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

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of
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In
Psychology
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Ríona Ní Bhroin
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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 Riona 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.

There are many necessary ingredients in the completion of a project such as a Master of Arts Thesis. I am lucky to have continuous love and support from my fiancé, Todd Baldwin. You are my best friend. This is one of the many projects we have walked together to achieve. Thank you. Financially, the Massey University Masterate Scholarship and the Graduate Women Manawatu Postgraduate Scholarship provided me with support well beyond my own means. Thank you.

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