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

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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.

## Acknowledgements

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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.

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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## Introduction

### **Aim of the research**

The aim of this project was to explore stories of migration and motherhood in New Zealand. As a migrant woman in New Zealand, I want to raise awareness, stimulate debate and inform maternity services and psychological practice around the country. Although I am a migrant woman in New Zealand, my insider status does not extend to that of motherhood. In fact, it is my fear of embarking on that journey without my family that has inspired this research. Therefore, a further aim was to explore the resolution women found within their experiences of migration and motherhood.

### **Justification for Research**

In June 2012, half way through my thesis year, a report was released by the perinatal and maternity mortality committee (Perinatal and Maternal Mortality Review Committee, 2012). This report shows that the leading cause of death for new mothers is suicide. Although the report did not focus on migrant mothers, previous research in Canada suggests that migrant mothers have a 25% higher rate of postnatal depression and/or low mood than native mothers (Ahmed, Steward, Teng, Wahoush, & Gagon, 2008; Dennis, Janssen, & Singer, 2004). In a country where nearly one quarter of New Zealand's population of women are migrants (De Souza, 2007), I believe this research is imperative, if only to raise awareness and open the door to more in-depth work with migrant mothers all over New Zealand. There is a fire in my heart, this project, my lived experiences of migration and the stories of eight migrant mothers rest there.

It has been identified that diverse experiences of motherhood are poorly understood in sociological and psychological research, with a call for the stories of migrant mothers to be at the forefront of future research (Arendell, 2000). I hope that this project will mark a starting point; that it will create a ripple in the large ocean of the unknown experiences of motherhood and migration in New Zealand and around the world.

### **Cé a táim? Ko wai au? Who am I?**

My name is Ríona Ní Bhroin. I am a migrant woman in New Zealand. I arrived from my home country, Ireland, in July 2008. My intention was to stay in New Zealand for six months before returning home. I never considered leaving my family and friends in Ireland on a permanent basis.

My first two years in New Zealand were turbulent. I met a man; he is now my fiancé. However, the more content and happy I became here, the further away I felt from Ireland. I battled with notions of identity and culture. I felt unanchored in a sea of uncertainty and discovery. Questions regarding my identity that I had never considered before took the forefront of my daily life.

I returned to Ireland for Christmas in 2009/10. When I left my family at the airport, it felt like my whole self was torn apart. I had never realised before that, a large part of my identity consisted of my family, my roots. However, now, it also consisted of my partner. So many people say, 'just go home' but despite my unhappiness here without my family, I had no doubt that I would be equally unhappy in Ireland

without my partner. Intense discussion led to resolution of sorts. My partner and I would never say never and never say always. In a way, we are living in two spaces, two places, not fully committed in either. The notion of *la mestiza*, of the hyphenated-self, became a prominent aspect of my existence as a migrant. Before absorbing myself in articles for this research, I had no words to describe the space that I have come to inhabit. Against the backdrop of racial tensions, skin colour became a natural identifying category; it determined who I was. As a privileged white person, I had never experienced this before. In Ireland, religion and class define you. Even in this, I was part of the dominant: catholic and lower class, defiant against the minority: English upper class, the descendants of our colonisers. In New Zealand, for the first time in my awareness, my identity became intertwined with my whiteness. I was categorised as English; I was categorised as coloniser, the very construct my culture and history has taught me to resist. My history is as colonised, not coloniser. All of the resistance I never knew I harboured as an Irish person rejected it. I struggled between the two identities. Perhaps tellingly, I got a job as a counsellor in an Iwi mandated service. Here, I immersed myself in Te Ao Māori. I found myself comfortable with whakawhanaungatanga and composed my mihi based on fractions of me that I never had to name before. I assumed (with awareness) my first space at the margins- neither coloniser nor black, neither English nor Māori, existing within the (n)either/(n)or of New Zealand.

The second incident that springs to mind as I read Anzaldúa's (1999) *La Frontera: Borderlands*, Michelle Fine's (2007) and Torika Bolatagici's (2004) work on *Borderlands*, hyphenated spaces and the (n)either/(n)or, occurred in Ireland. My

partner and I returned for another family Christmas in 2011/12. We visited my brother's pie shop on our second day. My brother was not there so we went straight to the counter and placed our order. The lovely woman behind the counter asked immediately if I was Cilian's sister saying, "Cilian phoned before and said you'd be in. He said to look out for an Australian guy with a girl who talks funny". We clarified that Todd was a New Zealander, had a lovely chat and ate our pies. Nevertheless, the friendly chat stuck with me. I did not realise that Irish people think I "talk funny". I have become a hybridised version of my past self- in New Zealand I am Irish; in Ireland I am not quite. Therefore, once again the question persists: who am I? Ko wai au? Cé a táim?

Immigration truly shakes the certainty of self. There are many other experiences in life that do this, for example adolescence and parenthood, but usually the culture you exist in, your social location, provides you with an anchor of some sort to hold onto in times of rough weather.

The discussion about children arose. I have always wanted children. I only ever imagined Irish children, who would grow up with my extended family and support networks, who would have their home in my home. On the other hand, I want children with my partner. I started to question what it would be like having a child away from my family. My mother, my father, my aunties, my uncles and my grandparents play extremely important roles in my life. I know if I became a mother in Ireland I would have all of these people to knit clothes for my unborn, coo

delightfully at his/her wrinkled skin, offer me respite when I needed it and, of course, give me a kick up the arse (as we say at home) when I needed it too.

My interest in this project was sparked. I began researching. I was interested to learn about the high levels of postnatal depression experienced by migrant mothers, but I was not surprised. I have experienced depression in the past and one of my concerns is that it may be triggered once again during an unsupported experience of pregnancy/early childhood. I was surprised to find that, despite the large population of migrants in New Zealand, there is very little research exploring migration and motherhood. I view this project as a stepping-stone in an area that needs further exploration. I am speaking to migrant mothers about their lived experiences of becoming a mother away from their homelands and/or countries of origin. However, my expectations are shaped by my own experiences and the literature I have read. I do believe that challenges in mental health, isolation and loneliness are prominent in the lives of migrant mothers. I also strongly believe that these stories need to be shared. As I embarked on this research, I embodied *la mestiza* as I anticipate motherhood half the world away from my family.

To be sure, the last 18 months of my sojourn in New Zealand has been less turbulent. I have found a more comfortable spot in this world. My position at the margins of New Zealand culture has become less prominent. Since my redundancy from the Iwi service, I have been washed away in a tide of being Pākehā. This is not something that I relish, on the other hand it has placed me more firmly where my skin assigns me; there is less dislocation here. I feel honoured that I have had the opportunity to exist at the hyphens of Māori-Pākehā-Irish-New Zealander. This

position calls my previous values and beliefs into question. It has disrupted the assumptions that I held and highlighted that we all base our lives, our judgements, on constructed values and beliefs that resonate with us. Existing at the Borderlands of two cultures has highlighted that I, like all other people, have been subject to 'cultural tyranny' (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 100). Dominant discourses dictate our values and beliefs. I do not believe we need to abandon all of our discourses but we need to be aware that they exist. There is no other way to recognise and respect diversity and embrace difference. This project looks at the stories of migrant mothers in New Zealand. The stories highlight the diverse journeys women make into motherhood in the margins of New Zealand society. The stories challenge psychological models and cultural blueprints of how to perform both motherhood and migration by exploring diverse accounts of experience through narrative analysis. In part, they have also challenged my expectations and experiences of the same.

### **Review of Chapters**

Chapter 1 reviews immigration from the perspective of both cultural and cross-cultural psychology, introducing the multiple aspects of psychology and immigration. Chapter 2 reviews motherhood, mothering and psychology; here, the concept of cultural discourses regarding good and bad mothering are introduced. Chapter 3 details the overarching feminist methodology of this project. It also provides a detailed description of the research methods used. Chapter 4 is the analysis of the women's stories, the harmonisation of hyphens, and the co-production of knowledge. Finally, chapter 5, the discussion, reviews the aims of the project alongside women's stories of migration and motherhood in New Zealand. It also

reviews the current project in context of other literature in the field, discusses limitations of the project and explores some final personal reflections.

## Chapter One: Immigration

### **Immigration - A Global Phenomenon**

Immigration is a global phenomenon. One in every 33 people worldwide has migrated from their country of origin. 3.1% of the world's population are migrants. This accounts for an estimated 214 million people worldwide; 49% of whom are women (International Organization for Migration, 2012). In 1996, the United Nations launched an annual global forum on migration and development in response to the on-going social and economic impact of migration worldwide. The aim of the forum is to invest in strategies that maximise the positive effects and minimise the negative impact of immigration worldwide (Stelzer, 2011). This comes after many years of immigrant "mismanagement" where host country<sup>1</sup> policies have benefitted neither the host population nor the immigrant population who live there (Esses, Deaux, Lalonde, & Brown, 2010, p. 636).

There are many reasons why people migrate. Research suggests that people who migrate often move from less economically developed countries to more economically developed countries to improve their living standards and financial situation (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993). That said, the vast population of migrants in the world suggests that the reasons people migrate are multiple and diverse. They may include family reunification, war, conflict, job transfers, lifestyle, climate, love, dependence, a holiday turned to habit, a sense that "home" is no longer (t)here or a combination of the above and more

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<sup>1</sup> The destination country

(Berger, 2004; Department of Labour, 2012; Dion & Dion, 2001; Nesdale & Mak, 2000).

### **New Zealand and Immigration**

Here, in New Zealand, the immigrant population is growing. In 2006, 22.9% of the country's population were born outside of New Zealand, an increase from 19% in 2001 and 18% in 1996<sup>2</sup> (Ministry of Social Development, 2010). New Zealand has played host country to migrants from around the world for the past two centuries, in particular since 1840 when the Treaty of Waitangi<sup>3</sup> was signed and a surge of British, Irish and European immigrants ensued (Ward & Masgoret, 2008). The immigration policies of New Zealand have undergone significant changes since that time. In 1991, the prioritisation of the skilled migrant category greatly influenced the demographic of immigrants in New Zealand today. The policy shifted criteria from ethnicity/race to academic/career-focused and resulted in greater diversity among accepted migrants and a move away from the homogenous population created by previous "White New Zealand Policy" (Ward & Masgoret, 2008, p. 228).

Currently, there are three streams through which migrants are granted permanent residency in New Zealand: skilled/business stream, family stream and international/humanitarian stream (Department of Labour, 2012). The skilled/business stream bases admission on the applicant's employability and

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<sup>2</sup> These are the most recent Census statistics. A further round was expected in 2011 however due to the Christchurch Earthquake, the Census was postponed.

<sup>3</sup> An agreement signed by representatives of tangata Māori and the British Crown stipulating cohabitation of Aotearoa/New Zealand.

potential contribution to New Zealand. The family stream allows current New Zealand residents and citizens to sponsor the residency application of a family member from abroad. The international/humanitarian stream includes the Samoan Quota, the refugee quota and the Pacific Access Category. In the year 2010/11, 57% of permanent residency grants were through the skilled/business stream, 36% through the family stream and 7% through the international/humanitarian stream. In the same year, 20 937 women were granted permanent residency permits (Department of Labour, 2012).

## **Psychology and Immigration**

### *Acculturation and Identity*

The study of my peers and I transcends many academic domains including sociology, anthropology and economic policy. Berry (1990a) argued that psychology can further develop our understanding of acculturation - the bidirectional impact of immigration on migrants and the countries that host them. Some psychologists define acculturation as a unidirectional impact on immigrants who come into contact with a new culture (Padilla & Perez, 2003). Berry (2001) argues that this assumes all non-dominant/migrant groups become subsumed by dominant cultures - an assertion that overlooks the development of migrant centres such as China town in New York, Little India in Singapore and Irish Fleadh/Ceilí festivals in Chicago. Berry proposes that acculturation affects both immigrant and host nation populations as they negotiate the maintenance of group characteristics and the convergence of two groups of people. Berry states that, "the intersection of these issues creates an intercultural space,

within which members of both groups develop their cultural boundaries and social relationships” (Berry, 2001, p. 615).

According to Berry (2001), there are four acculturation attitudes that negotiate this intercultural space: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalisation. None of these attitudes is superior to the other; rather, the most suitable attitude depends on the level that we migrants choose or choose not to engage with our host nation. A person can choose to assimilate if they disregard their cultural identity of origin and prioritise their engagement with the host culture. If an individual chooses to maintain their culture of origin and avoid integration with the host country, separation is assumed. Integration involves the simultaneous maintenance of one’s cultural identity of origin and engagement with the host culture. Finally, marginalisation occurs when the cultural identity of origin is renounced (usually by force) and the host culture is rejected (Berry, 2001). When two cultural groups come into contact they choose to infiltrate or discount each other, merge cultures or remain culturally distinct; “thus, for both groups in contact, there is a *mutual* process involving one’s own attitudes and behaviours and a perception of those of the other groups” (Berry, 2001, p. 618).

### **The Marginal (Wo)Man?**

The negotiation of acculturation is associated with an acute disruption of immigrant sense of identity (Berger, 2004; Berry, 2001; Yoon, Langrehr, & Ong, 2011) . Clarke and Ebbett (2010) define culture as something that “helps to

define one's place in the world" (p. 214). Accordingly as migrants, we lose familiar reference points, the cultural compasses that once defined our place in the world. We negotiate acculturation and identity in an unstable, ill-defined space. As migrants, we are required to re-invent an identity that is compatible with the new surroundings of our host country while negotiating the loss and/or maintenance of their culture and/or identity of origin. For many years, researchers have argued that living at the crossroads of two cultures is to live as a "marginal man" [*sic*] (Park, 1928, p. 881), a condition that can lead to, "psychological conflict, a divided self, and disjointed person" (LaFromboise, et al., 1993, p. 395).

### **The Marginal (Wo)man and Acculturation Stress**

Acculturation stress is a psychological response defined as:

a stress reaction in response to life events that are rooted in the experiences of acculturation, the psychological difficulties in adapting to a new culture, or psychological stressors resulting from unfamiliarity with new customs and social norms (Wei et al., 2007, p. 386).

The impact of acculturation stress is among the most researched and reported phenomena in psychological immigration literature. Hovey (2000) found acculturation stress to predict depression and suicidal ideation among a group of 17-77 year old Mexican immigrants in the United States of America. Leavey (1999) establishes a relationship between migration, acculturation and increased alcohol use, self-harm and suicidal ideation among the Irish in Britain. Acculturation stress is associated with higher levels of depression and anxiety (Yoon, et al., 2011), suicidal ideation (Walker, Wingate, Obasi, & Joiner, 2008),

helplessness, insecurity (Berger, 2004), somatic symptoms and identity confusion (Williams & Berry, 1991).

Immigration has been described as, “a lifelong, multifaceted, multilayered, complex, and never-ending experience” (Berger, 2004, p. 9) during which people who migrate negotiate new social, cultural and behavioural norms. The rules of engagement - eye contact, social interaction and friendships - are new. Supermarket etiquette may change. Language has new meanings; many layers constructed from shared history, shared awareness and a shared past may transcend the new immigrant. For many, we are re-born; there are no reminders of past selves prior to our arrival in our host countries (Berger, 2004). The never-ending psychological processes of identity formation and acculturation must weave new understandings in a labyrinth of hidden meaning.

### **Women, Migration and Migration Stress**

Nearly half (49%) of the immigrant population around the world are women (International Organization for Migration, 2012); 23% of women in New Zealand were not born here (De Souza, 2007). Despite these statistics, as in the case of Park’s (1928) marginal man, migrant women “remain silent and invisible, present as a variable, absent as a person” (Morokvasic, 1983, p. 18). Indeed, it is only the past two decades that migrant women have been granted space and place in psychological literature (Dion & Dion, 2001).

Research suggests that migration has a comparatively worse impact on women's professional, social, health and mental health status than men's (Noh, Wu, Speechley, & Kasper, 1992). Much research has found that women are forced to de-skill by accepting positions of less training and education than the positions they held in their country of origin (Berger, 2004; Bürgelt, Morgan, & Pernice, 2008). Despite my degree in psychology, I spent seven months doing practical and personal cares for the elderly at \$13 per hour. Of course, I met some fabulous people and many elderly migrants, who were willing to share their experiences with me, however, there was little respect from my employers and unregulated working hours. It was a challenging follow on to my career in Ireland.

In addition to this, although not the case for me, women embarking on employment as migrants may experience conflict between the culturally constructed gender roles of home and host. For example, Noh et al. (1992) found high levels of depression among employed Korean women in Canada. The authors suggest that, for the women in their research, employment conflicted with the valued belief of women as homemakers in Korea. This has been described as the "double burden" of immigrant women juggling home and work, often with reduced family time and reduced family income (Berger, 2004; Dion & Dion, 2001). Other research suggests that, for women, migration and acculturation result in a greater vulnerability to a host of health and mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, heightened distress, suicidal

behaviours and lower health ratings (Dennis, et al., 2004; LaFromboise, et al., 1993; Morrow, Smith, Lai, & Jaswal, 2008; Pedraza, 1991).

### **Diversity and the Dichotomously Damned**

Psychological models of acculturation and acculturation stress (Berry, 1990a, 2001; LaFromboise, et al., 1993; Padilla & Perez, 2003) have contributed greatly to the study of migration. They have created awareness in the academic domain of psychology where once it was remiss. They have highlighted some of the challenges that face those of us who migrate - identity confusion, anxiety and marginalisation, although perhaps not in the same manner that the acculturation model suggests (Berry & Sam, 1997). The models have ignited academic debate and have influenced international policy (Berry, 2001; Wills, 2010). However, it has been argued that the traditional empiricist approach of assigning psychological dichotomies in predominantly linear models is both “oversimplifying and insensitive” (Hermans & Kempen, 1998, p. 1112) to the lived experience of 214 million migrants worldwide.

The four acculturation attitudes assign the lived experience of migrants to a world of (n)either/(n)or. According to the cross-cultural perspective in psychology, those ascribing to a universalist<sup>4</sup> approach (Berry, 1990a, 2001; LaFromboise, et al., 1993), migrants must exist within the confines of one acculturation attitude or the other. There is no movement in-between. We are

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<sup>4</sup> Universalist psychologists believe that, “the psychological processes that operate are essentially the same for all the groups” (Berry & Sam, 1997, p. 296). Therefore, psychological phenomena transcend culture and are universal.

rigid; we are static. Bhatia and Ram (2009) summarise this by stating, “cross cultural research, though commendable for bringing issues of immigrant identity to the table, has largely presented migration as a series of fixed phases and stages that do not account for the specific culturally distinct... immigrants” (p. 141). And so, the dominant psychological approach contributes further to the marginalised (wo)man as they are assigned norms that classify their ability to “do” immigration and fit within the (ab)norm of acculturation. Diversity disregarded assimilates with dominance.

### **“I’m-a-migrant”**

There have been calls for psychology to explore the experience of immigration outside of the linear psychological models that have been prescribed to date (Bhatia & Ram, 2009; Hermans & Kempen, 1998); to recognise the diversity of experience among the 214 million people in the world who occupy the shared spaces and places of migration. Already, research is growing in the field of narrated experiences in an effort to represent the “I’m-a-migrant” of the world, those who do not fit into the dichotomous models that have been prescribed to them. For example, Bhatia and Ram (2009) explore the fluidity of migrant identity and reject the traditional assumption of a linear migration experience. Their research highlights the influence of the host country’s social, historical and political climate on the identity of Indian immigrants in America post 9/11<sup>5</sup>. The participants of Bhatia and Ram’s research explain how they re-negotiated their

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<sup>5</sup> 9/11 refers to the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 when five planes were hi-jacked in American air space.

existence as immigrants in America in order to navigate the historical and political events that took place. The participants report the experience of being “*simultaneously assimilated, separated and marginalized*” (p. 145; italics in original); thus, rejecting the notion of successfully navigating linear stages of immigration and recognising the transient and changeable nature of identity within the context - the place and space in socio-political history. Fine and Sirin (2007) explored similar notions of immigrant fluidity in the United States of America against the backdrop of 9/11’s events, concluding that people occupy a “hyphenated self” (p. 16), a provisional status dictated by socio-political environment of the dominant other.

Thus, the social environment, policy and politics of host nations dictate the space that immigrants occupy at any given time and space in history. The concept of “I’m-a-migrant” is constructed and deconstructed by prevalent discourses perpetuated through social events and host nation policy. Dovidio and Esses (2001) write, “the formal policies of nations toward immigrants and immigration leave psychological legacies that persist long after economic and political factors shift” (pp. 379-380). For example, during the mid-late 1990s and early 2000s, the Celtic Tiger<sup>6</sup> transpired and Ireland’s migrant population increased significantly. In 2004, there was a referendum on the citizenship rights of children born to asylum seekers in Ireland. The Irish Government argued that the implementation of new policy removing these rights was “a moral force for good, an arbiter of liberal democracy, and benign protector of Irish and EU

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<sup>6</sup> A period during of strong economic growth in Ireland

sovereignty” (Tormey, 2007, p. 78). The referendum recorded one of the highest voting turnouts and showed 4:1 people in favour of the implementation of new policy. Many describe the 2004 referendum as a reflection of a newer inhospitable social environment for migrants - a place where diversity and citizenship do not mix and to be an immigrant was to be unwanted. The socio-political environment shifted the shared meaning and understanding of being an immigrant in Ireland and resulted in lasting negative effects (including isolation, hostility and violence) in particular for migrant women (Lentin, 2007; Tormey, 2007).

Here in New Zealand, despite having a migrant-friendly reputation, discursive research shows a distinct disparity between how skilled migrants and “lazy” Pacific Island migrants are perceived (Lyons, Madden, Chamberlain, & Carr, 2011, pp. 23-24). As discussed by the authors, this view correlates with media constructions of Pacific Islanders in New Zealand; it is possibly linked to government immigration policy which (as identified by a participant in Lyons et al.’s study) grants permanent residency to a “Pacific Quota” each year, irrespective of Skilled/Business criteria. Therefore, the existence of migrants around the world is fluid against a backdrop of dominant social and political events, understandings and regulations. This alters the meaning ascribed to the hyphenated space that “I’m-a-migrant” occupy at any given point in history.

### ***La Mestiza*, Hybridisation and Hyphenated Identities**

Hybridity... is logically entwined within the coordinates of migrant identity and difference, same or not same, host and guest (Hutnyk, 2010, p. 63).

Hybridity, hybridisation (Hermans & Kempen, 1998) and hyphenated-selves (Fine & Sirin, 2007) describe a place of being at the edge of belonging, an in-between space, where a person is (n)either/(n)or. Hybridisation “undermines the idea of cultures as internally homogenous and externally distinctive” (Hermans & Kempen, 1998, p. 1113) thus creating multiple identities and multiple truths about what it is to “be”. Hyphenated-selves create a third space, a place where we are no longer ‘other’ but have found a new space to exist (Fine & Sirin, 2007). In this way, hybridisation and hyphenated-selves reject the notion of a dichotomous world where boundaries define the space between one and/or the other. Hybridity and hyphenation recognise the shared space between place and people and challenge the discourses of “other” within the structure of our society. Within these spaces a person can occupy the space of “norm” and “abnorm” simultaneously, thus challenging the static existence proposed by traditional models and celebrating the co-existence of traditions, cultures and people over thousands of years around the world.

Anzaldúa (1999) explores the notion of hyphenated-selves further and proposes that migrant women develop a *mestiza* consciousness. *La mestiza* is a new consciousness, a third space, through which migrant women transcend the boundaries of two or more cultures. *La mestiza* allows migrant women to

transcend prescribed binaries, the 'despot duality that says we are able to be only one or the other' (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 41).

To be a migrant is to embody the essence of *la mestiza* consciousness. It is the "making one of two distinct things" (Young, 1996, p. 26). Emigration shatters the mirror of identity into tiny pieces. Our job as migrants is to piece the mirror back together so that it reflects a new unified image of our past identities alongside our new identities as immigrants in a host country. This is a much easier job if the ground on which you are working is stable, rather than a landslide of social and political upheaval or confusion.

The process of rebuilding a broken mirror, while generally daunting, is not always a negative experience. Indeed, some researchers are calling for the positive aspects of migration and hybridised selves to be discussed: the opportunities, the development, the formulation of an identity that reflects diverse experiences in the world. Bolatagici (2004) argues that the mixed-race/mixed-culture hyphen serves to reinforce the discourses of discomfort that originated in the USA, where mixed-race relations were considered inappropriate, improper and, mostly, illegal. Those with a hyphenated identity reflect, "the detestable consequence of interracial sexual taboo" and the "fears of racial contamination" (p. 77) that plagued many White people in America and, later, Australia. Bolatagici (2004) seeks to address the gap in literature that has allowed the negative discourses of hybrid identities to perpetuate. More specifically to migration, the literature harbours a gap of positive and diverse

experiences among the 214 million “I’m-a-migrant” of the world. While the challenges that we face as migrants are many, a thread of balance must weave through the representations of our lived experience. The rich canvass of strength and sanguinity must be painted of people who transcend the binaries of dichotomous prescriptions of ‘how to’. The literature must embrace the privilege of stories from *la mestiza*- hyphenated and hybridised identities and the representations of *our* experiences, *our* stages and phases in *our* journeys. In this way, we can develop our understanding and awareness of the many conflicts and resolutions that migrant mothers weave into New Zealand’s past, present and future. We can allow the voices of lived experience to guide our knowledge and practice.

## **Chapter Two: Mothering and Motherhood**

It is here that I lose my insider status and embrace my stance at the periphery of experience. It is here that I look to the eight co-producers of this project for the most guidance and knowledge. Despite this, although I am not a mother, I have experiences of motherhood and mothering. I am lucky to have a wonderful relationship with my own mother and my Nana Byrne, both of whom have mothered me all of my life and continue to do so. I have had the pleasure of mothering some beautiful children throughout my life: Ríona Beag (Little Ríona), Oisín, Caoimhe and Eoghan. Although I am biologically lacking, motherhood and mothering is a part of my life narrative, my lived experience.

### **Psychological Representation of Mothering and Motherhood**

Since the 1970s, the depiction of motherhood in psychological literature has undergone radical transformation. In particular, feminist scholars have highlighted the incongruence between idealised perceptions of motherhood as an expansion of womanhood and diverse accounts of motherhood as a (sometimes difficult) choice rather than a natural, instinctual biological progression (Mitchell & Green, 2002). A distinction between motherhood and mothering has also been recognised, where the former is biologically female and the latter, although predominantly associated with women, need not be (Silva, 1996).

Arendell (2000) provides a comprehensive overview of motherhood and mothering in psychology and sociology. She discusses the fluidity of the term

“motherhood”, how it responds to the cultural context within which it exists. Arendell concludes that although the study of motherhood has developed considerably in the past decade, diverse accounts of motherhood (“deviant discourses”, p. 1195) need to highlight the disparities between discourses of idealised motherhood and the multiple realities that women live as mothers. Arendell contests, “areas calling for attention in the study of mothering...[are] identities and meanings of mothering, relationships... and the social locations and structural context from within which women mother... immigrant experience must be at the forefront of our considerations” (Arendell, 2000, p. 1201; parenthesis added). This process should interrupt the prescribed prototype of motherhood and mothering and provide a broader spectrum of experience to which women can relate. Overall, the recognition of diversity in psychology should contribute to the consecration of ‘deviant discourses’ and reduce the social pressures on women to perform motherhood/mothering where “traditional ideologies...remain central” (Choi, Henshaw, Baker, & Tree, 2005, p. 179).

### **The Metamorphosis of Motherhood**

From onset to its destination, childbearing requires an exchange of a known self in a known world for an unknown self in an unknown world (Rubin, 1984, p. 52)

The transition into motherhood involves the metamorphosis of a woman’s sense of identity. In her qualitative work, Miller (2005) represents the narratives of seventeen women who situate this transition in two major phases: during

pregnancy and after birth. During pregnancy, many women describe how pregnancy infiltrates their identity as their changing bodies undermine their attempts to maintain a separate sense of identity. The women report being seen “*just as pregnant women*, that this becomes an overriding identity, but it is not how they experience themselves” (Miller, 2005, p. 80; italics in original). Women embody shifts in their identity through the physical change of pregnancy. They convey the struggle to maintain their identity as a battle between their sense of identity and the changing bodies that they have lost control over. Other research further elaborates the embodied erosion of the autonomous sense of self as “a profound psychological experience to lose, temporarily, this central feature [autonomous control] of her prior identity” (Hollway, 2011, p. 23; parentheses added). The physical changes of pregnancy serve to reinforce the women’s dwindling grasp on their pre-pregnancy identities.

After birth, the women in Miller’s (2005) study occupy their identity as mothers through performing motherhood as depicted in social and cultural discourses. The women describe how, initially, the occupation of “being a mother” means to engage in activities understood as normative for mothers, for example, feeding their child and keeping their child clean. However, it is not until time has elapsed after the biological birthing event that they reconcile their sense of identity with the new identity of being a mother. This reconciliation takes different forms for different women in Miller’s project and is “constructed and understood in relation to others and contingent on past experiences... a social

self as a mother becomes incorporated into existing schemas of self-understanding” (Miller, 2005, p. 145).

Winnicott (1984) describes the immediate weeks after birth as a period of “primary maternal preoccupation” (p. 300). Basing his theory on extensive work in paediatrics and psychoanalysis, Winnicott dragged academic preoccupation with motherhood from the biological to the psychological. He proposed primary maternal preoccupation as a short, defined period during which women identify wholly with, and become psychologically engrossed in, their newborn child. This period interrupts previous psychological states for a short period. However, Winnicott’s theory attracted widespread criticism, perhaps, in part, due to his evocative choice of phrasing. Winnicott describes primary maternal preoccupation as, “a psychological condition... an illness were it not for the fact of pregnancy” (pp. 301-302).

The description used by Winnicott (1984) evokes resistance from many psychologists as it depicts women as passive and pathologised during the postnatal period. However, feminist researcher Hollway (2011) highlights the congruence between women’s depictions of the postnatal period in her research and Winnicott’s description of primary maternal preoccupation. Hollway contests that this psychological phenomenon should not pathologise women but rather pay heed to the enormous metamorphosis of motherhood—the transition of identity that many psychologists have reported and recognised

(Arendell, 2000; Choi, et al., 2005; Hollway, 2011; Liamputtong & Naksook, 2003).

### **The Myth of Motherhood and Mothering**

Research suggests that women engage more with personal and familiar relationships during their psychological transition to motherhood. Smith (1999) reports that, “the second half of the pregnancies are typically taken up with considerable reference to significant others - partner and immediate family” (p. 290). Here, Smith portrays social support as a fundamental element of the renegotiation of women’s identity as mothers. During the ante- and post-natal period women look to others, in particular family members, to help make sense of their transition (Arendell, 2000; Choi, et al., 2005; Miller, 2005). In this way, women rely on the available social and cultural discourses to inform their understanding of what motherhood and mothering mean.

In the same manner “notions of normal and good and bad mothering permeate the contemporary context in which transition to motherhood is experienced and understood” (Miller, 2005, p. 66). Cultural discourses of motherhood and mothering often dictate how women anticipate, experience and discuss their journey. In particular, research suggests that women use these discourses to validate their performance as mothers in comparison to cultural ideologies of motherhood. Arendell (2000) proposes that Western ideologies of motherhood consist of “intensive mothering” (p. 1194). Good intensive mothering involves self-sacrificing women who abandon their own needs in honour of the well-

being and nurturance of their child; an ideology born during a political era in US history when children became valued representations of the future and mothers became responsible for the nurturance of that socio-political hope (McMahon, 1995). The intensive mothering ideology (often associated with white, heterosexual, and double parented, middle class families) is perpetuated through media representations and sustained through government policy.

As discussed in Chapter 1, ideologies are generally situated in dichotomous models of “how to do”. Dichotomies assign the ability to successfully perform socially endorsed roles. The dichotomous discourses on motherhood and mothering create the existence of bad mothers and good mothers according to the dominant ideology at a particular socio-political, historical and cultural time and place. Often this persists in the face of deviant discourses that reject the idealised dichotomy such as working mothers, single mothers, same-sex couples, mothers who struggle with their loss of self, surrogate mothers and migrant mothers - the list is not exhaustive nor is it exclusive. Some research has rejected such ideologies and endeavoured to highlight the impact that culture has on society’s understandings and performance of mothering and motherhood. For example, Lamb and Bougher (2009) review migration literature that documents how the gendered roles of mothers shift between Sudan, China and Canada, thereby highlighting the impact culture has on our understanding and performance of mothering and motherhood.

## **Migration and Culturally Constructed Motherhood**

If “good mothering” is culturally constructed it seems reasonable to argue that migrant women may be more vulnerable to performing motherhood ‘badly’ as their cultural discourses may conflict with that of their host country. ‘Maternal role attainment’ is identified by Morrow et al. (2008) as “the pressures on women to adhere to gendered ideals of motherhood and femininity” (p. 605). Their research found migrant women in Canada struggle with the shifting standards of “good” childbirth, breast-feeding and gendered mother/father roles between their home countries and their host country. This contributed to a sense of being bad mothers and resulted in feelings of guilt over their perceived failures. Liamputtong and Naksook (2003) also describe this conflict of culturally constructed good mothering between Thai mothers and their Australian partners. In particular, the conflicts arose between sleeping arrangements and child discipline with the mothers generally conceding to the “Australian way... to avoid conflicts with their husbands” (p. 659). Thus, cultural discourses provide women with a blueprint of good and bad mothering; these are used to make sense of their own lived experiences. The exposure to dichotomies of another culture throws migrant women’s accepted blueprints into discord, creating the reconsideration of women’s implicit understandings of good and bad mothering and motherhood.

## **Social support, Mothering and Motherhood**

A consistent finding in both quantitative and qualitative mothering and motherhood research is the pivotal role of social support for women who

become mothers. Social support has been linked to more positive mental health outcomes (Dennis, et al., 2004), coping skills (Mitchell & Green, 2002), adjustment to motherhood (Liamputtong & Naksook, 2003) and reduced parental distress (Priel & Besser, 2002). Social support between mothers and daughters has been recognised as “a pivotal role practically, socially and emotionally... kinship was closely interwoven with one’s self-identity as a caring and capable mother” (Mitchell & Green, 2002, p. 19).

Priel and Besser (2002) explored the role of perceived social support for first time mothers during the final weeks before childbirth and the immediate weeks postpartum. The authors examined the mediating role of perceived social support on mother’s perceptions of early childhood relationships with their own mothers (as an indicator of health and stress regulation) and perceptions of how unsettled their infant was during this period, postpartum depressive symptoms and new-born health. The authors concluded that perceptions of prior caring, social support and current availability of social support promote the well-being of first time mothers and their infants.

Many migrant women endure the collapse of social and family networks as part of the migration process (Berger, 2004). This occurs due to physical distance and due to the psychological and economic strains of immigration. For many, it is not economically viable to visit home and family on a regular basis. For others, including myself, it can be emotionally unsettling to keep regular contact with home as time zones and poor internet connections (where available) serve to

highlight the distance between. The Biopsychosocial Model of Health (Engel, 1977) attributes health and well-being to a combination of psychological, social and medical factors. As discussed in Chapter 1, migration has been identified as a psychologically stressful event for many women. The social world is dismantled during migration and friends and family are left behind. This reduces available social support networks, a consistent psychosocial correlate of ill health among people (Lyons & Chamberlain, 2005). Indeed, much psychological research supports the notion that psychosocial factors contribute to poorer mental health outcomes for migrant mothers. In a longitudinal study, Dennis et al. (2004) found that women who had migrated to Canada within the previous five years were nearly five times more likely to report postpartum depressive symptoms than Canadian born women. Ahmed, Steward, Teng, Wahoush, and Gagon (2008) found the most commonly identified cause of postnatal depression by migrant women in Canada was having a new baby without the support of their mothers or other family members. Similar findings resulted in Morrow et al. (2008) concluding that, “many women described their depression as arising from a lack (or perceived lack) of adequate support from husbands and family members” (p. 609). Local research, Bürgelt et al. (2008), suggests that migrating to New Zealand with a partner or as a family may act as a protective factor by increasing the perception of support available, thus reducing loneliness and the perceived lack of extended support networks.

To summarise, psychological and sociological research has identified becoming a mother as a migrant as a “high risk” combination of events in a woman’s life

(Berger, 2004, p. 21). The many challenges of mothering and motherhood are faced alongside additional challenges of migration and can mean motherhood becomes a complex and often-traumatic event in a woman's life (Barclay, Everitt, Rogan, Schmeid & Wyllie, 1997). On the other hand, aside from the large body of research that constructs motherhood as a time of struggles and challenges, there is research that describes the positive aspects of mothering and motherhood. Many mothers portray mothering and motherhood as worthwhile and meaningful transitions in their lives (McMahon, 1995; Miller, 2005). Indeed some immigration literature suggests that becoming a mother facilitates a more positive attitude towards self and the lived experience as a migrant (Tsai, Chen, & Huang, 2011). Furthermore, Bürgelt et al., (2008) report that having children in New Zealand facilitates adaptation to the host country as children create more opportunity to develop social networks and support.

### **Problem Definition**

Biology does not dictate our destinies as men or women. Both mothering and motherhood represent culturally and socially constructed activities that many of us have the privilege to engage in or ignore. Even those who cannot biologically give birth can chose to embark on a journey of motherhood and/or mothering. The omission or addition of motherhood and/or mothering to our identity does not create a more whole person; our identities mould according to the experiences we engage in and the meaning that we ascribe to those experiences. The fluidity of identity interacts in such a way that the omission or addition of motherhood and/or mothering need not be a linear progression but

rather a transition of contradictions in which women may simultaneously experience and engage in the juxtaposition of conflicting identities.

If cultural discourses of motherhood and mothering dictate how women anticipate, experience and discuss their journey, narrative accounts may reflect the “good” mother discourse that women participants recognise in society, rather than their own experiences of motherhood. An important reason for exploring migrant women’s experiences of motherhood is the discrepancy between cultural discourses of “good” and “bad” of their home and host nations. As described in Chapter 1, we migrants occupy a space of (n)either/(n)or; this can force more honest reflections of actual experience as the reality of what is right and real becomes blurred and, at times, difficult to negotiate.

One of the primary reasons I engaged in this project was to explore the resolutions, strengths and strategies that assist women who become mothers as migrants. Although research reports higher rates of mental and physical distress for migrant mothers, many migrant mothers have negotiated the juxtaposition of migration and motherhood. Although the strategies and strengths that assist one person may not assist another, it is important to offer variations of the common pathologised migrant mother discourse and to provide representations of the multiple realities that migrant mothers embody.

Finally, this project aims to explore and pay heed to diversity among migrant women and their experiences of motherhood and mothering. Women, migrants and mothers need not be viewed as a “unitary category, diversity and differentiation must be acknowledged and explored” (Mitchell & Green, 2002, p. 7). This project represents stories of *la mestiza*, hybridised and hyphenated women who have become mothers at the crossroads of two cultures. The aim is to represent the fluid nature of identity within positive and negative experiences of migrant mothers in New Zealand; to further inform our knowledge of life outside the de-contextualised “cultural dichotomies [that] do not and cannot meet the challenges raised by the process of globalization” (Hermans & Kempen, 1998, p. 1112; parentheses added)

The overarching question guiding this research is how do women negotiate migration and motherhood in New Zealand? However, the aim of the research is to explore women’s stories and experiences of migration and motherhood, therefore, I expected there would be many other areas that require exploration in order to address the overarching question. For example, how does migration and/or the combination of migration and motherhood affect women’s identities? How do migrant mothers negotiate social support, if at all? How, if at all, is the mother-child relationship influenced by migration? How does motherhood in New Zealand compliment and/or conflict with expectations of motherhood and mothering from countries of origin?

The answers to these questions provide an important addition to the field of psychology and migration, and, psychology and motherhood/mothering. They represent the voices of marginalised people in research: migrant women who have become mothers. The lived experience of these marginalised women will provide alternative discourses that other women can draw on and engage in. Dichotomous rules will make way for non-linear, fluid realities.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

I kneel before you as a feminist psychologist. I do not kneel in submission, but rather, in honour of the knowledge gifted to me by others. I kneel in honour of the knowledge I might receive from you. I kneel, eyes open and immersed in yours so that you might hear. I kneel, ears open, so that we might hear. We might create. We might produce. We might use the melodies and beats gifted to us, our voices and our ears and we might compose our version of these experiences, a meaningful interaction, a co-production, a harmony of a hyphenated space, to play for others who might hear. We might navigate the representation of voices: women's, yours and mine, to produce knowledge that resonates with our life narratives (Riessman, 1993). I kneel in resistance of the things that I do not believe; I recognise the right to believe them. I kneel before you as a feminist psychologist, a past version of me humbled by the journey that I have travelled. The junction of feminism, migration, immersion and distance has brought me to my knees - a place I actively embrace the burdenless gift of knowledge, and the hope that the journey does not end here.

I always believed that I was open to experience and others. In particular, over the past four years as I have journeyed through migration and my study and the many faces of resistance have been revealed. However, it was with trepidation that I called myself a feminist psychologist for the first time. I have rejected the term until now as it conjures up images that are not welcome in my culture, where we must be silent in our misgivings and martyr on with life always. As I struggled with this methodology section, trying to resolve the struggle I was

feeling (between my affiliation with feminist viewpoints and calling myself a feminist), it dawned on me that the knowing part of me was fighting the condemnatory part of me and that the biggest part of me wanted to shake free of that judgement. I was judging myself for aligning with something my preconceptions dismissed. Yet my preconceptions were challenged and enthusiastically accepted defeat as they thread on a newfoundland of identity and knowledge. You see, feminist psychology makes sense to me. It truly makes sense. I kneel before you as a feminist psychologist and pay heed to the many times I have rejected, not heard and overlooked. I pay heed to the people who keep talking when dismissed; one day somebody might listen. I pay heed to the part of me that was threatened by a myth and perpetuated an Other. I anchor this project in feminist assumptions to represent the voices of migrant mothers in New Zealand and to reject societal binaries that create an Other and pathologise diverse experience.

### **A Feminist Methodology**

Mary Gergen (1988) outlines six assumptions of feminist research that recognise: the researcher's relationship with the subject matter; the researcher's values; the context of knowledge; that 'fact' is confined by the researcher's linguistic abilities and that knowledge is a co-production between the researcher and participant and consumer (Gergen, 1988, p. 47). I actively embrace these assumptions; I have used them to guide this project.

## **My values and motivations**

I believe that this project is an extension of my life experiences. In line with Gergen's (1988) feminist methodology, I reject my position as an objective researcher who passively observes and receives information from objects of study. Thus, challenging the epistemological assumptions of empiricist psychology where objective science is good science, fact and truth observable; my aim is to embrace feminist methodologies and recognise the ever-present relationship between the knowable and the knower (Morawski, 1997).

Feminist scholars question the nature of value-free knowledge and propose that researchers' life experiences interweave with the production of knowledge (Gergen, 2001). The very process of psychological inquiry - investigating the underlying phenomena of human behaviour and experience - is inseparable from the interests, values and beliefs of the inquirer. Therefore, the fallacy of objective, context- and bias-free research is contested (Gergen, 1988; Gergen, 2001; Riessman, 1993). As researchers, we are active in the practice and generation of knowledge. Our stories and experiences provide the scaffolding for our endeavours (Gergen, 1988). This project was born from my experiences as a migrant in New Zealand. My fears of becoming a mother as a migrant and my fascination with the resilience of migrant mothers provided enough sustenance and energy for it to grow. The questions that I asked of this research reflect my values and assumptions about both journeys. I recognise that I, the researcher, am active and embodied in the production of knowledge (Chase, 2008). I hoped that identifying these values and motivations would heighten my

awareness throughout the research and allow me to interact with women and knowledge production in an honest, reflective manner.

### **The context of knowledge**

Gergen's (1988) methodology situates all knowledge within social and historical contexts, which in turn, are culturally embedded. This influences the methods used to produce knowledge. Feminist methodology recognises that people interact as part of a social, historical, economic and political environment. Consequently, the practice of removing people from these environments to study behaviour is 'nonsensical' (Gergen, 1988, p. 49). For example, the current project may have worked with 50 women or completed focus group work if it was not constrained by people-power, finances, time and so forth. Therefore, research not only reflects the combined personal values and beliefs of participants and researchers, but also the context in which it is produced (Morokvasic, 1983). The aim of the current project was to talk to women in an environment of their choice that was connected with their lived social world(s). The knowledge produced represents an interaction immersed in contextual, cultural realities of social, political and historical events in time.

### **The fiction of fact**

Feminist methodologies recognise that knowledge is produced and constrained by researchers' prior linguistic frameworks (Gergen, 1988). This assumption rejects empiricist beliefs that 'fact' exists independent of the knower. Facts are constructed within the available linguistic framework that people have to

describe phenomena. In this way, there may be more than one 'true/factual' interpretation of how one experiences the world, as the interpretation itself is a process of interaction.

### **The co-production of knowledge**

Feminist research rejects the sanctification of researcher over researcher - knowledge is co-produced through the interactions between researchers and participants within a particular context. We do not receive, or discover knowledge; we construct it through our shared interactions and experiences (Andrews, 2004; Chase, 2008; Gergen, 1988). Furthermore, each reader co-produces knowledge with the researcher and the participant as they attend to and interpret research within their own context and linguistic framework, an assumption that is developed further in Catherine Riessman's (1993) levels of representation, discussed below.

### **Working the Hyphen**

In line with Gergen's (1988) guidelines for feminist methodology, Fine (2004) and Fine and Sirin (2007) describe the co-production of knowledge as *working the hyphen*. Fine (2004) writes:

When we write essays about subjugated others as if *they* were a homogenous mass (of vice or virtue), free-floating and severed from contexts of oppression, and as if we were neutral transmitters of voices and stories, we tilt toward a narrative strategy that reproduces Othering, on, despite or even "for". When we construct texts collaboratively, self-consciously examining our relations with/for/despite those who have been contained as Others, we move against, we enable resistance to Othering (p. 139)

During my preparation for this project, these words reverberated in my thoughts. In the current research, I worked the hyphen of migration and motherhood, to meet eight women at the hyphen of these experiences. The interaction of our understanding and lived experience produces the knowledge discussed in the following chapters. I am a migrant woman in New Zealand. As a migrant woman, I have been dislocated and forced to reconstruct my narratives of self. Motherhood is something that I have not yet embarked upon but aspire to. The hyphen of motherhood, and/or anticipation of, is the hyphen that worried me the most. Yet, it is the position that most nurtured and developed this project. I wanted to learn about the experience of becoming a mother away from home. I wanted to explore how the connection motherhood and the dislocation of migration interact with how we make sense of ourselves. I wanted to negotiate the challenges and explore the strengths of life as a migrant mother in New Zealand. I wanted to hear more women's stories of migration and motherhood, to raise awareness of the issues migrant mothers face and, most importantly, explore the forms that resolution takes for each woman as they renegotiate cultural boundaries.

In this process, I engaged firmly and honestly with subjective, embodied responses throughout the research. I wanted to ensure that I remained at the hyphen *with* the women, rather than at the peripheral, "objectively" observing and perpetuating an Other in psychological research. Engaged in feminist research, I rejected broad generalisations about psychological and behavioural norms, dichotomies and the construction of Other by challenging linear models

that allow for *successful* migration and motherhood. In the same manner, I questioned and rejected the notion of the Other - a space constructed of women who do not fit within the constraints of binary models in psychological research (Chase, 2008). Feminist scholars (Andrews, 2004; Gergen, 2001) argue that women, generally excluded from psychology research, occupy this space; the call of feminist researchers is to reject the offer of the Other and promote women's experience as more than a deviation from androcentric master narratives of psychology (Gergen, 2001). In the current research, migrant mothers and I place our stories at the forefront of discussion and exploration. While I recognise that this neglects men's stories of migration and fatherhood, the limitation is situated in my commitment to feminist research and my rejection of androcentric master narratives that position women as Other.

### **Anzaldúa's *Mestiza* consciousness**

*La Mestiza* is, 'an Aztec word meaning town between ways, *la mestiza* is a product of the transfer of cultural and spiritual values of one group to another' (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 100). Anzaldúa offers *la mestiza* to any woman who has lived at the psychological, spiritual or physical Borderlands between two or more cultures. *La mestiza* emerges from *la coatlicue*, a place of conflict and dislocation in which our many identities, influenced by our diverse socio-cultural locations, resist each other. She is a new place, a third space, in which migrant women embrace ambiguity in the face of the contradiction that we embody. Anzaldúa writes that, 'the struggle of *la mestiza* is above all a feminist one' (p. 102). *La mestiza* rejects the defined spaces that androcentric society offers

women. She rejects the male dominated rules that claim she must be one or the other, thus placing her at the margins of society. *La mestiza* transcends such binaries to exist as an expansion of separated socio-cultural and historical places. She is a third space, a whole, greater than the sum of her separated parts. Similar to narrative inquiry, Anzaldúa proposes that *la mestiza* helps women who live at the Borderlands to make sense of our conflicting existence and the events that disrupt our understanding of ourselves.

### **Narrative Inquiry**

In the production of meaningful knowledge, feminist researchers rejected the “hierarchy of researcher over researched” (Gergen, 2001, p. 21) and proposed methods that allow participants to tell their stories in their ways. The predictability of behaviour is rejected for the exploration of how people ascribe meaning to experiences in their lives. Narrative inquiry becomes the vessel of women’s voices, a method of recovering voices from the margin and initiating the disruption of androcentric realities (Chase, 2008).

Sarbin (1986a) proposes that narratives are a root metaphor for psychology. This proposition assumes that people use stories to make sense of their lives. Sarbin suggested that we use *plots* to link key events and experiences in our stories, thus allowing the construction of coherent narratives across our lifetimes. The use of plots provides us with temporal frameworks for making sense of our experiences. In this way, we are psychologically rooted in the stories that we tell. Cultural narratives are culturally specific plots; these plots

provide sense-making “scaffolding” (Kirkman, 2002, p. 33) or a backdrop for individual plots and narratives. Here, personal narratives are considered a function of the social environment in which people exist. Miller (2005) writes, “actors, then, are limited in their narrative construction and reconstruction and makes sense of their experiences from, and within, particular locations in the social world” (p. 10). As narrators, we rely on the way in which our world is constructed to provide coherence in our personal narratives. Exploring individual and cultural narratives provides researchers with an insight into how narrators negotiate their identity in the midst of meaningful events in their lives (Chase, 2008). Using narrative psychology, I am interested in how the women in this project make sense of the dislocation and relocation of migration and motherhood in their lives. I wanted to explore how individual and cultural plotment have aided the emergence of *la mestiza* among migrant mothers in New Zealand.

### **Narratives and Counter Narratives**

Feminist narrative research asserts that language is a form of action. Language is used as a form of resistance and representation, resistance against the dominance of master narratives (Andrews, 2004) and representation of counter-narratives (Riessman, 1993) . Andrews (2004) describes master narratives as culturally and socially accepted norms that have become blueprints for how people perform in society. Anzaldúa (1999) describes this as ‘cultural tyranny’ (p. 100); the process in which culture communicates and reinforces its accepted version of reality. For example, Chapter 1 discusses how immigrants are

expected to perform successful migration through adaptation (Berry & Sam, 1997; Zheng, Sang, & Wang, 2004). Chapter 2 describes the master narratives of good mothering across cultures (Liamputtong & Naksook, 2003; Miller, 2005). Counter-narratives represent voices of people whose lives do not fit within the confines of master narratives (Andrews, 2004). Counter-narratives challenge the dominance of master narratives as they, “expose the construction of the dominant story by suggesting how else it could be told” (Harris, Carney, & Fine, 2001, p. 13). Counter-narratives resist binary models of how to perform socially. They challenge the status quo, knowledge situated in empiricist explorations of dominant cultures that overlook the people who revolve around the margins of what we accept to be. I embarked on the current research hoping to challenge dominant psychological models of successful migration (I am still unsure if I have successfully migrated yet!) and good mothering by exploring the diverse experiences of both migration and motherhood across different cultural locations.

### **Representation**

Riessman’s (1993) levels of representation are loyal to the assumptions of feminist methodology as proposed by Gergen (1988). Riessman proposes that researchers cannot “give voice” (p. 8), rather, we hear, interpret and represent our understanding of multiple and diverse voices. We co-produce voice with the narrator; the interaction between - the hyphenated space - works to constrain, maintain and/or liberate strains of narratives that may not have otherwise been produced (Fine, 2004; Fine & Sirin, 2007; Riessman, 1993).

Riessman (1993) proposes five levels of representation: attending, telling, transcribing, analysing and reading. The narrator, researcher and reader are connected and disconnected at these levels. Attending to experience is the first level of representation. Looking at a scene in the world is like looking at a picture on a digital camera. Each picture consists of millions of pixels; each pixel constitutes a part of the whole. When we are presented with a scene, each one of us makes sense of it by attending to the pixels that resonate with our journey, our being and us. In this way, two people may recall the same scene differently; the combination of pixels that they attended to formulating a distinct whole.

The second level of representation is telling experience (Riessman, 1993). Telling experience involves the narrator, the listener and the space in between. Telling, or describing the megapixels, transforms the original picture in three ways. First, the narrator uses narrative to “re-present” (Riessman, 1993, p. 9) or arrange the picture according to the details that they originally attended to. Second, as the narrator did with the original scene, the listener engages and responds to the details of the narrative that resonate with them. By responding to certain aspects of the story, the listener guides the telling of the narrative and the original scene becomes an edited co-production of listener cues and narrator responses. Here, the language that revives the scene also revises it. Finally, narratives serve as a representation of the narrator. The stories we tell exist in a labyrinth of master narratives. There are rules that dictate how we, as the protagonist, should perform. In order to perpetuate our identity as “good”

(or competent or moral or adventurous or loving) in a world of psychological binaries, we narrate our stories as we wish to be viewed in the context of our relationship with our listeners. Telling is a social interaction between the narrator and the listener within a particular context. It edits the original picture and re-presents the image as a reflection of shared details that resonate within their interaction. This is the second level of narrative representation.

Narratives are recorded during research. Generally, this involves the use of a voice recorder to record interactions between the researcher and the narrator. Transcribing experience from recorded interactions is the third level of representation. The researcher's voice becomes prominent at this level. The voice recorder preserves the original interaction between narrator and researcher. It preserves intricacies of speech such as silences, prompts, hesitations and tone and volume of voice. The researcher decides what nuances are transcribed. What is included, and left out, influences how the reader understands and interprets the published narrative (Riessman, 1993). What is included, or not included, is likely to reflect the researcher's prior values and motivations that inspired their research; it will also link with the theoretical affiliations and epistemological assumptions of the researcher. Here, the narratives that influenced the researcher's engagement in the project, shape and guide their interpretation and transcription of the recorded interactions. They manipulate the way in which the narrator's story is re-presented, which in turn confines future interpretations.

Analysing experience is intrinsically bound with transcribing experience; it is the fourth level of representation. Once again, the method of analysis used corresponds with the theoretical and epistemological background of the research. There are distinct methods of analysing narratives; the function of each is to identify narrative themes and amalgamate them into a coherent whole. Narratives, like life, are not presented as a “neat, chronologically ordered series of events” (Miller, 2005, p. 9), therefore, narrative analysis serves to actively impose (the researcher’s) order onto the narrators’ experience.

Riessman’s (1993) final level of representation is reading experience. In a sense, reading experience reactivates the first level of representation - attending to experience - but the reader attends to an edited, textual version of the original picture. As a result, the reader’s attending experience may be limited; it may also be expanded. Once again, the reader attends to aspects of the textual representation of the narrative that resonate with them. This encompasses the reader’s personal, social, economic and political being. It exists within a socio-political environment at a particular point in history. The understanding of meaning in a text is bound to all of these. Different people who exist in different places, spaces and times will understand it differently. In this way, knowledge is co-produced by the reader, the researcher and the participants. The narratives we tell, the texts they create, do not stand still; they “stand on moving ground” (Riessman, 1993, p. 15); they respond to reading experience, the final level of representation.

## **The current research**

In particular, narrative research and the telling of narratives provide the opportunity to reconstruct meaning and identity at times that our interpretive structures are overwhelmed by events or contradictions that we cannot resolve (Riessman, 1989). Producing narrative is a form of intentionally making sense of disorderly events and organising them into a sinuous whole (Chase, 2008).

Chapter 1 and 2 detail the powerful impact of immigration and motherhood on the negotiation of identity. Research suggests that both events are disruptive to a woman's identity; extensive reconsideration and renegotiation is required to negotiate these experiences. For this reason, Riessman's levels of representation in narrative analysis provide suitable structure for exploring the lived experiences of migrant mothers in New Zealand. I approach the research knee-deep in identified ontological and epistemological assumptions that guide my understanding of knowledge and the capacity that I, and others, interact with it. I approach the research as a co-producer of experience, of representation and of narrative. I recognise my voice and anticipate the harmonising of hyphens. As a final step, I will re-present my interpretation of our narratives as an amalgamated whole of migration and motherhood in New Zealand.

## **A note of caution**

Critics of feminist research methods advise that the voices of narrative research do not represent all women. Women's experiences are not universal. They interact with our social class, culture, religion, socio-economic status, political

status and many more intricacies of lived experience (Jenkins & Pihama, 2001).

This research recognises the limited population that it engages with (the women, including me, who take part) and resists the application of our voices to the experience of others. Diversity is recognised and embraced in the exploration of meaningful experience (Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1996).

## **Method**

### **Ethical Considerations**

Before I collected any data, an application was submitted to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee. The Committee reviewed the project and the original application was approved in principle; however, the Ethics Committee raised concerns over the vulnerability of the population group being interviewed. I addressed their concern by adding an exclusion criterion of recent refugee women. I acknowledge that the experiences of women who arrive in New Zealand as refugees remain untold, another silence.

Furthermore, due to the technique of snowballing, and that excerpts of each woman's interview would be included in the final publication, anonymity could not be guaranteed. I brought this to each woman's attention on the information sheet and at the start of each interview. Each woman was assured that every effort would be made to ensure confidentiality. This was achieved by using pseudo names on all transcribed material, deleting all audio records once transcribing was completed and by keeping all consent forms and release of

transcript forms separate to the transcribed data. All transcribed material was password protected.

I checked in with all of the women after the interview and after the reading of transcripts. All women reported feeling fine, some said that taking part in the research had been a helpful process for them; one woman said she would keep the transcript to share with her children one day.

### **Engagement of women participants**

Women were invited to take part in this project through snowballing. This is a purposeful qualitative method that allows for the selection of people who have ample experience of the central research themes (Polkinghorne, 2005). In the current project, these themes are migration and motherhood in New Zealand. Information sheets (Appendix 1) were distributed to people in the community who knew migrant mothers. The women then made contact with me, the researcher. Once a woman made contact, interview times were scheduled. Eleven women made contact. One declined to participate; two offered to participate but were unavailable during the data collection period. I interviewed the other eight women.

The criteria used to gauge women's suitability were (1) to be a migrant woman who has (2) given birth to at least one child in New Zealand. Although the women are a homogenous group in one respect, they are all migrant mothers in New Zealand, their stories, experiences and cultural locations are diverse in

many other respects. The women were aged between 25 years and 58 years, which represents various temporal arrangements. The women have lived in New Zealand for different lengths of time, ranging from 4 years to 38 years, and intrinsically bound with their stories was their relationships with their children's fathers; two women had separated from the father of their children; the other six remained in a relationship with the fathers of their children.

### **Interviews**

Eight women agreed to take part in the project. The women were invited to meet with me in a public place or in their home. Seven interviews took place in women's homes. One interview took place in the researcher's office. As per ethical requirements, my supervisor was informed of the location, start and finish time of all interviews. At the start of each interview, all of the women were given another copy of the Information Sheet. The rights of each woman, should they participate, were discussed at the start of each interview. Each woman was given an Individual Consent Form to sign (Appendix 2).

The duration of the interviews ranged from one hour, two minutes and 12 second to two hours, 19 minutes and five seconds. The interviews produced 189 transcribed pages.

The interviews were semi-structured. A set of questions (Appendix 5) were used to guide the interviews. However, in line with feminist assumptions, the women were recognised as experts in their own experience and each woman was told

that the interview was about their individual experience and to expand on the questions in whatever way they wished to. Despite my desire to present each of the eight women participants as the protagonists of the final project, in line with Riessman's (1993) levels of representation, I recognise that the final representation of data is a co-production of knowledge between the women, the researcher, the supervisor and the readers of the project.

### **Transcribing the interviews**

The third level of representation involved the transcription of each interview. In order to ensure my engagement with the material I completed this process. The interviews were transcribed verbatim including pauses, repeats and accentuations. During this process, it became clear to me how my experiences and expectations interweaved with the women's stories. At each step, I recognised the process of co-producing knowledge as part of the exploration of women's stories. Although, in my opinion, each woman told their story freely, I noticed that at times, my input was shaped by my experiences of migration and after I had completed a few interviews, the experiences of other women. This often shaped the questions I asked women, potentially narrowing or expanding the final narrative produced by each woman, as described in Riessman's (1993) second level of representation; thus realising the co-production of knowledge between researcher and participant as an iterative process.

## Analysing the Data

Once the interview was transcribed, I offered to post or email the transcripts to each woman. All women chose to have the transcript emailed to them. They were given the opportunity to edit or add to the transcriptions. Only one woman made changes, these were minor changes, including age adjustments and other technical details. After each woman was given the opportunity to read and amend the transcription, I asked her to sign a Release of Transcript form (Appendix 3). I met with six of the women to sign this form; thus providing another opportunity to connect in the process. I posted it to the remaining two, along with a stamped addressed envelope so they could return it.

I read and re-read the transcripts, making notes at the sides of the pages. Next, I reduced each transcript to a set of themes that I recognised. Although I originally considered Fine and Sirin's (2007) hyphenated space, I found that it did not sufficiently address the complexity of mine and the women's stories. For me, it did not capture the fluidity and movement between conflicting spaces and the sense of being nowhere and everywhere at one space and time. Fine's (2004) work remained important to the project as it provided me with a theoretical framework of working the hyphens with the women in the project. Part way through the analysis, the metaphor of *la mestiza* (Anzaldúa, 1999) introduced herself to my knowing. I re-read the transcripts again, highlighting any further information that reflected Anzaldúa's metaphor. However, the reason I chose to work with *la mestiza* is that she was already present in the work that the eight migrant women and I had produced. The analysis, the fourth

level of representation, generated a meta-story, a representation of the lived experience of nine migrant women, and eight migrant mothers, in New Zealand.

## Chapter Four: Analysis

Migration is, “a lifelong, multifaceted, multi-layered, complex, and never-ending experience” (Berger, 2004, p. 9). It involves the renegotiation of identity in an unfamiliar socio-cultural and historical place. Personal life narratives, the stories that enable us to make sense of who we are, are disrupted as we re-evaluate, renegotiate and reconfirm our identities in a new cultural location. Through motherhood women also renegotiate former identities and negotiate new experiences to form a reconciled sense of identity (Miller, 2005). Cultural narratives provide the socio-cultural scaffolding for how we understand our experiences; they confirm our actions and behaviours within a particular social and cultural environment. They provide dichotomies and discourses among which we negotiate our identities. Understood as separate events, migration and motherhood disrupt personal narratives. Experienced together, the combination of events disrupts both personal and cultural narratives. Sarbin (1986a) suggests that narratives allow people to make sense of disruptive events in their lives. The following pages represent my interpretation of how the eight women in this project have negotiated migration and motherhood and the disruption of their life narratives against the backdrop of Anzaldúa’s (1999) *la mestiza* metaphor. It also represents my story, a migrant, the ninth participant and co-researcher in the project.

Anzaldúa (1999) developed *la mestiza* based on her experiences as a lesbian Latina in the United States. However, she offers *la mestiza* to any woman who

lives on the psychological, physical or spiritual borders of two or more cultures.

Anzaldúa writes:

Because I, a mestiza, continually walk out of one culture and into another  
Because I am in all cultures at the same time (p. 99)

Anzaldúa's *mestiza* woman becomes a plural being in order to negotiate the conflicting reality of living between two cultures. This framework recognises that as migrants, we may be both settled and disconnected, involved but isolated, mourning for the past but focusing on the future. We live on the *Borderlands* of two cultures, existing within the dominant mainstream of neither. We have become ambiguous beings, moving as separate identities in two worlds, and both at the same time. We are at sea. The currents represent our two homes; the swash and backwash play equal parts in the movement of the sea, never the same but existing as one. To develop a *mestiza* consciousness is to become tolerant of constant contradiction in our lives, our identities and how we make sense of the world. It is to become, "a multiplicitous being that is inspired, as well as torn, by ambiguity and contradiction, inspired to become creative or to fight and change the ways of the dominant culture" (Ortega, 2001, p. 14). Every woman in this project has developed a *mestiza* consciousness. The lived experience of contradiction and spaces between has taken different turns for all of the women; although an effort has been made to respect each woman's individual story, an equal effort was made to ensure the anonymity of each participant. Therefore, I have used a needle to sew the multiple threads of our stories and develop a meta-story of common themes, a representation of the lived experience of migrant mothers in New Zealand.

### ***La Coatlicue***

Emerging as *mestiza* is an iterative process. Long before she arrives in New Zealand, unknowingly, her preparation for the multiplication of identities begins. *La mestiza* is a butterfly; she exists at the Borderlands of two cultures, floating between the oppressive binaries of (n)either/(n)or, where “the self has added a third element which is greater than the sum of its parts” (Anzaldúa, 1999, pp. 101-102). However, the beauty of the butterfly exposes a dark past. She emerges from an isolated place, a confined place, in which she prepares physically, spiritually and psychologically for her transformation. This is her cocoon- *la coatlicue* (Anzaldúa, 1999). The women in this project, and I, have all existed within the grips of *la coatlicue*. It is here that we feel split. We feel dislocated and disconnected from ourselves, our cultures. It is here we are at the Borderlands of our new environments, “alienated from her mother culture, ‘alien’ in the dominant culture” (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 42). *La coatlicue* creates boundaries and binaries that we do not belong to, but strive to achieve. It is a confusing place where we embody the (n)either/(n)or of ourselves and the spaces that we exist. We do not fit. We are static, stuck in a state of resistance against ourselves as multiplicitous beings. Striving to be whole pulls us apart and starts a war between our many identities and histories. Emily, 36 years, UK describes *la coatlicue* as:

*Just incredibly emotionally draining and doesn't do anything (pause, 2 seconds) positive*

Here, Emily highlights the stasis of *la coatlicue*. It drains us; we have no energy left to progress or to move forward. In the grips of *la coatlicue*, we are caught in a complex cycle, resisting ourselves.

Cate, 58 years, UK, describes how her engagement with *la coatlicue* prevented her from recognising and accepting the support offered to her at the beginning of her stay in New Zealand. She was resistant to her positioning at the Borderlands; she embodied the 12 000 miles during each moment that her identities were competing binaries rather than co-existing in plurality:

*then the hard times started for me, really hard times, the honeymoon was over...it was all sweetness and light and then bumph, hit with a tonne of bricks...I mean there'd be times that I was thinking, what the hell have I done now, I'm not just married, I'm 12,000 miles away and I'm stuck with it sort of thing, em and it's not that I didn't get some support but at the time I didn't really accept it and I didn't really acknowledge that it was support... it was huge for me and emotionally em I'm glad I didn't go off the rails if you know what I mean, when I think about it I could have done*

Freja, 47 years, Dutch, describes *la coatlicue* as not belonging anywhere. In this state, she does not recognise a plural woman who belongs to all cultures, rather she sees a static woman who belongs to none. She is *la coatlicue*:

*I will never belong somewhere*

### **Sitting between Two Chairs**

While we embody *la coatlicue*, we remain dislocated from ourselves, our cultures and the everyday confirmation of how we make sense of our worlds. Our identities are challenged by socio-cultural spaces with new rules, new norms and a new sense of what it is to be. However, as time goes by the socio-

political cultural environment that we exist in becomes more prominent, challenging our sense of wholeness. Analise, 53 years, Swiss, describes this as “sitting between two chairs”. We have lost our base, our chair, and struggle to sit upright, our backsides spread between two chairs. There is always a gap between, no matter how close we pull the two chairs together, they cannot, and will not, become one chair. Sitting between two chairs is an illustrative metaphor for the everyday complexity we negotiate as migrant women. Sitting between two chairs conveys dislocation and instability. Sitting between two chairs represents the identity that Park (1928) attributed to the marginal man, at the border of two cultures that never fully fuse; and that Anzaldúa (1999) describes as living in the *Borderlands*. Anzaldúa writes that, ‘a borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary’ (p. 25). Boundaries exist to define spaces, places, people and things from each other; they create binaries, the (n)either/(n)or, norms and abnorms. As migrants, we learn to transcend boundaries; we live in a perpetual state of transition, moving between two cultures. As migrants, we live in the *Borderlands*, sitting between two chairs.

Cate, 58 years, UK, demonstrates how other people contribute to the definition of our identities. The conflicting ideas that others have about ‘who’ Cate is, are located in binaries of what it is to ‘be’ a New Zealander or to ‘be’ English. By other people considering Cate as confined by these boundaries, rather than floating in the *Borderlands*, it positions her as a marginal (n)either/(n)or:

*I think to my New Zealand friends 'til my dying day I'll be a pom, right, but to my English friends... gradually I got more and more kiwi*

### **The Twilight Zone**

For many migrants, this sense of being (n)either/(n)or, existing between binaries, in the Borderlands of two cultures, leads to a perpetual state of homesickness. Becky, 25 years, UK, describes this as existing in a 'twilight zone'. It is distressing to realise that we are no longer whole in any one space or place. Amongst cultural boundaries and binaries, we become confused about where we belong and who we are:

*It's bizarre, you sort of live in a twilight zone... you belong to neither country (pause 3 seconds) in all honesty, half of you belongs to New Zealand because it's where you currently live and you have a lot of affection for the country... I believe, it cannot rival your affection for your home country... you're stuck, always in a perpetual state of homesickness wherever you are*

In her description of the twilight zone, Becky highlights her conflicting existence at the Borderlands of two countries. Becky does not belong fully to one or the other, her existence in the Borderlands, her feeling attachment to both results in a sense of contradiction, leaving her in a, 'perpetual state of homesickness' whichever world she inhabits.

### **'World travellers' and The Bubble**

Lugones (1992) writes that *la mestiza* adopts an ambiguous state in order to survive living in the Borderlands of two cultures, or two 'worlds'. In this sense, "'world' is not to be seen as equivalent to the sum of things that are in the world, but includes the ways in which human beings are in the world" (Ortega,

2001, p. 11). *La mestiza* emerges from *la coatlicue*, a static place in which she negotiates her marginal positioning as an Other; the place of danger, of non-recognition, isolation and disconnection. She becomes a 'world' traveller (Lugones, 1992). When *la mestiza* emerges, the migrant woman grows wings large enough to fly from her cocoon, her static place. She is a butterfly. She floats between socio-cultural spaces, her histories woven in her wings, the socio-political realities of both worlds carrying her. She becomes an ambiguous being, tolerant of the contradictions that she experiences, transcending the binaries of two worlds to live in the Borderlands between. Emily, 36 years, UK, uses a 'bubble' as a metaphor for her ambiguity; it helps her to negotiate her existence at the Borderlands. Her bubble allows her to float between her two worlds, transcending the boundaries of being (n)either/(n)or:

*Yes (pause, 3 seconds) it's sometimes easier to be a bit in your bubble... and not to burst it. Which sounds really awful but (pause, 2 seconds) it's sometimes just easier to just get on every day... It's better to try not to grasp it, for me I almost have to try and just (pause, 3 seconds) you know, you can't, you can't rationalize it, the more you think about it, the more- for me- the more it upsets me so the easiest thing is to try and just (pause, 3 seconds) move on*

Emily's ambiguity creates tolerance for her existence at the Borderlands.

Instead of trying to 'rationalise' it, she accepts it; she stops struggling against it.

Emily allows herself to feel contradiction as her life continuously moves between two cultures.

### **Bursting the Bubble: The 'headfuck'**

Anzaldúa writes that *la mestiza* 'can be jarred out of ambivalence by an instance, and often painful, emotional event which inverts or resolves the ambivalence. I'm not sure exactly how' (p. 101). The women in this project identified moments that their ambiguity is challenged and their movement within the Borderlands is disrupted. In particular, they identified times when the borders of both cultures are redefined and the ability to transcend them becomes more difficult. These moments include physically, spiritually or psychologically leaving or releasing one 'world' for/to another. During these times, the stasis returns and we, as migrant women, feel intensified isolation and dislocation. We re-embody *la coatlicue*. Through talking with the eight women in this project and experiencing it myself, I understand that the redefinition of boundaries between two worlds creates stasis; ambiguity is shaken and our fluid identities become trapped; we are (n)either/(n)or again rather than moving as pluralistic beings. Emily, 36 years, UK, describes this as 'the headfuck':

*Sometimes it sounds awful, but I almost choose not to think about it (pause, 2 seconds) because it's too much of a [whispers] head-fuck... it is sometimes easier to go in your bubble...it's one of the reasons I don't like going home either... you know going home opens it all up. It makes it really raw because you have to say goodbye. Saying goodbye sucks... you know when I see my dad, and my dad's not particularly emotional, and you see his face being so churned up and it's so heart wrenching and I mean it never stops. It's never going to stop*

Freja, 47 years, Dutch, had recently arrived back to New Zealand, after a trip to Holland, when we had the interview. Her misery ("*I've been through a really miserable time, exactly for identity*") results from the physical movement

between her two 'worlds'; this has ironically, trapped her *mestiza* consciousness, her space of fluid ambiguity. She has split once again, trying to grasp (n)either/(n)or rather than floating between the two:

*I've been through a really miserable time, exactly for identity because... I've had half of my life in Europe and half of my life in New Zealand... but not really integrated into Kiwi society or maybe I've just realised, I don't want to fit in because I want to keep my, part of my European identity as my base, my roots*

Daniella, 34 years, German, has recently reconnected with a childhood friend in Germany. This experience has redefined the boundaries between New Zealand and Germany and has disrupted her ability to occupy her third space and transcend the static binaries of the Borderlands:

*But yea, it does make it hard because now I really want to go and see her (pause, 2 seconds) before that it was out of sight, out of mind but now I really would like to go back*

### **Migration: A Journey through Isolation**

As a singular event, migration strips women of their social supports and networks. Moving half the world away limits everyday social connections in the lives of migrant women. For Hayley, 33 years, who moved from Australia, the impact of moving away from family and friends was apparent:

*when you travel, the longest friendships to develop are close girlfriends, like without a doubt, I mean you have acquaintances, you have people you know.. but to have girlfriends that you can call on in a crisis and just chill out in your pyjamas and go shopping and eat ice cream and all that stuff, that takes years and years to develop those sorts of friends*

Hayley describes the loss of friendships that have taken 'years and years to develop', the people that you can sit with in silence and enjoy each moment. Often these friendships are the ones we turn to when we are unsure of

ourselves, doubting. As migrants, we lose the people who offer this support, these connections. When we make cultural faux pas there is no one who understands the cultural rules that we are following, the “version of reality that our culture communicates” (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 100). We are placed as Other, at the margins of the dominant culture. We are in the Borderlands.

Becky, 25 years, UK, comes from a very close-knit family. She told me that even at home she never had many friends because she has a large extended family and spent all of her time with them. Moving to New Zealand has unravelled the protective circle of her family and allowed self-doubt to question her identity:

*B: So I mean I'm used to not fitting in*

*R: OK, so that's not 100% new for you moving country? It wasn't a shock of that feeling?*

*B: No, yea, I mean no, it's not fitting in but (pause, 3 seconds)*

*R: But normally you've got the back up of your family?*

*B: Yea, normally I've got the back up of my family... whereas here it's like you've got nobody to fall back on*

### **“A cultural collision” (Anzaldúa, 1999)**

Throughout my discussions with the eight women in this project, it became clear that migration and motherhood as singular and cumulative events are ever moving, ever shifting and rarely stable. Migration is an iterative process; the end-point of one iteration process provides the start point of another. *La mestiza* is fluid within the changing social, historical and cultural environment that she exists. Diverse social and cultural worlds compel her to reconsider her own behaviours and adapt to her new environments. As *mestiza*, she floats between two worlds, resisting the “despot duality that says we are able to be only one or the other” (p. 41). As Hayley, 33 years, Australia, says, ‘some weeks

you get it right, and some weeks you don't'. Becky embodies the conflict between her two 'worlds' through her appearance, her outward identity. Becky, 25 years, UK, shows how both 'worlds' have different expectations of how she should be, ultimately she is struggling to achieve either:

*B: Yea I've had to change to fit in... it's taken some time for people to warm to me but hand in hand with that is me trying not to care so much about my appearance, I've had to-*

*R: So you've had to let that go a bit?*

*B: Yea, to fit in. Whereas in England I don't fit anymore because I've-*

*R: Because you have let it go (both laugh)*

### **"The Hump"**

Our everyday lives, the everyday events, mean that we embody the growing distance and disconnection between our countries of origin and ourselves. In this way, we become multiple selves as our identities shift from one 'world' to another. This does not mean that we leave our countries of origin entirely, we continue to exist psychologically and spiritually in the Borderlands between, but we adapt and fit within the socio-cultural environment around us at a given time. Here *la mestiza* allows us to be part of two conflicting 'worlds'. Emily, 36 years, UK, describes the disconnection of our identity from socio-cultural locations as "The Hump":

*But then it's really hard because you, when you haven't seen somebody for a long time, you have so much information you want to impart, it's almost like you need to diffuse it into each other... it takes a few times to be normal, if you know what I mean.... Because you have all this everyday stuff which... you kind of email each other about it but (pause, 2 seconds) it's not the same as being there... you need to get (pause, 2 seconds) it's almost like a hump you need to get over*

The hump acts as a metaphor for the bridge between two 'worlds'. It embodies the physical, cultural and psychological space in between, a humpback bridge to the Borderlands. The hump comes in many forms, including economic, as

Analise, 53 years, Swiss, discusses:

*it's not easy, you very quickly realise that the fact that you're moving country, it's not only social but it's also economic... if you leave for 5 years, that's probably fine if, after that you have a good job... but after 10 years, you can forget... the gap is starting to widen... We tried two times [to go back to Switzerland] but the job for [partner] was not good and after that you feel that because you don't keep paying your retirement scheme the gap is starting to widen and you think, 'oh my gosh I don't want to be poor at 65*

The hump also penetrates social relationships. And so, as migrant women, not only do we live between the Borderlands of two cultures but we also experience life at the Borderlands of our family, our friends and our socio-historical roots.

We become 'like a foreigner in your own family', always travelling, floating outside the defined boundaries of what was once home:

*... all the birthdays you are not there, all the Christmas (pause, 2 seconds), you're almost a foreigner in your own family (pause, 3 seconds) and I found that hard (Analise, 53 years, Swiss)*

Cate, 58, UK also experiences the growing hump between her two 'worlds'. She has embraced her life at the Borderlands of the UK and New Zealand. She lives in an ambiguous state, tolerant of the contradictions between both 'worlds'.

Although she feels more of a 'visitor' in England, it is still in her heart. England is part of her history, her ancestry, her life story. New Zealand is her present. She floats between both 'worlds'; she inhabits third place, *la mestiza*, which is greater than, but could not exist without her two parts:

*...as the years have progressed and the visits back to England, I felt more of a visitor, I still, it's still in my heart... but this is home*

## Language: Thinking 'like an English'

As we immerse ourselves in another cultural location, tangible signifiers, such as language, highlight the psychological and physical distance between our two 'worlds'. Anzaldúa (1999) writes, "ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity - I am my language" (p. 81). Most obviously this effects those from non-English speaking countries, however, it also effects those of us from English speaking countries as we learn that there is more to language than simply words; language represents culture, a shared social, historical location at a given point in time. I am always amused by the perplexed looks I get when I use phrases such as, 'now in a minute' or 'your man' or 'gas'. Other Irish phrases are direct translations of mo theanga - the Irish language. We say, 'I'm just after doing that', a direct translation of 'táim direach tar-eis'. Our shared history, our shared culture underpins the way we use and understand language. Shared language connects people through shared histories. Language is a brick in the wall of cultural narratives, as Analise, 53 years, Swiss, says; learning to speak English does not mean you 'think like an English':

*you realise that language belongs to a social network - how can you explain that? You can learn English but you don't think like an English*

Cate, 58 years, UK, is a native English speaker. However, Cate learned English in England, as she describes, this English does not always directly translate to New Zealand English. Once again, the language that we use creates boundaries around the socio-cultural places and spaces that we exist:

*even getting to know what other people are talking about, you know, we all speak English but there are so many different words and yet again [husband] was hopeless for that because he just presumed I knew what he was talking about*

Becky, 25 years, UK, describes how her use of the English language meant that New Zealand employers did not understand her curriculum vitae. This created barriers in her search for employment. She has since learned how to write a 'Kiwi CV' and has had more success applying for jobs. Bürgelt, Morgan and Pernice (2008) reported similar experiences for German migrants in New Zealand. The authors report that competency in the English language enhanced participant's capability of finding and maintaining suitable employment. Becky's experience shows that competency in the local, cultural use of a language is equally important:

*well one of the primary things, trying to get a job when I first got here, I had my English CV so I sent that, applied for loads of jobs, nobody even bothered to call me back or, and you know, loads of things, em and then I went for a job at [business] bizarrely enough the office manager there was English so she looked at my CV... I was there for 2.5 years, when people applied for jobs I was able to take a look at what Kiwi CVs looked like, now I've changed mine to fit because nobody understood my CV before*

Daniella, 34 years, Germany, describes the physical effect of learning a new language as exhausting. She agrees with Analise, stating that you have to change the way you think in order to learn a language. Once again, language is a lot more than words and semantics; there is shared history and meaning in language.

*I was so tired for the first few months. You're so tired when you learn [another language]... if you learn a way that you can actually talk in it and basically almost dream in it, it does change the way you think because you have to... like even the sense of humour, it's totally different*

Of the eight women in this project, five are native English speakers, albeit from various cultural-linguistic locations, one is a native German speaker, another Dutch and another woman Swiss-French. For the women who did not grow up

with English as their first language, negotiating the maintenance of that part of their identity with themselves and their children can be a difficult task. It can lead to shame and embarrassment; it can also lead to pride. Analise, 53 years, Swiss, describes how her children were 'ashamed' when she and her husband spoke French. Here, her children represent the separation of her two 'worlds', the boundaries are redefined and *la mestiza* is static once again, highlighting Analise's dislocation, her isolation and her existence at the margins of the dominant society:

*R: So, at home do you guys speak French with your children?*

*A: Yea, but they are answering back in English... what I found hard is (pause, 3 seconds) they were ashamed of us because it was not (pause, 2 seconds) a lot of people not speaking English and every time we were speaking French they look like, 'oh my gosh' because people were looking at us strangely and I think that they don't want to be ostracised.*

Bürgelt et al., (2008) found that migrating as a couple was advantageous for maintaining aspects of German identity, including language and culture.

Daniella, 34 years, German, believes her struggle to teach her children German is accentuated by not having a German partner in New Zealand. Here, her attempts to teach her children German redefine the boundaries of her two 'worlds'. Not living with another German speaker highlights her physical distance from her country of origin and her everyday existence in the margins of the dominant society:

*R: Do you speak some German to the kids?*

*D: I do try really hard but because what I've come to realise is I don't have a partner or anyone living with me that speaks German as well, so they don't overhear... it's not frequent enough*

### **Hitting a brick wall: successful migration?**

Berry (2001) and Berry and Sam (1997) propose that migrants acculturate to their host countries. As discussed in Chapter 1, Berry and Sam propose four ways through which migrants can *choose* to acculturate: assimilation, integration, separation and marginalisation. Berry writes:

When examined among immigrant (or other nondominant) individuals, these have become known as acculturation attitudes. Here, the issues are: To what extent do people wish to have contact with (or avoid) others outside their group, and to what extent do people wish to maintain (or give up) their cultural attributes (Berry, 2001, p. 618)

My own experience as a migrant and the experiences of the women I spoke to as part of this project, reject this simplified explanation for how we, as migrants, adapt to new socio-cultural environments. Our stories present a key challenge to Berry and Sam's model of acculturation: despite a desire to integrate to New Zealand society by connecting with New Zealand people, there are often barriers to us creating these connections and links within the host country. There are more than two issues to consider; rather, as with many aspects of migration, there are multiple issues and these are fluid and ever moving. This supports Bhatia and Ram's (2009) declaration that linear models of migration are insufficient and oversimplified; they do not, and cannot, address the complex spaces and places that migrants occupy around the world. Grace, 36 years, South Africa, describes her experience establishing friendships with New Zealanders as 'hitting a brick wall':

*I initially tried to connect like that with locals and found I was hitting a brick wall because they already have their best friends from childhood you know, so they didn't want to get past a certain point, they wanted to see me and enjoy my company but they didn't want to go beyond that... quite often they don't*

*want to invest in a foreigner because you might up and leave so why should they invest in you*

Like Grace, Hayley, 33 years, Australia, believes that the brick wall is constructed by people's experiences (or non-experiences) of social isolation. She notes that people who have never had to move country and 'start from scratch' probably don't make much effort to befriend those of us on the margins, because they already have their 'fall-backs'. Similar to cultural tyranny, if you have always lived in the comfort of social connectedness, never in the grips of isolation, you are unlikely to recognise the disconnection of others:

*whereas people who haven't had to move somewhere else and start from scratch and meet people and build from the group up again, don't kind of get that and you do notice that, even locally here, the people who do have parents and high school friends still around don't have to make quite the same effort to (pause, 2 seconds) em (pause, 2 seconds) I guess (pause, 3 seconds) they've got their fall-backs already*

Freja, 47 years, Dutch, and Emily, 36 years, UK, both distinguish between friendships and 'meaningful friendships'. It takes many years to develop a friendship to the point that it survives with minimum maintenance. When you migrate as an adult, your energies are pushed and pulled in many directions including identities, family at home and abroad, careers and friendships. This leaves little time to invest in meaningful friendships. You no longer have the time you did as a teenager to 'hangout' after school or (as in the case of this project) spend girly weekends away. The aftermath of this reality is that acquaintances form but are often stunted before they become meaningful friendships. This is an added complexity to life at the Borderlands of two cultures:

*It was, it was really hard... it's very (pause, 2 seconds) very hard to meet people and I don't know why but everybody says it, really, really hard to meet people... well not just mates, but meaningful friendships, do you know what I mean? (Emily, 36 years, UK)*

*She told me, Freja, I do recognise your problem of not being able to relate that well to Kiwi women, because her friends, her good friends in Auckland were all European, not New Zealanders... you know, they say kiwis are very friendly bunch of people... well I haven't met kiwis, I haven't met the kiwis that are able to form meaningful friendships (Freja, 47 years, Dutch)*

### **The metamorphosis of motherhood**

As discussed in Chapter 2, women undergo a shift in identity when they become mothers. Despite the fact that migrant women have already negotiated major identity shifts, dislocation, isolation and the transcendence of boundaries and binaries through adopting *mestiza* consciousness, the metamorphosis of motherhood shifts things once again for them. Here, I lose my status as insider and look to the women in this project for guidance. Hayley and Grace describe how motherhood erodes their previous identities; they embody the social role of motherhood rather than the past person that they once knew:

*It totally changes your whole (pause, 2 seconds) your whole life... there's no time for you, that's probably the biggest thing... you have to change the way you do things (Hayley, 33 years, Australia)*

Grace, 36 years, South Africa, compares herself to her friends in South Africa who have become mothers. She believes that these women have maintained their pre-motherhood identity; Grace believes this is a function of cultural discourses surrounding good motherhood and returning to work. Not only is Grace marginalised as a migrant in the dominant New Zealand society, her conflicting values about working and motherhood have highlighted the

boundaries between her home country and her host country, threatening her fluidity and ability to transcend the defined boundaries of the two countries:

*you know, they've managed to maintain that identity as lawyer, as banker, but I feel like I've lost mine... yes I've lost mine, I'm only a mother now. And I know that's a big job and important and blah, blah, blah and what people keep telling you but that's not what I see my life purpose as, you know, although I love being a mom, it's not me, it's not who I am...I'm not sure, I just feel like I have lost my identity a bit, being a mom, em, yea, just (pause, 3 seconds) because I function purely for everybody else's needs, you know?*

### **'There was no home': Negotiating motherhood, identity and migration, isolation and loss**

All of the women named social isolation as one of the key challenges of motherhood and migration in New Zealand. In particular, all of the women spoke about the loss of history, of family connections - grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters. They also spoke about the friends who have known you for many years, the ones you can call on when you need help. Freja, 47 years, Dutch, returned to an empty house, rather than a home, after three months living on the neo-natal ward with her children. This illustrates the reality of isolation for migrant mothers in New Zealand:

*I tell you, I came home, back to [town] after 12 weeks being in hospital... I drove home from Auckland ... I came in a cold home. The fire, and it's winter, looking back I think there was no-one... there was no-one who would light a fire so I could arrive in a warm house... after what I'd been through there was no-one. There was no home*

### **'It takes a village to raise a child'**

The loss of family and friends is not simply about needing a babysitter or social support, but also about children losing connection with the historical, socio-cultural past that each woman embodies. Primarily, it is about children,

grandparents, brothers and sisters missing that connection. Hayley, 33 years, Australia, and Daniella, 34 years, Germany, both miss the input of their siblings.

In particular, Hayley wishes that her children had relationships and connectedness with their cousins:

*I would love to have, even more so than grandparents, I would love to have brothers and sisters here so that the kids could grow up with their cousins*

Daniella, 34 years, German, initially had the support of her sister in New Zealand. This was a primary reason she chose to migrate to New Zealand.

However, once Daniella lost contact with her sister, her isolation became more prominent than before. Initially, Daniella mentions the practical supports:

*I found it lonely sometimes. A big point to come here was my sister... I did that for her a lot, I take over and babysit for her, clean up the kitchen or whatever, hang the washing out, she came home and the kitchen was cleaned, cos if you get out you just want to get out, not worry about the kitchen, but there wasn't anybody to do it, so you know those things I never had*

Later in the interview, Daniella discusses the emotional impact of losing contact with her sister. She does not keep photographs of her sister because it would upset her. Her children do not know that she has a sister. For Daniella, although her sister lives in New Zealand, she represents a social and historical connection to her past that resurrects conflict and stasis for her identity. Daniella is happy living in New Zealand but the disconnection from her sister has redefined the boundaries between her two 'worlds' where previously her sister had represented her fluidity between the two. Daniella notes that this has also created loss for her children, as they are not exposed to another German person, a person with shared socio-cultural and historical background:

*D- It would be very nice, particularly as she has a daughter. I have a niece who's about 10 now and I haven't seen her for 7-8 years*

*R- Gosh, and what about your kids do they know they have a cousin?*

*D- They don't know. I don't have any pictures of them 'cause it makes me upset, what's the point of letting them know? If she's not going to be there anyway, why? I can't explain it to them why she's not in my life, you know? So they just don't know, they don't know I have a sister"*

Becky's family love all of the grandchildren but live in the perpetual state of awareness that Becky's daughter will be 'taken away eventually'. For this reason, Becky, 25, UK, believes that her family 'spoil' her daughter at every opportunity to make up for the absences between. Becky also believes that she is more affectionate to her daughter to try and make up for her missing the love her extended family might give. Becky highlights how guilt is an added complexity in the story of migration, motherhood, isolation and loss. Most of the women described feelings of guilt towards their family at home and towards their children in New Zealand. At the same time, all of the women feel that New Zealand is a better place for their children to grow up. Once again, the migrant woman battles contradiction, the pull and push of the home and host lands. In this instance, her child represents the psychological, physical and spiritual boundaries between her two 'worlds':

*Awh, they do love her, they spoil her rotten. I mean they can't say no to their grandkids at the best of times... but for her, because they know she'll be taken away eventually, they spoil her rotten. And I feel, because my family are so loving that she would be on the receiving end if we were living in England and there was never that threat of her being taken away from them, she would be showered with love and over here I sort of try and make up for that by probably being over affectionate... (Becky, 25, UK)*

Becky later says that the reason she stays in New Zealand, despite living with the perpetual push and pull of host and home is for the well-being of her

daughter. Her daughter can 'spread her wings' in New Zealand. This is consistent with Bürgelt et al. (2008), who report that migrant women are more likely to stay in New Zealand if they perceive "the migration as benefiting themselves and their children" (p. 293). Watching her daughter spread her wings, Becky can float among the Borderlands. She recognises that her issues do not 'resolve, they take on new forms'. Becky emerges from static binaries and engages ambiguity and tolerance for her conflicting realities. She is *la mestiza*:

*B: you just know that she's the most important thing in your life, you're no longer the most important thing in your life, your happiness isn't, her happiness is, so, em, like before if I wasn't happy in a country I would have moved away*

*R: But now because it's better for her you'll stay?*

*B: Yea, because that's how children change things... yea, there's enough space for her to spread her wings and do her own thing in New Zealand whereas perhaps in England there isn't, em, so she makes everything (pause, 2 seconds) some of the other issues, I mean I don't think they resolve, they take on new forms*

Analise, 53 years, Swiss, describes her feelings of guilt in relation to bringing her children up in New Zealand, away from her extended family. She feels that she has 'robbed them of something' the she cannot replace:

*Sometimes even my kids now are telling me that's annoying that we we're here because we never had a Christmas with the family or something like that. Because we have no family. All the family is there. We definitely miss that... and sometimes I'm wondering if I robbed them of something... we can't replace*

Grace, 36 years, South Africa, believes that 'it takes a village' to raise children and that the village 'should be yours'. Grace regrets that her children do not have the influence of an older, wiser generation. She and her husband moved to New Zealand to remove their children from everyday violence but she is aware that she has also removed her children from her village, the place her socio-

cultural and historical roots exist; once again, Grace tolerates contradiction in the Borderlands of her two 'worlds':

*Yes, that really upsets me that really does bother me a lot because (pause, 3 seconds) em (pause, 3 seconds) you know that saying, 'it takes a village'? I really believe that it should be a village and it should be yours, you know, it should be your aunties and your uncles and your grannies and your granddad and your mom and dad and I think that kids benefit so greatly from developing relationships with other family members, particularly grandparents... I think the kids are exposed to people my age, they're not exposed, you know they don't have relationships with the older, wiser, grandparent type people so I think that has an impact too, to have relationships with people of all ages is important as well*

Freja, 47 years, Dutch, feels that living half the world away has diminished her opportunity to grow closer to her mother. She also feels guilt that her father did not have the opportunity to create connections with his grandchildren before he died:

*F: because most people say once you become a mom, that's when you get closer to your own mom again... but by living on the other end of the world and missing out on the daily or weekly contact... I've also missed out on growing closer to my mom...one of them [friend in Europe] was saying, oh I flew to Salzburg and my dad, the granddad of her children... they were skiing together all those things, you know, you don't (pause, 3 seconds)*

*R: You don't get them*

*F: You don't get them. And I know my dad would have wanted to do all that stuff*

Cate, 58, UK, feels guilt that her mother did not get to spend time with her children as she now does with her grandchildren. Once again, striving to balance the needs of all people in all worlds is present:

*... in a way now, as a grandmother, and I've only become a grandmother in the last couple of years... I feel sorry that she [Cate's mother] didn't get to know them quicker, I'm really sorry that she didn't... here I am getting to see them [Cate's grandchildren] every other day... so she never had that, the first time she saw the eldest was when he was 6 months old and then there was a long period of time*

However, Cate also identifies that her mother and father were supportive of her move to New Zealand. Cate describes letters that her mother sent, how she used to 'love' getting them, and how her mother spoke positively of Cate's move to New Zealand:

*but I used to love writing letters and getting letters as well so I think that helped me because I really looked forward to her letters coming and she was always, you know, positive about, well what are you doing, this is what I'm doing but it must be boring compared to what your life is*

Once again, this mirrors findings by Bürgelt et al., (2008) who report that migrant feelings of guilt were reduced when family and friends in the country of origin were supportive of their move, and that this, "strengthened the participants' migration decision, counteracted doubts and ensure support during their migration" (p. 295).

### **'Cultural tyranny': Culturally constructed motherhood**

All cultures have unspoken rules about how we should 'be'. They are the culturally constructed discourses of society, based in the socio-cultural, historical and political emergence of groups of people. Often, we do not recognise these discourses until we remove ourselves from the perpetual reinforcement that our culture offers. Migrants notice discourses. Anzaldúa (1999) describes it as 'cultural tyranny', she writes, "like all people, we perceive the version of reality that our culture communicates. Like others having or living in more than one culture, we get multiple, often opposing messages" (p. 100). Cultural discourses influence the values and expectations surrounding motherhood and what it means to perform "good" motherhood. The women in this project identified times when those in New Zealand challenged their

'versions of reality'. These challenges cause distress for migrant mothers; their values are oppressed in the shadows of dominant society. In particular, all of the women experience intense pressure to breastfeed:

*But I also found with the breast feeding, I found a lot of pressure here to breast feed whereas friends back home were straight onto the bottle you know, and I really struggled to breastfeed (Grace, 36 years, South Africa)*

Becky, 25 years, UK, also experienced significant pressure to breastfeed, stating that you definitely 'feel the guilt' if you chose not to, or cannot, breastfeed in

New Zealand, compared with a more pro-choice approach in the UK:

*Breastfeeding seems a lot more important over here... it's very pro-choice in England, I don't think it's pro-choice here, I think it is your choice but you definitely feel the guilt*

### **Cultural tyranny, motherhood, migration and careers**

Another challenge that the women in this project identified was the suppression of their careers. This challenge was present in migration initially but continued and interacted with motherhood. Many of the women reported struggling to find work in New Zealand, often taking positions for which they are over qualified. This is something I experienced myself as a new migrant woman. Berger (2004) reports that migrant women are often forced to take under qualified positions due to their inability to secure suitable employment in their host countries. Bürgelt, et al., (2008) also report that the undervaluing of German qualifications in New Zealand, 'meant that participants had to either stay at home or to work below their qualifications for much less money, which left them not only dissatisfied, but also added to loneliness, homesickness and financial difficulties" (p. 294). Analise, 53 years, Swiss, had always worked until

she came to New Zealand. For her, not securing a job meant a reduced family income and, most importantly, increased isolation during her first years as a migrant:

*I wanted to do something because I'd always worked but at the time it was quite hard... after that I had some problems, I mean you're far from everyone and I could not find a job*

Becky, 25 years, UK, describes her search for employment as a 'culture shock'.

She applied for many jobs when she arrived in New Zealand with no success.

This resulted in her staying at home all day, not interacting with others and feeling distressed and isolated in her new environment:

*I was so bored. I really was just so bored, really lonely and so (pause, 3 seconds) yea (pause, 3 seconds) quite a big culture shock, em, trying to get a job, being highly unsuccessful, starting off with the jobs I thought would be a natural progression for me and gradually getting down to things a bit, I was too qualified for but I just wanted a job, I needed to get to know people*

Grace, 36 years, South Africa, feels pressure to be a stay at home mother rather than juxtaposing her career/mother identities. For Grace, her career represents her pre-motherhood identity, a part of her identity that she would like to reclaim. However, the dominant discourse in New Zealand society prevents her from taking that step. She is subject to cultural tyranny, her wishes marginalised by the values of the society in which she lives:

*So I feel like (pause, 2 seconds) I (pause, 2 seconds) perhaps not as influenced here or pushed to go out and get work as quickly as I probably would have been in South Africa, I actually feel pressured to stay home longer because I wouldn't be a good mother if I went to work too... to be a good mom I feel like I have to lose my identity here, to be a good mom I have to stay at home and be a mom and nothing else, that's what I feel like, pressure, pressure to do that. If I was to seek other things I would be selfish*

Emily, 36 years, UK, believes that moving to New Zealand quashed her plans for her career. When Emily arrived to New Zealand she found 'no opportunities'

and this, she believes, resulted in her having children earlier than she had previously anticipated:

*I think the main thing about moving over and having my career effectively stalled, the main thing is I think I had kids younger than I would have done*

However, Emily does not wish to be a full-time mother, to be the 'best mom' she can be, she believes that she needs to work outside the home as well as in:

*I guess I had an awful lot of plans to do with my career... then I went from a big city to, you know effectively being based in the middle of nowhere and there was no opportunities... And I found it really quite hard, and it was even worse because it was a small town and quite hideous really... there was a lot of women at home... I'm totally happy in the fact that I know I want to work, I know it's a hard balance because I do know I need to be there for my kids to a point, but the fact is that I've realised about myself is that if I was to be a full time mom, I can't cope... for me to be the best mom that I can be I have to do some work and that's just the way it is*

### **Going off the rails: The emotional impact of migration and motherhood**

Migration, motherhood, identity, isolation, barriers to integration, negotiating new cultural dichotomies, loss of family ties and severed cultural connections - these are the daily challenges that migrant mothers face in New Zealand. It does not stop. It is ever moving. The emotional aftermath in the Borderlands is an everyday reality. The chaotic war of identities reignites; *la coatlicue* re-emerges to challenge, the tolerance and ambiguity, the plurality that we have developed. Three of the women who took part in this project experienced postnatal depression. Grace, 36 years, South Africa, partially attributes her experiences of postnatal depression to her isolation as a migrant mother:

*It's still very difficult, I've, after both babies I've struggled with postnatal depression and I think part of that is feeling isolated and away from home*

Cate, 58 years, UK describes her experiences of postnatal depression as feeling 'a mess'. *La coatlicue* emerges through the multiple shifts of migration and motherhood. This cumulates in experiences of disconnection and isolation, rejecting both past and present spaces, embodying the (n)either/(n)or at the margins, in the Borderlands:

*OK, I'm 12 000 miles away... for me it was huge and emotionally, em, I'm glad I didn't go off the rails if you know what I mean... I definitely got awful postnatal depression with my first one, which I didn't realise I was going through, I remember very vividly the Plunkett nurse coming one day... she realised obviously I was a mess*

Becky, 25 years, UK, has never been diagnosed with depression but considers it as part and parcel of her lived experience at the Borderlands of two cultures.

She challenges her depression, *la coatlicue*, with her ambiguity, her tolerance for her positioning at the margins and the challenges that this presents:

*I mean, I've never been treated for depression over here, but I, I would suspect that there were quite a few instances where I would say I have been depressed (pause, 3 seconds)... I've had some big challenges to overcome, you know, it's just another one of them*

### **Tolerance, ambiguity and other forms of resolution**

Through narratives, we search for resolution. In most stories, we provide an ending of sorts, something that makes sense of why we have travelled the journey we have. In narrative analysis, we look at how people make sense of lived experience, resolution and coherence along the road. All of the women in this project embody *la mestiza*, a space in which they float above their separated selves and in doing so create a third space, a hyphenated space (Fine & Sirin, 2007) greater than the sum of both separated parts. *La mestiza* is not

the same for every woman. She is different colours; she has unique patterns on her wings. The histories that are woven into her wings span across diverse socio-cultural locations. She is beautiful. All *mestiza* present different forms and are at, what seemed like, different stages of their iterations. Some feel firmly that New Zealand is home, others wonder if they would make the same decision, take the same journey if they could go back. *La mestiza* does not overcome *la coatlicue* in isolation. She allows for contradiction, tolerance and ambiguity. She allows us a rebirth as knowing identities, plural people. However, the socio-cultural environment that nurtures *la coatlicue*, that feeds our transformation from 'nightmare into a numinous experience' (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 95) moulds our metamorphosis in many ways. The women in this project described some of the things that carry them through turbulence, including: support from home, children reducing social isolation, connections with other migrant mothers, children creating attachment to New Zealand and maternity services in New Zealand.

### **Support from Home in New Zealand**

Despite living half the world away, support from home plays an important role for migrant mothers in New Zealand. This support comes in many forms including telephone calls, Skype and visits from family members to New Zealand. Hayley, 33 years, Australia, Emily, 36 years, UK and Grace, 36 years, South Africa all have regular visits from family members:

*My mom travels out to New Zealand at least twice a year... we're really lucky actually that my parents love to travel and can afford to travel... I was lucky my mom came out the second time round for 5 weeks, the first 5 weeks, which*

*was brilliant... I had two cesars so to have that help was awesome (Hayley, 33 years, Australia)*

*I'm very lucky because (pause, 3 seconds) like, my mom comes out every year and my dad will come out every second year with her... so I have her with me for 6-8 weeks of the year and then admittedly I do have nothing for the rest of the year, em (pause, 2 seconds) but, yea (Emily, 36 years, UK)*

*but having mom here has really given me a huge boost and given me a bit more sleep as well... while she's been here it's been incredibly easy (Grace, 36 years, South Africa)*

Telephone calls and Skype provides regular connectivity with family and friends.

It can also provide connections with family members who cannot travel for financial or health reasons. Becky, 25 years, UK, speaks with her Grandmother every day:

*I ring my grandmother every day, I just spoke to my mom on the phone this morning... and I talk to my grandmother, which is my mom's mom, em every day probably*

Grace, 36 years, South Africa, also phones home every day to speak with her mother. For Grace, connecting with her mother on a daily basis diminishes the distance between them, and creates the feeling that they are in the same room, 'having a cup of tea'. Daily contact serves to reduce the size of the hump between both 'worlds':

*I phone my mom every day... just to feel like we're still chatting and still, to make it feel like we're still in the same room having a cup of tea*

Maintaining contact with family and friends provides practical support; it also provides emotional support as Freja, 47 years, Dutch describes. Freja had no family support for the first 12 months; when her parents arrived in New Zealand, the year's events cumulated and Freja 'spent two weeks in bed'. Freja could finally 'let go' and allow herself time to heal after a difficult year:

*Actually, after a year my parents arrived, it was around Christmas time and I ended up being so ill, I just spent two weeks in bed, finally I could let go, I finally could let go, I finally and so my mom was there and my dad was there and I could just (pause, 3 seconds)*

### **Children reducing isolation**

Although many of the women struggled to develop friendships in New Zealand, most women found after they became mothers, they met and formed friendships with other mothers. In particular, migrant mothers connect with other migrant mothers; for the women in this project, having children has opened the door to many social opportunities, including antenatal classes, early childhood centres and mother groups. Some of the women felt that having children made the choice to return home more difficult, thus isolating them further; simultaneously, having children reduced isolation and created more opportunities to build social networks and a stronger attachment to New Zealand. This is consistent with Bürgelt et al.'s, (2008) conclusion that "children facilitated the establishment of social contacts, which reduced missing family and friends, and enhanced social support" (p. 295). Becky, 25 years, UK, told me that having a daughter has increased her opportunities to interact with other people on a day-to-day basis:

*I met quite a few friends at my antenatal class, and being able to connect with people, you know, it's just common ground... I mean one of the benefits of having a child is that you can overcome some of that social isolation, I mean [daughter] was not conceived for that purpose but she was certainly a vehicle to overcome some of the social isolation*

As discussed earlier, it can be difficult to develop and maintain new friendships as a migrant adult. However, Hayley, 33 years, Australia, points out that having

a child at the same time as another woman is a 'huge bond builder', a shared experience that nurtures the development of intimate friendships:

*when I did get pregnant and did yoga I met two or three and then we ended up in antenatal group together and baby groups for that first sort of 6-12 months when you still hang out with your baby group a lot... sharing parenthood is a huge (pause, 2 seconds) bond builder as well... at antenatal is where people form life time friendships because you are together like (pause, 2 seconds) more than once a week*

Grace, 36 years, South Africa, firmly believes that having children has facilitated her meeting 'like-minded people' in New Zealand. Once again, she attributes this to joining local antenatal classes:

*R: And do you think having children has helped to invest in those friendships?  
G: Very much so, very much so, yea. I found it difficult to meet (pause, 3 seconds) like-minded people and (sighs) yea, people that were in the same situation as me and then once I had kids I was meeting them all the time... my friend that I mentioned earlier I met through antenatal class"*

Daniella, 34 years, Germany, became an active member of the local play centre, she believes that this reduced her isolation significantly and created a new 'family':

*I went to play centre. I was very involved in play centre so that was my family basically*

### **Making your own family**

Migrant mothers supporting migrant mothers was a prominent theme of my discussions with the women in this project. The women suggest that this is a result of being in the same boat as each other, recognising and understanding isolation in each other and having a required need for support. Becky, 25 years,

UK, says she 'naturally gravitates' towards other migrant mothers because they 'understand':

*Yea, I naturally gravitate towards the migrant mothers...even like the 60 year old women who moved out in their 30s, they were once me, they do, they understand, I mean you can't talk to somebody who's lived all their lives in this town or have all their family here about being socially isolated*

Grace, 36 years, South Africa, describes having to form your own family in your new environment. She has a migrant friend that she can 'rely on' as a 'mother or sister'. She and her friend have connected in a world of disconnection and offered each other solace in their mutual situations:

*I feel like you still have to make your own family because you're away from home, so I've got a friend in particular who is from Finland and she has also felt quite isolated so we have kind of made each other family, we rely on each other in the same way that you would a mother or sister*

Emily, 36 years, UK, believes that migrant mothers make mutual effort with one another as they recognise the need to form support networks in each other:

*I think there's an understanding of the situation you are in and people [other migrants] do make effort I think to try and, I guess not fill the gap but to help each other out because... you need to form your own support network*

### **Children facilitating attachment to New Zealand**

Many of the women believe that having children in New Zealand has fostered an attachment to their host country. Here, children represent the third space that *la mestiza* inhabits; they represent the juxtaposition of each woman's socio-historical past and current socio-cultural space. Becky, 25 years, UK, explains that because New Zealand is her daughter's home, Becky has found a sense of 'home'. Becky's daughter nurtures her tolerance for contradiction

within her own identity and about where she belongs and where she is. Becky has found resolution in the fact that her daughter is at home in New Zealand:

*because this is her [daughter's] home, therefore it is my home. You know I think I'd probably feel quite differently if I'd not had my daughter... a major thing towards me feeling more settled was [daughter] em (pause, 4 seconds), but I don't know how it would have been if [daughter] wasn't here*

Emily, 36 years, UK, describes how New Zealand is 'a part of who she [daughter] is', therefore, New Zealand has become 'more important' to Emily. This is something that develops as her daughter is grows older and embodies a combination of Emily's two 'worlds':

*Now they're older or now the two of them are a little bit older I think it's given me more of an attachment to the country... because I, my little girl is a total little kiwi... and I mean, you know, it really, it's part of who she is, so because it's a part of who she is I think it's become more important to me*

Cate, 58 years, UK, describes how her children simultaneously highlighted her existence at the margins of the dominant society but also facilitated her attachment to her new environment:

*R: Do you reckon you having children here created a stronger attachment to New Zealand?*

*C: Yes, yes although I never really thought about it before, but I think they just grew up as kiwi boys em, farming boys and I was em I suppose the odd one out because I was the only female in the household and the only English connected person in the household... it's probably made me more of a New Zealander having them, perhaps if they were born outside, if they were born over there, if everything had been different, I don't know"*

### **Maternity Services in New Zealand**

Many of the women commented on the high standard of care that maternity services in New Zealand offer. For many of the women, these services were the primary source of support during the early years of their children's lives. Grace,

36 years, South Africa, compares the New Zealand services to those in South Africa, saying that her friends 'can't believe' how fantastic it is:

*that's a huge difference to South Africa, the care that you get here after having a baby is hugely different, em, you know they come to your home, it's all free, they check your baby, they check to see how you are, yea, awh, it's amazing, when I tell them back home that my midwife visits every day after my baby's born they can't believe it*

Grace carries on to say that the caring nature of maternity health professionals 'really helps' to diminish feelings of isolation and provides excellent support during the initial months of motherhood:

*but having people like the Plunkett nurse who are really caring, that really helps, you know my midwife was amazing... just find people really, really caring here, the hospital in particular, just you really are cared for in that maternity unit*

Hayley, 33 years, Australia, agrees with Grace, saying that the Plunkett system and other healthcare systems are an excellent source of support for migrant mothers in New Zealand:

*You know, the Plunkett system is amazing, mother's groups, immunisations, all that stuff is really, really good*

### **La mestiza: Tolerance and ambiguity, strength and resolution**

The work of the mestiza consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh... how duality is transcended. The answer to the problem... lies in healing the split that originates in the very foundation of our lives, our culture, our languages, our thoughts (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 102)

All of the women in this project have negotiated winding roads through their experiences of migration and motherhood. All have lived in the Borderlands of two cultures and emerged through *la coatlicue* as new women, butterflies, their wings carrying them to a third space where they transcend the (n)either/(n)or of

two cultures. As migrants, we challenge the versions of reality that culture imposes on its people; our lived experience rejects the simplistic binaries that dictate how we should 'be'. To exist at the margins of the dominant society is a painful place to be. We cannot emerge from this place without letting go of past version of ourselves; our shifting socio-cultural environments challenge what we know and accept to be 'true' about ourselves. In this 'knowing' state, we can no longer be the same person; we can no longer be comfortable as we were before. We are *la mestiza*. We are new women, disassembled and resurrected with stronger foundations:

*well it gives you strength, you have to deal with, because you are alone, you don't have parents to help you, you have no-one to help and you have to find the way... And probably the fact that I've been here and had to overcome loneliness and not have work and have the kids alone and blah, blah, blah, making me a more stronger person in the same time (Analise, 53 years, Swiss)*

*I think going overseas actually makes you more aware of where you've come from... I mean, that's just my mantra, it's the same with her, it's about coping, I mean, I have to cope, I don't have any other alternative, I'd be back in England by now because there have been times when, you know, I needed help and you just have to carry on, carry on (Becky, 25 years, UK)*

*I'm quite happy here, I'm still a butterfly but now it's in a different way... [through migration] you become more accepting...it's been great impact for me having my children... when you don't have a child, you have your routine of how you do things but when you have a child it flies out the window...and that's a big curve. When you are more flexible beforehand from migration, from seeing all the other things, I'm sure it's much better for yourself (Daniella, 34 years, Germany)*

*You know, all this, moving country, away from family, having a baby, opening a business, it's got to make you stronger (pause, 3 seconds) if it doesn't break you... and if I can give that access to some of the cultural heritage of the UK... a different way of lifestyle and I think it enables me to bring my children up in a world I want to more (Emily, 36 years, UK)*

*I think it just happened automatically, sort of an osmosis thing, and it's like even the way I think... that was a huge five years for me when you put it like that you could say, shivers it's a wonder you didn't go off your rocker...So I*

*must have processed it reasonably well, or I must have had enough support or I must have been strong enough (Cate, 58 years, UK)*

## Chapter Five: Discussion

Michelle Fine's (2004) *working the hyphens* provided me with overarching principles with which I approached this project. Although I am present in every page, this work is not mine alone. It is the co-production of knowledge, the harmony of the hyphens between eight women and me. Just like migration and motherhood, research is an iterative process. Every interaction I had, whether it was reading previous literature or a discussion with one of the women, built on the last. I entered this project with my own history, my story as a migrant woman in New Zealand. I am now layers of the histories and experiences that have been shared as part of this co-production at the hyphens of migration and motherhood in New Zealand.

Although Fine (2004) provided me with a research method that guided the project, I struggled to apply the hyphenated-selves framework (Fine & Sirin, 2007) to the stories that the women and I produced. This is likely to be a result of my own experiences. For me, the hyphenated-selves framework does not capture the complexity of my lived experience as a migrant in New Zealand. It does not allow me to be a combination of conflicting identities, focused on the present and mourning for the past, all in one space and place and time. I heard a similar conflict within the voices of the women who spoke with me. For this reason, I continued my search and the metaphor of *la mestiza* (Anzaldúa, 1999) introduced herself to me. The voice of *la mestiza* existed in the stories before she was applied to the analysis. There was conflict, ambiguity, bubbles and

twilight zones, all used by the women in this project to try and make sense of their experiences of migration and motherhood in New Zealand.

### **Harmonising Hyphens: Reviewing the aims of the project alongside women's stories**

*La mestiza* (Anzaldúa, 1999) does not only provide a metaphor for making sense of the stories in this project. She embodies the aims of the research. *La mestiza* rejects the dichotomous models that create spaces for (n)either/(n)or in society, assigned through cultural discourses of what it is to 'be'. In chapter 1, I reviewed immigration literature in psychology. Here, stories of *successful* migration were discussed, where linear models of migration provide migrants the option to *choose* between four acculturation attitudes (Berry, 2001; Berry & Sam, 1997). Fine and Sirin (2007) and Bhatia and Ram (2009) reject this simplified explanation of migration and explore the fluidity of migrant identity against socio-cultural and political spaces. Their research suggests that migrants can experience all four acculturation 'attitudes' in a simultaneous manner. The current project supports this; the women and I offer stories of conflict, experiences of two 'worlds' in the same space and place. Furthermore, the current project rejects the terminology used by Berry and colleagues. 'Acculturation attitudes' insinuates a subjective decision to view and/or engage with host countries in a particular way; however as the current research shows, there are many other factors that influence a person's engagement with their host country, including whether or not people in the host nation are willing to invest in relationships with new people. Chapter 2 explores master narratives of

'good' and 'bad' mothering. This includes the pressure on women to achieve maternal role attainment (Morrow, et al., 2008) among conflicting values and beliefs about what it means to be a 'good' mother. Similar to the women in this project, Morrow et al. (2008) report that master narratives regarding breastfeeding and gender roles can create conflict for new migrant mothers.

One of the primary aims of this project was to explore diverse accounts of migration and motherhood, to highlight master narratives in New Zealand society, and to reject the marginalisation of women to categories of (n)either/(n)or. *La mestiza* achieves this. The same ambiguity applied to the conflicting existence at the Borderlands of psychological, spiritual and physical places and spaces is applied to the dominant psychological models that serve to further marginalise women through classifying their ability to 'do' migration and motherhood successfully. *La mestiza* allows us to 'be' as we are and to be many of what we are. Through her experiences at the Borderlands of two cultures, she recognises versions of reality communicated through culture and rejects the 'despot duality that says we are able to be only one or the other' (p. 41). We are not marginal (wo)men (Park, 1928) because of our inability to reconcile psychological conflict as a result of our decision to move to another country. Rather, we are marginalised women due to society's refusal to recognise how discourses and duality split us into (n)either/(n)or and how *la mestiza* transcends the split, the boundaries and binaries ascribed to our identities, our lives and our cultures. We are pluralistic beings.

## **Harmonising hyphens across psychological literature**

Psychology literature suggests that migrant mothers are vulnerable to a host of social, economic and health disparities (Ahmed, et al., 2008; Berger, 2004; Noh, et al., 1992). The current project supports this literature as many of the women narrate experiences of difficulty establishing social networks and securing employment that recognises their previous qualifications and experiences.

Emily, 36 years, UK, believes that her inability to secure employment is the primary reason she became a mother younger than she had anticipated. Becky, 25 years, UK, remembers how she had to 'beg' a potential employer for a position for which she was over-qualified. Analise, Becky and Emily all discussed the emotional and social impact this had on their adjustment to life in New Zealand, as they struggled to find social outlets and contacts outside of their homes.

All of the women in the project discussed the impact that migration and/or motherhood had on their emotional, social and psychological wellbeing. In particular, the women, along with feelings of loneliness and experiences of social isolation, identified feelings of pre- and post-natal depression. In accordance with psychological research from abroad, mental health challenges and social isolation are a very real part of the lived experience of migrant women and mothers. However, an aim of the current project was to explore motherhood and migration from a holistic perspective. Although social, health and economic challenges are a real and important part of the lived experience of migrant woman and mothers, the women in this project exhibit strength,

sanguinity and resilience in their 'worlds'. The final section of the analysis, *Tolerance, ambiguity and other forms of resolution*, explores the many ways in which the women in this project find their forms of resolution. Many of the strategies identified by the women support and complement previous research; however, others are specific to this research and therefore contribute to psychology's understanding of protective features of migration and motherhood in New Zealand. For example, Bürgelt et al., (2008) found that sufficient English skills increased migrant ability to develop support networks and find satisfying employment. The women in this project agree that language is important in this area however highlight that there is more to language than words and semantics; it incorporates shared histories and experiences, thus creating challenges for migrants whether or not English is their native language. Therefore, continued social engagement within the culture that they live will increase the capacity to understand and communicate on a local level, further supporting adjustment to social and employment scenarios. Furthermore, this project and previous research (Berger, 2004; Bürgelt, et al., 2008) highlight the support of partners and/or family or friends from home who live in New Zealand. However, the current project also calls attention to the support that people from home countries, who have not moved to New Zealand, offer to migrants, along with the mutual supportive relationships that migrant mothers of many origins develop with each other. The migrant mothers in this project describe the process of stepping into a family role for each other, a relationship developed from mutual understandings of migration and motherhood.

All of the women in this project describe how having children has increased their attachment to New Zealand. This occurs in two ways. Firstly, having children develops social opportunities and networks for women. The women in this project met other mothers through antenatal classes, play centres, walking groups, childcare centres, soccer lessons and school. As Hayley, 33 years, Australia, says, having a child at the same time is a strong bond builder, something that transcends the limited shared experiences migrant mothers can have with others in new social locations. Secondly, the women in this project spoke about the positive relationship between their love for their child and their attachment to New Zealand. Although some women felt that New Zealand is not where they would choose to live if they were not mothers, having children shifted their decision, leading the women to choose New Zealand because they believe it is a better place for their children. As their children grow, the women report stronger affiliation with the country as their children become 'little kiwis' (Emily, 36 years, UK). In this way, the love for their children increases their love and attachment for New Zealand.

### ***Half the World Away, Cultural Competencies and Psychology***

The Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act, 2003, guides the Cultural Competencies set out by the New Zealand Psychologists Board (New Zealand Psychologists Board, 2011). It states that, practitioners should take 'reasonable steps to meet the diverse need of their client population' (p. 2). As mentioned previously, 23% of women in New Zealand were not born here (De Souza, 2007). That is nearly one quarter of the country's women. Given the complexity of

migration and motherhood, and the challenges that this project and research abroad have highlighted for migrant women (Arendell, 2000; Dennis, et al., 2004; Tsai, Chen, & Huang, 2011), it is highly likely that a practicing psychologist in New Zealand will work with one, if not many, migrant women during the course of their career. The Cultural Competencies propose that competent psychologists should have, 'knowledge of socio-political influences (e.g., poverty, stereotyping, stigmatisation, land and language loss, and marginalisation) that impinge on the lives of identified groups (e.g., identity formation, developmental outcomes, and manifestations of mental illness)' (p. 4). *Half the world away* expands current awareness and knowledge about the migration and motherhood experience in New Zealand. It offers new knowledge regarding identity, social and economic features of the lived experience of migrant women and mothers in New Zealand. It provides reference points for those who do not have lived experience of migration and/or motherhood to understand the fluidity of migrant identity, the reality of conflicting 'worlds' and the capacity to transcend these. The women and I provide an alternative narrative to traditional psychological discourses that further marginalise us in the Borderlands of society's (n)either/(n)or.

### **Limitations**

Every piece of work has limitations. *Half the world away* is no exception to this. Although the project has met the original aims, there are other areas of migration and motherhood in New Zealand that could be explored. For example, all of the women in the project are white and identify as middle class.

They are all from a European background. As a researcher, I affiliate with this background also. For this reason, there are many stories and experiences of migrant women in New Zealand that have not been represented on these pages. In line with feminist assumptions, this project did not set out to represent the voices of all women, and recognises that the representations produced by the women and I are bound to a particular interaction in a space and place in a socio-cultural, historical and political time. However, it is a limitation that the stories of more women were not explored. In particular, I would like to hear the stories of women who are not proficient in English. Becky, 25, UK, discussed the barriers to services in New Zealand when you are new to the country and do not know where to access them. My presumptions imagine that these barriers are tenfold for a woman who cannot speak the English language. Furthermore, the women in this project identified community groups such as antenatal classes, yoga and mother groups, as a method of overcoming social isolation in New Zealand. If a woman cannot speak English, how does she navigate services and overcome social isolation in New Zealand? This project does not answer that question. In addition to this, I remain aware of the silence, the missing voices of refugee women.

A further limitation stems from the researcher's lack of insider knowledge about motherhood. In retrospect, I believe this shaped the interviews to focus primarily on the process of migration rather than a combination of the two. Although, many areas of motherhood were explored with reference to migration, I believe there was space to develop themes of motherhood and

identity as a separate process. It is likely that my personal narratives restricted my ability as a researcher to meet the women at the hyphens of this experience, thus contributing to a limitation in the project.

This project used a needle to thread together the stories of nine women to create a meta-story. This approach was adopted for a few reasons, firstly, to provide increased anonymity to the women and secondly to provide a robust analysis of experience by highlighting congruence and commonalities of experiences across the group of women. However, by creating a meta-story, the uniqueness and diversity of the women's experiences were sometimes lost. Every woman in the project has their own story to tell, their own journey and their own twists and turns along the way. Furthermore, every woman experiences their own sense of resolution, what it means to occupy the space of migration and motherhood in New Zealand at this time.

Finally, this project spoke with eight women. Given the high number of women migrants in New Zealand, there are many more voices and stories to be heard. Each new project will provide another layer of understanding, a further iteration that contributes to the understanding of the challenges and strengths of migration and motherhood in New Zealand. Some may suggest that the experiences of eight participants and a researcher represent a small participant pool, however, Polkinghorne (2005) writes, 'the concern is not how much data were gathered or from how many sources but whether the data that were collected are sufficiently rich to bring refinement and clarity to understanding

an experience' (p. 140). As discussed in the previous paragraph, the women in this project have shared an abundance of rich stories and experiences. Indeed, a smaller group may have allowed more in-depth analysis of their rich experiences through migration and motherhood in New Zealand.

### **Personal Reflections**

This project has developed from somewhere deep within my heart. I know that many small steps have brought me here. I have held the hands of many women along the way. In a way, I cannot comprehend that a door might close between the women, *la mestiza*, this project and I. I have always believed in the importance of this work; I hope the process continues and the door remains ajar. *La mestiza* resonates strongly with my experience of migration. She has freed me. She has walked with me through conflict to my place of tolerance and ambiguity. Before absorbing myself in articles for this research, I had no words to describe the space that I have come to inhabit. During the first 18 months of migration, I was miserable, static between two separate worlds; I was uncomfortable and confused. I grappled with the sense of being (n)either/(n)or, stretched across my binaries of what it means to 'be'.

As a migrant, I lost the points of reference that once served to consolidate my sense of identity. For me this presents itself in many ways. In New Zealand, I was born on the 24th of July 2008; I have no past. Standing still, I do not hear the whispers of my past, my being; I do not get reassurance from the anchor points that have moulded me along the way. As a person, I rely on things to

reinforce the person that I have become. Culture is a safety blanket through which my way of viewing and interacting with the world makes sense. However, over the past four years, and in particular throughout this project, I have discovered that creating my own “New Zealand” identity is inextricably bound with my Irish identity. They are not two separate things. I am a plural being.

This project was born out of my uncertainty in New Zealand, my fear of becoming a mother half the world away from my family. The women who spoke with me have inspired me in many ways. I value the time and experience I shared with them at the hyphens of migration. I hope that one day I may be able to meet them at the hyphen of motherhood too.

It is important to highlight the valuable role of Plunkett and other maternal services. Every woman in this project spoke highly about her access through maternal healthcare services in New Zealand. From the stories in this project, it appears that the maternal services are doing a fantastic job for migrant mothers. This is extremely important, as often these services are the only social support that migrant mothers can reach out to as they embark on the journey of motherhood.

However, there are always areas for development, as Cate, 58 years, UK says:

I think there has to be something put into place through the health system, I don't know what but through the maternity care, Plunkett, somebody out there that perhaps checks on the new mothers more than the other mothers, on these new immigrant mothers because I know how I felt and I still did have some support and watching out for postnatal depression or just turning up

and saying hello, having a chat, because I can see that it could be really a dangerous tipping over the edge for some of them em, and if the men are anything like my man, he was clueless, absolutely clueless, useless (both laugh) loved him to bits but useless in the sense of being a support, absolutely useless and not having any concept of what I was going through, not only new hormonally but new in lots of other ways and I think that perhaps a little bit more support for those that are just going home with the new one... it is a big fright to think that some people will just be stuck behind closed doors and going around the absolute bend

Of course, the current maternal services are working hard to address some of the things that Cate discusses, however one of the things that resurfaced continuously throughout the project is the support that migrant mothers offer other migrant mothers. The women told me that this stems from 'being in the same boat' as each other, understanding the isolation and vulnerability that each other experience. Migrant mothers step into family roles for each other; they create family with each other. This is not meant to replace the family we have left behind, but it goes a little way to reduce the impact of social isolation in motherhood. I believe that introducing migrant mothers in the community to other migrant mothers may combat isolation further. I do not believe in exclusivity; however, it is clear from the interviews that there is a connection between migrants that is rarely found in other relationships in the host country. I believe that this connection should be used to further reduce isolation, increase connectedness and support amongst migrant mothers in New Zealand. Furthermore, facilitating the mutual support of migrant mothers does not increase the demand on healthcare resources around the country. By increasing mutual social support and reducing social isolation, we may decrease the negative psychological impact of motherhood and migration in New Zealand. We will listen to the voices of those who are experts in their own experience.

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## **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Information sheet

Appendix 2: Individual consent form

Appendix 3: Release of transcript form

Appendix 4: Interview schedule

Appendix 5: Guiding questions

## **Appendix 1: Information Sheet**

[Print on Massey University departmental letterhead]  
[Logo, name and address of Department/School/Institute/Section]

### ***Half the World Away- A qualitative study exploring stories of migration and motherhood in New Zealand***

#### **INFORMATION SHEET**

This information sheet has been designed to provide you with information about the research project Half the World Away: Exploring stories of Migration and Motherhood in New Zealand. My name is Róna Byrne. I am a Masters student at Massey University studying Psychology. I have chosen to undertake this research as I am also an immigrant woman living in New Zealand. I left my home country Éire (Ireland) in June 2008.

Dr Leigh Coombes of the Psychology Department in Massey University will act as my supervisor throughout this research project.

#### **What is the project about?**

The aim of this project is to explore how women negotiate becoming mothers following migration from their home countries. I hope to use the data to further inform future maternity health initiatives in New Zealand.

Participants for this project have been identified through word of mouth; this has created a "snowball" effect in which potential participants can provide me (Róna) or other known participants with their contact details so that I can invite them to take part in the project. The selection criteria for the current project are women who have migrated to New Zealand and have had a child/children while living here. My aim is to invite 8-10 women to participate in the project to highlight the commonalities and differences of the lived experience of migration and motherhood.

I would be grateful for the opportunity to discuss your personal experience of migration and motherhood in New Zealand and would like to take this opportunity to invite you to participate in the study. However, before deciding whether you wish to be involved in the research, please read this letter carefully to ensure you are fully aware of the nature of the research project and your rights should you choose to participate.

Please feel free to contact either me or my research supervisor if you have any further questions or concerns regarding the research.

#### **What can I expect if I decide to take part?**

Participation in this project will involve a one-on-one interview with me, the researcher. The interview will take approximately one hour. It can occur at a time and place that is most convenient for you, for example, at your house or in the library. The interviews will explore your experience of migration and motherhood in New Zealand.

With your permission, the interview will be recorded on a digital voice recorder. I will then transcribe the interviews word-for-word. I will then make a time with you go over the transcript to give you the opportunity to make any changes that are important to

you. This will take approximately one hour. Once you have agreed to the document, I will apply a form of narrative analysis to identify common themes in the data. At the completion of the research everyone who takes part will be sent a summary of the research findings

### **How will my identity be protected if I decide to take part?**

As a participant you will be assigned a pseudo-name to ensure confidentiality. All data will be stored in a locked cabinet; I will not use your real name or the names of any of your family/friends in the transcripts so that it is harder for you to be identified. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the transcripts. All electronic versions of the data will be password protected and destroyed once the project is complete.

While I will do everything I can to ensure that you can speak openly with me in confidence, please be aware that it is impossible for me to guarantee that no-one will find out that you took part in this research, so please take account of this before you decide whether or not you would like to participate. Furthermore, it is likely that somebody provided you with this information sheet, therefore will know that you have considered taking part. Please be assured that I will not confirm whether or not any person decided to participate in the research.

### **What are my rights if I decide to take part?**

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study at any time;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used,
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. Please feel free to contact me (Ríona) or my supervisor (Leigh) should you have any further questions or should you wish to take part in this project.

### **Contact details:**

Ríona Byrne (Researcher)  
School of Psychology  
Massey University  
Palmerston North  
Phone: 022 4262365  
Email: riona.nibhroin@gmail.com

Dr Leigh Coombes (Supervisor)  
School of Psychology  
Massey University  
Palmerston North  
Phone: 06 350-5799, ext 2058 or free phone 0800 627 739  
Email: L.Coombes@massey.ac.nz

### **For your information:**

Committee Approval Statement

“This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 12/14. If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 8729, email: [humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz)”

## **Appendix 2: Participant Consent Form- Individual**

[Print on Massey University departmental letterhead]  
[Logo, name and address of Department/School/Institute/Section]

### ***Half the World Away- A qualitative study exploring stories of migration and motherhood in New Zealand***

#### **PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature:                      Date:

Full Name – printed

### **Appendix 3: Release of Transcript Form**

[Print on Massey University departmental letterhead]  
[Logo, name and address of Department/School/Institute/Section]

#### ***Half the World Away- A qualitative study exploring stories of migration and motherhood in New Zealand***

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview(s) conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature:                      Date:

Full Name - printed

## **Appendix 4: Interview Schedule**

[Print on Massey University departmental letterhead]  
[Logo, name and address of Department/School/Institute/Section]

### ***Half the World Away- A qualitative study exploring stories of migration and motherhood in New Zealand***

#### ***INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (Participants)***

The following questions will be covered in the interview, but participants will be invited to tell their own stories of the events and how they have coped with them in their own way.

The interview is structured around a starter and prompt series of questions. Prompts are only used to ensure that all the issues of interest to the researchers are raised. The interviewer identifies appropriate responses within the participant's story as it is told from their own point of view and prompts are not used if the relevant information has been provided spontaneously.

##### **Starter**

Thank you for participating in this research. We are most interested in hearing your story of your experiences of migration and motherhood in New Zealand.

##### **Background Prompts**

These background questions will invite participants to expand on the experiences of migration and motherhood

- Please tell me what it was like for you to immigrate to New Zealand
- How many years have you lived in New Zealand?
- In your experience, how has immigrating to New Zealand impacted on your identity and/or sense of who you are?
- Please tell me about your experiences of becoming a mother...
- In your experience, how has becoming a mother impacted on your identity and/or sense of who you are?

##### **Processes Prompts**

These questions invite the participant to talk about their experiences of mothering/motherhood in New Zealand after emigration from their home country.

- How have the dominant beliefs about mothering in New Zealand complimented/conflicted with your own and/or that of your country of origin?
- Do you believe that your relationship with your child has been influenced as a result of your immigration to New Zealand?

##### **Outcomes Prompts**

These questions invite the participants to talk to the researcher about their overall experiences of migration and mothering.

- What are some of the challenges that you have experienced as an immigrant mother in New Zealand?
- What are some of the positive aspects of becoming a mother in New Zealand that you have experienced?

## **Appendix 5: Guiding Questions for Interviews**

Firstly, thank you for taking the time to talk with me. My name is Ríona. I came to New Zealand from Ireland nearly 4 years ago and have lived in Taupō since. I have no children of my own but hope to embark on that journey in the coming years.

As you know from the information sheet, this research is about becoming a mother in New Zealand. I would like to hear your stories about migration to New Zealand and about becoming a mother away from your birth country. I am interested in your thoughts, feelings, experiences and memories of both journeys- the challenges and strengths you encountered along the way.

### **Explain rights**

I have some questions here that I will use as prompts but over the coming hour or so I am most interested in hearing the parts of the journey that are most meaningful to you.

### **Demographics**

- What is your age please?
- Where were you born?
- Do you have a large family in your home country?

### **Immigration:**

- What age were you when you came to New Zealand
- What made you decide to come to New Zealand?
- Can you tell me what the migration experience has been like for you?
- Do you believe that migration has changed you as a person?
- Do you think that migration has influenced your sense of self or identity in anyway?
- How about your values and beliefs? Have they changed much since you moved to New Zealand? Or do you think they have remained the same?

### **Motherhood:**

- How many children do you have?
- Were they all born in New Zealand?
- How long were you living in New Zealand before you had your son/daughter?
- Can you please tell me about this experience?
- Do you believe that becoming a mother has changed you as a person?
- Has there been any times that New Zealand expectations of motherhood have conflicted with your own?
- In a so-called 'ordinary day' do you imagine motherhood in your home country would be different to motherhood in New Zealand?
- Do you believe that your relationship with your child has been influenced because of your migration to New Zealand or do you believe it would be much the same in your home country?
- What are some of the challenges that you have experienced as a migrant mother in New Zealand?
- What are some of the positive aspects of becoming a mother in New Zealand that you have experienced?
- Can you tell me about Community and Social support? How have these things influenced becoming a mother in New Zealand?
- Is there anything else about your experiences of becoming a mother away from home that you would like to talk about?