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Half the World Away:
A qualitative study exploring migration and
motherhood in New Zealand

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Abstract

Migration is a global phenomenon. An estimated 214 million people worldwide have migrated from their countries of origin; 49% of whom are women. Previous research suggests that the juxtaposition of migration and motherhood has a considerable impact on the identity of women, and is associated with social isolation, economic strain and mental health concerns. In New Zealand, 23% of the population of women were born outside the country; despite this, there is limited local research into the impact of migration and motherhood. *Half the World Away* is a contribution to this gap in psychological research; the project explores the lived experience of migrant mothers in New Zealand. Feminist methodologies guide this research. Stories of migration and motherhood are explored using narrative analysis against the backdrop of *La Mestiza* metaphor. *Half the World Away* rejects previous assertions that migrant women become marginal women due to our inability to reconcile psychological conflict caused by migration. It explores how cultural discourses and master narratives split us into (n)either/(n)or and how women negotiate migration and motherhood by adopting pluralistic identities that transcend the conflicting realities of living between two cultures. *Half the World Away* offers a holistic analysis of experience and challenges dichotomous, linear models of the same by exploring the fluidity of migrant identity against socio-cultural and political spaces. This research offers new knowledge regarding identity, social and economic features of the lived experience of migrant women and mothers in New Zealand, thereby providing a new cultural resource to inform and guide psychological practice.

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The English translation of my name is Ríona Daughter of Byrne. I am, in fact, daughter of Byrne and daughter of Lynch. I am daughter of the socio-political and cultural spaces and places that I have lived, and the socio-political and cultural spaces and places of the Byrnes and Lynches that went before me. The writing in this

project is a result of these people and places that went before me; they exist in every word that has been produced. Go raibh maith agaibh agus go n-eirí libh.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Table of Contents	v
Introduction	1
Aim of the Research	1
Justification for the Research	1
Cé a táim? Who am I? Ko Wai Au?	2
Review of Chapters	6
Chapter 1 – Immigration.....	8
Immigration: A Global Phenomenon.....	8
New Zealand and Immigration.....	9
Psychology and Immigration.....	10
The Marginal (wo)Man.....	11
The Marginal (wo)Man and Acculturation Stress.....	12
Women, Migration and Migration stress.....	13
Diversity and the Dichotomously Damned.....	15
‘I’m-A-Migrant’	16
<i>La Mestiza</i> , Hybridisation and Hyphenated Identities.....	19
Chapter 2 – Motherhood and Mothering.....	22
Psychological Representations of Mothering and Motherhood.....	22
The Metamorphosis of Motherhood.....	23
The Myth of Mothering and Motherhood.....	26
Migration and Culturally Constructed Motherhood.....	28

Social Support, Mothering and Motherhood.....	28
Problem Definition	31
Chapter 3- Methodology.....	35
A Feminist Methodology.....	36
My Values and Motivations.....	37
The Context of Knowledge.....	38
The Fiction of Fact.....	38
The Co-production of Knowledge.....	39
Working the Hyphen.....	39
Anzaldúa's <i>Mestiza Consciousness</i>	41
Narrative Inquiry.....	42
Narratives and Counter Narratives.....	43
Representation.....	44
The Current Research.....	48
A Note of Caution.....	48
Method.....	49
Chapter 4- Analysis.....	55
<i>La Coatlicue</i>	57
'Sitting Between Two Chairs'	58
'The Twilight Zone'	60
'World Travellers' and 'The Bubble'	60
Bursting the Bubble: The 'Headfuck'	62
Migration: A journey through Isolation.....	63
'A Cultural Collision'	64

'The Hump'	65
Language: Thinking 'like an English'	67
'Hitting a Brick Wall': Successful Migration.....	70
The Metamorphosis of Motherhood.....	72
'There was no home': Negotiating motherhood, identity and migration, isolation and loss.....	73
'It takes a Village to Raise a Child'	73
'Cultural Tyranny': Culturally Constructed Motherhood.....	78
Cultural tyranny, motherhood, migration and careers.....	79
Going off the rails: The emotional impact of migration and motherhood..	81
Tolerance, Ambiguity and Other forms of Resolution.....	82
<i>La mestiza</i> : Tolerance and ambiguity, strength and resolution.....	89
Chapter 5- Discussion.....	92
Harmonising Hyphens: Reviewing the aims of the project alongside women's stories.....	93
Harmonising Hyphens across Psychological Literature.....	95
<i>Half the World Away</i> , Cultural Competencies and Psychology.....	97
Limitations.....	98
Personal Reflections.....	101
References.....	104
Appendices.....	109