importance of considering the practical implications that arise from these insights cannot be overstated. To fulfil their professional responsibility of providing support for children, teachers need to recognise the positive impact of effective parent-teacher communication about children's early education experience. By drawing on knowledge from families, teachers can understand the nuances of cultural practices that could result is teachers and parents talking past each other and instead develop more appropriate practices.

7. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the neglected experiences of Middle Eastern children and their parents in New Zealand early childhood centres at a time of increasing cultural and ethnic diversity across all educational settings. Three research questions guided my investigation:

- What are Middle Eastern parents' expectations for their children's early education in New Zealand?
- What are early childhood teachers' practices and perspectives with respect to Middle Eastern families?
- What are the challenges faced by Middle Eastern children in New Zealand early childhood centres?

I chose to employ a mixed methods research design because it gave me the depth and breadth of perspective needed to address the research questions. More specifically, the data collected from my survey of Middle Eastern parents (n=84) helped me identify the boundaries of the challenges experienced by Middle Eastern children; the expectations of Middle Eastern parents for their children's early education; and the practices of teachers in interaction with Middle Eastern families. The follow-up four case studies helped me gain a more rounded understanding of the experiences in all three focus areas. To answer the first two research questions, I brought together findings from the survey and parent/teacher interviews. To answer the third research question, I relied on all three data sets: the survey, parent/teacher interviews, as well as my observations of the case study children. I analysed the data collected from both phases using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. In phase one, I used descriptive statistics for analysing the responses to the close-ended questions of the survey, and thematic analysis for the responses to the open-ended questions; in phase two, I used thematic analysis for the interviews and observational data in the case studies. I discussed the findings through constructs from hybridity theory (Bhabha, 1994), critical multiculturalism (May & Sleeter, 2010), and funds of knowledge (González et al., 2006).

In this chapter, I bring together the key insights under each research question and, using the theoretical constructs introduced in chapter three, I discuss my study's contributions to ECE scholarship. I conclude with a discussion of the limitations of the research and some suggestions for future research.

7.1 Key Findings

7.1.1 Middle Eastern Parents' Expectations of Early Childhood Centres

Tensions Between Parental Expectations and Teachers' Practices

My key finding in relation to the first research question was the identification of an ongoing tension between the dominant New Zealand early childhood discourses promoted by the teachers and the alternative discourses about children and ECE used by the Middle Eastern parents (see Hall, 2006 for a detailed discussion on the notion of 'discourse'). For example, some of the parents wrote or spoke about the importance of incorporating structured educational experiences into early childhood programmes and yet were reluctant to either communicate their views or bring about a change to teacher's practices. Interviews with teachers, on the other hand, showed that the parents' expectations about structured educational experiences were often dismissed because they were thought by the teachers to contradict the concept of 'learning through play' which is a foundational concept within the New Zealand early childhood curriculum.

In many cases, the teachers were unaware of the values that underpinned the Middle Eastern parents' expectations. An example was the different views held by teachers and parents with respect to the level of independence that children should be allowed and encouraged to exercise during daily routine activities. While parents strived for nurturance in their childrearing, teachers highlighted the development of independence in children. More specifically, Middle Eastern parents did not support the idea that children should have complete independence in activities such as eating and drinking; for the parents, supporting children with these activities was a fundamental part of affectionate parenting. From the teachers' point of view, however, building up children's ability to feed and dress themselves, and otherwise look after their own needs was a valued goal, which if ignored, would compromise children's independence. These opposing views indicate a disjuncture between communal nurturing ways of being valued by Middle Eastern parents, and the notion of individualism as promoted by teachers (see Rogoff, 2003). This discursive tension contributed to the creation of an asymmetrical power relation between parents and teachers (Tobin et al., 2007), which was reflected, among other things, in some teachers' negation of parental expectations that were different from the dominant discourses of the curriculum.

When teachers interpreted things only from their cultural perspective, they not only dismissed the parents' expectations, but also projected negative judgements about them. For instance, faced with the Middle Eastern parents' expectation that teachers should attend to the children's routine care activities, such as feeding and dressing, the teachers attributed this expectation to Middle Eastern parents' underestimation of their children's abilities. This suggests that the teachers were only able to interpret these parents' expectation from their own cultural perspective and did not recognise that their beliefs about "good child-rearing" might be equally as culturally bound as those of the Middle Eastern parents. Given the pedagogical imperative in the early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, that teachers should work in partnership with culturally and linguistically diverse families, these findings have important implications for early childhood teachers, including that they should cultivate a stance of criticality of their own cultural lenses. As Moll et al. (1992) have argued, parents' expectations and practices represent funds of knowledge that can be invited and incorporated into the early childhood programme, instead of being treated as deficit practices in need of rectification. Wisdom to tap into these funds of knowledge would enrich early childhood teachers with the knowledge to devise more inclusive policies and practices.

Te Whāriki is characterised as "a curriculum for all children" (MoE, 2017, p. 12). It states that an inclusive curriculum "involves adapting environments and teaching approaches as necessary" (MoE, 2017, p. 13). It introduces the notion of 'local curriculum' which "provides the vision, space and flexibility for those involved in ECE to continually reshape understandings and interpretations of *Te Whāriki 2017* to ensure that practices are adapted and respond to demographic changes" (Chan, 2019, p. 257). According to Skerrett (2018),

> The imperative is to actively take note of whānau pedagogies, and ways of being and knowing. It is not about fitting children into a fixed curriculum, but more about designing curriculum to be versatile, flexible, and adjustable to where children are at. (p. 4)

However, teachers' over-reliance on dominant discourses of ECE may operate to limit their openness to other ways of being, seeing, and doing (see Chan & Ritchie, 2020, p. 225) and potentially enculturate children of different ethnicities into an exclusively English/Pākehā way of being (Skerrett, 2017). According to Skerrett (2018), "in the dominant hierarchical approach to education of both indigenous and non-indigenous children they have been coerced into taking on board the dominant viewpoint of not only who they are, but who they might be and become" (p.

7). Skerrett (2017, p. 14) reflects on the discrepancy between the ambitions of *Te Whāriki* and its actual outcomes and criticises the overly simplified way in which the curriculum comprehends biculturalism:

> *Te Whāriki* shies away from addressing the complexities of biculturalism because of lack of analysis around what it means to be bicultural, and the relationship of language/s to biculturalism. The curriculum framework translates, in practice, into a common implicit (western) curriculum through a common implicit (Western) language by design.

In this context, adopting a critical approach can help early childhood teachers to genuinely and fairly address issues related to the normalisation of Western, individualistic perspectives and the corresponding marginalisation of 'other' perspectives. According to Chan (2019),

> By making critical theories explicit in the document, *Te Whāriki 2017* overtly states its intention to provide guidance for teachers . . . to consider and address social and global inequality issues, including those emerging from the current situation of superdiversity. It is inequitable for teachers, for example, to uncritically apply dominant ECE discourses to assess migrant children's abilities . . . or to design standardised learning experiences for all children. (p. 253)

Instead of citing specific discourses of *Te Whāriki* for negating parents' viewpoints, teachers might ask 'how can this expectation be accommodated within the framework of *Te Whāriki'*, or 'which principle of *Te Whāriki* can support the incorporation of the expectation?' By critically reflecting upon their "normal" practices and including different epistemologies in their programmes, early childhood teachers can work towards creating a transformative curriculum.

7.1.2 Early Childhood Teachers' Practices and Perceptions with Respect to Middle Eastern Families

Teachers Used Different Approaches in Accommodating the Needs of Middle Eastern Families

The key finding in relation to the second research question was teachers' different approaches in accommodating Middle Eastern families' needs. While most of the teachers adopted a critical multicultural approach and acknowledged Middle Eastern families' individual needs when

celebrating their important events and accommodating their dietary needs, findings from the survey and case study data suggest that this approach was missing in several cases. In other words, some teachers did not consider the dynamic nature of families' values and the diversity of opinions among Middle Easterners; hence, their practices tended to assume a static and tokenistic representation of Middle Eastern families' culture. For instance, some teachers did not communicate with Middle Eastern parents about children's dietary needs but instead automatically removed non-halal products from their children's diet. This practice was driven by the assumption that all Middle Eastern families are 'Muslim' and eat 'halal food'. Alienated by these assumptions, one of the parents expressed her disappointment at what she believed was a stereotypical and discriminatory judgement. According to Bhabha (1994), assumptions fail to recognise the hybridity and fluidity of cultural practices; instead the practices of each imagined community are simplified and essentialised. An important finding that can help challenge the stereotypical image of a Middle Eastern family is the secular upbringing of children reported by some Middle Eastern parents, both in the survey and the case studies. Some of these families strongly objected to any form of religious teaching for their children. Consequently, teachers need to critically reflect on their own values and judgments about families, so that their basis for understanding families is rooted not in inaccurate stereotypes but in authentic relationships.

The findings indicate that Middle Eastern parents were in general prepared to modify and negotiate some of their original childrearing practices. Some parents embraced certain practices of the centres – such as children's involvement in messy play – because they perceived messy play as beneficial to their children's learning. When Middle Eastern parents navigated between the centre practices and their original practices, they sometimes functioned within a new, in-between space where they were consciously blending elements of both cultures to maximise their children's participation and learning. Bhabha (1994) identified these new spaces as 'third spaces', which are better described as parts of a spectrum rather than a continuum. As a result of the emergence of third spaces, parents' funds of knowledge expanded, and their parenting practices remained fluid. For instance, one of the parents negotiated across the Middle Eastern and New Zealand styles of learning and expected a mix of instruction-based and play-based learning for her child. These findings, elaborated in chapter four, show the fluid childrearing practices of Middle Eastern families.

In their survey and interview answers, Middle Eastern parents indicated a general willingness to share their views on childrearing and ECE. In some cases, the main issue raised by parents was not the absence or presence of certain practices, but the lack of effective communication between home and centre. For instance, one of the case study parents mentioned that she was willing to engage in centre activities if she knew more about them.

Such findings point to the gap that exists between the Middle Eastern families' lived experiences of their child's attendance at their early childhood centre, and the way that the children's attendance was understood by most of the centre teachers. In so doing, these findings also highlight the importance of teacher preparation and professional learning courses that develop teacher communication skills and promote their effective communication with immigrant families. *Te Whāriki* recognises the values of communication and partnership with families but the translation of these values into practice relies on the knowledge, competencies, and commitment of early childhood teachers. It was encouraging that some of the case study teachers were more attuned to the barriers that could hinder effective communication with parents and found ways to proactively address those barriers, such as through using the services of a community navigator (see Mara, 2006 for a similar discussion on the benefits of using community members as language and cultural assistants). However, these practices were the exception rather than the rule.

7.1.3 Middle Eastern Children's Challenges in New Zealand Early Childhood Centres

Middle Eastern Children Struggled to Express Themselves in English

The key finding in relation to the third research question was that Middle Eastern children generally entered their early childhood centre struggling to express themselves in English and the dominance of English in the early childhood centres meant that the children needed to gain control of English to be able to communicate and form relationships with peers. While all the case study teachers were of the view that children picked up the language naturally, they acknowledged their role in facilitating English language acquisition and provided examples of deliberate practices to achieve this, such as slowing down the rate of their speech and using simple language structures. These practices had clear positive impacts on the case study children's English language acquisition. Although there were some teachers who incorporated phrases from the children's home languages into the programmes, this practice was mainly an effort to help the children feel

more comfortable in the programme rather than a concerted effort to support or maintain the Middle Eastern children's home language. In other words, the teachers' efforts were mainly aimed at ensuring that the Middle Eastern children learnt English as the dominant language spoken in the centre rather than by any intention to move away from established mode of creating generation after generation of monolinguals in New Zealand.

Another important finding was the disconnection between teachers' practice of 'use your words' and Middle Eastern families' values of compliance and interdependence. In one of the case studies, the parent had a collectivistic attitude toward self-expression particularly during times of conflict (see Yamamoto & Li, 2012 and Shahaeian et al., 2011 for a further discussion on the cultural meanings of self-expression). She viewed self-expression as an undesirable communication style and instead promoted interdependence and compliance and an avoidance of all conflict. As I argued in chapter six, lack of open communication between the parent and teachers led to a case of 'talking past each other' (Metge, 1984) resulting in two contradictory approaches for helping the child handling his conflicts. While the teachers encouraged the child's assertive verbal expression, the parent promoted restraint of self-expression. It was clear that in the context of his early childhood centre, self-expression was frustrating for the child mainly because he was faced with the challenge of single-handedly navigating two culturally dissonant practices on his own: one from his home and one from his early childhood centre. This raises important implications for teachers, namely the need to be cognisant of different cultural norms and nuances associated with their routine practices.

7.2 Significance and Contributions of my Study

This research is the first systematic study of the experiences of Middle Eastern children and their parents in New Zealand early childhood centres. It is also the first attempt to investigate teachers' perceptions of Middle Eastern families in the context of New Zealand ECE. As such, the findings have the potential to raise intercultural awareness and to motivate early childhood teachers to create collaborative spaces by critically engaging in dialogues with Middle Eastern families and embracing the knowledge that families bring to the programmes. The findings might also encourage teachers to hold conversations with immigrant parents about the two parties' views on

partnership. This knowledge can help teachers devise relevant opportunities for parents' involvement in the programmes.

A major contribution of this study is to the wider area of immigrant children's early education experiences, nationally and internationally. More specifically, the study has shown the potential for implementing mixed-methods research designs to study these experiences. The research process itself has practical implications for researchers who work in the area of ECE, especially in terms of research ethics. One of the most challenging parts of this research was gaining the necessary ethical approval from the university to conduct this study, especially since the submission of the application unintentionally coincided with a time of heightened cultural sensitivities and security concerns occasioned by the events around the Christchurch mosque shootings of March 2019. Gaining access to the early childhood centres for a study on Middle Eastern children at this time, and to the participating parents and children proved challenging and time consuming. Some of the early childhood centres that I approached for survey dissemination were wary of the negative impact of the Christchurch attacks on Middle Eastern families' experiences of life in New Zealand in general, and of early education services in particular (see chapter three). However, the majority of the contacted centres were very supportive of the research. For a considerable portion of the participants in this study, 2019 was an exceptionally tough year. The fact that enough data was collected during that year to address the research questions demonstrates the possibilities of research in a post-crisis environment.

This research contributes to ongoing efforts for debunking the stereotypes associated with certain minority groups, and specifically Middle Easterners. Instead of falling back on outdated conceptulisations of Middle Easterners and somehow trying to accommodate the *perceived* needs of this population, this study suggests that it would be profitable for early childhood teachers in New Zealand to seek a deeper understanding of what Middle Easterners in this country really think and feel. This understanding can minimise the stereotypical views of Middle Eastern families at both institutional and individual levels. In this sense, the findings can serve a broader societal function.

7.3 Limitations and Areas for Future Research

While I made every effort to minimise limitations in this study, some limitations of time and resources could not be totally overcome. One of my main objectives was to create a balanced

representation of different Middle Eastern nationalities in the case study sample. I did achieve this goal, but the case studies only reflect the experiences of four Middle Eastern families and their children in a major city in New Zealand. While the findings contribute towards an understanding of the research topic and have relevance to teachers and teacher educators, they cannot be generalised nor transferred to other research settings. Further research is required, preferably with larger groups of participants from a variety of Middle Eastern nationalities, to achieve a better understanding of the experiences of Middle Eastern families in New Zealand early childhood services.

Researchers have mentioned the place of residence as a potential determinant of immigrant families' experiences (e.g., see Maxwell, 2019), therefore one might reasonably expect that if a similar study were carried out in a different city, different patterns might emerge from parent and teacher interviews.

I could only collect data during a fixed period of the children's attendance at the respective early childhood centres because of the time limitations within which this study operated. If the data collection had occurred over a longer time period, my interpretations might have been enriched.

I also acknowledge that children's voices are not as loud as those of their parents and teachers. I attempted to account for children's challenges through non-participatory observation, however, future research would benefit from highlighting Middle Eastern children's actual, rather than perceived difficulties in New Zealand early childhood centres by seeking to ask them directly about their experiences.

To identify the challenges faced by the case study children, I only observed them in the centres. However, it would be useful for future research to allow for observations of Middle Eastern children in their homes. This would generate additional insights into the children's experiences as they learn to function in the two contexts.

Although two of the children's fathers were present during the interviews, the mothers chose to be the interviewed participants. I consider this a limitation because a father's perspective of early education might not match that of a mother. A study including Middle Eastern fathers could create different but equally useful information.

7.4 Concluding Remarks

Due to the paucity of previous research on Middle Eastern population in the context of New Zealand early childhood services, my main objective in this research was to give voice to Middle Eastern families and shed light on their experiences. This objective required anticipation of all the possible communication barriers between me and the participants. Throughout the design phase of the study, I adopted several measures to account for the identified barriers. To enhance accessibility to the survey, I had the original English version translated into Arabic and Farsi by professional translators and checked through back translation. I also conducted three of the interviews in the families' home languages. These factors alongside the trust that was built between the participating parents and me resulted in first-hand insights into the experiences of Middle Eastern families. Several survey respondents showed appreciation for having been asked about their experiences. Some specifically mentioned the facilitating role of the provision of the national survey in their home language.

The case study participants' acceptance and cooperation during the data collection process exceeded my expectations. The four early childhood teachers demonstrated great commitment to this research. Likewise, Middle Eastern parents were very open and keen to share their experiences. I observed some wonderful interactions within the early childhood centres which inspired me as an early childhood researcher. Throughout the thesis, I discussed multiple instances of positive parent-teacher communication. However, the survey and interview findings suggest that effective communication was missing in several cases. In some cases, children were clearly not supported in navigating between home and centre practices. In other cases, children and their parents were kept invisible and uninvolved within the programmes. Ineffective communication also led teachers to make incorrect assumptions about Middle Eastern families.

These findings lead me to conclude that at the heart of culturally responsive practice with diverse families, is the need for effective parent-teacher communication. Growing culturally responsive practice in early childhood settings (McFarlane et al., 2019; Morrison et al., 2022; Warren, 2018) is a project with ongoing potentialities for both researchers and teachers.

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Appendices

Appendix 1- Email to Kindergarten Associations or Parent Organisations (Phase 1: Survey)

Dear Sir/Madam at (Name of Kindergarten Association/ or Centre's parent organisation),

I am Mehri (Fatemeh) Irajzad, a PhD student in Early Childhood Education at Victoria University of Wellington. For my PhD project, I will be investigating the experiences of Middle Eastern children and their parents in New Zealand early childhood centres. As one part of my study, I need to identify Middle Eastern parents who can respond to an online anonymous survey about their child's early childhood experiences.

I am contacting you because the centres in your association/organisation are listed as having one or more Middle Eastern children enrolled in 2018. For my study, Middle Eastern children are those whose ethnicity is listed as being from the following countries: Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

This email is to inform you of the study and to ask if I may email the online anonymous survey to the early childhood centres in your association with a request that they pass the survey on to Middle Eastern parents in their centre community.

If you are happy for me to approach centres in your association/organisation in this way, may I please ask you to: (i) read the attached information sheet and (ii) complete the attached consent form.

I would appreciate your response to this email by (insert the date).

Regards,

Mehri Irajzad

PhD Student in Early Childhood Education

Victoria University of Wellington

Appendix 2- Email to Centre Managements (Phase 1: Survey)

Dear Sir/Madam at (Name of the early childhood centre),

I am Mehri (Fatemeh) Irajzad, a PhD student in Early Childhood Education at Victoria University of Wellington. For my PhD project, I will be investigating the experiences of Middle Eastern children and their parents in New Zealand early childhood centres. As one part of my study, I need Middle Eastern parents to respond to an online anonymous survey about their child's early childhood experiences. It should take them approximately ten minutes to respond. The survey has been created in English, Arabic, and Persian, so that parents can choose the language that they are most comfortable with.

I am contacting you because your centre is listed as having one or more Middle Eastern children attending your centre in 2018. For my study, Middle Eastern children are those whose ethnicity is listed as being from the following countries: Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

I am writing to seek your assistance in distributing the online anonymous survey to Middle Eastern parents/guardians who attend your centre. As a first step, I need to formally ask for your consent to assist me in this study by (i) reading the attached information sheet and (ii) completing the attached consent form.

I would really appreciate if you could email me your reply as soon as possible. If you agree to participate, I will provide you with precise instructions on how to send out the survey to Middle Eastern parents/guardians at your centre.

I would appreciate your response to this email.

Regards,

Mehri Irajzad

PhD Student in Early Childhood Education

Victoria University of Wellington

Appendix 3- Email to Centre Managements That Agreed to Participate in the Study, Providing Them with Instructions on How to Send the Survey to Middle Eastern Families (Phase 1: Survey)

Dear Sir/Madam at (Name of the early childhood centre),

Thank you so much for your positive response to my request for your help in sending out an online anonymous survey to the parents of the Middle Eastern children in your centre.

For my study, Middle Eastern children are those whose ethnicity is listed as being from the following countries: Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

This email is to explain what is needed, as follows:

1- I am asking you to send an email to the parents of the Middle Eastern children in your centre asking them to complete the survey.

2- The text of the email is the yellow highlighted section in this email and contains the link to the survey.

3- If any of the Middle Eastern parents do not have access to either a computer or a mobile phone, please let me know so that I can send you a hard copy in the language of their choice that you can pass on to them. I will also send you a self-addressed envelope.

4- Please feel free to add your own text to explain the request to participate in this study, which can be something like this: "We have been asked to help distribute an online survey to Middle Eastern parents. The survey is part of a PhD study by Mehri (Fatemeh) Irajzad. Please see her message below."

Since a three-week timeframe has been allocated for this phase of the study, I would appreciate it if you could send out the survey to parents as soon as possible and ask them to complete it before (insert date).

I truly appreciate your assistance with my study,

Regards,

Mehri Irajzad

PhD student in Early Childhood Education

Victoria University of Wellington

Dear Parent,

I am Mehri Irajzad, a PhD student in Early Childhood Education at Victoria University of Wellington. I am researching the experiences of Middle Eastern children and their parents in New Zealand early childhood centres. I am writing to ask if you could spend ten minutes to complete an online anonymous survey for this research project.

As a Middle Easterner myself, I know that Middle Eastern children have unique experiences when growing up in another culture, and this survey aims to explore these experiences.

If you or a person in your family knows English, I would appreciate if you complete the survey in English as this will speed up my analysis. However, I have also created the survey in Arabic and Farsi in case you find it more comfortable to answer in one of these languages. **As soon as you click on the survey link, you can choose your preferred language on the top-right of the survey.** The survey is anonymous, which means the responses will not be able to be traced back to you. If you participate in the survey, you will have the opportunity to enter in a draw to win a **$50 supermarket voucher**.
To start the survey, please click on this link:

I truly appreciate if you complete the survey as soon as possible.

Respectfully,
Mehri Irajzad
PhD Student in Early childhood Education
Victoria University of Wellington

Farsi translation of the Email to Middle Eastern parents

والد عزیز، سلام:

من مهری ایرج زاد، دانشجوی دکترای آموزش به کودکان در دانشگاه ویکتوریای ولینگتون هستم. پروژه ی دکترای من در مورد تجربیات کودکان خاورمیانه ای در مهدکودک های نیوزلند می باشد. از شما والد عزیز تقاضا دارم تا با تکمیل پرسشنامه طراحی شده (که حدودا ۱۵ دقیقه طول می کشد) در این پژوهش شرکت نمائید. برای صیانت از هویت شما، این پرسشنامه ناشناس است و در هیچکدام از مراحل تحقیق نام شما پرسیده نمی شود.

این پرسشنامه به سه زبان آماده شده است: انگلیسی، فارسی و عربی. اگر شما و یا فردی در خانواده شما انگلیسی می داند، خواهشمندم که این پرسشنامه را به زبان انگلیسی پر کنید. در غیر این صورت، می توانید زبانی که با آن راحت تر هستید را انتخاب نمایید. بدین منظور، پس از کلیک کردن بر روی لینک زیر، صفحه اول پرسشنامه باز می شود و شما می توانید زبان پرسشنامه را از بالا سمت راست آن صفحه انتخاب کنید.
پس از تکمیل پرسشنامه، می توانید وارد قرعه کشی بن ۵۰ دلاری سوپرمارکت شوید.

برای تکمیل پرسشنامه، لطفا بر روی لینک زیر کلیک کنید:

خیلی ممنون می شوم اگر هرچه زودتر به این پرسشنامه پاسخ دهید.

از همکاری شما صمیمانه سپاسگزارم،
مهری ایرج زاد،
دانشجوی دکترای آموزش به کودکان
دانشگاه ویکتوریای ولینگتون

Arabic translation of the Email to Middle Eastern parents

عزيزتي الام/ عزيزي الاب

أنا مهرى ايرجزاد، طالبة دكتوراه في تعليم الطفولة المبكرة بجامعة فيكتوريا في ولنجتون. أقوم بإجراء بحث حول تجارب أطفال الشرق الأوسط في مراكز الطفولة المبكرة في نيوزيلندا. من أجل القيام بهذا المشروع البحثي، أرجو منكم تعبئة هذا الاستبيان عبر الانترنت (مع العلم ان هذا الاستبيان مجهول المصدر ولا يلزم فيه تعريف الهوية) ويمكن أن يستغرق حوالي 10 دقيقة.

بصفتي شرق أوسطية، أدرك أن أطفال الشرق الأوسط لديهم تجارب فريدة من نوعها عندما ينشؤون في بيئة ثقافية مختلفة، ويهدف هذا الاستبيان إلى استكشاف هذه التجارب.

تم إنشاء الاستبيان باللغات الإنجليزية والعربية والفارسية، وبالتالي، يمكنك اختيار الإجابة بأي لغة تشعر بالارتياح معها. إذا كنت تعرف أو أحد أفراد أسرتك اللغة الإنجليزية، فسأكون ممتنة لو اخترت إكمال الاستبيان باللغة الإنجليزية. بمجرد النقر على رابط الاستبيان، يمكنك اختيار لغتك المفضلة في أعلى يمين الاستبيان. الاستبيان مجهول، مما يعني أنه لن يتم تتبع هوية من يقوم بتعبئته. إذا شاركت في الاستبيان، فستتاح لك الفرصة للدخول في السحب للفوز بقسيمة تسوق بقيمة 50 دولارًا.

لبدء الاستبيان، يرجى الضغط على هذا الرابط:

إنني أقدر حقاً قيامك بإكمال تعبئة الاستبيان فى اسرع وقت ممكن.

بالغ الاحترام

مهرى ايرجزاد

طالبة دكتوراه في التعليم في مرحلة الطفولة المبكرة

جامعة فيكتوريا ولنجتون

Appendix 4- Information Sheet for Kindergarten Associations/Parent Organisations (Phase 1: Survey)

About this project:

I am Mehri (Fatemeh) Irajzad, a PhD student in Early Childhood Education at Victoria University of Wellington. For my PhD project, I am exploring the experiences of Middle Eastern children and their parents in New Zealand early childhood centres. My study is a three-year mixed methods research project (2018- 2021) about: Middle Eastern parents' expectations for their children's early education; early childhood teachers' perspectives and practices with respect to Middle Eastern families; and the challenges faced by Middle Eastern children in New Zealand early childhood centres. The study was designed before the Christchurch mosque incident of 15th March 2019 and is not a direct response to it. My study is designed to complement similar studies focused on the experiences of children from other ethnic backgrounds.

The first phase of this study is to send an online anonymous survey to Middle Eastern parents and explore their experiences and expectations for their children's early education as well as their views about their children's experiences in New Zealand early childhood centres. Data for this phase will be gathered from June 2019 till 31 September 2019. Once the study is completed, there will be conference papers, reports, articles, and book chapters written about this study in academic publications and possibly in media releases, in aggregated form.

What will the study involve for your association?

I am contacting you because the centres in your association/organisation are listed as having one or more Middle Eastern children in 2018 and I would like to approach them to participate in my study. For my study, Middle Eastern children are those whose ethnicity is listed as being from the following countries: Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

If you agree for me to approach centres in your association/organisation with a request to assist me in sending the online survey to Middle Eastern parents, I would ask that you please complete the attached consent form and email it to me. This would then allow me to contact centres directly and invite their participation. It is voluntary for the centres to distribute the survey and for the parents to complete the survey.

What will the study involve for the Middle Eastern parents?

Middle Eastern parents will be invited to spend ten minutes of their time and complete an online anonymous survey which is about their expectations and expectations for their children's early education and their views about their children's experiences at early childhood centres. This survey is prepared in three languages: English, Arabic, and Farsi and parents can choose the language in which to respond.

The survey is anonymous which means that the responses won't be able to be traced back to individuals. By completing and submitting the survey, Middle Eastern parents are voluntarily agreeing to participate. They are free to not answer any question for any reason.

Middle Eastern parents whose children attend an early childhood centre in [the city of choice], can click on to an extra section in their survey where they can add their contact details and the contact details of the centre they attend if they are willing to participate in the qualitative phase of the study.

What do I do if I wish to ask questions or find out more about the study?

If you have any queries or would like to know more about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisors:

Mehri Irajzad Email: Mehri.irajzad@vuw.ac.nz
1- Supervisor: Prof. Carmen Dalli Email: carmen.dalli@vuw.ac.nz
2- Supervisor: Dr. Mere Skerrett Email: mere.skerrett@vuw.ac.nz

Human Ethics Committee information

This research has been approved by the Human Ethics Committee of Victoria University of wellington (Reference number: 0000027201). If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research, you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convenor: Dr Judith Loveridge. Email hec@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 6028.

Appendix 5- Information Sheet for Centre Management (Phase 1: Survey)

About this project:

I am Mehri (Fatemeh) Irajzad, a PhD student in Early Childhood Education at Victoria University of Wellington. For my PhD project, I am exploring the experiences of Middle Eastern children and their parents in New Zealand early childhood centres. My study is a three-year mixed methods research project (2018- 2021) about: Middle Eastern parents' expectations for their children's early education; early childhood teachers' perspectives and practices with respect to Middle Eastern families; and the challenges faced by Middle Eastern children in New Zealand early childhood centres. The study was designed before the Christchurch mosque incident of 15th March 2019 and is not a direct response to it. My study is designed to complement similar studies focused on the experiences of children from other ethnic backgrounds.

The first phase of this study is to send an online anonymous survey to Middle Eastern parents and explore their experiences and expectations for their children's early education as well as their views about their children's experiences in New Zealand early childhood centres. Data for this phase will be gathered from June 2019 till 31 September 2019. Once the study is completed, there will be conference papers, reports, articles, and book chapters written about this study in academic publications and possibly in media releases, in aggregated form.

What will the study involve for your centre?

I am contacting you because your centre is listed as having one or more Middle Eastern children in 2018 and I would like to approach their families to participate in my study. For my study, Middle Eastern children are those whose ethnicity is listed as being from the following countries: Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

If you are happy for me to approach parents through your centre, this would mean that you would assist me to distribute the online anonymous survey to Middle Eastern parents who attend your centre.

As a first step, I need to formally ask for your consent to assist me in this study by completing the attached consent form. After receiving your consent form, I will provide you with precise instructions on how to send the survey link to Middle Eastern parents.

What will the study involve for the Middle Eastern parents?

Middle Eastern parents will be invited to spend ten minutes of their time and complete an online anonymous survey which is about their experiences and expectations for their children's early education as well as their views about their children's experiences at early childhood centres. This survey is prepared in three languages: English, Arabic, and Persian and parents can choose the language in which to respond.

It is voluntary for the centres to distribute the survey and for the parents to complete the survey. The survey is anonymous which means that the responses won't be able to be traced back to individuals. By completing and submitting the survey, Middle Eastern parents are voluntarily agreeing to participate. They are free to not answer any question for any reason.

Middle Eastern parents whose children attend an early childhood centre in [the city of choice], can click on to an extra section in their survey and they will be led to a separate page (to preserve the anonymity of the survey) where they can add their contact details and the contact details of the centre they attend if they are

willing to participate in the qualitative phase of the study. They will also have the opportunity to enter in the drawing to win a $50 Supermarket Voucher.

What do I do if I wish to ask questions or find out more about the study?

If you have any queries or would like to know more about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisors:

Mehri Irajzad Email: Mehri.irajzad@vuw.ac.nz
1- Supervisor: Prof. Carmen Dalli Email: carmen.dalli@vuw.ac.nz
2- Supervisor: Dr. Mere Skerrett Email: mere.skerrett@vuw.ac.nz

Human Ethics Committee information

This research has been approved by the Human Ethics Committee of Victoria University of wellington (Reference number: 0000027201). If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research, you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convenor: Dr Judith Loveridge. Email hec@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 6028.

Thank you. I look forward to hearing from you.

Appendix 6- Consent Forms for Kindergarten Associations and Parent Organisations (Phase 1: Survey)

Please tick if you agree.

I have read the information sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. ☐

I understand that I can ask further questions at any time. ☐

I understand that there will be conference papers, reports, articles, and book chapters written about this study in academic publications and possibly in media releases, in aggregated form. ☐

I understand that the survey data will be gathered from June 2019 till 31 September 2019. ☐

I understand that it is voluntary for the centres to distribute the survey and for the parents to complete the survey. ☐

I agree for Mehri Irajzad to approach centres in my association/organisation to seek their participation. Yes ☐ No ☐

Name and Signature: _____ _____
Position: _____
Name of the association/organisation: _____
Date: _____
Contact details: _____

Appendix 7- Consent Form for Centre Managements (Phase 1: Survey)

Please tick if you agree.

I have read the information sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. ☐

I understand that I can ask further questions at any time. ☐

I understand that there will be conference papers, reports, articles, and book chapters written about this study in academic publications and possibly in media releases, in aggregated form. ☐

I understand that the survey data will be gathered from June 2019 till 31 September 2019. ☐

I understand that it is voluntary for my centre to distribute the survey and for the parents to complete the survey. ☐

I agree that my centre participates in this research. Yes ☐ No ☐

Name and Signature: _____ _____
Position: _____
Name of the centre: _____
Date: _____
Contact details: _____

Appendix 8- English Version of The Survey

Dear respondent:

I am Mehri Irajzad, PhD student in Early Childhood Education at Victoria University of Wellington. For my PhD project, I am researching the experiences of Middle Eastern children and their parents in New Zealand early childhood centres.

You are invited to participate in this research because you have Middle Eastern ethnicity and you have a child (your child or a child in your family) who attends an early childhood centre in New Zealand.

The survey is anonymous, which means your responses will not be traced back to you. It will take approximately ten minutes to complete the survey. By completing and submitting the survey you are voluntarily agreeing to participate. After you submit your survey, you will be asked if you want to add your contact details to enter in a draw for a **$50 supermarket voucher**.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact either me or my primary supervisor:
1- Mehri Irajzad (Mehri.irajzad@vuw.ac.nz)
2- Prof. Carmen Dalli Phone: (+64 4 463 5168) Email: (Carmen.dalli@vuw.ac.nz)

This research has been approved by Victoria University of Wellington's Human Ethics Committee (Reference number: 0000027201). If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact Victoria University HEC Convenor, Dr Judith Loveridge. Email hec@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 6028.

*** I used the word "my child" in the survey, which can be either "your child" or "a child in your family".**

Your experience at your child's centre

Please choose the most accurate response for each item.

	Strongly agree	agree	disagree	Strongly disagree
1- I feel welcomed at my child's centre.	○	○	○	○
2- I feel comfortable talking to the teachers about my child.	○	○	○	○
3- My cultural background is respected at the centre.	○	○	○	○
4- My religious beliefs are respected at the centre.	○	○	○	○
5- Teachers ask for my expectations regarding my child.	○	○	○	○
6- Teachers ask for my concerns regarding my child.	○	○	○	○
7- Teachers keep me informed about my child's experience at the centre.	○	○	○	○
8- Teachers provide opportunities for me to get involved with the centre.	○	○	○	○
9- I like to get involved at the centre.	○	○	○	○
10- I am happy with my child's activities at the centre.	○	○	○	○
11- I support that my child should learn English at the centre.	○	○	○	○
12- I support that my child should learn te reo Māori at the centre.	○	○	○	○

13- What expectations do you have of your child's centre? Please explain.

_____

15- How does the centre meet your cultural and religious expectations for your child? Please explain about their practices.

_____

*Please add anything else you wish to say here:

_____

Your view of your child's experience at the centre

Please choose the most accurate response for each item.

I believe that:

	Strongly agree	agree	disagree	Strongly disagree
1- My child enjoys being at the centre.	○	○	○	○
2- My child has a good relationship with other children at the centre.	○	○	○	○
3- My child has settled well in the centre.	○	○	○	○
4- My child's needs are met at the centre.	○	○	○	○
5- My child participates in activities at the centre.	○	○	○	○
6- My child feels alone at the centre.	○	○	○	○
7- My child is learning to use English at the centre.	○	○	○	○
8- My child is learning to use te reo Māori at the centre.	○	○	○	○

9- What challenges has your child experienced at the centre? (Please write at least three challenges)

_____

11- Have you noticed any changes to your child's experience at the centre after the Christchurch mosque attack on 15 March 2019? Please explain.

_____

*Please add anything else you wish to say here:

—

Background Information

1- What is your relationship to the child?

- ○ Mother
- ○ Father
- ○ Grandmother
- ○ Grandfather
- ○ Aunt
- ○ Uncle
- ○ Other (please specify) _____

2- What is your nationality?

- ○ Bahraini
- ○ Egyptian
- ○ Emirati
- ○ Iranian
- ○ Iraqi
- ○ Israeli
- ○ Jordanian
- ○ Kuwaiti
- ○ Lebanese
- ○ Omani

- ○ Palestinian
- ○ Qatari
- ○ Saudi Arabian
- ○ Syrian
- ○ Yemeni
- ○ Other (please specify) _____

3- Which option best describes your religious affiliation?

- ○ Muslim
- ○ Jew
- ○ Christian
- ○ Other (Please specify) _____

4- What is your first language?

- ○ Arabic
- ○ Farsi (Persian)
- ○ Kurdish
- ○ Turkish
- ○ Hebrew
- ○ English
- ○ Other (please specify) _____

5- How long have you been living in New Zealand?

- ○ 0 - 5 years
- ○ 5 - 10 years
- ○ 10 - 15 years
- ○ More than 15 years

6- How old is your child?

- ○ Less than 1 year old
- ○ 1-2 years old
- ○ 2-3 years old
- ○ 3-4 years old
- ○ 4-5 years old

7- What is your child's gender?

- ○ Male
- ○ Female

8- Please choose the type of centre that your child attends now:

- ○ Kindergarten
- ○ Education and Care Centre
- ○ Other (please specify) _____

1- Phase two of the study

My study has two phases: 1- Survey 2- Case studies.
After gathering the survey data, I will start my case studies. I will choose Middle Eastern children to explore their experiences in their early childhood centre. In each case study, I will hold an interview (about 60 minutes) with one of the parents of each child. The interview will focus on the child's experiences at the early childhood centre. I will also observe the child at the centre for two mornings each week for four weeks, to record his/her experiences.

If you are living in [the city of choice] and are willing for me to contact you again to participate in the second phase of this study, please click on the link below to add your email and the name of your child's centre in the space provided.

Giving your contact details does not mean that you have already accepted to participate in the second phase. You can make your final decision after meeting the researcher in your child's early childhood centre and knowing more about the project. Accordingly, I will contact you if you are selected. As a sign of appreciation, parents whose children are involved in phase two of the study will receive a **$50 supermarket voucher.**

Appendix 9- Arabic Version of the Survey

أطفال الشرق الأوسط في مراكز الطفولة المبكرة في نيوزيلندا

عزيزتي المشاركة/ عزيزي المشارك:

أنا فاطمة إرزاد ، طالبة دكتوراه في تعليم الطفولة المبكرة بجامعة فيكتوريا في ولنجتون. رسالة الدكتوراة التي أقوم بإجرائها حاليا هي حول تجارب أطفال الشرق الأوسط في مراكز الطفولة المبكرة في نيوزيلندا.

تمت دعوتك للمشاركة في هذا البحث لأنك تنتمي لعرقية/اثنية شرق أوسطية ولديك طفل (طفلك أو طفل من عائلتك) يحضر الى مركز طفولة المبكرة في نيوزيلندا.

الاستبيان مجهول، مما يعني أنه لن يتم تتبعك. سوف يستغرق تعبئة الاستبيان حوالي 10 دقيقة. ومن خلال إكمال وتقديم الاستبيان، فإنك توافق طوعًا على المشاركة. بعد إرسال الاستبيان الخاص بك، سيتم سؤالك عما إذا كنت ترغب في إضافة تفاصيل الاتصال الخاصة بك للدخول في السحب للحصول على قسيمة تسوق بقيمة 50 دولارًا.

إذا كانت لديك أي أسئلة، الرجاء عدم التردد في الاتصال بي أو الاتصال بالمشرفة الرئيسية:

1 -فاطمة ارزاد **(Mehri.irajzad@vuw.ac.nz)**

2 -البروفيسور كارمن دالي: البريد الإلكتروني**(Carmen.dalli@vuw.ac.nz)**

تمت الموافقة على هذا البحث من قبل لجنة الأخلاقيات الإنسانية بجامعة فيكتوريا في ولنجتون (رقم الطلب .....). إذا كان لديك أي مخاوف بشأن السلوك الأخلاقي لهذا البحث، فيمكنك الاتصال بجامعة فيكتوريا بجامعة فيكتوريا، الدكتورة جوديث لوفيريدج. البريد الإلكتروني **hec@vuw.ac.nz** أو الهاتف + 64-4-463 6028.

* استخدمت كلمة "طفلي" في الاستبيان، للدلالة على "طفلك" أو "الطفل في عائلتك".

تجربتك الخاصة في مركز طفلك

الرجاء اختيار الإجابة الأكثر دقة لكل من البنود التالية

	أوافق بشدة	أوافق	لا أوافق	لا أوافق بشدة
أشعر بالترحيب في مركز طفلي. .				
أشعر بالراحة عند التحدث مع المعلمين عن طفلي. .				
يتم احترام خلفيتي العرقية في المركز				
يتم احترام معتقداتي الدينية في المركز				
يسأل المعلمون عما أتوقعه منهم بشأن طفلي				
يسأل المعلمون عن قلقي/مخاوفي بشأن طفلي				
يطلعني المعلمون على تجربة طفلي في المركز				
يوفر لي المعلمون فرصا للمشاركة في أنشطة وفعاليات المركز				
أحب أن أشارك في أنشطة وفعاليات المركز .				
أنا سعيد/راضي بخصوص أنشطة طفلي في المركز. .				
أنا أؤيد أن يتعلم طفلي اللغة الإنجليزية في المركز .				
أنا أؤيد أن يتعلم طفلي اللغة الماورية في المركز.				

-ما الذي تتوقعه من مركز طفلك؟ يرجى توضيح.

-كيف يلبي المركز توقعاتك الثقافية والدينية المتعلقة بطفلك؟ يرجى توضيح.

*الرجاء إضافة أي شيء آخر ترغب في قوله هنا:

وجهة نظرك حول تجربة طفلك في المركز

الرجاء اختيار الاجابة الأكثر دقة لكل من البنود التالية

أعتقد أن:

	أوافق بشدة	أوافق	لا أوافق	لا أوافق بشدة
يستمتع طفلي بوجوده في المركز.				
طفلي له علاقات جيدة مع أطفال آخرين في المركز.				
استقر طفلي جيدًا في المركز.				
يتم تلبية احتياجات طفلي في المركز.				
يشارك طفلي في أنشطة المركز.				
يشعر طفلي بالوحدة في المركز.				
يتعلم طفلي استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية في المركز.				
يتعلم طفلي استخدام اللغة الماورية في المركز.				

ما هي التحديات/الصعوبات التي واجهها طفلك في المركز؟ (يرجى كتابة ثلاث تحديات على الأقل)

هل لاحظت أي تغييرات مرتبطة بذهاب/وجود طفلك في المركز بعد هجوم مسجد كرايستشيرش في 15 مارس 2019؟ يرجى التوضيح.

* الرجاء إضافة أي شيء آخر ترغب في قوله هنا:

معلومات اساسية

1. ما هي علاقتك بالطفل؟
   - الأم
   - الأب
   - الجدة
   - الجد
   - العمة/الخالة
   - العم/الخال
   - غير ذلك (يرجى التحديد)

2. ما هي الجنسية التي تحملها؟
   - البحرينية
   - المصرية
   - الإماراتية
   - الإيرانية

- العراقية
- الإسرائيلية
- الأردنية
- الكويتية
- اللبنانية
- العمانية
- الفلسطينية
- القطرية
- السعودية
- السورية
- اليمنية
- غير ذلك (يرجى التحديد)

3. ما هو انتماؤك الديني؟
   - الاسلام
   - اليهودية
   - المسيحية
   - غير ذلك (يرجى التحديد)

4. ما هي لغتك الأم؟
   - العربية
   - الفارسية
   - الكردية
   - التركية
   - العبرية
   - الانجليزية
   - غير ذلك (يرجى التحديد)

5. منذ متى وأنت تعيش في نيوزيلندا؟
   - أقل من 5 سنوات
   - 5 - 10 سنوات
   - 10 - 15 سنة
   - أكثر من 15 سنة

6. كم عمر طفلك؟
   - أقل من 1 سنة
   - 2-1 سنة
   - 3-2 سنوات
   - 4-3 سنوات من العمر
   - 5-4 سنوات من العمر

7. ما هو جنس طفلك؟

- ذكر
- أنثى

8. يرجى اختيار نوع المركز الذي يذهب اليه طفلك حاليا:
   - رياض الأطفال (Kindergarten)
   - مركز التعليم والرعاية (Education and Care Centre)
   - غير ذلك (يرجى التحديد)

1. المرحلة الثانية من الدراسة

تتضمن دراستي مرحلتين: 1- الاستبيان 2- دراسات الحالة.
بعد جمع بيانات الاستبيان، سأبدأ دراسات حالة خاصة ببحثي. سأختار عددًا من أطفال الشرق الأوسط لاستكشاف تجاربهم في مراكز الطفولة المبكرة. في كل دراسة حالة، سأجري مقابلة (حوالي 60 دقيقة) مع أحد والدي كل طفل. وستركز المقابلة على تجارب الطفل في مركز الطفولة المبكرة. كما سأقوم بمشاهدات للطفل في المركز لمدة يومين اسبوعيا لمدة أربعة أسابيع، وذلك من أجل تسجيل تجربته.

إذا كنت تعيش في مدينة ولنجتون وترغب في الاتصال بي مرة أخرى للمشاركة في المرحلة الثانية من هذه الدراسة، يرجى النقر على الرابط أدناه لإضافة بريدك الإلكتروني واسم مركز طفلك في المساحة المتوفرة.

إعطاء تفاصيل الاتصال الخاصة بك لا يعني أنك ألزمت نفسك المشاركة في المرحلة الثانية. يمكنك اتخاذ قرارك النهائي بعد مقابلة الباحثة في مركز الطفولة المبكرة لطفلك ومعرفة المزيد عن المشروع. ووفقا لذلك، سوف أتصل بك إذا تم اختيارك. وتقديرا لمساهمتهم، ستحصل العائلة التي يشارك طفلها/أطفالها في المرحلة الثانية من الدراسة على قسيمة تسوق بقيمة 50 دولارًا.

2 -جائزة الاستبيان

من خلال النقر على الرابط أدناه، يمكنك أيضًا إضافة بريدك الإلكتروني للدخول في سحب للحصول على قسيمة تسوق بقيمة 50 دولارًا.

* لأن هذا الاستبيان مجهول ولا يقوم بتتبع هوية الشخص الذي قام بتعبئته،
سيأخذك الرابط في الأسفل الى صفحة جديدة لتقوم بإضافة ايميلك لنستطيع التواصل معك اذا رغبت بذلك.

Appendix 10- Farsi Version of the Survey

تجربه ی کودکان خاورمیانه ای در مهدکودک های کشور نیوزلند

پاسخ دهنده گرامی، سلام:
من فاطمه ایرج زاد -دانشجوی دکترای آموزش به کودکان در دانشگاه ویکتوریای ولینگتون -هستم .پروژه ی دکترای من در رابطه با تجربیات بچه های خاورمیانه ای در مهدکودک های نیوزلند می باشد و این پرسشنامه نیز با همین هدف طراحی شده است .
شما به این خاطر دعوت به مشارکت در این پژوهش شده‌اید که اهل یکی از کشورهای خاورمیانه هستید و (کودک شما یا کودکی در خانواده شما) به یکی از مهدکودک های نیوزلند(هر نوع مرکزی) می رود.
این پژوهش می تواند به معلمان، مربیان و تمام افراد دخیل در آموزش به کودکان کمک کند تا کودکان و خانواده های خاورمیانه ای را بهتر بشناسند و در پاسخگویی به نیازهای آنها بهتر عمل کنند .بنابراین از شما والد عزیز تقاضا می شود در این پژوهش شرکت کنید.
تکمیل کردن این پرسشنامه حدودا 10 دقیقه طول می‌کشد .برای صیانت از هویت شما، در هیچکدام از مراحل این تحقیق نام شما پرسیده نمی شود .مشارکت شما در این پژوهش کاملاً داوطلبانه است و پاسخ دهی شما به سوالات پرسشنامه و ارسال آن به منزله رضایت شما به مشارکت می باشد .بعد از اینکه به سوالات پاسخ دادید، در صورت تمایل می توانید ایمیل خود را وارد کنید تا در قرعه کشی **بن ۵۰ دلاری سوپرمارکت** شرکت داده شوید .
اگر سوالی درباره این پژوهش دارید، می‌توانید با من و یا استاد راهنمای من در تماس باشید.
۱ - فاطمه ایرج زاد : (fatemeh.irajzad@vuw.ac.nz)
۲ -پروفسور کارمن دالی(Carmen.dalli@vuw.ac.nz)
این پژوهش توسط کمیته اخلاق پژوهشی دانشگاه ویکتوریا ولینگتون تائید شده است) شماره درخواست .(.....) اگر در رابطه با اجرای اخلاقی این پژوهش نگرانی دارید می توانید با دکتر جودیس لاوریج (hec@vuw.ac.nz) رئیس کمیته اخلاق پژوهشی دانشگاه ویکتوریا تماس بگیرید.
* در طول این پرسشنامه از کلمه" فرزند "استفاده شده که به" کودک شما "یا" کودکی که شما با در نظر گرفتنش این پرسشنامه را پاسخ می دهید "اشاره دارد.

تجربه ی شما از مهدکودک فرزندتان

لطفا گزینه مورد نظر را انتخاب کنید .

	کاملا موافقم	موافقم	مخالفم	کاملا مخالفم
۱ - من در مهدکودک فرزندم احساس خوب و راحتی دارم .	○	○	○	○
۲ -من برای صحبت کردن با معلم ها احساس راحتی می کنم .	○	○	○	○
۳ -در مهدکودک به نژاد و قومیت من احترام گذاشته می شود.	○	○	○	○
۴ -در مهدکودک به عقاید مذهبی من احترام گذاشته می شود .	○	○	○	○
۵ -معلم ها انتظارات من در رابطه با فرزندم را از من جویا می شوند .	○	○	○	○
۶ -معلم ها نگرانی های من در رابطه با فرزندم را از من جویا می شوند .	○	○	○	○
۷ -معلم ها من را در جریان شرایط فرزندم در مهدکودک قرار می دهند .	○	○	○	○
۸ -معلم ها برای من فرصت مشارکت در مهدکودک را فراهم می کنند .	○	○	○	○
۹ -من دوست دارم که در مهدکودک فرزندم مشارکت داشته باشم.	○	○	○	○
۱۰ -من از فعالیت هایی که فرزندم در مهدکودک انجام می دهد رضایت دارم .	○	○	○	○
۱۱ -من دوست دارم فرزندم در مهدکودک زبان انگلیسی یاد بگیرد .	○	○	○	○
۱۲ -من دوست دارم فرزندم در مهدکودک زبان مائوری یاد بگیرد .	○	○	○	○

-شما چه انتظاراتی از مهدکودک فرزندتان دارید؟ لطفا توضیح دهید .

-مهدکودک فرزندتان چگونه به انتظارات فرهنگی و مذهبی شما در خصوص فرزندتان توجه می کند؟ لطفا توضیح دهید .

لطفا اگر نکته دیگری مدنظر دارید، در این جا ذکر کنید :

نظر شما درباره تجربه فرزندتان در مهدکودک

لطفا گزینه مورد نظر را انتخاب کنید.

به نظر من :

	کاملا موافقم	موافقم	مخالفم	کاملا مخالفم
۱ -فرزند من از رفتن به مهدکودک لذت می بَرَد .	○	○	○	○
۲ -فرزند من با سایر بچه ها در مهدکودک ارتباط خوبی دارد .	○	○	○	○
۳ -فرزند من به خوبی در مهدکودک جا افتاده است .	○	○	○	○
۴ -به نیازهای فرزند من در مهدکودک به خوبی رسیدگی می شود .	○	○	○	○
۵ -فرزند من درفعالیت هایی که در مهدکودکش انجام می شود، شرکت می کند .	○	○	○	○
۶ -فرزند من در مهدکودک احساس تنهایی می کند .	○	○	○	○
۷ -فرزند من در مهدکودک زبان انگلیسی یاد می گیرد .	○	○	○	○
۸ -فرزند من در مهدکودک زبان مائوری یاد می گیرد .	○	○	○	○

- فرزند شما چه چالش هایی را در مهدکودک تجربه کرده است؟ لطفا حداقل سه چالش را توضیح دهید .

-بعد از حمله به مساجد کرایستچرچ در مارس ۲۰۱۹، آیا متوجه تفاوتی در تجربه ی فرزندتان در مهدکودک شده اید؟ لطفا توضیح دهید .

*لطفا اگر نکته دیگری مدنظر دارید، در این جا ذکر کنید:

مشخصات فردی

شما با کودک چه نسبتی دارید؟

- مادر
- پدر
- مادربزرگ
- پدربزرگ
- خاله/عمه
- دایی/عمو
- (سایر)لطفا مشخص کنید

ملیت شما چیست؟

- بحرینی
- مصری
- اماراتی
- ایرانی
- عراقی
- اسرائیلی
- اردنی
- کویتی
- لبنانی
- عمانی
- فلسطینی
- قطری
- عربستان سعودی
- سوریه ای
- یمنی
- (سایر)لطفا مشخص کنید

مذهب شما چیست؟

- اسلام
- یهودیت

- مسیحیت
- (سایر) لطفا مشخص کنید

زبان اول شما چیست؟

- عربی
- فارسی
- کردی
- ترکی
- عبری
- انگلیسی
- (سایر)لطفا مشخص کنید

چند وقت است که در نیوزلند زندگی می کنید؟

- ۰ تا ۵ سال
- ۵ تا ۱۰ سال
- ۱۰ تا ۱۵ سال
- بیش از ۱۵ سال

فرزند شما چند سال دارد؟

- کمتر از یکسال
- ۱ تا۲ سال
- ۲تا ۳ سال
- ۳تا ۴سال
- ۴تا ۵سال

جنسیت فرزند شما چیست؟

- پسر
- دختر

لطفا نوع مهدکودک فرزندتان را انتخاب کنید :

- Kindergarten
- Education and Care Centre
- (سایر)لطفا مشخص کنید

مرحله ی دوم این پژوهش

این پژوهش از دو مرحله تشکیل شده است :۱ -پرسشنامه ۲ -مطالعه موردی
پس از جمع آوری پرسشنامه ها، من تعدادی کودک با قومیت خاورمیانه ای انتخاب می کنم تا تجربیات آنها در مهدکودک را بررسی کنم .هر کودک به مدت ۴ هفته) هفته ای دو جلسه (در مهدکودک مشاهده می شود و با یکی از والدین کودک مصاحبه ای در رابطه با تجربیات فرزندشان در مهدکودک انجام می شود که این مصاحبه حدودا ۶۰ دقیقه طول می کشد .

اگر شما در {شهر موردنظر} ساکن هستید و دوست دارید که در مرحله دوم این پژوهش نیز شرکت کنید، روی لینک زیر کلیک کنید تا بتوانید ایمیل خود و نام مهدکودک فرزندتان را وارد کنید .

وارد کردن ایمیل به معنای رضایت شما به شرکت در مرحله دوم این پژوهش نخواهد بود و شما می توانید پس از دیدار با محقق در مهدکودک و آشنایی با جزئیات تحقیق تصمیم نهایی تان را بگیرید .در صورت انتخاب شما توسط محقق، با شما تماس گرفته خواهد شد .برای تشکر از افرادی که در مرحله دوم شرکت می کنند، به والدین هر کودک یک عدد **بن ۵۰ دلاری سوپرمارکت** داده می شود .

۲ -جایزه پرسشنامه
با کلیک کردن بر روی لینک زیر همچنین می توانید در محل مشخص شده ایمیل خود را وارد کنید تا به قرعه کشی **بن ۵۰ دلاری سوپرمارکت** شرکت داده شوید .

*لینک زیر با این هدف طراحی شده است تا شما بتوانید ایمیل خود را در صفحه مجزایی وارد کنید و پرسشنامه همچنان ناشناس باقی بماند .

Appendix 11- Information Sheet for Centre Management (Phase 2: Case studies)

About this project:

I am Mehri (Fatemeh) Irajzad, a PhD student in Early Childhood Education at Victoria University of Wellington. For my PhD project, I am exploring the experiences of Middle Eastern children in New Zealand early childhood settings. My study is a three-year mixed methods research project (2018- 2021) about: Middle Eastern parents' expectations for their children's early education; early childhood teachers' perspectives and practices with respect to Middle Eastern families; and the challenges faced by Middle Eastern children in New Zealand early childhood centres. The study was designed before the Christchurch mosque incident of 15th March 2019 and is not a direct response to it. My study is designed to complement similar studies focused on the experiences of children from other ethnic backgrounds.

This study has two phases. This information sheet is about the second phase of this study which involves four case studies. I am writing to invite your centre to be the site for one of these case studies which will be conducted over a period of four weeks.

What will the case study involve for the children?

Each case study will have one Middle Eastern child as its focus. The child will be observed and videotaped during their normal activities and interactions at the early childhood centre for two mornings a week over four weeks. Since other children as well as teachers will likely be part of the video-ed interactions, I will inform all parents, children and teachers about the case study and seek their consent. Children will be asked for their consent to participate at the start of the study using a simple consent form, and the researcher will remain attentive to their comfort level with the recording throughout the data-gathering period.

As the researcher in the study, I will carry out the video-recordings as a non-participant observer. Video recordings will only be used for data analysis and publications would only use stills from video recordings. I will take written notes about the interactions of Middle Eastern children with other children and with their teachers.

What will the case study involve for the teachers?

All teachers in the centre will be informed of the case study and their consents will be sought for their inclusion in the video recordings that will take place in the centre.

I will also ask for one or two volunteer teachers to be interviewed about their perspectives and practices when working with Middle Eastern children and their parents. These interviews will be audio-recorded and supplemented by field notes.

All teachers can decide to withdraw from the study at any point before the end of data gathering in April 2020.

What will the case study involve for the Parents?

The parents of all children in the centre will be informed about the study and will be asked whether they agree for their child to take part either as a focus child, or as part of the centre community.

Middle Eastern parents of the focus children will be interviewed and their expectations for their children's early education as well as their perspectives about their children's experiences at early childhood centres will be sought. These interviews will be audio-recorded and supplemented by field notes.

All parents can withdraw their child from the study at any time before the end of data gathering in April 2020.

How will participants' privacy be protected and how will information from the study be used?

Data from this study will be stored securely by the researcher in her office. All information gathered will be confidential to the researcher and her supervisors and these records will be destroyed ten years after the completion of the study. In case a translator is needed when the researcher interviews Middle Eastern parents, they will be required to sign a confidentiality form. No person will be identified in written text and still images will be de-identified unless the participants independently choose otherwise. Once the thesis is completed, still images that are likely to be used in publications will be selected, de-identified and the consent of any person involved in the selected still images will be sought at that point as a one-off exercise. In other words, the researcher will not choose further images and the participants will not be approached again for consent to use further images from the study. In case of children, their parents' consents will also be sought. Participants can withdraw any image involving them from publication.

No participants - children, teachers, or parents - will have their names revealed by the researcher. Substitute names will be used for participants and the centres.

With regards to the identifying details of the early childhood settings – they will be removed for any presentation of the findings in line with our commitment to ensure confidentiality.

When reporting teachers' and parents' views about each other, I will be mindful of the possible relationship dynamics of what I say and take steps to avoid any possible harm arising from my report. This might mean changing any identifiable features of respondents where these do not materially affect the argument I am making, or at times it could mean that I do not report what is said.

External transcribers of data will be required to sign a confidentiality form. There will be conference papers, reports, articles, and book chapters written about this study in academic publications and possibly in media releases, in aggregated form.

All participants can have summary of the research findings and access to a full copy of thesis by request. Parents of the focus children can request personal copies of the videos that their children feature in. The researcher will de-identify the video-recordings before sharing them with these parents.

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

- ask any questions about the study at any time;
- withdraw your centre from the study before the end of data gathering in April 2020 (If you wish to withdraw, the information you provide will be destroyed);
- be given a summary of the research findings and access to a full copy of thesis by request.

What is the next step?

If you are happy for the researcher to proceed with a formal invitation to the Middle Eastern parents and teachers at your centre, please complete the attached consent form to indicate whether you are willing for them to participate in this study.

What do I do if I wish to ask questions or find out more about the study?

If you have any queries or would like to know more about the study, please do not hesitate to contact contact me or my supervisors:

Mehri Irajzad Email: Mehri.irajzad@vuw.ac.nz
1- Supervisor: Prof. Carmen Dalli Email: carmen.dalli@vuw.ac.nz
2- Supervisor: Dr. Mere Skerrett Email: mere.skerrett@vuw.ac.nz

Human Ethics Committee information

This research has been approved by the Human Ethics Committee of Victoria University of wellington (Reference number: 0000027201). If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research, you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convenor: Dr Judith Loveridge. Email hec@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 6028.

Appendix 12- Information Sheet for Middle Eastern Parents (Phase 2: Case studies)

Who is the researcher?

I am Mehri (Fatemeh) Irajzad, a PhD student in Early Childhood Education at Victoria University of Wellington. For my PhD project, I am exploring the experiences of Middle Eastern children in New Zealand early childhood settings. My study is a three-year mixed methods research project (2018- 2021) about: Middle Eastern parents' expectations for their children's early education; early childhood teachers' perspectives and practices with respect to Middle Eastern families; and the challenges faced by Middle Eastern children in New Zealand early childhood centres.

This study is important because there is no study on Middle Eastern children's experiences in New Zealand early childhood centres. The study was designed before the Christchurch mosque incident of 15th March 2019 and is not a direct response to it. My study is designed to complement similar studies focused on the experiences of children from other ethnic backgrounds.

This study has two phases. You have already participated in the first phase of the study by completing an online survey in which you indicated your willingness to participate in the second phase: case studies for four Middle Eastern children. Thank you for your willingness to do so. Please read this information before confirming that you wish to proceed with the case study. I thank you in advance, whatever your decision is.

What will the case-study involve for you?

Participation in the case-study would mean: I will interview you at a time and place of your choice. The interview will take approximately 1 hour. I will ask you questions about your child's experience at the centre and your expectations for your child's early education. With your permission, I will audio record the interviews.

What will the case-study involve for your child?

I will observe and video-tape Middle Eastern children during their normal activities in the centre to explore their experiences. I will observe your child for two mornings in a week for four weeks. I will record your child's experiences by taking notes and using vide-tapes. I will ask you to explain to your child about the study and if they are happy to be observed and videotaped. A simple consent form is developed for your child and I will ask you to complete this form with your child. Children whose parents have consented for their participation will also be informed about the project by the researcher during a group mat time and they will be given time and opportunity to ask any questions.

How will your and your child's privacy be protected and how will information from the study be used?

Data from this study will be stored securely by the researcher in her office. All information gathered will be confidential to the researcher and her supervisors and these records will be destroyed ten years after the completion of the study. In case a translator is needed when the researcher interviews you, they will be required to sign a confidentiality form. Substitute names will be used for all participants and the centres.

Please note that video recordings will only be used for data analysis. Publications based on this research would only use stills from video recordings with personal details de-identified and faces blurred. No person will be identified in written text and still images unless they independently choose otherwise. Once the thesis is completed, still images that are likely to be used in publications will be selected, de-identified and your and your child's consent for any selected still image involving your child will be sought at that point as a one-off exercise. In other words, the researcher will not choose further images and you will not be approached again for consent to use further images from the study.

When reporting teachers' and parents' views about each other, I will be mindful of the possible relationship dynamics of what I say and take steps to avoid any possible harm arising from my report. This might mean changing any identifiable features of respondents where these do not materially affect the argument I am making, or at times it could mean that I do not report what is said.

The information from my research will be used in my PhD dissertation and academic publications, conferences, and possibly in media releases, in aggregated form.
If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- ask any questions about the study at any time;
- choose not to answer any question;
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;
- receive a copy of your interview transcripts to review;
- request a personal copy of the video-tape that your child features in after the researcher has removed the identifying features of other children involved in the video recordings;
- to withdraw any image involving your child from publication;
- withdraw yourself and your child from the study before the end of data gathering in April 2020 (If you withdraw, the information you provide will be destroyed);
- be given a summary of the research findings and access to a full copy of thesis by request.

If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact me or my supervisors.

Mehri Irajzad Email: Mehri.irajzad@vuw.ac.nz
1- Supervisor: Prof. Carmen Dalli Email: carmen.dalli@vuw.ac.nz
2- Supervisor: Dr. Mere Skerrett Email: mere.skerrett@vuw.ac.nz

Human Ethics Committee information

This research has been approved by the Human Ethics Committee of Victoria University of wellington (Reference number: 0000027201). If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research, you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convenor: Dr Judith Loveridge. Email hec@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 6028. Thank you, I look forward to hearing from you.

Appendix 13- Information Sheet for Volunteered Teachers (Phase 2: Case studies)

About this project:

I am Mehri (Fatemeh) Irajzad, a PhD student in Early Childhood Education at Victoria University of Wellington. For my PhD project, I am exploring the experiences of Middle Eastern children in New Zealand early childhood settings. My study is a three-year mixed methods research project (2018- 2021) about: Middle Eastern parents' expectations for their children's early education; early childhood teachers' perspectives and practices with respect to Middle Eastern families; and the challenges faced by Middle Eastern children in New Zealand early childhood centres. The study was designed before the Christchurch mosque incident of 15th March 2019 and is not a direct response to it. My study is designed to complement similar studies focused on the experiences of children from other ethnic backgrounds.

What will the case-study involve for you?

The researcher will interview you at a time and place of your choice. The interview will take approximately 1 hour. I will ask you questions about Middle Eastern children's experiences in New Zealand ECE centres and your practices and perspectives regarding Middle Eastern children and their parents. With your permission, I will audio record the interview.

How will your privacy be protected and how will information from the study be used?

Data from this study will be stored securely by the researcher in her office. All information gathered will be confidential to the researcher and her supervisors and these records will be destroyed ten years after the completion of the study. Substitute names will be used for all participants and the centres. When reporting teachers' and parents' views about each other, I will be mindful of the possible relationship dynamics of what I say and take steps to avoid any possible harm arising from my report. This might mean changing any identifiable features of respondents where these do not materially affect the argument, or at times it could mean that I do not report what is said.

The information from my research will be used in my PhD dissertation and academic publications, conferences, and possibly in media releases, in aggregated form.

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

- choose not to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable;
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;
- withdraw from the study before the end of data gathering in April 2020 (If you wish to withdraw, the information you provide will be destroyed)
- ask any questions about the study at any time;
- receive a copy of your interview transcript to review*;*
- be given a summary of the research findings and access to a full copy of thesis by request.

What do I do if I wish to ask questions or find out more about the study?

If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact me or my supervisors:

Mehri Irajzad Email: Mehri.irajzad@vuw.ac.nz
1- Supervisor: Prof. Carmen Dalli Email: carmen.dalli@vuw.ac.nz

2- Supervisor: Dr. Mere Skerrett Email: mere.skerrett@vuw.ac.nz

Human Ethics Committee information

This research has been approved by the Human Ethics Committee of Victoria University of wellington (Reference number: 0000027201). If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research, you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convenor: Dr Judith Loveridge. Email hec@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 6028.

Thank you, I look forward to hearing from you.

Appendix 14- Information Sheet for Parents of Incidentally Recorded Children (Phase 2: Case studies)

Who is the researcher?

I am Mehri (Fatemeh) Irajzad, a PhD student in Early Childhood Education at Victoria University of Wellington. For my PhD project, I am exploring the experiences of Middle Eastern children in New Zealand early childhood settings. My study is a three-year mixed methods research project (2018- 2021) about: Middle Eastern parents' expectations for their children's early education; early childhood teachers' perspectives and practices with respect to Middle Eastern families; and the challenges faced by Middle Eastern children in New Zealand early childhood centres. The study was designed before the Christchurch mosque incident of 15th March 2019 and is not a direct response to it. My study is designed to complement similar studies focused on the experiences of children from other ethnic backgrounds.

My study has two phases. In the first phase I sent out a national online survey. I am now in phase two of the study which involves case studies of four Middle Eastern children in their EC centres. One of these will be in the centre attended by your child. I will observe and video-tape interactions between Middle Eastern children, their teachers and other children.

What will the case-study involve for your child?

Since your child will be in the centre during my data gathering, it is possible that they will appear in some of the footage I will gather. If you do not wish for your child to be included in the video recordings, please indicate this in the attached consent form and the researcher will avoid recording your child.

If on the other hand you agree to participate, I will ask you to explain to your child about the study and if they are happy to be included in videos. A simple consent form is developed for your child and I will ask you to complete this form with your child. Children whose parents have consented for their participation will also be informed about the project by the researcher during a group mat time and they will be given time and opportunity to ask any questions.

How will participants' privacy be protected and how will information from the study be used?

Data from this study will be stored securely by the researcher in her office. All information gathered will be confidential to the researcher and her supervisors and these records will be destroyed ten years after the completion of the study. Substitute names will be used for all participants and the centres. Please note that video recordings will only be used for data analysis. Publications based on this research would only use stills from video recordings with personal details de-identified and faces blurred, unless you and your child independently choose otherwise. Once the thesis is completed, still images that are likely to be used in publications will be selected, de-identified and your and your child's consent for any selected still image involving your child will be sought at that point as a one-off exercise. In other words, the researcher will not choose further images and you will not be approached again for consent to use further images from the study.

Please note that parents of focus children may request to have the video-recordings that their child features in. In that case, if your child is included in the footages, the researcher will de-identify the videos by removing the identifying features and blurring your child's face, unless you and your child independently choose otherwise.

The information from my research will be used in my PhD dissertation and academic publications, conferences, and possibly in media releases, in aggregated form.

If you agree for your child to be included in the video-recordings, you have the right to:

- ask any questions about the study at any time;
- withdraw any image involving your child from publication;
- withdraw your child from the study before the end of data gathering in April 2020 (If you withdraw, the information you provide will be destroyed);
- be given a summary of the research findings and access to a full copy of thesis by request.

What do I do if I wish to ask questions or find out more about the study?

If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact me or my supervisors.
Mehri Irajzad Email: Mehri.irajzad@vuw.ac.nz
1- Supervisor: Prof. Carmen Dalli Email: carmen.dalli@vuw.ac.nz
2- Supervisor: Dr. Mere Skerrett Email: mere.skerrett@vuw.ac.nz

Human Ethics Committee information

This research has been approved by the Human Ethics Committee of Victoria University of wellington (Reference number: 0000027201). If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research, you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convenor: Dr Judith Loveridge. Email hec@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 6028.

Thank you, I look forward to hearing from you.

Appendix 15- Information Sheet for Incidentally Recorded Teachers (Phase 2: Case studies)

Who is the researcher?

I am Mehri (Fatemeh) Irajzad, a PhD student in Early Childhood Education at Victoria University of Wellington. For my PhD project, I am exploring the experiences of Middle Eastern children in New Zealand early childhood settings. My study is a three-year mixed methods research project (2018- 2021) about: Middle Eastern parents' expectations for their children's early education; early childhood teachers' perspectives and practices with respect to Middle Eastern families; and the challenges faced by Middle Eastern children in New Zealand early childhood centres. The study was designed before the Christchurch mosque incident of 15th March 2019 and is not a direct response to it. My study is designed to complement similar studies focused on the experiences of children from other ethnic backgrounds.

My study has two phases. In the first phase I sent out a national online survey. I am now in phase two of the study which involves case studies of four Middle Eastern children in their EC centres. I will observe and video-tape interactions between Middle Eastern children, their teachers and other children.

What will the case-study involve for you?

Since you will be in the centre during my data gathering, it is possible that you will appear in some of the footage I will gather. If you do not wish to be included in the video recordings, please indicate this in the attached consent form and the researcher will avoid recording you.

If on the other hand you agree to participate, please note that video recordings will only be used for data analysis. Publications based on this research would only use stills from video recordings with personal details de-identified and faces blurred, unless you independently choose otherwise. Once the thesis is completed, still images that are likely to be used in publications will be selected, de-identified and your consent for any selected still image involving you will be sought at that point as a one-off exercise. In other words, the researcher will not choose further images and you will not be approached again for consent to use further images from the study.

How will participants' privacy be protected and how will information from the study be used?

Data from this study will be stored securely by the researcher in her office. All information gathered will be confidential to the researcher and her supervisors and these records will be destroyed ten years after the completion of the study. Substitute names will be used for all participants and the centres.

The information from my research will be used in my PhD dissertation and academic publications, conferences, and possibly in media releases, in aggregated form.

If you agree to be included in the video-recordings, you have the right to:

- ask any questions about the study at any time;
- withdraw any image involving you from publication;
- withdraw from the study before the end of data gathering in April 2020 (If you withdraw, the information you provide will be destroyed);
- be given a summary of the research findings and access to a full copy of thesis by request.

What do I do if I wish to ask questions or find out more about the study?

If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact me or my supervisors.

Mehri Irajzad Email: Mehri.irajzad@vuw.ac.nz
1- Supervisor: Prof. Carmen Dalli Email: carmen.dalli@vuw.ac.nz
2- Supervisor: Dr. Mere Skerrett Email: mere.skerrett@vuw.ac.nz

Human Ethics Committee information

This research has been approved by the Human Ethics Committee of Victoria University of wellington (Reference number: 0000027201). If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research, you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convenor: Dr Judith Loveridge. Email hec@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 6028.

Thank you, I look forward to hearing from you.

Appendix 16- Centre Management's Consent Form (Phase 2: Case studies)

Please tick if you agree.

I have read the information sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. ☐

I understand that I can ask further questions at any time. ☐

I understand that any identifying information from my centre will be removed for any presentation of the findings. ☐

I understand that all information gathered will be confidential to the researcher and her supervisors and these records will be destroyed ten years after the completion of the study. ☐

I understand that I am free to withdraw my centre from this project at any point before the end of data gathering in April 2020. ☐

I understand that teachers, children and their parents may withdraw from this study at any point before the end of data gathering in April 2020. ☐

I agree that the centre participates in this study.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I would like to be given a summary of the research findings.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I would like to have access to a full copy of thesis.	Yes ☐	No ☐

Name of Manager: _____
Signature of Manager: _____
Name of the centre: _____
Date: _____
Contact details: _____

Appendix 17- Middle Eastern Parents' Consent Form (Phase 2: Case studies)

Please tick if you agree.

I have read the information sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction; ☐

I understand that I can ask any question about the study at any time; ☐

I understand that all information gathered will be confidential to the researcher and her supervisors and these records will be destroyed ten years after the completion of the study; ☐

I understand that in case a translator is needed when the researcher interviews me, the translator will be required to sign a confidentiality form. ☐

I understand that substitute names will be used for all participants and the centres. ☐

I understand that I can choose not to answer any question that makes me uncomfortable; ☐

I understand that I can ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview; ☐

I understand that any still images of my child will be de-identified, unless I independently choose otherwise; ☐

I understand that my child's consent and my consent for any selected, de-identified still images involving my child will be sought before publication; ☐

I understand that I can withdraw any image involving my child from publication; ☐

I understand that I can withdraw myself and my child from this study at any point before the end of data gathering in April 2020 and any information that I have provided will be destroyed. ☐

I agree to participate in this study. Yes ☐ No ☐

I agree that my child to participate in this study. Yes ☐ No ☐

I would like to receive a copy of my interview transcripts to review. Yes ☐ No ☐

I would like to be given a summary of the research findings. Yes ☐ No ☐

I would like to have access to a full copy of thesis. Yes ☐ No ☐

I would like to have a personal copy of the video-tape that my child features in. Yes ☐ No ☐

Name of parent: _____

Signature of parent: _____

Name of child: _____

Name of centre: _____

Date: _____

Contact details: _____

Appendix 18- Consent Form for Middle Eastern Children (Phase 2: Case studies)

Researcher: Mehri Irajzad, PhD, Victoria University of Wellington.

Child's name: ……

Centre's name: ……

I would like to watch and vide-tape you in your centre. You can ask me to stop videoing you at any time. Is it ok?

 

I may make some photos from your video. I will show these photos to you and your parents before I use them. You can let me know if you are ok for me to use them.

 

The study has been explained to me and I agree to be in it.

 

Appendix 19- Volunteered Teachers' Consent Form (Phase 2: Case studies)

Please tick if you agree.

I have read the information sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. ☐

I understand that I can ask further questions at any time. ☐

I understand that all information gathered will be confidential to the researcher and her supervisors and these records will be destroyed ten years after the completion of the study; ☐

I understand that substitute names will be used for all participants and the centres. ☐

I understand that I can choose not to answer any question that makes me uncomfortable. ☐

I understand that I can ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview. ☐

I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any point before the end of data gathering in April 2020 and any information that I have provided will be destroyed. ☐

I agree to participate in this study.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I would like to receive a copy of my interview transcripts to review.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I would like to be given a summary of the research findings.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I would like to have access to a full copy of thesis.	Yes ☐	No ☐

Name of participant: _____
Signature of participant: _____
Name of the centre: _____
Date: _____
Contact details: _____

Appendix 20: Consent Form for Parents of Incidentally Recorded Children (Phase 2: Case studies)

Please tick if you agree.

I have read the information sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction; ☐

I understand that I can ask further questions at any time; ☐

I understand that all information gathered will be confidential to the researcher and her supervisors and these records will be destroyed ten years after the completion of the study; ☐

I understand that substitute names will be used for all participants and the centres. ☐

I understand that in case focus parents request the videos of their child, if my child is included in the footages, the researcher will remove the identifying features of my child unless I independently choose otherwise; ☐

I understand that any still images of my child will be de-identified, unless I independently choose otherwise; ☐

I understand that my child's consent and my consent for any selected, de-identified still images involving my child will be sought before publication; ☐

I understand that I can withdraw any image involving my child from publication; ☐

I understand that I can withdraw my child from the study at any time before the end of data gathering in April 2020. ☐

I agree that my child participates in this research. Yes ☐ No ☐

I would like to be given a summary of the research findings. Yes ☐ No ☐

I would like to have access to a full copy of thesis. Yes ☐ No ☐

Name of parent: _____

Signature of parent: _____

Name of child: _____

Name of centre: _____

Date: _____

Contact details: _____

Appendix 21- Consent Form for Incidentally-Recorded Teachers (Phase 2: Case studies)

Please tick if you agree.

I have read the information sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction; ☐

I understand that I can ask further questions at any time; ☐

I understand that all information gathered will be confidential to the researcher and her supervisors and these records will be destroyed ten years after the completion of the study; ☐

I understand that substitute names will be used for all participants and the centres. ☐

I understand that any still images of me will be de-identified, unless I independently choose otherwise; ☐

I understand that my consent for any selected, de-identified still images involving me will be sought before publication; ☐

I understand that I can withdraw any image involving me from publication; ☐

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time before the end of data gathering in April 2020. ☐

I agree to participate in this research.	Yes	☐	No	☐
I would like to be given a summary of the research findings.	Yes	☐	No	☐
I would like to have access to a full copy of thesis.	Yes	☐	No	☐

Name of participant: _____
Signature of participant: _____
Name of the centre: _____
Date: _____
Contact details: _____

Appendix 22- Parents' Interview Schedule (Phase 2: Case Studies)

Date of the interview:

Childcare centre:

Type of the centre:

Interview started at:

Interview ended at:

Length of the interview:

Interview was held at:

People who were present:

My reflections:

The topics that will be discussed in this interview are as follows:

- Demographics
- Background information
- Information about parents' expectations and views
- Information about child's experience at the centre
- Wrap-up questions

Demographics

Pseudonym:

Gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Other

Mother tongue:

Birthplace:

Length of stay in New Zealand:

Relationship to the child:

Child's pseudonym:

Child's gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male

Child's age:

Length of attendance of the child at the centre:

Parent's Background information

1. Can you please describe your child, such as his/her personality, special needs, and language abilities?
2. Why have you enrolled your child at the centre?

Information about parents' expectations and views

1. How would you describe your overall view of your child's ECE experience?
2. What are your expectations for your child's early education?
3. Have you ever communicated your expectations with teachers?
4. Do you have any involvement with the centre?
5. Can you talk about the practices that teachers implemented for you and your child at the centre?

Information about child's experience at the centre

6. Can you please talk about your child's experience at the centre?
7. What are the positive experiences of your child at the centre?
8. What challenges has your child been dealing with since starting the program?

Wrap-up questions

9. Is there anything else you want to add?
10. Is it ok for me to contact you if I need to clarify anything?

Appendix 23- Teachers' Interview Schedule (Phase 2: Case Studies)

Date of the interview:

Childcare centre:

Type of the centre:

Interview started at:

Interview ended at:

Length of the Interview:

Interview was held at:

People who were present:

My reflections:

The topics that will be discussed in this interview are as follows:

- Demographics
- Background information
- Teacher's practices for Middle Eastern families
- Information about Middle Eastern children's experiences at the centre

Demographics

Pseudonym:

Gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Other

Birthplace:

Mother tongue:

Years of Experience:

Position at the Centre:

Early Childhood Qualifications:

Teacher's background information

1. What's your experience in working with Middle Eastern families?
2. What is your perception of Middle Eastern families in general?

3. Do they get involve in your program?

Teachers' practices for Middle Eastern families

4. Can you please talk about your practices (if any) for Middle Eastern families?
5. How do you identify and incorporate Middle Eastern families' values into your program?

Information about Middle Eastern Children's Experiences

6. Can you please talk about Middle Eastern children's experiences at the centre?
7. What are Middle Eastern children's challenges as noted by you?
8. Do you have any strategies for helping them in such situations? Explain please.

Wrap-up question

11. Is there anything else you want to add on this topic?
12. Is it ok for me to contact you if I need to clarify anything?

Appendix 24- Protocols for Child Consent; Ensuring Confidentiality of the Data, and Script for Informing Children About the Research Project

Ensuring ongoing consent from children throughout the data-collection process:

1. All children whose parents have consented for their child to participate in the project will be informed about the project by the researcher (See (I) information sheet for Middle Eastern parents and (II) information sheets for parents of incidentally-recorded children), during a group mat-time. This will be done following the script below entitled 'Script for Mat-time talk with Children about the Project'.
2. Children whose parents have given consent but who are absent during the scheduled mat-time talk will be informed about the project individually, in a manner as similar as possible to the script used during mat-time talk.
3. All children will be given time and opportunity to ask any questions of the researcher or the teachers or share any concerns around the project; all the questions and concerns will be addressed by the researcher.
4. The researcher will remain attentive and sensitive to any signals from the children that they are not comfortable with the cameras or the note-taking; these signals might include, but are not limited to, any bodily signals or verbalised discomfort.
5. Before switching on the camera, the researcher will inform the children and teachers in the given area that the camera is now on and that it will keep running.
6. Should a child express or signal discomfort at being filmed, the researcher will approach the child and let them know they have noticed it and check if it is so. The researcher will repeat to the child that they can change their mind and not want to participate for a few minutes, or the whole session. The researcher will then repeat that from now any part of the film from today where the child appears will be destroyed as soon as the researcher returns to the office with the camera, on the same day. I will also point out to the child that should they wish to stay away from the cameras, they can use any of the remaining playing areas where the cameras are never brought. The researcher will then ask the child if they want to be asked again to be in the video next time she comes in.

Ensuring confidentiality of the data used for presentations:

1. All data used for presentation is to be anonymised using the list of pseudonyms developed for the project.
2. Still images will only be used with the participants' consent. The researcher will act upon their consent.

Script for Mat-time talk with Children about the Project

I will ask the teachers to give me sometime during mat time to explain the study for children. In that mat time, I will tell them why I am coming to the centre.

I will sit on the floor with the children and:

- explain that:
    - I would like to video record the children for part of their day at the centre;
    - they can say yes or no to being recorded;
    - their parents/ adults at home have been told about the study
    - they can let me know at any time if they do not want to be in the video
    - I would like to write about what I see the children doing.
- I will ask the children to tell me if ok by saying ‘yes’. Remind children that they can change their mind. If they do so, they just need to tell me, or the teacher, or their parent/home adult.

Appendix 25- Translator's Confidentiality Form

Researcher: Mehri Irajzad, PhD, Victoria University of Wellington.

I undertake to maintain full confidentiality about all details of the data I have been asked to translate/interpret as part of the above project.

I will ensure that no other person has access to my computer/device.

I agree to delete all the files from my computer/device once the translation has been completed.

Name of the translator/interpreter: _____

Signature of the translator/interpreter: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 26- The Procedure for Finding and Selecting Case Study Participants and Gaining Informed Consent Forms

a) As the details of some of the volunteers did not make their city of residence clear, in order to make sure that these parents were living in the city of choice and they were eligible to be included in the second phase, I contacted them through email to confirm their nationality and their city of residence in New Zealand.
b) Of those one family was from Iran, one from Saudi Arabia, one from Syria, two from Jordan, and one from Egypt. Out of these, the Egyptian parent, stated that her child had started school, so that case was taken out of the pool of potential case study participants.
c) I then approached the centres that the children of the remaining Middle Eastern parents attended and provided the centre manager with an information sheet and a consent form, inviting them to participate in the study.
d) On confirmation of access from the five centre managers, I approached the teachers in the centres for their consent to participate, providing them with two types of information sheets and consent forms, one each for the observation stage and for the interviews.
e) Once the teachers of a centre gave consent to be part of the study and at least one teacher accepted to be interviewed, I went back to the Middle Eastern parent(s) whose child attended that centre and likewise provided them with the information sheet and two consent forms, one for themselves and one for their child. I also told the parents that they could request the information sheet and consent forms to be translated into a language of their choice. Three of the Middle Eastern parents said that they are comfortable with English and the other two said that they had family members who could help them with reading through the forms. Four of these parents went on to complete the forms, but the fifth, (from Jordan) who had previously agreed to participate in the study, decided to decline to take part in the second phase after reading the information sheet. She was concerned to me, and they were mostly about the study being focused on 'Middle Eastern children'. Therefore, I informed the centre manager of the parent's decision that I would be unable to proceed with the study of their centre. Finally, I was left with four Middle Eastern children (i.e., two from education and care centres and two from kindergartens).
f) The final stage was to seek consents from the parents of other children at the centres. To do this, I had to spend some time in each centre either at drop-off or pick-up times. Each

parent received one information sheet and two consent forms, one for themselves and one for their children. Parents were requested to help me seek consent from their children using the form provided.