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CONTRA VIENTO Y MAREA
(Against the Wind and the Tide)

**Latin American Women in New Zealand:
Resettlement Experiences and Issues**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Philosophy
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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the resettlement experiences of four Latin American women who migrated to New Zealand between 1974 and 1990. The research question for this study was: What have been the consequences of migration and resettlement in terms of gender relations, family relationships, paid work, domestic roles and ethnic identity? Particular attention was given to the experiences of the participants in the maintenance of their culture and language.

This study was approached from a feminist perspective. The researcher conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews in Spanish with each of the participants. The personal involvement of the researcher, who is also a Latin American immigrant, was an integral part of the study.

The difficulties experienced by the participants as new settlers reflected: their individual circumstances of migration; their previous knowledge of English; the loss of kin support; the gender relations within their families; and the opportunities they found in New Zealand. All the participant experienced major changes within their families, the most significant being divorce or separation from their husbands/partners.

The degree of involvement in the labour force depended to a large extent on their domestic responsibilities and their knowledge of English. The participants have emerged from their initial position of powerlessness as new settlers having gained in self-confidence and independence. One of the major changes they identified was in their adoption of more egalitarian gender roles and ideas.

Ensuring continuity with their cultures and the maintenance of the Spanish language was very important for the participants. The difficulties they experienced in this area reflected the demands of integration into New Zealand society and the lack of general community support. In this context, therefore, the support of other Latin American people was of crucial importance for the participants in terms of helping them to cope with the challenges of cultural change. This study gives weight to an approach to resettlement which recognises and values the language and culture of immigrants, as well as assisting them to obtain the skills required to be part of the new society.

DEDICACIÓN

Esta tesis está dedicada en primer lugar a mi mamá. Este poema, que ella me dió hace algunos años, ahora me hace más sentido:

*Solamente dos cosas
podemos dejar
a nuestros hijos...
Una es raíces
y la otra es alas.
(Anónimo)*

La segunda dedicación es para mis hijos Miguel, Isabel y Miriam, quienes han sido mi mayor inspiración durante mis años de inmigrante.

En tercer lugar, pero no el último, dedico mi trabajo de investigación a mi nieto Rayne.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis first to my mother. This poem, which she gave me some years ago, now makes more sense to me.

*Only two things
we can leave our children...
One is roots
and the other one is wings.
(Anonymous)*

The second dedication is to my children, Miguel, Isabel and Miriam, who have been my source of inspiration during my years as an immigrant.

The last (but not least) dedication is to my grandson Rayne.

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