

**Invisible students: The lived experiences of international PhD students who are
mothers of dependent children**

Zeyun Zhang

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ABSTRACT

Academic women have long asserted that the university community ignores the issues they face when combining their studies with work commitments and maternal responsibilities. Recent studies in this field indicate women encounter many obstacles when pursuing an academic journey. These challenges encompass the struggles involved with fulfilling a number of roles – particularly those created by motherhood. Nevertheless, there has been relatively little research into how international PhD *student-mothers* manage to reconcile the tensions between their studies and the demands of their personal lives. Earlier literature has not focussed on the challenges faced by international PhD student-mothers when they are attempting to integrate into a new society and a different culture while studying and/or working and looking after their children. This study provides a feminist perspective to investigate the barriers and challenges international PhD student-mothers face when seeking to combine PhD study with their mothering responsibilities in a New Zealand context.

This research project involved semi-structured interviews with 17 international PhD student-mothers from nine different countries studying at a leading New Zealand university. The interviews reveal their emotions involved in being international PhD-mothers, their personal learning and mothering challenges, as well as how they forged a sense of belonging within a neoliberal university environment. The thematic analysis of the interviews provides insight into not only the tensions which are a daily reality for international PhD student-mothers' but also the joy and motivation of them.

This study analyses the specific and distinctive hurdles faced by PhD-mothers who are also international students, and who have to determine how to construct personal and intimate relationships, and provide effective, quality childcare. These women described the requirement to abide by the implicit norms of “mothering” within a New Zealand context which, at times, contradicted their own cultural norms as well as meeting the tacit expectations of the academy. The issues they face stem from the academic settings, emotional anguish, an absence of extended family help, the stress of coming to terms with new cultural norms, visa restrictions and motherhood ideologies. Although the number of solutions to these problems is quite limited, help comes from family members, supervisors' support, peer support and the

women's own resilient characters. This thesis presents data which offers an understanding of these women's experiences of integrating studying and motherhood away from their home country in a neoliberal university. The participants describe several tensions that include financial hardship, the gap between expectations and reality, the gap between the support structures of the university and the PhD-mothers' actual needs, and most significantly – the societal pressure to be a perfect mother as well as the ideal scholar.

DEDICATION

In dedication to my parents, Weijia Liu and Zhongwei Zhang, who always love me and support me unconditionally.

For my husband Zhaohui Xu, and my daughter Quinn Yun'an Xu, who made me a mother.

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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 Locating Myself in the Research

I was born in a small city in the north part of China in the 1990s as the only child of my parents. My grandparents were both working in the hospital when I was born. My grandfather was a doctor, while my grandmother was an administrator. My mother also worked in the hospital when I was young. She was a pharmacist. As a pharmacist residing in the hospital, she needed to work the night shift twice a week. Since my father was also very busy, sometimes I had to stay with my grandparents when my mother worked at night. When I was at school age, my parents realized that staying with my grandparents was not always a good option. Nobody could supervise my homework properly and tutor me after my English after-school class during term time. My mother resigned from her job as a pharmacist at the hospital when I was 11 years old, even though she had recently attained her Senior Pharmacist Certification. She changed her career to office work at a medicine management department. It was 9 am – 5 pm work, with no nightshift requirements. She could take me to after-school classes, supervise my homework, cook my breakfast, lunch and dinner, stand in front of me anytime I needed her. However, she always said that quitting her job at the hospital was not because of me but because she was tired of the night work.

I never felt gender bias while I was growing up. My parents attached great importance to my education. I went to the top class in the best primary school and middle school in our small city. Then I went to a top senior school in the province. I finished my undergraduate study at a Normal University and decided to go abroad to continue my master's study to satisfy my curiosity about education and the world. When I did my first master's degree in the United Kingdom (UK), I encountered Gender Studies for the first time. In 2014, I graduated with a Master of Science in Educational Research in the UK in research that looked at postgraduate students who are also mothers. That year, I got another research master's offer from the University of Auckland. In 2015, I came to New Zealand and started my research life here. In 2016, I finished my Master of Arts in Education degree and started my PhD straight away. I

knew that a PhD was very prestigious and also a challenging job. But I never expected that it would be such a long, tough journey.

In general, my education process has been straightforward, and so has my life path. I met my husband when I was 19 years old. We fell in love and married two years later, just before starting my first Master's study in the UK. I never thought that marriage would change my life. Even though before the wedding day, my parents kept asking me if I was ready for marriage at such a young age, I believed the wedding was a celebration party for our love. Fortunately, the marriage did not change my life too much at that time. I continued my study as part of my life plan. My husband strongly supports my study and career, just like my parents. My husband is also the only child in his family. He went to the UK when he was young and finished his undergraduate study there. He used to work in the advertising and investment industry in Beijing. In 2015, to support my further study, he quit his job and came to New Zealand with me. He now works in a real estate company in Auckland. My husband is very proud of the work I have done to achieve a PhD. We both have the same goals for our life, not only short-term but also long-term. My husband has never refused to do housework. He is in charge of cooking and gardening. He goes to the supermarket for household necessities. He knows more about vegetable price fluctuations than I do and can choose the best price. I never felt the challenge of balancing family and PhD life until we had a child.

Balancing childcare and a career is a tough job for women. As a researcher, I kept delaying having a child in the first few years of our marriage as I understood this problem. Nevertheless, in 2017, I got pregnant as I wrote the proposal for this research about international PhD-mothers and my daughter was born before my provisional year presentation. The start of this research is also the start of my motherhood journey.

I ignored some of my broader family and female friends' arguments that a woman's priority is to be a mother when they have a child. I thought it was unfair to limit myself to having a role as only a mother when I have engaged at every education level throughout my life. The books I have read, and the knowledge I have gained did not teach me to stop progressing. However, it is unavoidable that working and career women will face complicated decisions. The situation becomes more complex for a PhD-mother who is away from her home country and has international status. Family problems appeared sooner in my life because of my short

maternity leave (only three months due to the visa conditions of doctoral study in New Zealand), our financial burden with my unpaid workload, dealing with daily domestic jobs, childcare and later, the child's education. These are all the challenging aspects of my life that also threaten the relationship between myself and my husband.

Since my daughter was born, my mother came to help me with childcare, just like most Chinese grandparents do to support their working children (Cook & Dong, 2011; Deutsch, 2006). With my situation, it was not easy for my mother. She had to apply for extended leave from her work, and geographically she had to separate from my father for a long period. With my parents' sacrifice and support, I survived my provisional year and was able to get back to doctoral work very soon. However, the strategy has not always been effective because of the visitor visa condition – the visitor visa holder could only stay in New Zealand, at the most, nine months within 18 months (Immigration New Zealand, 2021). I took most of the responsibilities of child rearing when my mother was away. In the first three years of caring for my daughter, I often wondered whether I was a full-time mother or a full-time PhD student. I struggled with my PhD when I witnessed some of my PhD colleagues studying while working part-time at the university, publishing, going to conferences and presenting their research to colleagues. I felt guilty when I fully engaged with the study – I cried every morning when I went to a conference in Japan and left my one-year-old daughter at home. I worried about my career path. Taking care of a baby while doing the PhD drained my energy for engaging with part-time work opportunities at that time. In the absence of any source of income from myself, while watching my research proceed slowly, I started to question myself, my choice and the meaning of my doctoral research.

However, becoming a member of the international PhD-mothers community at the university gave me a new perspective to think about and conduct my research and engage with my participants, not as an “outsider.” Meanwhile, my daughter gives me so much joy beyond the research while I am doing my PhD. Her existence keeps motivating me to finish this research.

I wish to make explicit here that the data of this study are not merely collected by a *method*. On the contrary, my participants' narratives of PhD life and motherhood were composed in our own lives, at some point in history and in the social world of specific values and practices. I was the one who is also doing a PhD in New Zealand as an international student-mother. I

experienced, listened, studied and researched, and constructed and took away these stories. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) pointed out that, behind the research process methodology is the researcher's biography, "who speaks from a particular class, gendered, racial, cultural, and ethnic community perspective" (p. 21). Therefore, I cannot be entirely objective and distance myself from my own values and prejudices. I was not only a researcher when I conducted this research in view of the above experience. I am also an insider, in the sense that I, myself, am an international PhD-mother who could relate intimately to the many challenges my participants expressed throughout their time talking to me. As such, although the rest of the thesis makes present the voices of my participants and their hopes and dreams and challenges while mothering and studying, this thesis is also intensely personal for me and much of what has been articulated by the participants resonates with my own struggles and joys in this research process.

1.2 Introducing the Study

The global approach to higher education is significantly different from that of the late 1960s. Most noticeably, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2008) the change in focus is from a specialist, elitist system to one which caters for all. Aotearoa New Zealand, like many other countries, has transformed higher education from serving an elite group of privileged citizens to massification, by increasing and widening enrolments (Leach, 2013). University applicants are becoming less traditional, with numbers of female students, working-class students, students with special needs, mature students, and students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds higher than ever before (OECD, 2012a). These groups of people are seen as 'non-traditional' because they have previously encountered more barriers when trying to enter the higher education system – be those gender-based, financial or cultural – and these barriers are not wholly historical (Marshall, 2016). Many university students who do not fit into the *traditional* category can still find it difficult to maintain all their responsibilities inside and outside of campus. The ethnic make-up of universities is constantly being scrutinised since a greater availability of global information is forcing the higher education system to become more diverse, in terms of both their student body and the scope of the courses on offer (OECD, 2015).

Globalisation has resulted in universities adopting a much more business-like approach to student recruitment. This corporate approach has altered the way that universities cater for their students. Students are now the client or customer, and large corporations also have their part to play in university life. The globalisation of the knowledge economy leaves the universities with little choice but to actively target international students as both a source of revenue and to meet expectations to be more global (Bolsmann & Miller, 2008; Stromquist & Monkman, 2000). The increase in international students has led to a change in recruitment practices which has, in turn, altered the economic, political, social and cultural fabric of modern universities (Brooks & Waters, 2011).

As a liberal state, neoliberalism began to prevail in New Zealand universities from the early 1990s onwards (Larner & Le Heron, 2005). In 2011, the Ministry of Education set goals for the next 15 years to support the development of International Education, including an aim to “double the number of international postgraduate students, particularly in programmes in addition to those at PhD level”, and to “increase the transition rate from study to residence for international students with bachelor’s level qualifications and above” (Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 7). By the end of the 2010s, and during the time of this study, universities in New Zealand had become conceptualised entities producing marketable educational products (Shore, 2015). This is illustrated by the fact that education was listed as New Zealand’s fourth most valuable export in 2017. Within the context of the service sector, education was the second most profitable commodity. A total of 32,000 jobs were being continually supported by the income generated by international students (Education New Zealand, 2017). The quest to boost revenue prompted universities to recruit substantial numbers of international students whose families enjoy a degree of affluence and who are able to finance tuition fees and other living costs in cities with a high cost of living from a global perspective. According to the latest statistics, the estimated annual costs that international students in New Zealand must cover are in the region of \$NZ18,000-\$27,000 depending on the area they live in, which includes the cost of accommodation, textbooks, food, travel, and a basic social life (New Zealand Education, 2021). Berno and Ward (2002, as cited in Marriott et al., 2010) concluded that, whilst 62% international students in New Zealand had expected to have sufficient funds to cover their time there, only 51% had been able to do so.

Butcher and McGrath (2004) indicated that some overseas students were opting to study in New Zealand because it had a reputation for being relatively inexpensive with favourable exchange rates and a high standard of living, while some overseas students struggled to pay for their daily life and their parents made financial sacrifices to support their studies in New Zealand. Others decided to study in New Zealand because it would enable them to refine their English language proficiency whilst concurrently studying for a degree. McKinlay (2002) has suggested that the overall costs of study are a major determinant for international students considering New Zealand as a destination.

In 2007, further research was conducted by Deloitte on behalf of the New Zealand Ministry of Education with the intention of identifying ways to support the country's international student population. The resultant report stated that 72% of international students were supported by their parents, with almost one quarter experiencing significant problems related to the payment of tuition fees (Deloitte, 2008).

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic closing the New Zealand border, the international student market contributed an estimated \$2 billion to New Zealand's economy in the 2018 calendar year, from over 110,790 international students (Education Counts, 2020b). Joyce and Woodhouse (2013) pointed out that the rather ambitious objective of the New Zealand Leadership Statement for International Education was to double the \$2.6 billion to \$5 billion by 2025. As Dr Michael Cullen, the former Labour Finance Minister reported, international education was crucial in terms of forging connections around the world, with positive consequences emerging for the quality of the education experience and research outcomes. One vital criterion was, therefore, thought to be the ability to attract the best students (Cullen, 2006). Government officials could not have predicted the impact of the pandemic on international travel and therefore the predictions regarding student numbers are unlikely to be realised.

In January 2006, the New Zealand government made some significant changes to immigration policy in order to attract international students onto Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) courses. Incentives included subsidizing tuition fees so that they are the same as domestic students and granting wider citizenship rights for these students, which included granting work rights once their studies were complete for both themselves and their partner. These attractive incentives produced the desired effect because the number of new international

students enrolled in doctoral level programmes more than doubled in 2006 (OECD, 2016). By 2017, with 46% of doctoral students coming from abroad, New Zealand had one of the highest proportions of international doctoral students in the world (OECD, 2017). The latest statistical data from the New Zealand Ministry of Education (2021b) shows an increase in international PhD students to 4885 in 2020, from 3135 in 2011, thus demonstrating a steady increase of 54% (Ministry of Education, 2021b).

The success in attracting international students, however, has also revealed underlying issues with regard to how foreign students adapt and acclimatise to university life in a foreign country. Despite international students enriching many of New Zealand's doctoral courses, the cultural barriers for students adapting to life in New Zealand sometimes result in greater challenges which can affect their overall social, health and academic achievements (Soong et al., 2015).

Though significant changes have been seen in New Zealand international education, the country still has a lot of progress to make (New Zealand Education, 2014). Interest in the experiences of students in New Zealand's higher education system began to increase from the 1990s. Researchers found that the export education sector in New Zealand is beset with multiple issues, including problems related to infrastructure, staffing, accommodation, capacity, the English proficiency of students, and student welfare (Campbell & Li, 2008; Kukatlapalli et al., 2020; Vu & Doyle, 2014; Ward, 2001; Zhang & Brunton, 2007). According to Ward's study in 2001, many international students underestimated the extent of the accommodation problems they would face. While 51% did not see accommodation as an issue, 70% went on to experience it as a problem. Acceptance by local residents was also a challenge, with 72% expecting to be fully accepted by the local people, and only 35% reporting that this had subsequently happened. Thus, the disjoint between anticipated acculturation and actual acculturation was significant, as manifested by the fact that, of the 91% of international students that had assumed that they would make friends with local people, only half were proven to be correct (Ward, 2001). The gap between the expectations of international students before they start their studies and the reality they experience once they arrive in their destination country is a worldwide phenomenon, which had been researched by the scholars across the world (Barron, et al., 2009; Yooyen, et al., 2011). The disjoint between expectations and reality is caused by the aggressive marketing of

universities to promote themselves and enhance their competitive position. Therefore, satisfying the requirements of international students on their arrival is more difficult and an analysis of the service provided, and their effectiveness should be prioritised by both education provider and the state in New Zealand.

Thus, the then New Zealand Education Minister, Trevor Mallard (2003), triggered a debate designed to revise and strengthen the existing Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students (Smith & Rae, 2006). New Zealand's first International Student Wellbeing Strategy was not produced until 2017 by a change in government and Paul Goldsmith, the then Minister of Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment. The Minister stated that the International Student Wellbeing Strategy “contributes to a vibrant and prosperous New Zealand, where international students feel welcome, safe and well” (New Zealand Education, 2017, p. 2). The strategy aimed to enable international students to be heard and considered when the government formulates policies and strategies (New Zealand Education, 2017).

While the previous National government was keen to promote internationalization, the current government of Labour, in power since 2017, has different priorities, one of which is to “close off backdoor immigration” via lower-level study and limit the numbers of international students in low-value courses (New Zealand Labour Party, 2017a, p. 3). According to the 2017 Election Policy on Immigration, Labour wanted to shift the focus of International Education back to ‘quality’ education, rather than education providing a shortcut path to immigration (New Zealand Labour Party, 2017b). Under the new policy, improving the quality of International Education by drawing together the expertise and improving the universities’ research ability is becoming prioritised, which encourages universities to pay attention to the experiences of international postgraduate students, especially those at PhD level. Currently, because of visa regulations, international doctoral students cannot hold a student visa if they choose to study part-time. There were 3,220 international doctoral students who were undertaking full-time courses. Half of the current international doctoral students are women, who account for 49% of the 4,885 international doctoral students in the eight public universities (Ministry of Education, 2021b).

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the experiences of all international students. Moreover, it has also had serious implications for host institutions, not least by highlighting their dependence on the revenue accrued from international students. These institutions can only remain viable in the future, therefore, if they bolster the support systems they provide for international students (Doyle et al., 2020). With this in mind, the New Zealand government recently announced its intention to devote \$51.6 million to the development of a strategic recovery programme for the nation's international higher education system (New Zealand Government, 2020). Prioritising the experiences of international students is not only a moral imperative, but also an economic one. Failure to do so will jeopardise the sustainability of the country's international education system, thereby depriving students, universities, and the national economy of multiple benefits, as acknowledged by the current New Zealand Education Minister, Chris Hipkins (Doyle et al., 2020).

However, the international PhD students who are also carers for dependent children are rarely considered in statistics and, as a result, it is difficult for the universities to understand their requirements and concerns and they are therefore largely ignored in research and policy making. According to Braxton (2000), universities have an obligation to support student-mothers and help them with their studies. As was highlighted earlier, most international doctoral students in New Zealand are women between the ages of 25-54 years old (Ministry of Education, 2021b), and many of them are also carers for dependent children. Encouraging the enrolment of international PhD-mothers improves diversity within the institution which can only be positive for all students. Well-supported students are far more likely to persevere with their studies if they feel supported by both their peers and the university as a whole (Austin & McDermott, 2003; Braxton, 2000; Gasser & Gasser, 2008; Huff & Thorpe, 1997; Jing & Mayer, 1995; Peltier et al., 1999). While there is information available relating to international doctoral students' experiences worldwide, and data obtainable on the experience of students simultaneously raising children, there are few studies that bridges the two – and no research specifically into international doctoral students who are also mothers with dependent children in New Zealand.

This study provides evidence for the New Zealand government and the universities to consider how they might establish relevant support networks for international PhD student-mothers who have dependent children. Identifying and reducing the challenges of this student

population would, not only attract more international students to come to New Zealand to study at doctoral level and improve the universities' international reputation, but also improve the quality of international education and attract more talented and skilled international students to stay in New Zealand after graduation and contribute to the country's prosperity.

In this research project, 17 international PhD student-mothers from a large university in New Zealand were invited to share their lived experiences of combining PhD studies and motherhood. The recruitment process was not as difficult as expected. On the contrary, many student-mothers were eager to have their voices heard. All the PhD student-mothers who attended this research's Provisional Year Presentation participated in this research directly. Koha ¹ was not used in the recruitment process of this research. There were several mothers who expressed their interest when they saw the recruitment flyer. The researcher also received emails from PhD student-mothers studying in other universities with their appreciation and best wishes for this research. Participants were asked to share their imperfect PhD journey while living away from their home countries, culture and family supports. The interviews were emotionally highly charged. There were tears, laughter, joy, confusion, and even regrets. The literature and research findings not only provide insights into the conflict of mothering and PhD study, as PhD student-mothers carry both guilt and gratitude while acknowledging the sacrifice that they make regarding motherhood and studying for a PhD abroad, but also present their gratifying experience of escaping or taking a break from the traditional gender role and being a role model of their children. The purpose of this thesis is to provide an insightful understanding of the lived experiences of PhD students who are also mothers in the context of a neoliberal university in New Zealand.

1.3 Research Questions

This research focuses on a particular group of students in one New Zealand university who do not traditionally garner much attention from academics. The research uncovers and makes visible the stories of this group drawing together key themes and ideas. The main question of this thesis is:

¹ Koha: a Māori term for a gift or donation

Main question

What are the lived experiences of full-time international doctoral students who are mothers with dependent children in New Zealand?

Sub-questions

1. How does their family composition affect their experiences?
2. How do their parental responsibilities affect their academic doctoral studies?
3. How do cultural backgrounds, religion and ethnicity impact the varying experiences of this group of students?
4. What role does gender play in their experiences?
5. What are the most enjoyable aspects of their experiences in New Zealand at the moment?
6. What are the challenges they have while studying in New Zealand?
7. What challenges and barriers to programme completion do they encounter when attempting to contest prevailing discourses regulating identity categories such as gender, ethnicity/religion and parental status in a neoliberal university?
8. How do they balance their family life with their academic life while studying in New Zealand?
9. How do they deal with their doctoral candidate role at home?
10. Do they more likely hide their motherhood role at university?
11. What does the support from their university or the government mean to them?
12. To what extent do their expectations of what it will be like to be a studying mother match their lived realities?

1.4 Proposed Structure of the Thesis

This chapter provides the background of tertiary education and international education in New Zealand. In light of this background, the chapter brings particular attention to female international PhD students with responsibilities for children and the statistics of this group of students. This chapter sets out the aims and rationale underpinning this thesis and briefly introduces the research participants and the recruitment process.

In Chapter Two, a comprehensive literature review details the most up-to-date research regarding international students and doctoral studies, mothers in academic life, as well as postgraduate and doctoral student-mothers. The evidence in the literature shows that gender

inequality puts more pressure on women in academia. While the second wave of feminism underlines all women's rights to prioritise their well-being, many women's lives are still influenced by gender imbalance and their family responsibilities. Combined with the literature, this study argues that international PhD student-mothers face a series of unique and persistent sets of challenges while studying abroad with their families. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the literature gap and the importance of this study.

Chapter Three describes feminist discourse analysis in conjunction with the characteristics of feminist scholarships (Acker & Wagner, 2019) and specifically Ahmed's work on 'Queer Phenomenology'. Ahmed's (2006a) theoretical perspective provides an interpretive framework for gaining a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of the international PhD student-mothers from the perspective of the participants. In addition, feminist discourse analysis encourages researchers to investigate sexual difference, a framework generated by gender discourse within specific contexts. In the context of this study of international PhD-mothers who have various nationalities and cultural backgrounds, feminist discourse analysis is particularly useful in placing the participants' voices at the centre of the research by highlighting the conditions of existence of this group of students in the neoliberal university context, exploring how they manage categories of identity related to gender, race/ethnicity, motherhood and PhD students, as well as honouring the narratives and stories the participants tell about themselves. This chapter introduces my participants whose voices will be interwoven throughout the thesis. A full account of the data-gathering approach and method is provided with an overview of the thematic analysis approach used to examine, (re)present and evaluate data.

Chapter Four is the first of the two findings' chapters. This chapter describes the results of the data analysis, which contain five significant themes. These are the pressure of living up to gender assumptions of the student-mothers; the split and guilt emotions associated with being a mother; the shame and loneliness as well as the sense of self-worth and joy they experience on their study journey. Harnessing Ahmed's (2004) theory of the affective, this study sets out to comprehend the links and relationships which exists for student-mothers between motherhood, gender and being a student – as well as the emotions they live through and their experiences. In so doing, this encourages and drives a debate on how international

PhD student-mothers can develop and thrive and the institutions' role in offering this group of students' valuable support.

Chapter Five presents the results from participants regarding the problem of accessing support. It highlights data on how PhD-mothers interact with the support structures available at the university, the issues they encounter, and times when they have failed to take advantage of, and engage with, the university's support structures. The data covers the institutional policies and procedures which have an impact on PhD student-mothers. The chapter examines four major themes: Childcare, Financial Support, Emotional Support and the support which supervisors offer PhD-mothers, whether informally or officially.

Chapter Six is the first discussion chapter. This chapter uses an intersectional approach to assess international PhD-mothers' stories and looks closely at how their migrant status affects their identities as students and mothers. In addition, this chapter signals the domestic gender dynamics in the context of New Zealand society. The first part of the chapter reveals views of gender and motherhood derived from the women's national or cultural backgrounds, and how these continue to affect and shape women and overlap with other beliefs they hold, which may come from their religion or ethnic traditions. The second part of the chapter evaluates the various shared and different pressures on international PhD student-mothers to find a balance between their family life and academic life in the context of their own culture and the norms which they brought with them to New Zealand.

Chapter Seven combines the data contained in the findings to outline the influence of neoliberalism on the experiences of international PhD-mothers. This chapter focusses on the intersection of neoliberalism with enacting gender, individualism, and neoliberal cultural expectation of PhD study and motherhood. Through this, the feminist discourse analysis is employed to bring to the gendered workings of neoliberal power to light. This chapter will also discuss the strategies they use to balance studying with their responsibilities as mothers, as well as gap between the PhD-mothers' needs and the lack of comprehensive, official information they can access at the university, which would go a long way towards helping them to meet their needs.

Chapter Eight offers a conclusion and sums up how this thesis contributes to the existing literature in this field. This chapter concludes with the affective factors on PhD-mothers' experiences in a neoliberal context, their engagement with the structures of neoliberal university life, the influence of the intersection between culture and motherhood on their experiences. Several tensions are highlighted within this study, including the gap between their needs as students and the current family-friendly provisions of the university. While the findings of this study cannot be generalised, the narratives of the participants in this study show complex and multi-layered societal, cultural and practical challenges and successes for international PhD students.

CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This research examines the experiences of international PhD students studying at a university in New Zealand. Specifically, the participants in this research were all mothers. Therefore, this study explores the obstacles and successes these students encountered during their overseas PhD study, outlining the factors shaping their experiences and the strategies they drew upon to establish an equilibrium between their domestic and academic lives. A significant amount of research about the experiences of student-parents has been done by scholars such as Baxter and Britton (2001), Quinn (2003), Archer et al. (2003), Williams (2004), Osborne et al. (2004), Moss (2006), Alsop et al. (2008), Lynch (2008), Mason (2009), Springer et al. (2009), Hodgetts et al. (2010), Wall (2010), Longhurst et al. (2012), Roberts (2013) and Brooks (2012, 2015), Maunula (2017), Kulp (2020), and Mirick and Wladkowski (2020). However, research into international students who are also mothers is rare. It is appreciated that there must be difficulties balancing student life with dependants, as acknowledged by McGivney (2003), but the fact is that universities are often not officially aware of an international student-mother who has dependants, despite there being a large number of international female students over the age of 25.

The current chapter comprises a review of literature with a particular emphasis on existing scholarship pertaining to mothers engaged in postgraduate and doctoral study. Thus, the review commences with an overview of literature relevant to international doctoral students, after which there is an examination of research into mothers engaged in academic life. This section then proceeds to evaluate existing research into the experiences of postgraduate and doctoral student-mothers and international PhD student-mothers in multiple national contexts in order to identify the challenges shared by members of these groups. In addition, the discourse that impacts the experiences of mothers engaged in academic life is also discussed.

2.2 International Students and Doctoral Studies

This section will discuss the previous significant research on the experiences and challenges of international doctoral students. Today's doctoral student is engaged in a highly competitive global higher education market, which has had significant changes over the last fifty years. The education marketplace for doctorate-level degrees is now generally much more challenging for all (Marginson & van der Wende, 2007; Nerad, 2010; Rizvi & Lingard, 2009). The routes into the doctoral study, along with the resulting career choices post-university, are subject to increased global competition, making it more difficult for individuals to succeed (Marginson & van der Wende, 2007; Nerad, 2010; Rizvi & Lingard, 2009; Wolfinger et al., 2009). This change is made all the more difficult for international students undertaking doctorate level education in a country that is not their own.

International students' experiences are unique, firstly because they often speak a different language and so their study language may not be their first, and secondly, because they have often arrived from differing educational backgrounds with different teaching and academic styles to their fellow students. These fundamental differences may impact the outcome or success of the international doctorate student because of the different types of teaching and research methods, alongside the more obvious language and cultural barriers (Evans & Stevenson, 2011; Gopi et al., 2020; Harman, 2003). A further detrimental factor, as was pointed out by Mehdizadeh and Scott in 2005, is the obvious strain that can be placed on a student when being far away from their families. The literature suggests that international students may feel more isolated and less integrated into student life when compared to some domestic students (Evans & Stevenson, 2011).

Gardner pointed out in 2007 that, in order for doctoral students to be successful, they had to fully engage with their studies and be determined to complete them, and both of these factors play a key factor in whether or not the student will successfully graduate at doctorate level (Gardner, 2007). Despite the unwavering perseverance of many international students to succeed, it can come at a price. Both stress and fatigue among doctoral students are high (Gardner, 2007). There are multiple factors and reasons behind this, as was highlighted by Casanave in 2008. Some of the wider challenges faced by non-English-speaking students

include a lack of cultural integration, misinterpretation of thought processes, misunderstanding of socio-political and personal integration, and difficulty with literacy-based exercises which need specific social and political knowledge. Other stresses include the overall academic requirements, unspoken assumptions, assumed rules of the game and their relationship with their supervisors (Casanave, 2008). These challenges can have a dramatic effect on doctoral students by making them feel like fish out of water (Casanave, 2008, p. 14). The many obstacles and challenges faced by the international doctoral student are numerous and complex. Tran (2013) stated that the "intercultural communications" between non-English background international students and their colleagues and supervisors present them with a complex network of challenges and obstacles. However, it does also provide them with a chance to change and develop through a process of self-determination and transformation within the academic institution.

Scholars have long since been aware of the difficulties faced by international doctoral students studying abroad. It is well known that differing social practices and language barriers can be problematic. However, Sato and Hodge (2009) discovered that the differences run a lot deeper than this and can be a lot more profound. Their study of 18 Asian PhD students who came from Japan, Korea, and Taiwan at two American universities revealed that there are more barriers being experienced by these students other than simple cultural and language barriers, such as "academic plight, mixed relationships, and emerging self-awareness" (Sato & Hodge, 2009, p. 136). In 2015, Campbell cited far-ranging implications for international doctoral students at another American university, the number one issue being family and family relationships. The study looked at the significance of family relationships and what bearing these had on the international doctoral students' adjustment to their academic and professional lives. It showed that many doctoral students are mature (aged 40 and over), and therefore family relationships play a significant role in their lives. Bilecen (2013) studied 35 international doctoral students at two German universities and highlighted the impact of identity issues on international doctoral students, where many of them tended to struggle with identity issues in their university lives, and he describes this as a process. He revealed that students adopted different personas in an attempt to reconcile the apparent differences between themselves and others throughout their studies (Bilecen, 2013).

Adopting a quasi-experimental research methodology, Nikula and Sibley (2020) examined the efficacy of academic preparation programmes devised to promote self-efficacy amongst international postgraduate students in New Zealand. The results emerging from their study indicate that, since international students come from diverse academic backgrounds and have different levels of self-efficacy, it is essential that education providers employ a more proactive approach to the promotion of acculturation. This can best be achieved via academic study skills programmes.

These studies have sought to address the questions of international doctoral students' challenges by focusing heavily on student progression and general student satisfaction based on their educational experiences. This has provided valuable insight into the direction of doctorate education globally, and macro-level data on international doctoral students. There have, however, been few studies into the individual, micro-level international doctoral student experience. There is a pressing need for more work to be conducted on family life and its impact on international doctoral students. There is much to understand on this subject, particularly in relation to how international doctoral students balance studying and working with the demands of the family, especially the dependent children, in a foreign country. More needs to be known about how international doctoral students adapt to these demands and how they make sense of all of these experiences in a rapidly evolving, interconnected world.

2.3 Mothers in Academic Life

One of the most interesting tensions associated with mothers in academic life is the question of the opposition between the autonomous and uncompromising nature of academic life and the nurturing, supportive qualities associated with motherhood. In this respect, both motherhood and academic life can be perceived as somewhat avaricious (Currie et al., 2002; Edwards, 2000).

The heavy workloads associated with academic life can be compounded by domestic responsibilities (O'Meara & Campbell, 2011; Wolfinger et al., 2009). Hence, there is increasing interest in the problematic nature of harmonising domestic life with academic obligations (Armenti, 2004; Bosanquet, 2017; Drago & Colbeck, 2003; Drago et al., 2006;

Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2014; Huopalainen & Satama, 2019; Mason & Goulden, 2002; Mason et al., 2005; Tower & Latimer, 2016).

The image of the successful academic is one wherein the individual devotes their efforts and time entirely to their university life in order to establish a clear career trajectory (Altbach, 2013; David et al., 1996; Goode, 2000; Heffernan, 2020; Locke & Wright, 2017; Mirick & Wladkowski, 2018; Poole & Bornholt, 1998) thereby, but also earning a reputation for diligence, single-mindedness, and enthusiasm, as manifest in multiple published works (Cerulo, 2016; Harris et al., 1998; Rawat & Meena, 2014). Moreover, academic devotion allows individuals to establish status through their body of research (Heward et al., 1997; Santos & Cabral-Cardoso, 2008), much of which is produced within the confines of reputable faculties (Luke, 1994; Rawat & Meena, 2014). This stereotypical successful academic is also presumed to favour research in preference to teaching, managerial, or pastoral roles (Bagilhole & White, 2008; Edwards, 2000; Goode, 2000; Locke & Wright, 2017). Furthermore, the research contribution made by academics is expected to be high at the outset of their careers (Barnard et al., 2021; Heward et al., 1997).

According to research into multiple occupations conducted by Drago et al. (2006), there is a correlation between being a primary caregiver and several career-related disadvantages, including diminished promotion prospects, lower pay levels, and negative peer evaluations. In academic contexts, this inequality is exacerbated by the prioritisation of research over teaching (Hobson et al., 2005). Since most academics commence their careers in their 30s, there is an unfortunate clash between the biological imperative of women wishing to have children and the timing of tenure opportunities (Hirakata & Daniluk, 2009). There is no explicit suggestion that the ideal successful academic is either a man or a childless woman, but the work of Maureen Baker (2010; 2012a; 2012b; 2016) points to the implicit forces that favour these categories of academics. There are multiple challenges that face mothers wishing to develop careers in academia. These include the assumption in some cultures that women should primarily devote themselves to domestic responsibilities. Academic women are obliged to interrupt their careers to have children. Consequently, they frequently find themselves relegated to low-status or part-time employment (Raddon, 2002). Mothers who remain in academia tend to have lower publication rates, have diminished access to promotion opportunities, and be less likely to be granted tenure in the US (Henkel, 2017; Hirakata &

Daniluk, 2009; Wolfinger et al., 2008). Hence, Eversole et al. (2007) have suggested that academic life is inherently anti-caregiver, with mothers being regarded as the least preferred type of employee.

The dominant narrative is that women must assume the principal domestic burdens, such as childcare. Nevertheless, rates of dual professional families are rising. Hence, more men are assuming responsibility for caring roles (Cooklin et al., 2014). Despite this, research by Wolfinger et al. (2008) has suggested that women still shoulder the heaviest physiological and psychological burdens in terms of childrearing, thereby impacting their academic careers. Thus, as noted by Wolfinger et al. (2008), women are more likely to be successful in academia if they either delay their families or opt to have no children. Research has shown, however, that mothers are more productive in academia than they believe (Aiston & Jung 2015; Dobebe et al., 2014). Women have the ability to make decisions over their career development, balance their caring responsibilities and academic career successfully while still enjoy their working life (Bosanquet, 2017).

Academic work has the advantage of flexibility, which is useful for primary caregivers. Nevertheless, many academics have expressed concern over decisions about taking family-related leave and postponing childbearing (Bosanquet, 2017; Nikunen, 2012). In other words, far from living up to its reputation as an egalitarian, family-friendly, and progressive workplace, the academic environment is a highly competitive, meritorious milieu where gender inequality prevails (Nikunen, 2012). Discrimination within academic environments is manifest in multiple ways, including the diminishing of female scholarship (Marschke et al., 2007), the presence of covert workloads (Clark & Corcoran, 1986; Park, 1996), overt hostility towards those who have children or act as primary caregivers (Colbeck & Drago, 2005), and reduced mentoring and career progression opportunities (Marschke et al., 2007).

According to Hochschild (1989), these women are obliged to shoulder a second shift, wherein they assume a disproportionate share of domestic and caregiving responsibilities in addition to their paid work. Research conducted by Macfarlane and Burg (2019) confirmed that female academics do more housework than their male counterparts, which inevitably encroaches upon the time available to pursue research interests. As noted by Goode (2000), most

research is conducted out of normal working hours. Hence, women invariably find themselves disadvantaged due to their other non-work or private sphere commitments.

Whilst men devote an average of 57 hours per week to combined work and domestic responsibilities. Their female counterparts are obliged to devote 80 hours to these obligations (Drago et al., 2006). The correlation between these findings and the unequal distribution of female scholars within the academic hierarchy is clear. As noted by both Probert (2005) and Strachan et al. (2011), far fewer women than men achieved the position of senior lecturer. According to the latest research by Walker et al. (2020), more senior positions were held by men in the eight public universities in New Zealand, with 64% to 69% of associate professors and heads of department and 74% to 81% of professors and deans between 2012-2017, while the majority of universities had equal proportions of female academics in 2017.

In addition, there is considerable evidence confirming the negative impact of childrearing, not least in relation to the period immediately following the end of parental leave (Hardy et al., 2018; Wolfinger et al., 2009). According to Samson (2002, as cited in Hardy et al., 2018), partnered women with pre-school children are more limited in their choices than women with dependants who attend school due to the associated need to make childcare arrangements. Nevertheless, O'Meara and Campbell (2011) have suggested that the onerous nature of parental responsibility persists for many years beyond infancy. Research conducted by Wolfinger et al. (2008) revealed that not only did many PhD recipients with young children opt not to seek tenure in the US, but also that there were scant opportunities for them to re-enter academia at a later stage (Wolfinger et al., 2009; Xie & Shauman, 2003).

Post-structural feminism suggests that whilst women are positioned by the dominant discourse, they can simultaneously engage in positioning by consenting to, opposing, or reshaping this discourse. Thus, as observed by Foucault (1972, 1977), power does not simply travel vertically in a downwards direction but also radiates in a complex and multifarious fashion. Raddon's (2002) research sought to examine the narrative surrounding mothers within academia, examining the way mothers are both positioned and engage in positioning. Thus, Raddon (2002) adopted a biographical approach wherein the daily experiences of an academic mother named Susan were explored in the context of discourse. The findings verified existing research that suggested female academics feel obliged to temporarily

disengage from their maternal roles in order to function effectively within an academic environment (Leonard & Malina, 1994). Raddon (2002) concluded that the fluid manner in which these discourses intersect generates challenges for mothers both within academia and in respect of their non-work subjectivities. However, they also contain the potential to empower women by enabling them to reimagine potential ways of being within academia (Raddon, 2002).

Schiebinger and Gilmartin (2010) have contended that the unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities is not an issue emerging from the academic environment. Rather, it is a private concern. According to Colbeck and Drago (2005), the problem of caretaker bias in academia and its resolution requires major shifts in existing institutional culture and policies related to work–family balance.

Universities have attempted to acknowledge the need to address work–family issues, as manifest in the widespread implementation of family-friendly policies, such as parental leave, stop-the-tenure-clock policies, and dual-career hiring initiatives. In addition, institutional support frameworks, such as childcare centres, have also been introduced (Quinn, 2010; Quinn et al., 2004). Nevertheless, research indicates that institutional-level commitment to family-friendly strategies remains insufficient (Friedman et al., 1996; Hollenshead et al., 2005; Huopalainen & Satama, 2019). Moreover, there is a clear need for policies that have been introduced to be subjected to regular evaluation. Universities should also engage in long-term appraisals of the impact of their family-friendly policies in respect of promotional prospects and tenure opportunities (Friedman et al., 1996; Hollenshead et al., 2005). There also remains an absence of institutional level appraisal of the fiscal and institutional obstacles to the creation of family-friendly environments (Friedman et al., 1996).

It has been suggested that many academics in the early stages of their careers are hesitant to exploit family-friendly policies because they fear the impact this might have on their tenure prospects (Lester, 2013; Mason & Goulden, 2004; Thompson et al., 1999; Williams et al., 2006). In other words, as noted by Umbach (2007), the social devaluation of women continues to be reflected in the academic workplace. Hardy et al. (2018), Ollilainen (2020) and Perna (2001) have suggested that gender-based workplace differentiation in academia is a product of the lower status attached to the academic fields, work roles, and institutions to

which female academics gravitate. Whilst many elite institutions have introduced family-friendly policies, research indicates a tendency for these universities to perpetuate so-called *ideal worker* standards within their institutional frameworks. Hence, family-friendly policies are not truly implemented in practice.

Existing research has clarified the challenges and barriers encountered by mothers in academia and illuminated how the inconsistencies in prevailing narratives about academic success and motherhood have prevented women from exploiting family-friendly policies at many universities. There is a clear need for further information regarding how PhD student-mothers address the challenges of academic life within the context of rapid international change.

2.4 Postgraduate Students Who are Mothers

Women encounter many challenges throughout their lives, the most significant of which perhaps is motherhood, which brings with it a whole new range of duties and responsibilities. According to some researchers, for example, Medina and Magnuson (2009), the 21st century has seen a rise in the complexity of issues encountered in motherhood, to a large degree due to the changing expectations about motherhood within modern society (Medina & Magnuson, 2009).

Hill Collins (1994) and Vincent et al. (2010) point out that expectations of motherhood differ between classes and ethnic groups. However, throughout western society, *intensive mothering* has become the key parenting style. Lynch (2008), Douglas and Michaels (2004) and Hays (1996) outlined how mothers are expected to devote significant time, energy and emotion to raising their offspring. Furthermore, they are expected to make personal sacrifices and show devotion (Arendell, 2000). Although both mothers and fathers are influenced by such parental expectations, women tend to be more affected since they have long been regarded as the primary caregiving parent within society, as Springer et al. (2009) have demonstrated. The European Values Study (2009) found that the assumption that women are best suited to caring for children continues to be prevalent in modern society, even though theories outlined by Bowlby (1953) regarding maternal deprivation were quashed long ago (European Values Study, 2009). According to Gewirtz (2001), such styles of parenting are

favoured by policy-makers and aim to re-socialise working-class families by universally integrating middle-class parenting styles.

The way that parents are viewed within postgraduate education is highly influenced by these differences in parental duties between men and women, whereby childcare is expected to be provided by the female parent. For example, a study by Baxter and Britton demonstrated that female partners of men who are fathers in education tended to be more accommodating to their partner's current needs, even though mothers in education were still expected by their male partners to maintain household chores and duties (Baxter & Britton, 2001). Similarly, a study by Alsop et al. found the traditional separation of labour impacted female students in that they themselves, and their families, expected them to remain the primary caregiver even while studying (Alsop et al., 2008). In the United Kingdom, researchers have found that student-mothers who are balancing parenting with studying were more inclined to feel guilty than student-fathers. The feeling of guilt amongst student-mothers is highlighted by the research of Brooks (Brooks, 2015). This is in accordance with the traditional expectation that women are inevitably responsible for childcare regardless of their educational constraints, while their male partners can remain exonerated from parenting duties. This gender difference means that student-mothers find themselves trapped between two policy fundamentals. They must better themselves academically so that they are always neoliberally employable (Roberts, 2013), but also must be exceptional mothers who are engaged with their children, thus always being there for them while maintaining successful studies (Brooks, 2013; Wall, 2010).

Complicated and continual restructuring of family relationships is necessary to maintain studies while being a parent. In 1999, O'Malley stated in the literature that as a result of her studying, she often had to try to ignore her children's existence (O'Malley, 1999, p. 29). Joan C. Williams (2004) explored the expectations of parents, and particularly mothers, and subsequently noted a *maternal wall* within education. One graduate mother was cited by Williams (2004) as saying that she does not act like she has children (Williams, 2004, p. 2).

While there is insufficient research about postgraduate students who are mothers in New Zealand, there are some significant studies focussed on the experiences of postgraduate student-mothers from the United Kingdom, America, Australia, and Denmark, which provide

valuable insight into the barriers and obstacles of a postgraduate student's life as a mother in tertiary education. Sue Webb (2001) conducted research into this area by documenting the stories and experiences of 1,145 students who entered further education in the United Kingdom in the 1990s. She found gender roles to be highly influential in accessing higher education, in that women with parental responsibilities tend to encounter obstacles with accessing education, whereas men do not (Webb, 2001, p. 52). Research by White (2004), who studied the gender differences between undergraduate and postgraduate courses across two universities in Australia, corroborates such findings. White found that the amount of time that female postgraduate researchers can dedicate to studying and their ability to be present at meetings and seminars is hugely affected by their personal responsibilities like parenting or looking after other family members. Furthermore, it was highlighted that opportunities for mothers to enter postgraduate study were limited due to financial restrictions associated with raising children (White, 2004, p. 238).

The provisions available to support graduate student-parents were investigated by Springer et al.'s (2009) study, wherein 63 sociology faculties across America were studied. Springer et al. (2009) documented their findings as demonstrating that parenting and studying together were incompatible. Furthermore, it highlighted individual student experiences. It outlined that some aspects of education, such as relationships with advisors, financial instability, inflexible schedules and doubts about future careers, were more difficult and complex for student-parents (Springer et al., 2009, p. 436). In this research, I will, therefore, discuss the differing experiences of parental responsibilities encountered by international doctoral student-mothers who are raising children in New Zealand. I will also investigate the impact this has on their academic doctoral studies.

Previous research in this field has documented the pressure felt by student-mothers to devalue their student identity while at home and focus on their maternal duties regardless of their education demands and studies. Lynch (2008, p. 595) conducted research in America, which identified the identity struggle experienced by student-mothers, as they seek to conform to cultural and social expectations to be good students and good mothers. She highlighted how student-mothers must adapt their lifestyles and approaches in such a way as to reduce the symbolic and traditional conflict between both roles. In order to feel like they are conforming to traditional expectations of being a hard-working and devoted student while

simultaneously being an energetic, attentive and financially secure mother, they must devalue their motherhood duty while studying and downplay their student role when not at university. This, however, according to Lynch (2008), causes overwhelming stress. Women were also found in a study by Dorothy Moss (2006) to be proactive in managing their time and space according to higher education demands. She asserts that women actively engage, combine and reorder activities in overlapping parts of their lives in order to facilitate more time and space (Moss, 2006, p. 3).

Accordingly, research by Rachel Brooks (2012) into 68 British and Danish university students also highlighted discord between academic and parental roles. She found that most student-parents were females, who, despite being dedicated students, saw their parental duties as their top priority. Furthermore, they regarded themselves as a parent much more so than as a student. The study did not see any significant changes in domestic roles, and the restructuring of family duties was found to be minimal (Brooks, 2012, p. 448). The same research into academic and family relationships suggests that women enjoy balancing both roles and devalue the importance of their studies at home in order to prioritise parenting duties regardless of study demands. There is thus clearly a discord between both roles, which student-mothers must endeavour to lessen.

Alsop et al. (2008, p. 630) suggest that the conflict between being a good mother and being a good student is still prevalent in modern society. They highlight that the familial advantages of succeeding academically facilitate the chances of simultaneously being a good mother and a good student. Having two separate narratives, one for society and one for themselves, allows student-mothers to manage their personal guilt. As highlighted in the previous section, according to Ollilainen (2020), academic environments are characterised by cultures of disembodiment wherein both professionals and students are expected to function only on a cerebral level, at the expense of the physical existence. This research project will, therefore, focus on how international student-mothers in New Zealand manage their student role and deal with their motherhood role during their doctoral study.

2.5 Doctoral Students Who are Mothers

Despite the fact that 54% of New Zealand doctorates are held by women (Ministry of Education, 2021b), female international doctoral students in New Zealand are invisible in the research, and even more so are those who have dependents. This section will focus on the primary academic research regarding the importance of parenting and family structures for doctoral students in higher education around the world.

The doctoral process is a demanding and lonely experience for all students (Cockrell & Shelley, 2019; Dickerson et al., 2014; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2006). However, these challenges are compounded for students who are also mothers due to the additional obstacles they must overcome. Most studies into the experiences of graduate students have explored the determinants of departure from or adherence to graduate programmes (Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2014). Hence, there has been only limited research into the factors that impact the capacity of female graduates to persist with their studies and achieve success at a doctoral level (McAlpine & Norton, 2006).

As highlighted in the first section of this chapter, the responsibilities of doctoral students stretch beyond assignments to external conferences, general administration, and extra work for supervisors (Springer et al., 2009). All of these expectations place the strain on the additional responsibilities of being a carer. Mason et al. (2013) have undertaken large amounts of research into the field of parents in academia. They suggest that university is not a conducive environment for raising a family with ease. Juggling the responsibilities of family life and academia can be difficult, and many female PhD students who are also mothers reported to Haynes et al. (2012) that they did not receive sufficient support from the university in the United States.

Within doctoral education, women with children often encounter additional barriers to programme completion, slowing down their progression or leading them to leave programmes altogether (Castelló et al., 2017; Gardner, 2009; Mason et al., 2013; McAlpine & Norton, 2006). These barriers include the balance of multiple roles and responsibilities (Castelló et al., 2017; Dickerson et al., 2014; McAlpine & Norton, 2006; Smith et al., 2006), childcare needs

(Brown & Watson, 2010; Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012), financial challenges (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012; Wao & Onwuegbuzie, 2011), institutional frameworks that fail to accommodate doctoral student-mothers (Springer et al., 2009), an academic culture that perpetuates gender imbalance (Drago et al., 2006; Mason et al., 2013), and the self-reproach that often accompanies the desire to achieve academic success in the context of maternal obligations (McAlpine & Norton, 2006). These all lead to different challenges for mothers than for other students (Carter et al., 2013).

Dickerson et al. (2014) proposed that the isolating and stressful character of doctoral study render it essential to identify the resources and competencies that enable students to persevere with their programmes. Evidence indicates that these resources include the presence of strong support networks, time management competencies, organisational skills, and resilient enthusiasm (McAlpine & Norton, 2006; Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). The existence of support beyond the confines of academia, as manifest in assistance from family, friends, and partners, has been shown to be critical to the ability to persevere (Adorno et al., 2015; Dickerson et al., 2014; Martinez et al., 2013; McAlpine & Norton, 2006; Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2014). There is even evidence that having a partner renders it more likely that students will complete their doctoral programmes (Lott et al., 2009).

However, another aspect of the gender-related challenges encountered by women during their doctoral studies comprises the possibility of relationship difficulties. Specifically, women engaged in doctoral studies often adopt more conventional relationships with their partners, not least because they are often financially dependent for prolonged periods (Lynch, 2008). In addition, the transformative potential of the status changes involved in completing a doctorate can impact the balance of power in a relationship and generate instability (Wall, 2008). Moreover, any disruption within personal relationships can impact the academic progress of women.

Academia remains a gendered milieu (Tower & Latimer, 2016). This effectively deters many women from openly expressing the problematic nature of combining parenthood with academic life (Armenti, 2004; Drago et al., 2006). The inherent bias against individuals who are caregivers means that women who share personal information about the challenges of

parenting (Armenti, 2004; Drago et al., 2006) may be perceived as lacking complete commitment to their professional roles and academic careers. This inevitably has negative implications for their prospects (Drago et al., 2005).

Many female academics opt to render their domestic lives invisible, not discussing the manner in which they harmonise their domestic commitments with their professional lives (Armenti, 2004; Drago et al., 2005, 2006). Major life events, such as ill health or the death of a loved one, can have enormous implications for the ability of students to complete their doctoral studies. Other events, such as the birth of a child or the loss of a pregnancy, are equally impactful (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). Balancing the demands of parenthood and academic life comprise one of the greatest challenges for many doctoral students (Brown & Watson, 2010; Castelló et al., 2017; Dickerson et al., 2014; Schriever, 2021; Smith et al., 2006; Washburn-Moses, 2008). Thus, the excessive demands of family life are often presented as a reason for departure from a doctoral programme (Beer & Lawson, 2017; Castelló et al., 2017; Gardner, 2009b; Lovitts, 2001). Whilst many mothers do manage to complete their doctoral studies, this requires not only dedication and diligence but also a willingness to make considerable sacrifices (McAlpine & Norton, 2006; Mirick & Wladkowski, 2020; Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012).

While research into the impact of parenting on doctoral study amongst international students is limited, some noteworthy research exists. The experience of pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood can be associated with additional stress for international graduate students who are obliged to negotiate the challenge of an unfamiliar culture and language (Zhang, 2021b). Whilst international study provides many opportunities for development, it should be assumed that students with elevated English language proficiency automatically possess the ability to transition seamlessly to another cultural milieu. In other words, the high academic English of international academics is of little use in situations where they are required to utilise the unfamiliar language of motherhood. This places them at a clear disadvantage when compared with their peers, who are native residents. This discrepancy in comparative experiences has been acknowledged by Lee and Hassett (2017), who observed that language does not comprise an objective process detached from the identity and objective of the speaker. Zhang (2021b) explores the on-campus and off-campus experiences of 11 international graduate students from China who were also first-time mothers in the US, the

objective being to determine how these women negotiated their identities as new mothers and navigated the intercultural and language of motherhood (Zhang, 2021b).

While it is clear that the lives of postgraduate and doctoral student-mothers have been examined in detail in the UK, America, Australia, and Denmark, there is limited research about student-mothers in New Zealand (Anderson, 2012; Longhurst et al., 2012), and there is no specific research relating to the international PhD-mothers in New Zealand so far. Thus, my study sets out to fill this research gap in order to increase understanding of the difficulties faced by this group of students.

2.6 Summary

In light of a comprehensive literature review, the present study argues that the most significant impediments faced by international doctoral students include language barriers, culture shock, unfamiliarity with academic environments, identity issues and family factors, while the student-mothers face a unique set of ongoing challenges exacerbated by the students' living situation. There is evidence from both counselling literature and academic scholarship that gender imbalances, such as those associated with unequal domestic responsibilities, subject women to stress. Although second-wave feminism has stressed the right of all women to prioritise their own welfare and aspirations, in reality, the lives of many women remain shaped by the domestic responsibilities and the needs of others.

Among the challenges faced by the postgraduate student-mothers in academic are the need to balance academic and childcare obligations, the difficulties in balancing study with the financial rigours concomitant with supporting their children, and lack of financial and emotional support.

As highlighted earlier, particular attention needs to be paid to the doctoral student-mothers with responsibilities for children, with research into this area sadly lacking, as was highlighted by Lynch in 2008 and Trepal et al. in 2014. The literature available tends to focus primarily upon domestic doctoral student-mothers, with minimal research having been conducted on the experiences of international doctoral student-mothers, especially those who have dependent children. This group of students has different challenges compared to their

domestic peers. In an attempt to address this gap, this study explores the experiences, successes and barriers of student-mothers as doctoral candidates while they study abroad, and the methods cited by them as being useful in managing their lifestyle as both mothers who have dependent children and international PhD students in New Zealand. This study makes a significant contribution to the literature on the challenges and barriers faced by international PhD student-mothers at their academic journey in New Zealand – a research area which has not yet been investigated.

Chapter THREE – METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study's research methodology and comprises a detailed, subjective account of the qualitative research journey of this thesis and the strategies employed therein. Specifically, this thesis examines the challenges, successes and barriers encountered by international PhD student-mothers in New Zealand, with a focus on affective factors, cultural influence and student interactions with the university's support structures. Feminist discourse analysis was selected as the most suitable methodological approach because the objective of this thesis is to explore the lived experiences of an invisible group of students who come from different cultural and national backgrounds in the neoliberal university context. The current chapter commences with an overview of feminist discourse analysis, which is followed by a detailed presentation of the relevant stages involved in this research, in addition to providing a comprehensive explanation of the research design and planning. Furthermore, this chapter includes a complete description of the data collection and analysis methods, including the procedures employed to represent the relevant data and introduces each of the participants.

3.2 Theoretical framework and Methodology

Defining feminist scholarship as having the following characteristics, Acker and Wagner (2019) state that feminist scholarship places women and gender at the centre of analysis, undermines unequal power relationships, strives to improve women's lives, emphasizes participation and reflects on researcher positionality and reflexivity. As a feminist qualitative researcher, an important objective of this study was to improve the quality of life of international PhD mothers. Accordingly, it is crucial that this research emphasizes valuing the voices of the participants and showcasing their own individual narratives, along with breaking down unequal power structures to improve these women's lives and PhD experiences. In particular, this study sought to understand how these women's real-life experiences differ, how gender shapes their lives, and how parental responsibilities, cultural backgrounds, religion, ethnicity and other influences shape their experiences. Consequently, this study

greatly depends on the real-life experiences, opinions, and perspectives of the participants in order to provide answers to all these questions. Therefore, in accordance with the definitions of Acker and Wagner (2019), all the characteristics of feminist scholarship are valued in this research, but the voices of the participants continue to be the driving force behind this research.

Further, a theoretical perspective derived from Ahmed's work on *Queer Phenomenology* (Ahmed, 2006a) was utilized as an interpretive framework for understanding the lived experiences of the international PhD student-mothers through the perspectives of participants. As Ahmed (2006a) explained in her discussion on phenomenology and the relationship between the subject and object, orientation refers to "how we come to find our way in a world that acquires new shapes" and that "to be oriented is also to be turned toward certain objects" (p.1). According to Ahmed's (2006a) phenomenological framing, an international PhD mother is an international PhD student with a constrained role as a mother, which emphasized the importance of "nearness or what is at hand" in the decisions taken by bodies (p.2). To put it another way, bodies are in intentional relationships with other objects, but the object they form relationships with depends on where they are situated and what they are closest to. As a consequence, this study assumes that PhD-mothers tend to orient themselves within the neoliberal academic environment and according to societal stereotypes of PhD students and mothers. Furthermore, Ahmed (2006a) provides a dynamic perspective on orientation, arguing that bodies are capable of reorientation (p.19). In this study, the lived experiences of international PhD mothers in New Zealand were explored, with a view to understanding which forces may reorient or redirect these mothers' experiences.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that both concepts- *voice* and *experience*, are contested. It is common practice in conventional, interpretive, and critical approaches to qualitative inquiry to privilege voice as a way to uncover consciousness and experience (Mazzei & Jackson, 2012). According to some feminist viewpoints, particularly liberal and radical feminist perspectives, and almost undoubtedly phenomenological feminist researchers as well, regard women's experience and voice as unquestionably 'true' and 'real'. Mazzei and Jackson (2012) asserted that qualitative researchers are trained to emphasize the authentic voice, to 'free' the voice from whatever blocks it from emerging and speaking the truth about oneself. To acknowledge the primacy of the voice in conventional qualitative research, the task of making voices heard

and understood, creating meaning and self-consciousness, and reaching transcendental and universal truths embodies this desire.

Conversely, the Marxist, post-structural, and new materialist views think those experiences and voices are shaped by either false consciousness or deep (social) structure of discourse, or by molar and molecular forces and so may be pulled apart and reimagined and disrupted. Various methodologies have been developed to combat the problem of voice in conventional, interpretive, and critical qualitative research (Jackson, 2003). Eventually, researchers began to realize that their texts created abstracted realities and that readers 'hear' the informants- enabling them to "hear the exact words (and occasionally, the paralinguistic cues, such as pauses, stops, starts, reformulations) of the informants" (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 209). Mazzei and Jackson (2012) argued that in spite of the realization that voices are not singular, the obsession with greater voices ignores what is considered to be a more salient issue: the practices persist in retaining metaphysical notions of voice - as the present, stable, authentic, and self-reflective, while the voice is still there to be found, retrieved, and liberated. In this research, as a feminist researcher, I valued the voices of the PhD student-mothers as the driving forces of this study and attempted to reclaim and liberate their voices.

The origins of discourse analysis do not lie in any research methodology, like grounded theory and ethnography. Instead, discourse analysis evolved from critical assumptions related to not only how humans think and acquire knowledge but also to the potential of humans to be (Jones, 2018). Foucauldian perspectives suggest that discourses comprise defined practices, including social conduct, knowledge forms, the ways in which individuals experience the self, and the power relations pervading all these processes (Weedon, 1987). It becomes possible to perform a denaturalising critique via discourse analysis, thereby facilitating the examination of the normalisation and categorisation of identity, the exploration of the concomitant reproduction of power relations, and the potential disruption of these processes. In other words, discourse analysis promotes reflection amongst academics and professionals as to the discursive contexts relevant to their own practices (Jones, 2018).

Feminist discourse analysis prompts researchers to examine sexual difference, a framework generated by gender discourse within specific contexts. That is, the statement that "I am a woman", with the corollary "You are not", indicates that gender discourse is constructed by,

not only how we regard ourselves as gendered, but also by the manner in which we discuss gender, our actions, our relevant knowledge, and the impact of gender in respect of power relations. The impact of language and the importance of meaning depending on the way we use it is omnipresent and inescapable (Bergström & Knights, 2006). In the context of this study of PhD-mothers who come from different national and cultural backgrounds, there are contested existing discourses in relation to how they manage identity categories pertaining to the correlation between gender, race/ethnicity, and identities as mothers and PhD students. They also accept the reality that they are simultaneously limited by these discourses within which they are located. With feminist discourse analysis, this research aims to emphasise the voices of participants and the lived experiences of this group of students in the context of the neoliberal academic community, as well as to honour their own stories and narratives.

Central to feminist discourse analysis is the tenet that data, as manifest via interviews or documents, exist within defined geographical, political, and historical situations (Jones, 2018). In light of the neoliberal background of New Zealand, the following qualitative research questions have been formulated in this research: How do their family composition, parental responsibilities, cultural background, religion and ethnicity affect their academic doctoral studies, and what role does gender play in their experiences? To further these questions, how are gender, maternal, and ethnic differences constructed within the neoliberal university discourses? What challenges and barriers to programme completion do international PhD student-mothers encounter when attempting to contest prevailing discourses regulating identity categories such as gender, race/ethnicity/religion and parental status? The methodology related to feminist discourse analysis, as employed in the current research, is further illuminated in the following sections.

3.3 Design and Data Collection

The principal intention of this research is to explore the challenges and barriers of international PhD-mothers whilst engaging in their doctoral studies in New Zealand and how they balance their roles as PhD students and mothers whilst completing their studies. Given that this study stresses meanings and interpretations, it was necessary to encourage participants to narrate their lived experiences, with a detailed thematic analysis being employed to extract speculative interpretations. By giving PhD-mothers the voice to articulate

their perspectives, it was possible to arrive at a more profound appreciation of their experiences.

3.3.1 Research Participants

The research population in this study consisted of international PhD student-mothers who have dependent children, from the first to the final year, all of whom were doing full-time study at a university in New Zealand. Locating the research participants was expected to be difficult and necessitated the implementation of three recruitment strategies at the beginning. Moreover, it was necessary to be flexible and to modify plans as required. The first recruitment strategy involved establishing contact with the faculty admissions, the International Office as well as the School of Graduate Studies, all of whom might have access to relevant databases of PhD students. Despite email responses expressing interest in the project, ultimately, little assistance was provided by any of these three sources.

Fortunately, the participant recruitment was not difficult as originally expected. This study provided an opportunity for the PhD-mothers who wanted to talk and share their stories. Four mothers who attended the Provisional Year Presentation of this research's proposal expressed their willingness to participate in the research directly after the presentation. In addition, a second strategy was adopted to recruit participants. A flyer was designed and distributed, calling for volunteer participants (see Appendix A). Specifically, the flyer incorporated sufficient basic information about the research to ensure that only those prospective participants who were eligible for, and interested in, the research would offer their time. The flyers were designed to attract the attention of potential participants and persuade them to engage with the researcher. This design was approved by The Human Participants Ethics Committee (approval number 019113). It was published within the weekly Postgrad News of the University of Auckland. In addition, several hard copy flyers were printed and placed on university noticeboards around the campuses. Five PhD-mothers contacted the researcher and expressed willingness to participate. The third recruitment strategy was based on the snowball strategy, a word-of-mouth approach. The participants who have already been recruited disseminated information about the project amongst their friends and colleagues. Thus, the peer recruitment strategy proved particularly efficacious, and an additional eight

participants were acquired. After two months of recruitment, 17 international PhD student-mothers agreed and participated in an individual 90-minute, semi-structured interview.

Once the 17 participants were identified, they were all supplied with written information about the study via email. The forms required by the Ethics Committee of the University of Auckland, "Consent Form for Students" and "Information Sheet for Students as Participants" (see Appendix B), were distributed. In addition, participants were encouraged to take time to consider the implications of their voluntary participation. However, no participant required additional time to consider. Each participant provided their signed informed consent and retained a copy of the information sheet for their own personal records. All the participants' names presented in this research are pseudonyms.

Introducing the Participants

Niro is a second-year PhD student who comes from Sri Lanka. She is 33 years old and has a five-year-old daughter. She was also 19 weeks pregnant when we had this interview. She is a Buddhist by birth. Niro came to New Zealand with her husband and daughter for her PhD study in 2016. Her brother-in-law was also living with them in Auckland. She attended this research's proposal presentation (called a PYR – Provisional Year Review) and volunteered to participate after the presentation.

Audrey is also a second-year PhD student. She is a single mother who comes from Hong Kong, China. She came to New Zealand with her two children. The older one is in high school, and the younger one is in primary school. The first thing that attracted her to New Zealand was the domestic tuition fees for PhD students and her scholarship. Audrey showed her gratitude during the interview. She was very grateful for her study experience in New Zealand, even though she also encountered time limitation barriers and insufficient childcare support.

Claudia is a fourth-year PhD student who comes from Mexico City, Mexico. She is 42 years old and a single mother with three children, a 16-year-old boy and 14-year-old twins (a girl and a boy). She grew up in a Catholic culture but is not a practising Catholic. She came to New Zealand with her three children for her PhD study in 2014. Like Niro, Claudia has also

attended the PYR presentation of this research. Claudia talked most of the time during the interview without many guided questions. She shared her struggles, challenges, barriers, regrets, gratitude, and joy in the interview, along with tears and laughter. Claudia expressed her appreciation of this study. She felt this interview was like counselling for her, and she was happy that finally there was someone who would like to hear her voice, that of being a PhD-mother.

Isabella is a first-year doctoral student who comes from America. She is 45 years old and has two children. The older one is a boy who is ten years old, and the younger one is a girl, three years old. She is a Catholic and from a middle-class background in America. She came to New Zealand with her husband and two children for her PhD study in 2016. Isabella was attracted by the research flyer and emailed me. She talked a lot about her struggles, barriers and regrets during the interview. Like Claudia, Isabella was also happy to have this opportunity to voice her unpleasant experiences.

Emma is a third-year PhD student who comes from China. She is 31 years old. She came to New Zealand with her husband in 2015. Emma got pregnant during her second year of PhD study. Her 15-month-old boy was born in New Zealand. Emma was introduced to this research by her friend. The interview with Emma happened in a café. We shared lunch and talked as friends.

Amy is a fourth-year PhD student. She comes from a small village in China. She is 37 years old, married, and has an eight-year-old boy living with her in Auckland. She came to New Zealand alone for her PhD study in 2014. Her son joined her in 2015. Her husband was still working and living in China when this interview happened. Before the PhD study, Amy was a lecturer in China.

Tessa is also a fourth-year PhD student. She is 40 years old and comes from Indonesia. She is a Muslim mother who has two children. Her son is 14 years old, and her daughter is 10. She used to be a senior lecturer in a private university in her home country. She has three different experiences as an international PhD student-mother, which include the time that both of her husband and children were in New Zealand with her, the time that only her children stayed in New Zealand with her and the time that she was in New Zealand alone. Like

Claudia, the interview of Tessa flowed without requiring many questions as her story just answered the questions.

Andy is a third-year PhD student who comes from China. She is 36 years old and doing her doctoral study with her 7-year-old daughter alone in New Zealand. Before her PhD study, Andy was a senior lecturer in China. Without her husband's support in New Zealand, her parents would fly a long way from China to help her with the childcare if they could. The interview with Andy was also in a café. At the beginning of the interview, Andy followed the questions one by one with straightforward answers until we started to talk about the childcare centre and her role as a mother.

Claire is a third-year PhD student. She is a Christian, 28 years old and comes from Colombia. Claire came to New Zealand to do PhD study with her husband four years ago. Her baby boy was born in New Zealand during her study. Without any family support, she takes care of her child all by herself. Claire contacted me after she saw the research flyer. The interview time changed several times because of Claire's busy schedule. During the interview, Claire shared her struggles, challenges, as well as strategies.

Ella is a fourth-year PhD student who comes from China. She came to New Zealand with her husband and son in 2014. Her daughter was born in New Zealand during her PhD study. Ella got Permanent Resident Visa status because of her husband. Her mother always comes to New Zealand to help her with childcare.

Mila is a fourth-year PhD student from Korea. Like Ella, she also came to New Zealand with her husband and child in 2014. Her husband passed away before she started her PhD study. At the time of the interview, Mila and her 9-year-old child were living with her sister. She is also working as a research assistant at the university. Mila is the only participant in this research who obtained Permanent Resident Visa by herself during her PhD study. The interview with Mila was gentle and relaxed.

Olivia is also a fourth-year PhD student who comes from China. Before she started her PhD study in New Zealand, Olivia was a lecturer at a university in China. She has a nine-year-old daughter. Olivia came to New Zealand alone for her study in 2017 when her daughter was

five. The girl joined her mother for a year and went back to China. During most of Olivia's PhD study, her daughter was staying at home in China with her grandparents. Olivia shared her experiences, motivations, challenges, regrets, struggles and also reflections of her decisions during the interview.

Monica is a third-year PhD student who also comes from China. She was pregnant when the interview happened. She is 34 years old, married and already has a four-year-old daughter. Monica came to New Zealand alone and left her daughter, who was only one, at home with her husband and grandparents in 2015. In 2016, she picked up her daughter when everything settled. Her husband was also doing his PhD in China. He came to New Zealand and visited them once a year. Because of the pregnancy, Monica's parents were staying with her to support her. Monica was introduced to this study by her friend. In the interview, Monica shared tears, self-deprecation, and also encouragement.

Ray is a first-year PhD student who comes from Belarus. She is Christian and 36 years old. She came to New Zealand with her husband two and a half years ago. They have two children, one is 11 years old, and one is nine. Before her PhD study, Ray also did postgraduate study in New Zealand. Because of accommodation issues, she also had to send her children back to her home country for a while until she settled down. Ray was attracted by the research flyer and emailed me. The interview was fluent and relaxed at her faculty building.

Serena is a second-year PhD student who comes from China. She is 32, married and has one child. She came to New Zealand with her husband first without their child. They picked up the child three months later when everything was settled, including accommodation and her child's kindergarten. The interview happened in a small café with laughter.

Winnie is a fourth-year PhD student who also comes from China. She is married and has one child. She came to New Zealand with her child in 2014, while her husband was still working in China. Winnie took care of her child by herself for most of the time of her PhD study. Her parents would come to help her during the validity of her visiting visa. The interview with Winnie took place during a long walk on a sunny afternoon.

Xiaoyan is a second-year PhD student who comes from China. She is 39, married and has a 10-year-old child. She came to New Zealand with her husband and child in 2016. Xiaoyan was the first participant who contacted me via the research poster. The interview happened in a café. Xiaoyan shared her experiences, motivations and challenges in this interview.

In summary, there were 17 international doctoral student-mothers who came from nine different countries and regions who participated in this research. Ten of the students were from China, while the other seven came from Sri Lanka, Mexico, Columbia, America, Indonesia, Belarus and Korea, respectively. In terms of age, 11 participants were in their 30s, with four participants in their 40s, while two participants did not specify an age. In terms of religion, two of the participants identified as Catholic, two identified as Christian, with one participant each identifying themselves as Muslim and Buddhist. The other participants did not state their religion. Across the group, 12 were married, two were pregnant, and two of them were taking care of their children alone in New Zealand at the time of the interviews. Two used to be living alone with their children in New Zealand before the interviews but had since been joined by family. Three identified as single mothers living alone with their child/children, and one did not specify her marital status.

3.3.2 *Semi-structured Interview*

The study was envisioned as an opportunity for the researcher to initiate conversations with research subjects, after which the narratives provided by the participants could be evaluated as the primary sources of data. The method for gaining insights into the experience of the participants was an individual, semi-structured interview of up 90 minutes' duration with 17 participants. According to Wellington (2015), richer data can generally be elicited from a qualitative interview than from other research methods. In the interviews for this research project, there was no intention on the part of the researcher to amass accounts or perspectives that could be deemed representative. Rather, the aim was to collect information about a range of opinions and voices of PhD-mothers articulating their own lived experiences. The semi-structured interview format employed in this study shaped the manner in which the discourse was constructed, not least in respect of the locating of the participants within discursive areas.

The interviews were designed to replicate a two-way conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee, thereby permitting participants to recount their experiences in their own words (Wellington, 2015). The open-ended questions that typically occur within semi-structured interviews are a valuable means of generating qualitative data. Hence, this approach is often preferred by educational researchers since it is both flexible and amenable to in-depth inquiry (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989). According to Smith (2008), this approach to interviews promotes dialogue wherein questions can be adapted in accordance with previous comments by participants, thereby allowing interviewers to explore promising themes as they manifest during the interview (Smith, 2008).

In the current research, the interview questions were modified as new possible areas of interest appeared. This necessitated amendments to the interview schedule (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Thus, the original interview schedule was changed on more than one occasion, with updates intended to incorporate more in-depth questioning or clarification. These changes were made progressively as required following discussions with the supervisors. Initially, the questions focused on the childcare challenges and conflicts with their studies facing PhD-mothers. However, mid-way through the data-collection process, the focus shifted to their perspectives on motherhood and being *good* PhD students, in addition to the need to balance academic life and family life in accordance with neoliberal perspectives.

During the interviews, both verbal and non-verbal communication styles were employed by the researcher to indicate active listening during the interviews. Initially, the interaction was somewhat formal because the participants did not know the researcher. However, communication became more relaxed and harmonious as the researcher gave her own background as a PhD-mother and thereby facilitating a more open and honest relationship between the participants and the researcher wherein all could share experiences and struggles pertaining to motherhood. This sharing served to eradicate any remaining communication tensions. The researcher concentrated on how to form relationships with the participants, as they came from various cultural backgrounds and, more importantly, they felt comfortable to share knowledge and information about their personal stories and family lives.

Empathy and sharing are important when attempting to establish rapport (Taylor et al., 2015). In the context of this research, establishing rapport proved comparatively unproblematic

because participants were prepared to share honest accounts of their experiences thereby facilitating the acquisition of more profound insights. Nevertheless, the diversity of cultural background amongst the research participants was likely to present issues because the participants might have attitudes and experiences at variance with the researcher's own perspectives. Moreover, the participants might attribute a different meaning to conduct or values in a multitude of areas (Constantin et al., 2015).

In order to understand these differences and to ensure that the planned research would be effective and amenable to all concerned, the researcher was obliged to demonstrate a degree of cultural awareness. For example, in this study, careful note was taken of the physical distance the interviewees place between themselves and the researcher, the manner in which they initiated greetings, their evident willingness to respond to certain questions, the length of time taken to respond to some queries, and the presence or absence of physical contact or eye contact. Thus, by monitoring this behaviour, the researcher was able to introduce behavioural modifications accordingly. Emphasising and reiterating key concepts, such as "confidential", "right to drop out", "pass questions," and "contact supervisors in case of any issue", was important in order to ensure that the participants felt comfortable about talking openly during the research process. Moreover, throughout the entire data-collection process, the treatment of the participants was predicated upon the assumption that they are experts in possession of valuable information from which the researcher wished to learn. Establishing and sustaining amicable relationships with the participants was prioritised. This included sharing advice, humour, and sadness. In addition, it was essential to demonstrate flexibility regarding the interview schedules and to change appointments if necessary, as the participants in this research had extremely busy lives and home and childcare duties. The researcher focussed on gaining insights into how participants were able to make sense of their lives, a process that improved with each successive interview.

3.4 Data Analysis

The preliminary phase in the data-evaluation process comprised the acquisition of familiarity with the data. Thus, the interviews were transcribed as soon as the interviews were completed. This task required the researcher to take crucial value decisions regarding the level of detail to be included. The initial decision to employ verbatim transcription required

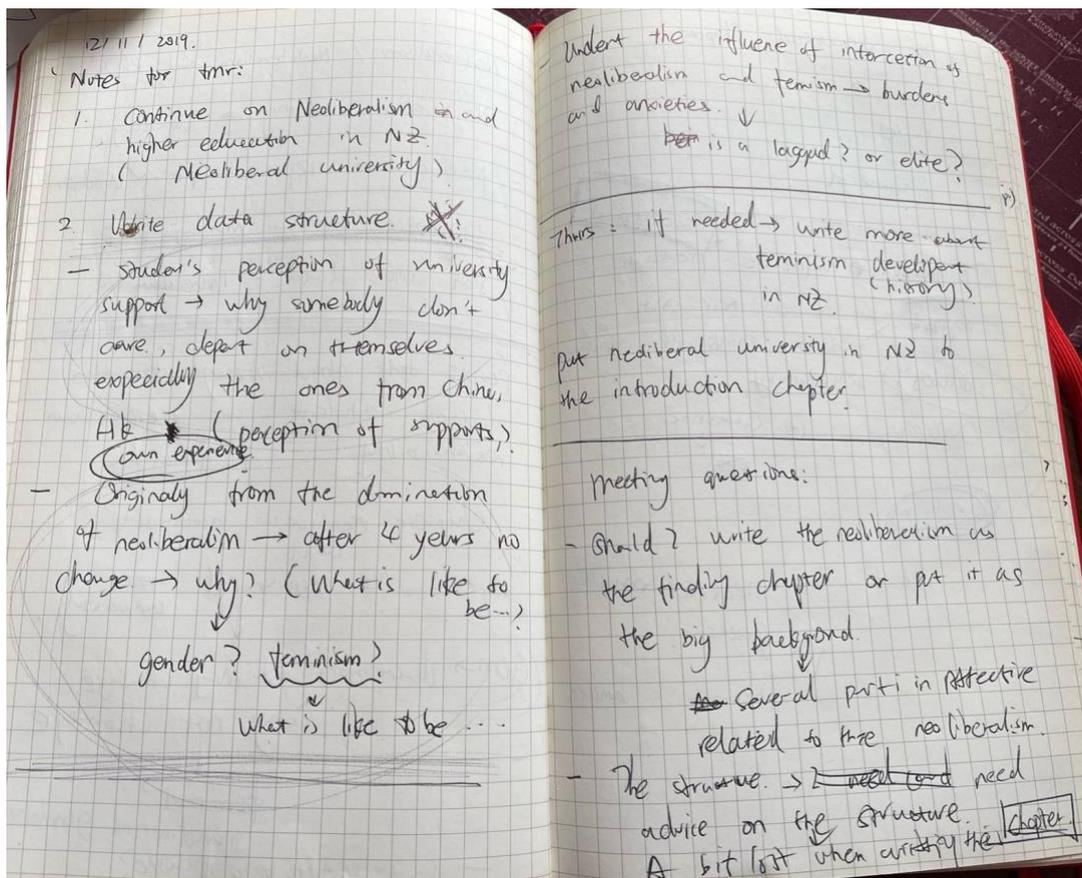
every word of the interviews to be transcribed (Poland, 1995), thereby transforming spoken words into text in a manner that also captures *how* the words were spoken. Thus, other variables, including emotions, were incorporated into the transcription in order to secure insights into participant perceptions. This strategy was adopted in order to render the data more credible. Moreover, it was also motivated by the presumption that, since the interviewees have given their time to present their experiences, these accounts should be accurately represented.

The original plan of transcribing the audio-recording was seeking assistance from an agency on the researcher's behalf. However, the researcher decided in the end to transcribe all the interviews without any additional assistance. Whilst this was a challenging process, it rendered it possible to generate initial reflections on the content and to identify common themes in the interviews. Moreover, it also resulted in the identification of themes that had not previously been considered.

All the transcriptions had been provided to the participants for review and comment. The participants had three weeks in which to return transcripts to the researcher. After the transcription process had been completed, the information was read through on multiple occasions in order to ensure complete familiarity with the content. Moreover, the transcripts were examined in the context of the research questions and any preliminary discursive frameworks. Reiterative reading of the transcripts allowed the researcher to acquire greater proximity to the experiences and perceptions of the participants, thereby providing insights into meanings ascribed to the events recounted in the interviews. Appreciation of the content increased with each re-reading (Mills & Morton, 2013).

The coding process employed an inductive approach in this research. The analysis is “driven by what is in the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p, 58). The principal intention of this research was to explore the lived experiences of international PhD-mothers whilst engaging in their doctoral studies in New Zealand and how they balance their roles as PhD students and mothers whilst completing their studies. This study stresses meanings and interpretations, and it was important to encourage participants to narrate their lived experiences by giving PhD-mothers the voice to articulate their perspectives. Thus, the codes and themes of this thesis are derived from the content of the data itself (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

However, Braun and Clarke (2012) also argued that a purely inductive approach is impossible, as when we analyze data, we always bring something to the data, and we need to know whether it is worthwhile coding for data that aligns with the research question. In order to identify the information requiring wider discussion, a series of analytical memoranda were produced before and during the data analysis to determine the information requiring more comprehensive discussion and the development of written revisions. The memos were predicated upon interpretive writing, including research diary entries, the key quotes from the transcripts, and findings from the literature review identified during the creation of the research proposal. This information included preliminary findings, possible themes, reflections on the research design, theoretical underpinnings of the study, and any subsequent steps in the research. These works were explored in conjunction with the research supervisors, with feedback utilised to develop written revisions. The photograph below shows the example notes from one of the analytical memoranda:



Instead of following the strict line-by-line coding with codes categorised before being organised into themes and sub-themes, the data analysis process employed reflexive

thematic analysis to reflect the researcher's perception of the reflexivity, creativity and subjectivity of qualitative research. The subjectivity of the researcher was a resource (Gough and Madill 2012) rather than a potential threat to knowledge production (Braun and Clarke, 2019).

From capturing the richness of participants' experiences to communicating findings, language is central to the research process (Lopez et al., 2008; van Nes et al., 2010). As a gateway to culture, language is also about understanding and producing meaning, describing and constructing a view of people and the world they live in (Temple, 1997, 2005). Ten participants came from China and their first language was Mandarin. As an international PhD student-mother who also came from China, the researcher also experienced cross-language research with data collection, interpretation and analysis (Squires, 2009). In the data collection stage, all the interviews were conducted in English. However, sharing the same native language gave the privilege to the researcher and participants to share some feelings and ideas in their native language. Some Chinese words were recorded in the research diary, translated in the re-coding process and merged into the code category. The photographs below show the example code/key quote in Chinese from the analytical memoranda:

Neoliberal. → effective ^{economy}

↓

motherhood. ideology.
independence.

self - care
↓
individualism.
guilty.

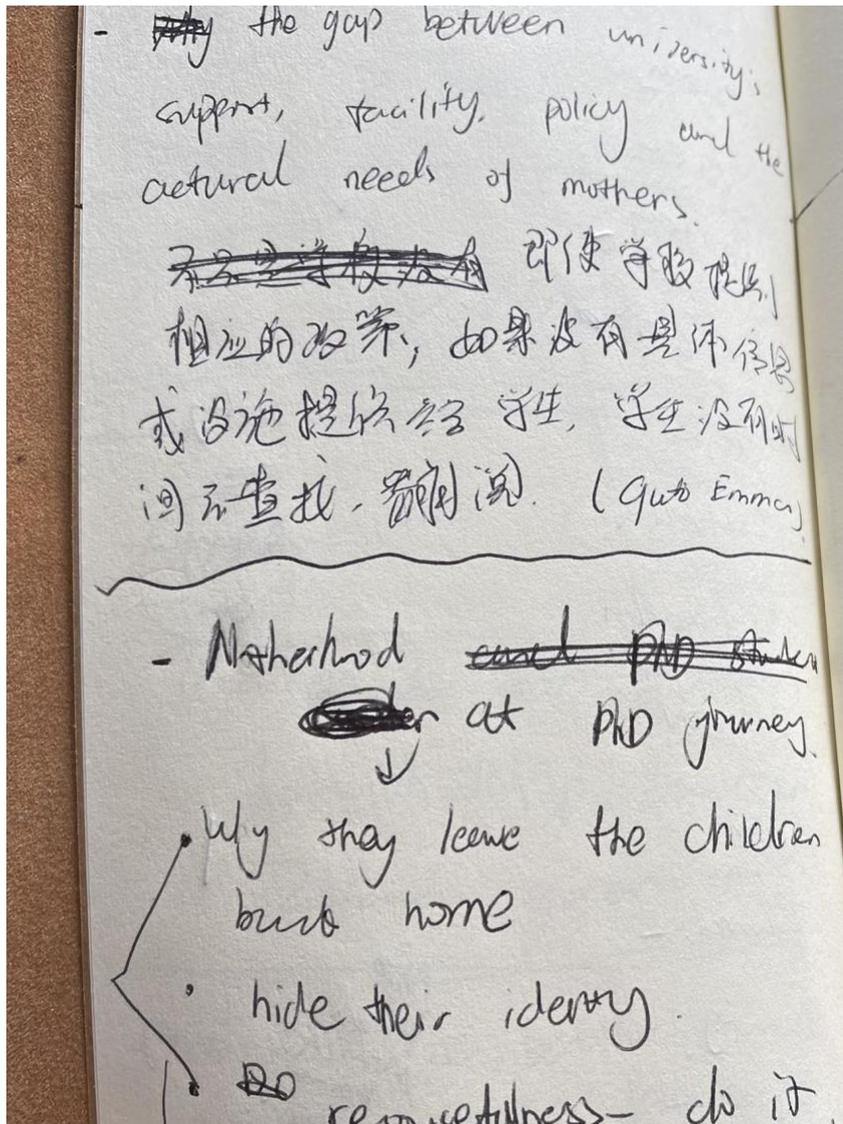
university competition.
↓
anxieties → shame.

- hiding identity.

- difference between
international
and domestic
peers.

- proud and pleasure

The Chinese words were circled in this page “不能帶孩子來 NZ”, means that she was “not able to bring children to New Zealand at the beginning”.



The Chinese script in this page: “即使学校提供相应的政策，如果没有具体的信息或者设施提供给学生，学生没有时间去查找/翻阅” is a summarised quote from one participant, which means: Even though the university has the supportive policy for the PhD parents, the student is unable to access it and does not have time to look for it by themselves if the university could not provide the information to the student.

Translation in this research is viewed as part of the reflexive thematic analysis process from the researcher's relativist ontological and subjectivist epistemological perspectives.

Translation of words between languages was not performed as one discrete work step but was revisited during the analysis or report writing. The iterative process is considered one that the researcher revisits over and over again to uncover meaning. In this manner, all the data in Chinese collected from the participants were highlighted in the transcripts and some of them

were written down in the analytical memo and not translated until the researcher had become familiar with the material and had identified the codes in Chinese. In this way, it allows the researcher to check and recheck the accuracy of the translated codes (and quotes) during the data analysis process (and beyond) to ensure the credibility of the translation. Moreover, it allows the researcher to maintain a familiarity with the material both in its original language and its English translation.

Further, qualitative data analysis is about telling "stories", interpretation, and creation, rather than discovering and finding "truth" in the data or buried deep in the data. Using reflexive thematic analysis means that the final analysis is the product of deep and long-term data immersion, deliberation, and reflection. Reiterative reading of the transcripts allowed the researcher to acquire greater proximity to the experiences and perceptions of the participants, thereby providing insights into meanings ascribed to the events recounted in the interviews. Thus "the themes do not passively emerge from the data to capture this process" (Braun and Clarke, 2019, p. 591).

In conclusion, the analytical memoranda helped organize the knowledge of the literature, familiar the participants' narratives, and allowed a closer examination of how women's narratives fit into the theoretical ideas of feminism, neoliberalism, and motherhood. Using the analytical memoranda, priority codes were established, based on the interview schedules and previous literature about postgraduate and PhD-mothers. The coding list doubled after the initial analysis, since half of the codes are the posteriori codes based on descriptions by participants. For example: lonely, leaving children in the home country, lack of information, passion etc. Axial coding (Patton, 2002) was then used to move beyond descriptive codes to interpretive codes and define key themes. The aim was to relate codes to each other. During this process, some codes got merged together, reducing the number of codes. For example: childcare, after-school problem, children's education, merged together to become 'childcare responsibility'.

The themes were constructed by grouping codes together that are similar. Themes, such as childcare problems, accommodation struggles, university support, unfamiliarity with New Zealand academic culture, supervision problems, financial burdens, lack of support, family support, the support from colleagues/community and the PhD-mother's resourcefulness.

These initial themes were then further broken down into higher-level themes that were defined and named, including the caring responsibilities, how to balance motherhood and PhD study, the barriers of the PhD journey, the challenges of being an international PhD-mother, the motivation/joyful factor, support received, the influence of gender/age/ethnicity/religion on the PhD journey. Every organising theme is then checked for consistency by examining all coded data extracts to understand if they followed a logical pattern and these were updated as needed. Subsequently, a comprehensive evaluation was conducted to determine how much the themes contributed to an appreciation of the data and its interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Once the reflexive thematic analysis had been completed, a detailed evaluation was designed to locate the participants within the themes in order to identify the challenges and conflicts related to their situations as international PhD students and mothers. In examining these accounts, Potter and Wetherell's (1987, p. 78) "sedimentation of past discursive practices" were identified and involved seeking accounts of personal change within the changing boundaries of the discourse that was being mapped. This included narratives related to how international PhD student-mothers adapted to their PhD study, balanced domestic and academic responsibilities, and adjusted to life overseas, especially within the context of the influence of neoliberalism.

In this respect, feminist discourse analysis is useful because it allows research issues to be culturally, historically, and geopolitically contextualised. Rather than treating the context in the current research as a straightforward reality, the analysis required locating the narratives within historical and cultural knowledge related to gender and motherhood. In this respect, the narratives could be regarded as realistic accounts.

The writing-up process required the conversion of data into explanatory text that rendered the analysis comprehensible and sufficiently explained the results. This required the findings to be presented and the emerging narratives to be discussed (Smith, 2008), thereby confirming the validity of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Discourse analysis employs different narrative forms, as is the case in other types of interpretive research (Jones, 2018). In other words, the accounts can either be presented explicitly in a written form as a "story" (Lather

1991, as cited in Jones, 2018) or as a "realist tale", as per John Van Maanen (Van Maanen 1988, as cited in Jones, 2018).

Specifically, a "realist tale" comprises the historical narrative that shapes discourse analysis. It is typically defined by its "interpretive omnipotence" (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 51) and assists in the creation of shaped appreciations between readers and writers regarding the context of any interpretation (Van Maanen, 1988). These realist tales comprise the background to the current research themes, in addition to providing the boundaries for any discursive formation within the categories of wider analysis, including the influence of traditional gender roles on the participants, the affective factors on the participants' experiences, the cultural differences of motherhood ideology as well as the challenges faced by the participants within the context of neoliberalism.

Thus, the data and discussions were presented separately in four distinct chapters, with two findings' chapters and two discussion chapters, wherein the same nascent thematic evaluation was present. The detailed presentation of the findings was supplemented with excerpts from the transcripts, thereby reinforcing the analysis. The discussion chapters were also linked to the existing literature in this field (Smith, 2008).

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the research participants and outlined the processes involved in this qualitative research. In doing so, it has clarified the links between the research and feminist discourse analysis, wherein this approach permits the evaluation and critiquing of power relations and their implications. As a consequence of the decision to employ this approach, the study employed semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions in order to ensure the themes were examined in sufficient depth. Feminist discourse analysis permits issues to be addressed through the narratives and stories of the participants tell about themselves. By placing the participants' voices at the centre of the research, the researcher has been able to examine any underlying assumptions regarding the challenges and barriers of the international PhD-mothers and to engage in critical thinking during the analysis of the data.

The next two chapters present the findings that emerged from the interview data of this study. Part A of the findings presents the stories reported by the participants and the affective factors which have an impact on the international PhD-mothers and what they experienced. The study reveals isolation, pressure, shame, anxiety, insecurity and various other implications that might afflict international PhD-mothers, based on their secrets, muteness, and general lived experiences. Further, Part B of the findings presents data on the challenges of this group of students, how they engage with the university's support structures, and the gap between the needs of international PhD-mothers and the university's support systems.

Chapter FOUR – FINDINGS PART A: THE HIDDEN EMOTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL PHD-MOTHERS

4.1 Introduction

The last few decades have seen a surge of interest in women and mothers participating in academia (Ahmad, 2017; Armenti, 2004; Bosanquet, 2017; Drago et al., 2006; Hardy et al., 2018; Henkel, 2017; Mason et al., 2013; O'Meara & Campbell, 2011; Raddon, 2002), however little attention has been paid to the experiences of the doctoral student-mothers, as junior researchers. The international student experience is also challenging due to balancing the requirements of dependent children with an academic life and the significant issues for doctoral students as an unpaid working mother in a foreign country (Zhang, 2016). Like the affective terms used by the early career academia mothers in Bosanquet's (2017) study, the interview data in this study reveals distinct strands of doubt and torn emotions amongst the participants. The findings presented in this chapter indicate that those mothers who had no family support to rely on in New Zealand emphasised the problems and hurdles, and not the pleasure and excitement of doing their research. 12 participants stated that they derived intellectual satisfaction and pride from being role models for their children, while the majority focussed on the affective responsibility of finding the right balance between their roles as mothers and their academic work in a competitive professional environment.

According to Ahmed's (2004) theory of the affective, emotions are not individualised, but psychological traits or temperaments. In Ahmed's view, emotions are produced by the effects of circulation (Ahmed, 2004, p. 8) within what is termed "affective economies", where different emotions attach themselves to, and demarcate, various subjects and objects, individuals and groups. It is important to note that Ahmed (2004) considered rationality as affect and not its absence. Ahmed did not accept theories of emotions which suggested that emotions could be separated and categorised according to whether they arose from the senses or physical change or were based on analysis and assessments of the world. Instead, Ahmed (2004) argued that it is not a simple matter to separate emotions from sensations since they necessitate and use processes of thought and acknowledgement. In this way, emotion combines thought and evaluation, while concurrently being felt by the body, and is one of the

ways in which we capture the world and take a stance towards our experiences. In addition, she emphasises the way emotions are moulded by a series of cultural histories and pivotal memories cannot be considered as simply *actual* at a given moment. In terms of the aims of this study, the value attributed to rationality is particularly pertinent, whether it is integrated into women's experiences within academia or the effect of neoliberalism. This being the case, the notion of the affective is relevant to the investigation of the experiences and lived realities of international doctoral student-mothers in a neoliberal university setting.

This chapter sets out to investigate the stories reported by the participants and their reflections on being a woman, a mother, and an international doctoral student. The main focus will be the affective factors which have an impact on the mothers and what they experience. The data in this chapter articulate a range of emotions: pride, stress, burn-out, worry, guilt, loneliness and fear of public exposure, and of being unmasked as an outsider. All these feelings have an odd relationship with participants' beliefs that they need to keep silent about their experiences as doctoral student-mothers. In some ways, these emotions are commonplace and mundane, but equally, they are concurrently in the main undisclosed and unarticulated in the university's public spaces. If they are discussed or mentioned, then they tend to be restricted to chats over the coffee machine or in the corridors, perhaps articulated to some degree in personal conversations between friends and very close colleagues – but they are silenced in most public spaces and discussions.

This chapter is organised around five key themes – the influence of enacting gender on the doctoral student-mothers, split and guilt emotions of being a PhD-mother, their shame, loneliness, pride and pleasure during their PhD journey. Drawing on Ahmed's theory of the affective, this chapter brings together an understanding of the connections and relationships between motherhood, gender and the doctoral student-mothers' student roles, their emotions and experiences and, in the process, opens up a discussion on how the doctoral student-mothers survive the institutional barriers with suggestions on possible provision for more effective support for this group of students.

4.2 Enacting Gender

This theme refers to the way in which the doctoral student-mothers in this study performed and enacted gender as well as its intersection with culture, race, and ethnicity. All of these women enacted historically and culturally conditioned significant ideas of gender roles while engaging with discourses regarding gender equality, inequality, or neutrality. It should be noted that enacting gender impacted the other themes concerning affective factors as well as the university structures and policies guiding a doctoral candidate's potentials and limitations. The accounts given by all the doctoral student-mothers were impacted by their notions regarding their gender role, with every account involving their practical approach towards planning their days, particularly if it concerned dividing work with a partner or childcare. The findings demonstrate the way in which the participants' gendered as well as intersecting coordination of work at home as well as the university uniquely positioned them for their study experiences.

Despite the differences in gender attributes, there still remains a hierarchy in a gender order. As an illustration, gender analysis can assist with understanding both the 'masculinity ideal' of historical Chinese men (Wen-wu) (Louie, 2012: 4) and anglo masculinity (Connell, 2002; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). According to the Confucian construction of manhood, real men do not behave in a self-consciously dominant manner (Young, 2003: 4). The cultural ideal of 'wen-wu' promotes a strength and intelligence that is gentle, disciplined, and intellectual. Like other typical characteristics of masculinity, it occupies a dominant and universal position above femininity (regardless of its specific nature) in binary gendered hierarchies. While masculinity manifests differently in different people (Beasley, 2008; Duncanson, 2009; Hooper, 2012; George & Loosemore, 2019; Sang & Calvard, 2019), the logic of masculinism implicitly subordinates women and those in non-dominant groups to masculine expectations. Ahmed (2015) states that when analysing sexism, it is imperative to go beneath the description to understand the underlying mechanisms of power, including the reasons why sexism persists despite decades of feminist activism. It is crucial to investigate and examine the very nature of power (Ahmed, 2015). This analytical approach that takes a gendered perspective can contribute to understanding the origins, as well as the effects of gender.

Further, Ahmed's work with 'embodied intersectionality' addresses the defining materiality of a black female / 'othered' woman's educational experience through the lens of her symbolic and narrative struggle. Nevertheless, in constructing the theoretical and methodological framework, it is crucial not to give primacy to the concept of experience, but to focus on the specific lived experiences of women (Ahmed, 2000).

The findings in this study indicate that traditional gender roles still have a significant influence on the doctoral student-mothers, who try to maintain life and work balance in their daily lives while assuming the major part of the responsibility for childcare and household chores – whether this involves doing the household work or allocating it or supervising others. Most of the doctoral student-mothers thus invariably had to work harder in the home than their partners, and feedback from the participants showed this was linked to both personal preference and gendered presumptions. Half of the participants who were accompanied to New Zealand by their husbands reported sharing housework and childcare equally, but once the subject was discussed in greater detail, most of them began to modify their answers. Craig (2006) and Lindsay (2008) noted that women have a tendency to assume more responsibility for housework, even if they are in full-time employment. A number of participants stated that since their husband worked or studied full-time there were sometimes clashes in their schedules and when this occurred the women were more inclined to step up and take responsibility for the housework and the children. An example of this given by Emma in the following:

My husband is quite supportive, but I have to say he, he is also having some difficulties himself. He needs to work, he needs to study, and of course, he needs to take care of me and my baby. So, it's not easy for him too. (Emma)

Motherhood is generally associated with caring responsibilities for children, and it has, therefore been rewritten as a gendered performance that signifies femininity (Baker, 2012). It has been noted that women tend to feel as if they are carrying an added burden of being different, which makes them more visible and puts more pressure on them to prove their value. The mothers in this study who had partners generally acted as primary caregivers to their young children, and some took on all childcare duties. They explained that this was

because women or mothers have a maternal instinct which makes them take on more responsibility for looking after children.

In the real world the priority always is your baby. The role of mother. You cannot overlook it. It's there. You need to finish it first and then focus on yourself... I'm thinking...I'm more caring about my baby because my baby's coming out from my belly. So we connect more closely than the father and the son. (Emma)

The doctoral student-mothers who assumed a large number of domestic duties did so because they considered it would benefit their family, but many of them said this restricted the time they had for themselves and for studying. As a result, they modified their goals and ambitions or organised their time in an extremely effective way.

In PhD you cannot have good supervisor, happy relationship with your family and very good quality academic achievement. You know you have to compromise. (Tessa)

In other words, the doctoral student-mothers frequently felt a conflict between their studies and the responsibilities and commitments that they have to their children. In particular, the doctoral students who do not have a partner to share these responsibilities with, when they seek to combine the care work for their children with their studies described needing to regularly renegotiate their study commitments, and their maternal identity tended to give them more emotional stress.

In fact, there are always challenges and difficulties at every stage of taking care of children. On the contrary, I think challenge will be smaller when the kids were younger, when she could go to childcare centre. Because when she was at childcare centre, I could send her to there at 7:30 in the morning and picked her up at 5:30 in the afternoon. It means that I had more time on my study. When the kid starts to go to school, everything changed. You have to prepare the lunch and all kinds of things. And you have to go to school later and pick her up earlier. So, the challenge will become bigger. (Andy)

It was also noted that, in the public domain, socio-cultural practices and belief systems hinder women's progress. An Indonesian respondent, Tessa, explained the ways in which she shared the domestic duties with her husband:

While he was here. He's also study. And that's like it can be really intense between us because he's doing his thesis, like master thesis. I'm doing my thesis. And there are like two stressed out people in the house. And it's it's very sometimes it's like 'come on let's take the kids out. No, I can't. I have to finish it... So, it come back to me again and come back to me again. And that really makes me feel bad like I need time too with my thesis. But... you know. In the Muslim way you cannot really say that to your husband. Like husband has a higher hierarchy than wife in Muslim tradition. That's quite hard. Like in Indonesian culture and in Muslim culture. Wives are subservient women. You know we serve husbands. I was and I've always been quite lucky because my husband is not really traditional like that. But there are some expectations that are still there. So, you don't really ask your husbands too much to take your burdens off. (Tessa)

Tessa demonstrates that domestic duties were not the only the obstacle for her study. When her children and her husband all stayed in New Zealand with her, she had to give priority to her responsibility as a mother, so she did not take up the opportunity to go to a conference where she had a paper accepted.

I got this one time I applied for a conference in Australia and it's last year. So, my husband is also here. And I got accepted and I got funding, but my husband just stops it. You can't go, who will take care of the kids. I argued with him. We had a family friend that come and stay with him and he just said no no. so my supervisor wrote an email to him and he still said no. And then they just...they understand and we at that time, I cancelled my trip, but I sent a poster. (Tessa)

As a discourse, globalisation and neoliberalisation offers creative as well as restrictive possibilities. It was believed by some scholars (e.g., Kabeer, 2008) that the power of neoliberalisation could help expand and reposition the experiences of women. Moreover, although women's capital tends to be misrecognised as well as limited to their own patriarchal communities, they have considerable importance on the international platform, particularly in

global feminist networks. Two of the participants stated that their mothers had played a part in encouraging them to study abroad for a doctorate in order to avoid traditional gender expectations. Claudia, a Mexican single mother with two children, was influenced by her mother and explained that she had escaped from the traditional gender role by studying for her PhD away from her own country.

I come from a place where that [gender] matters a lot and I had to kind of struggle before because of me being a mom and me being a woman. And so, they're my masters. I had to fight my way through it. At the same time, I come from a family with a lot of women like actually there's no man around me. My mom is also an academic at the university in Mexico. So, it's kind of like very big female figures. (Claudia)

Just like Claudia, Tessa's mother is also an academic woman. The study experience and life of Tessa's mother had a significant impact on her daughter and inspired her to pursue her PhD study abroad.

Like my mother is also a PhD. She's a professor now. And I experience when she took her PhD even in the same city in the same institution. When she teach, I can see my father made a big fuss about it too. So, it's for me. I see it. Whoever is the husband whatever situation when a woman wants to get PhD, they will face obstacles... So, I just think. In either if I choose to do it in Indonesia. I will have to do the same thing. I will face a similar thing. I think. It will take more sacrifice for me because I need to manage different things. I don't see that he will help more...it's all my individual thing. He can't help it so I better do it here. For everybody's sake as well because I will see the kids more, like I see my kids more here than I did in Indonesia because I'm freer. (Tessa)

Ahmed (2010) argued that the concept of happiness has a regulatory function, with traditional choices providing happiness while de-traditionalization can lead to unhappiness. In other words, women are expected to conform to patriarchal norms, failing which they risk being unhappy because they are disappointing their parents by transgressing in their non-traditional behaviours. Leaving the family behind and pursuing a PhD degree abroad is regarded as a transgression that has social as well as affective consequences.

I think being, being a female is always a disadvantage for higher study. Starting from the day I received notification that I was accepted I have to manage expectations from the whole family. My grandmother said oh why, like why do you have to go overseas. What about your husband. Are you ready to sacrifice your family? ... And then for my husband's family of course I'm lucky I don't have any parents-in-law. They all passed away. But for my sister in law and then my brother in law, they question my decision. Because they know that my husband's not happy. So, you know it's once I decided to go without full consent from my husband it's straight away being seen as a selfish decision. (Tessa)

In conclusion, 17 participants in this study explained that enacting their gender had a very powerful impact on their experiences of doing PhD study. The findings indicate that the care work involved when raising a family is significantly gendered, which can have a considerable impact on university work requirements. It may also be argued that mothering and motherhood is a gendered performance in which caring for children is strongly correlated to the feminine. One of the reasons some students with independent children chose to do a PhD abroad was to escape from the patriarchal communities in their home country. However, it is important to note that gender was not always viewed as a disadvantage or a burden by the women in this study. In the following themes, the emotions and secrets which intersected with enacting gender of doctoral student-mothers will be presented.

4.3 Split Responsibilities and Guilt

As discussed in the Introduction chapter, despite the fact that more women of the current generation enter the academic field, the gender gap is still present today because women are still bound by household responsibilities and the gendered circumstances that they live in. Baker (2012) suggests that motherhood inhibits career progress more than gender. The results of this study support this argument because, as mothers, in addition to the caring responsibilities, some of the participants mentioned that they felt guilty over leaving their children while doing their PhD.

I feel a lot of pressure. Yeah. You know I think it is a great duty. A lot of risk but that is to... You know for him, for his development and his learning and... You know, I am

guilty. I always feel guilty when I think he is not fully you know grow. So that's the main source of my pressure. You know when taking care of him. (Amy)

They want to focus more on their PhD and be a good student, but meanwhile being a mother, they also have concerns about their children's education and future.

I have to say as the mother student I have to, I have to divide my time into portions. Especially when my children have specific things, I have to support them to do. I have to sacrifice that... I have to spend, not sacrifice, but spend those time on them for that moments or for that period of time. Then I have to put less efforts in my studying. Not all the way through in highly productive way... for some kind of conference meetings or seminars. That has the fixed scheduled time. Even though I can get this arranged early. But still it's not easy to find someone to help out. (Allison)

Participants experienced cultural as well as organisational norms which they felt stifled their career orientations and aspirations. More than 30 years ago, Acker (1990) stated that gender inequality can be rigid as it is immersed into the structure of work organisations. This is, in fact, a well-known structural observation concerning how women's caring responsibilities are incompatible with academia's temporalities and rhythms (Cheung & Halpern, 2010).

Universities were not obligated to cater to the timetables of motherhood. It is believed that when a woman does not want just to be a mother and a wife, she has to learn how to balance and sacrifice.

It's a really hard for me to keep up with my study and take care of my baby... Too hard, too hard, too hard, too hard. There's not enough too hard for me to describe this thing. It's too hard. I don't know other international doctoral students, a doctoral student-mother. But for me, Too hard. You've been trying to find a balancing point all the time, but you can't find it... because we don't want to be a housewife All time. We have our own lives. We want to do things we like. It's about something you want to be. If you don't want to be a housewife. If you don't want to serve your husband and your baby, you want to be yourself. You need to Sacrifice something. (Emma)

Time management is often problematic for the doctoral student-mothers, who unanimously declared that they needed and wanted additional time since they found it difficult and stressful to carry out many tasks, fulfil their duties and juggle their days. Thirteen participants stated that having limited time was a significant barrier. Isabella, along with all the other participants, encountered problems trying to reconcile a range of tasks, including working part-time, doing her research and taking care of her children. The end result was that she constantly felt stressed.

I think because I feel stressed and I'm split between two places. So, I had to really learn last year how to be conscious when I with them that I'm in mum mode and then being fully mum not worrying about my studies. And then cut that when they go to bed and then to the study mode. So yes, I feel always split between these two, and balancing... I don't really enjoy it [my PhD study] actually. I love to study which is unusual. I think what I do enjoy is the fact that I know when I finish that I'll be able to show my children an example of the importance of reaching a goal and setting a goal and reaching and finishing that goal and the value of higher education. So, I think that's what keeps me going. And then my topic area also. I didn't do PhD for a career move. I did it for what I'm studying and making sure there's research there. So, I think that's also what keeps me going. But in terms of enjoying, not so much I think because of all of these challenges I have. (Isabella)

Four participants preferred to hide their status as mothers at the university. Andy believed that being known as a mother meant that others perceived her as being an uncommitted student. She did not tell her supervisor anything about her child at first because she did not "want to have any tag as a 'mum'." The reason for this is that Andy felt that her status as a serious and dedicated student could be compromised if others realised that she was a mother who had priorities at home over her PhD progress. This perspective is shared by Emma, Olivia and Monica, who also chose not to disclose their roles as mothers within their PhD journey.

Yeah, but I don't say, I won't say that I'm doing this intentionally. I have to say potentially I'm trying to be a person, professional doctoral student. When I am talking to my supervisors. Because, yeah, that's the thing, you are rolling things and you're trying

*to keep things balance. You don't want your mother role occupied all the roles.
Although it happens. (Emma)*

Emma ensured that the role of mother and PhD student were kept separate from one another. When she was back at home, just like Isabella, she chose to concentrate on her maternal role.

So far, I have to. So far, I have to because when you facing a very active baby you don't have energy just think about your study and you need to focus on him. Maybe he is trapped down by a toy. Maybe he bumped into something, so you don't have energy to think about just like... maybe when he fell asleep, you can think about Oh, what did I do, something in my study. (Emma)

Claudia adopted another hiding strategy to separate her roles and balance her PhD life and motherhood. She tried to hide her nervousness and other bad feelings in front of her children.

You hide it [emotion], but you also learn to control it. Yeah. It's not just hiding it. It's just that you can't, you can't. It's a privilege to stop feel bad about it. You can't. You need to keep on doing things. That doesn't mean that you don't feel scared and don't feel as... You do. But that you just don't pay attention to it. You just, you just keep going. Especially if it's practical things that there's not much thinking. You're just doing. You'd have to move. You have to feed them. You have to, you know, keep them warm. You have to find out a house, get them into school, buy uniforms, you know, learning how to use public transport and the money and everything. Those first days or weeks were about that. (Claudia)

Participants discussed maximising their potential, or their happiness formula (Ahmed, 2010) which tended to be focused on research for a minimum of four hours with no disturbance. They wanted time where they were not having to deal with the constantly increasing domestic responsibilities as well as making focussed time for their children in fragmented periods.

And at the same time, I need to give priority for my family especially for my daughter. Because I don't want to ruin her future because I know that her age is very sensitive,

very critical. ... she is in very critical period. She needs more attention from us especially because she has only me and my husband, her mother and father, no grandmother, no relatives. So, she needs a lot of attention from us. So, we need to give lots of love and attention and caring for her. (Niro)

The data in this study shows that it is possible that the performatives of motherhood and notions of mothering can be redrawn, based on the experiences of international student-mothers who are currently enrolled in the doctoral programme. Many international doctoral student-mothers who participated in this study empathised with the experiences of Burke (2010), who shares her own story and sets out how parental responsibilities are frequently at odds with the institutional practices at universities. For Burke (2010), parenting can impose restrictions on time available for research work, as this generally has to tie in with the child's school hours. Moreover, Burke (2010) identifies a sense of disconnection from her fellow postgraduate students and notes that while she is aware that education provides her with great opportunities, the level of engagement she feels is framed and determined by her responsibilities for childcare. Isabella illustrates the tensions inherent in this balance:

...for me, it's always been I want to be a good student. And I am a good student. I'm a good student. I'm just juggling many things. And as far as Mummy...So for a while I was very very very stressed out. So even when I was with the children. I couldn't be relaxed as mommy. And they [the children] felt that stress...So I realized whatever a PhD role was, I was reflecting with them in my time with them. So, I... Now tried to put them [doctoral student role and mother role] in two different spaces. (Isabella)

Although in their affective orientations, the respondents accepted their roles as mothers, regarding the intensification of academic work, they indicated it is not possible to merge the two competing values considering their idea of a 'good mother' and a 'good doctoral candidate'.

...someone would say because you are a mum so... when I heard something like that, I'm like 'so what'. But in the last year or two, when I tried to publish something, I found that I'm struggled. ... I think I have to spend more time on her. Because I don't want to

sacrifice her education for my PhD. She is what my PhD about. I think it is better to find a balance. (Andy)

In the meantime, the emotions of guilt for their children also made them question themselves whether they are a “good mother” when they tried to be a “good doctoral candidate.”

At first, I came here by myself. My daughter was one and half years old. She was too young. I wanted to pick her up when I settled down. At first, I was too busy, I did not feel anything. The first six month[s] went fast. But then when I picked her up at the airport, when I saw her came out of the door, when I saw her face, she looked at me like looked at a stranger. I was so sad... [tears] I can't... I still cannot forget that feeling.
(Monica)

This theme describes the feelings of guilt and split responsibilities of PhD student-mothers. It suggests that there is a material difference in international doctoral student-mothers' parenting as a result of the balancing of intensified responsibilities for childcare, as well as PhD study obligations. These findings suggest that the increased level of childcare profoundly impacts international student-mothers' engagement, time and energy for doctoral education. However, an important distinction to note is that this argument does not intend to suggest that the motherhood of international doctoral student-mothers is either always difficult or in deficit, while many mothers found motherhood had great demands on their time. They commented that being a mother was not always difficult in itself, but it is when combined with PhD study. In addition, children are also the motivations for them to finish their PhD study.

4.4 Shame

As well as the intellectual and emotional weight of being responsible for childcare, international doctoral student-mothers also have to deal with other academic challenges. These tend to be connected to academic, cultural distinctions and sources of stress, such as their feelings of marginalisation within the university and the problems they have with time management. The doctoral student-mothers describing their lack of confidence was evident in their dialogue that indicated how embedded it was in an affective economy. It becomes apparent that memories and reflections always reflect on certain aspects and can only portray

the manner in which people are viewed and therefore addressed, according to dominant social categories (Ahmad, 1997). The majority of the women interviewed were well aware of how others viewed their potential and abilities. Successful and lauded doctoral students need to demonstrate that they meet all deadlines, have a strong publication history, network effectively, have a standout researcher profile and regularly attend academic conferences (Gardner, 2007; Springer et al., 2009). Given these multiple pressures, a number of the study participants stated that they find it simpler to fade into the background and not draw attention to themselves as student-mothers – and not to discuss their personal lives or their role as mothers when talking to their supervisor.

If someone gives me a label like doctoral student-mum, I think it's a discrimination, at least marginalized. I didn't tell my supervisor about this at first. Because I don't want to leave the impression that I have so many other responsibilities and I am weak...Because I don't think I'm worse than anyone on academic, but even better than someone. But I put a lot of effort. I don't want to have any tag as a "mum" like this.
(Andy)

The way individual participants described their belief that they must hide or minimise their family commitments for being successful in their careers is termed "bias avoidance" by Bardoel et al. (2011, e157). One participant stated that women must be able to balance their personal, family lives with their professional lives. There was also extensive discussion about the idea of being caught between the university and the family, two greedy organisations.

I'm trying to be a person professional. Doctoral student. You don't want your mother role to occupy all the roles. Although it happens. (Emma)

The vast majority of the participants agreed that their supervisors provide them with much emotional support but added that they were unsure whether this was a positive or a negative thing.

I've felt supported emotionally, very much. I do feel that they empathize with my situation and they've been really caring about it, like they would always ask how I am doing. How are the kids. And am I struggle with something at home. So that's been

really good. But as I said they've, because of that, they have done the opposite of what I think I needed. And that has been letting me loose. So, no pressures with submitting a piece, you know. Ok, instead of finishing a piece in two weeks' time. we'll meet as soon as you finish it that doesn't matter. And that has made things more difficult for me.

(Claudia)

This phenomenon is described as “normal psychological injuries” by Hirschhorn (1988) and is common in everyday working life. These injuries tend to be normal and expected hurts experienced by individuals while attempting to work with others to implement primary tasks in an uncertain environment. Hirschhorn also highlights the organisational situatedness concerning interpersonal relations as well as the psychodynamic processes that result from individuals pursuing a primary task. It then becomes necessary to negotiate the ambitions, demands, and anxieties that are created by assuming organisational roles which include the ones concerning competency, as well as what they can say, to whom, and how.

My supervisor used to have a very high expectation for me, because my first year was very good, and he told me what I was going to publish. But later he said that you should not put too much pressure on yourself, you have to take care of the kid or something. I think, I find it difficult to say whether this support is good or bad, because he does not want to put too much pressure on me from a practical point of view. I think he was trying to be nice to me. He doesn't want to put pressure on me, but I think it's better if I can do it, but if I can't, he won't be disappointed or anything... So, I'm still grateful to him. (Andy)

The emotional costs involved with balancing the work that is accomplished as well as the internal disappointment about the work, which is not, cannot be underestimated. Most of the participants in this study reported that they had lowered their academic standards and expectations in order to better balance their study and childcare responsibilities throughout the PhD studying process.

My peers, they publish, you know have so many papers published, this and that. I have no... It's not him that you know... t's not him who stops me from publishing, but my attention cannot be focussed. And cannot be used to dig deep into this study that

prevents me from... Right now, do more reading writing and publishing further... I'm kind of doing research at a very shallow level. My attentions are always distracted it by... You know not by him, all by the people attached to him. A lot of things a lot of things you cannot imagine. (Amy)

This study has found that international doctoral student-mothers suffer from various financial stresses – for example, financial aid, childcare/child education costs, accommodation fees and ensuring they have savings for their visa application, etc. In addition, one of the most significant sources of anxiety and shame encountered by international doctoral student-mothers when they were trying to settle into their new surroundings was the limited information they had about the childcare and financial support available to them. Claudia is a single mother with two children from Mexico. When she first arrived in New Zealand, because of financial barriers and limited information about support, she lived in a hostel with her children, and she had to leave her children alone in the hostel room to find a house.

I'm keeping the children feeling safe because I was terrified. But they weren't. You know, they were kind of in an adventure, kind of in a camping mode, you know, because we were, we were staying at a hostel, a youth hostel, like the cheapest place that I could find that was suitable for the four of us... I mean I needed to go and look at the houses and they...umm maybe... I was scared that... like the Social Security Services would, you know, like complain of...because I wasn't taking good care of children...It was winter, so it was really cold and I didn't know how to use the buses or the train. I didn't know that I, if I could buy their [the children] hop cards. So, I was paying cash and so it was just so expensive so I couldn't take the kids with me but then leave them in the hostel by themselves and they were really young like 11 years old. I didn't know...and I come from a country where you don't leave kids alone. So, I was really scared but I couldn't, I couldn't tell them that. (Claudia)

Doctoral student-mothers often avoid talking about how their financial burdens cause stress in their lives, which may be because they believe addressing this subject may result in their integrity or commitment being questioned. In view of the financial consequences of being an international doctoral student who has dependent children, and the way this impacts on their

study, most students reported not being at ease as an international doctoral student-mother in New Zealand, citing financial strains.

...because of the financial burden I work 28 hours a week. And that allows us to be OK economically. Not great but like I said my parents paid for the childcare and then I do the rest... My original plan was not to work. So, I did not plan to come here and work... So yeah, we still struggle with that and figuring out how to work... And also, not having the childcare close by on campus. They're there together so financially (if) I didn't have that burden I would probably be OK. I know I'd be here actually every day on campus because that was the original plan was to come every day on campus... So, I'm used to being a good student. I'm used to being on campus all the time. I'm used to staying in the library. I love to study. I love doing what I do. But this... This whole picture has made it that I don't enjoy it. (Isabella)

Thirteen of the participants in this study chose to study in New Zealand because of its domestic tuition fees for all doctoral students. The interview data revealed that few people were fully aware of the living costs associated with studying in New Zealand before their arrival, particularly when they bring their children with them.

It is very expensive actually. So, from our budgeting, my parents actually send me extra income to pay for that part. So, my husband and I work to pay for our expenses here to rent and so forth. But the day-care is one hundred eighty a week. So, from a student perspective... it's an extreme expense for another two years we'll have that until she (her younger daughter) can go to school... here in New Zealand the other thing is different is you have for my older son. He is in school. But then every term they take a two-week break. So, you have to pay that two week breaks every time that happens it's over two hundred dollars, is thirty-five dollars a day. So between the term is very expensive. (Isabella)

Eight of the respondents who had not secured a scholarship were obliged to work part-time to pay for childcare, rental fees and/or cover the costs of their children's after-school activities. Every international doctoral student-mother without a scholarship stated that this was a handicap in terms of their personal academic achievements, but they had no other option

since they did not have access to alternative funding and being an un-paid doctoral candidate is a shame they carried as an adult within the family.

Well if you have enough money to support you in your study. You could put your time in your study. But of course. If you need to pay the bills. Because you are an adult, you have family. You need to take care of the baby you need to pay the bills from the early childhood centre, you'll need to work. (Emma)

Most of the respondents did not believe that the academic institution in which they were enrolled was the most reliable source of economic support but stated that they counted on either their family or their spouse to provide them with financial aid. The women who stated that their spouses and families were supportive noted how lucky they were to have someone who was ready to look after them and accept the way they wanted to manage their family and academic lives but also felt obliged to earn the money for the family.

I think maybe if we had money I could focus more on a study. That's what I want. You know I decide... I wish to have the money just to stop working and focus all the time in my PhD. But then. Who are going to pay the childcare? You know my husband cannot afford them. Because the money that he he's working right now is for to pay the rent, food, transport. Nothing else. He cannot afford 260 per week more. so that's what I do. I tried to work to pay 260 per week. (Claire)

Participants recounted their individual solutions and techniques they used to cope with their conflicting demands. For example, they discussed the efforts they made to stick to a deadline while doing their part-time job and taking care of their children. The extent of the thought and effort involved were surprising and yet were extensively varied. They made plans which were well thought-out personal strategies with effort put in to be a good ethical doctoral candidate while surviving with part-time paid work without giving up or feeling overwhelmed. Isabella talks about her coping strategies:

I'm not sure if I'm able to balance my work and life. I tried my best. I think, eh, one of techniques I talked, is before I going to studying mode to get my brain to the right place. To give my brain a quick break to watch a video or something that don't need to

think much and then prepare the brain to going to study mode. So that's how I kind of try to balance that. (Isabella)

It appears that many women in this study were reflexively scanning their motherhood responsibilities and then hiding them in their professional life. As Ahmed (2010) suggests, a sense of misalignment with an affective community produces a range of potential responses, including self-doubt, shame and humiliation, but also anger and resistance. At worst, misaligned or “alien bodies” risk simply disappearing from view. This was not the case for this group of respondents, who were active in resisting, contesting and challenging the affective economy associated with motherhood. They were constantly challenged to feel they performed in all of their roles but also sought to create balance, whilst hiding their mothering role in their professional lives.

4.5 Loneliness

The data in this theme show that feelings not only exist in the subject or object, but that the composition of the legitimate subject itself is the result of the affective cycle (Ahmed, 2004). In addition to the stress of childcare, intellectual burden and financial hardship, half of the participants mentioned affective issues including isolation. Some of the participants in this study, especially those who are single or do not have their partner around, suffered from depression and loneliness which appeared to be inescapable.

Loneliness...I mean, I have no doubt that's what being more difficult to overcome.... loneliness kills you. It takes your breath away because you can't even think sometimes. it's something that is really difficult to explain. And then it just changes from one type of loneliness to another type of loneliness. Loneliness because you don't have your community with you. And loneliness because you cannot engage in an, you know, in an academic group, that is another thing. And you see your peers they're all going to conferences. And they're all meeting, to go to seminars and stuffs. You can't. You just see it happen out there and you see people come and go and, and you can't join, and you start to feel lonely, you know... You talk about that with your supervisors but other than that you can't because you haven't got the space to do it. you go to your desk and

then run home. And that's it. So, loneliness, I think that's been the most difficult part.

(Claudia)

Unfamiliarity with the academic environment and the inability to establish a good cooperative relationship with supervisors can also lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness. A participant who comes from America had not managed to create a strong or helpful relationship with her supervisor in the beginning of her PhD study, since they came from different academic cultures and therefore had quite different goals and beliefs. The first year of her research was particularly tricky, as she floundered and ran into problems trying to begin her project. Her perception was that her supervisor responded by doubting her abilities, rather than providing help with support. Some of the tension between them arose because of their poor communication and subsequent lack of mutual understanding.

My experience was with my lecturers and supervisors in US. They always have the open-door policy. When you had questions, you could go, and they had specific office hours... So, my first six months here, I was told by my supervisors "we only meet you one hour a month". So, we met one hour every month. And also "you are sending us too many emails, we won't respond so many emails." So, I was basically given the message that I couldn't ask questions. So, I was not used to that kind of treatments. I was used to an open door, "I just have this quick question, can we just discuss it quickly so I can move on and keep doing my research". And here it is definitely not allowed. The closed-door policy. And like you are a burden; you are bothering us. Don't ask us questions. You go figure it out. That's what a PhD life is. You go figure it out...My prior supervisors. They said we don't care what you do outside of supervision. There is no excuse. You must do 40 hours a week. We don't care about your other obligations. (Isabella)

In addition, the initial shock from cultural difference also aggravated the loneliness of international students.

There's not many Latinos in New Zealand. There is a community but not, not a big one at the university. So that was a little bit tough at the beginning. No, you're not having someone to speak in Spanish with. Then there was this other thing that was driving me

crazy. You won't believe it but human touch, like in my culture we're really used to hugging each other you know. We greet each other with a kiss and a hug. And that doesn't happen here. Like people keep their physical distance. And after a while I didn't know what was happening to me, but I have this feeling something. I was feeling really bad and then I realised that I was missing human touch. You know adult touch. It was just the kids. But other than that, I was missing being able to kiss someone Hello.

(Claudia)

The doctoral student-mother participants whose extended family gave them help with taking care of their children had significantly more time to spend on their studies than those who had no family assistance and to some extent, saved them from loneliness. From the interviews, it was evident that the academic experience of an international doctoral student-mother was closely linked to the amount of family help they could rely on, and whether or not they were married or single.

At that time I remember when my parents were not here, four months or five months. I felt very dark at that time. I had to take her to school in the morning. And then I thought I didn't have much time to come to the office. I've been very tired all the time, I think it's only two or three hours to really focus on my study... I think if there's family help here, parents are here. I think I've had enough time, but I can't imagine if I was the only one to take care of the kid for four years, I don't think it's possible to do it. (Andy)

The findings in this section add to the literature indicating that doctoral study is a lonely experience for all students (Cockrell & Shelley, 2019; Dickerson et al., 2014; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2006). The data shows that the difficulties are exacerbated for international PhD students who are also mothers due to the additional obstacles they have to overcome while abroad. The study argues that the impact of loneliness on this group of students' study experiences could not be ignored. The gap between the doctoral student-mothers' needs and the support provided by the university and related institutions will be discussed in the next chapter.

4.6 Pleasure and Pride

It is logical to assume that the contradictory demands of concurrently being a mother and a doctoral student at university would have a negative impact on doctoral student-mothers' academic performance. As Pinilla and Munoz (2005) noted in their research, virtually every element of student-mothers' lives has a negative effect on how they perform academically. The only factor which helps student-mothers to succeed and meet their academic goals is if their extended family provides childcare, and this is the main reason why student-mothers are able to take part in higher education. Nevertheless, the data in this study reveals that international doctoral student-mothers, no matter if they have extended family support, they view their children as an intrinsic part of their educational journey, and while they acknowledge that children make it more challenging to meet their publishing and research goals, they see their children as a blessing.

I won't pursue to be a PhD here if I can't bring my kids. (Tessa)

As discussed in the previous themes, the data indicates that the international doctoral student-mothers are frequently assigned a disproportional level of responsibility for childcare. For those who are single or do not have their partner's help, their commitment is increased as they are likely to do all the parenting, rather than merely the bulk of it. However, taking full responsibility for childcare without the help of the husband did not always mean more pressure for the participants. On the contrary, for some of the participants, having their husband overseas meant they were more relaxed with their children and so they felt it was achievable to do their PhD study at the same time when they were alone. One participant, who came from Indonesia, stated she had more flexibility to balance the childcare and her study when her husband returned to their own country.

I really enjoyed times with kids. I take care of my household alone. I take care of the kids alone. They're much closer with me. So, it's a big advantage. (Tessa)

For half of the participants academic study was not always a burden. Ten participants felt it was an advantage and privilege to be able to do PhD study and be a mother.

I think that...They are kind of the same project (mothering and PhD). Because I decided to come here in the first place because it was also a way of parenting. This sounds a little bit contradictory, but it is really difficult. You struggle a lot and it's painful at times. but at the same time, it's amazing see what you're capable of doing. And to me this has been like the whole thing. Being a parent and doing my PhD. And being here with the kids and all of it together is what I want. (Claudia)

In addition, motherhood is not always a burden for academic study, but it can be an advantage and privilege for some of the international doctoral student-mothers. For Claudia, children are her motivation to do PhD study in New Zealand. She was not only proud of her motherhood but also took motherhood to be an integral part of her PhD study.

I'm kind of proud of my motherhood. To be honest. You know. The truth is that I've gone so far that I think that I haven't done the right decisions all the time like I've done a lot of mistakes. But the result is quite amazing. I'm really proud of my kids and myself. I think that whatever I come out with my PhD, will have that motherhood... You know, it's all... It will add to the quality of the PhD. It will be a different thing. I'm not saying that it will be the best PhD in the world, but it definitely has a twist kind of thing because the effort is being put there as part of a comprehensive project and I think that a good mom is the one that tries. Just... You just need to keep on going. If you believe that motherhood matters and that your job is important and that it's your project. PhD is your project; your motherhood is the also that. And that's what you are. And that's then. Then that's a good mother thing. I mean there are many different types of motherhood. But I think that the main thing is just believing in it. (Claudia)

Three doctoral student-mothers also felt pride and gratitude for the female member of their families, who encouraged and influenced them to escape from traditional gender roles as women and mothers and follow their own ambitions. One participant, who come from Columbia, and was raised by her foster mother and grandmother appreciated the challenges.

You know I'm a challenging person. I like challenges. If I don't have challenges, it's like, I can die. My life is about challenge. Every week. Every Sunday. After I used that week,

I do a list of things. There is something that is almost impossible for me to achieve. But I try it and sometimes I can spend more than months, like more than five months writing the same thing. Yeah until I kind of achieve it. Because I'm very strong. I can say maybe because the way I was raised. I'm very strong like I have faced many difficult things many difficult things. But when I remember where I come from, I say that's nothing. I can continue. I can survive there, and I can survive here. (Claire)

Half of the mothers in this study explicitly expressed their desire to be a role model to their children.

...one of the reason[s] that I do this PhD is that I want to show my daughter that a woman doesn't have to be at home. You have to work hard. You have to realise your self-worth. Because my kid is also a girl, I want to make a good role model for her. I want her to see that her mother works so hard and she wants to be a hard worker in the future. (Andy)

Overall, the data in this theme reveals the pride, enjoyment, gratitude and resourcefulness of international PhD-mothers. It is important to note that, contrary to the previous research findings regarding academic mothers, the data in this study showed that, although doctoral student-mothers acknowledge that motherhood poses challenges to their academic life, they all see their children as an inherent part of their PhD journey and as a blessing. They were not only grateful for the encouragement and influence that were given to them by their mothers and female members of their family as role models but also proud that they could be the role model for their own children, especially their daughters.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the lived experiences and feelings of doctoral student-mothers to highlight certain consequences such as insecurity, anxiety, shame, financial stress and loneliness as an unpaid working mother. However, this chapter is not a cry born of self-pity or self-absorption, or even an occasion to voice complaints. In essence, this chapter gives voice to the doctoral student-mothers. In addition, the data reveals that doctoral student-mothers

worked seven days every week, which often included a part-time job, childcare and housework combined with doctoral study.

It can be said that doctoral student-mothers as unpaid working academics fit within the neoliberal agenda as they are inclined to *work hard* as well as *do well* thus meeting neoliberalism's demands for self-motivating, autonomous, and responsible students. However, individuals were also able to derive a sense of fulfilment and inherent pleasures from their motherhood and study when they were able to carve out some time to enjoy their dual roles. They are also attracted to the relatively autonomous working lives of an academic, although this autonomy is no longer as relevant to the doctoral student-mothers. The flexible timetable of PhD study is not set for motherhood, which means more burden and working hours for the mothers as individuals' working responsibilities often have no boundary between their study and other aspects of their lives.

As noted by Jacques (2018), the emotion as well as affective world of individuals and their organisations interact significantly. Other researchers have stated that there is a symbolic internalisation by individuals of the institutions of which they are a part (Armstrong, 2005) that creates a dynamic interplay between the affective states of projection and introjection. Hence, emotions, as well as structural boundaries, are crucial in terms of the anxieties as well as ambivalences of individuation/group membership. In the next chapter, more voices and stories of doctoral student-mothers within their department and university as well as the supports from the university and related institutions will be presented.

Chapter FIVE – FINDINGS PART B: BEING A PHD-MOTHER IN A NEOLIBERAL UNIVERSITY

5.1 Introduction

The increasing numbers of women with childcare duties pursuing PhD and academic careers in the university create the need for higher education institutions to adjust programme support to ensure greater equity in higher education (Yakaboski, 2010) to support parents of children into higher education. The existence of student-mothers improves higher education diversity, thereby positively influencing all students (Anaya, 2011; Hook, 2016; Pretorius et al., 2019). As previously outlined in the Literature Review chapter and the Findings Part A chapter, doctoral student-mothers face additional challenges of negotiating study and family demands with doctoral study requirements. The literature indicates that students are more likely to persist with their studies over time if they have support programmes and networks (Austin & McDermott, 2003; Braxton, 2000; Gasser & Gasser, 2008). This chapter focuses on the structure of the university itself and the support systems at play in the university. Over the past decades, New Zealand universities, higher education institutions such as polytechnics, and the government have continuously launched a series of policies, support systems and strategies to support international postgraduate students, including those who have families and childcare duties. For example, government departments have been updating the policy of better supporting international students (Ministry of Education, 2020). The university also provides discounted childcare rates for staff and doctoral students who have dependent children, equity group support meetings, and free counselling services to all students. However, the data in this study highlighted the nature of both roles – mother and doctoral student – as often in conflict given the structural competitive elements of a neoliberal institution such as a university.

The focus of this chapter is on bridging the gap between the participants who are often unable to interpret and engage well with the university support systems on offer. This chapter includes data on how they engage with university's support structures, what challenges they have faced, and instances where there is a gap between the needs of students and the university's support systems. The data includes the specific institutional policies and practices

that affect enrolled doctoral student-mothers. This chapter is organised around five key themes: childcare; immigration and visa challenges; financial support from the university; emotional support; and the formal and informal support of supervisors. The data show the PhD-mothers' perception of supports, what the university has offered in these five areas and how the participants interpret the support provided by the university. The impact of access to information regarding the structure and specific policies of the university and its practices regarding doctoral student-mothers is also presented in this chapter. Within these five areas, those responding made overt claims, stating an operational discrepancy between what the university said it offered, and the extent to which this support could be utilised efficiently and effectively.

5.2 Childcare

A major concern for many doctoral student-mothers is childcare and this became a dominant theme when analysing the data. The childcare support that is discussed in this section not only refers to Early Child Education (ECE) systems for young children who are under 5 years old, but also refers to all the other childcare support structures that all the doctoral student-mothers might need, including after-school programmes for older children, parent rooms at the university for breastfeeding, maternity leave regulations for doctoral students, and family-friendly environments at the university.

5.2.1 Breast-feeding Facilities

As Niro, a mother who has a 4-year-old child and was also pregnant during her PhD study said:

You know as a university you don't have age range. so, people come from younger to older. So in between there would be mothers who are feeding. I don't know even we have a feeding room here. So, what kind of support we have, as a mother have. (Niro)

The gap between doctoral student-mothers' needs and the university's facilities which cater for the requirements of mothers and their children are overtly expressed in this statement by Niro. There were four student-mothers in this study who had been pregnant during their PhD

journey. All of them felt that they have been well supported by their supervisors, but not specifically supported by the university infrastructure.

I get only supports from the family but from the campus, from the university side, umm what supports. I go to the health care centre for the GP. But if I'm sick so that... I think that is ordinary or normal help that they give to students not specifically for pregnant mothers. My supervisors are supportive. So yeah. They understand me. They care about me and my baby, my pregnancy. From my supervisors and from my family I get the support. Other than that, I don't think that the university provide the support [to me] as a doctoral mum. (Niro)

Emma, as a new mother, also has the same feeling. She appreciated the maternity leave support from the university, but also mentioned the lack of facilities to support new mothers on the campus. There was no parent room for new-born babies and mothers on her campus. When she came back to study after three months of maternity leave, she had to hide in a small meeting room in the doctoral hub to express milk.

But the part I'm not quite satisfied with is the, the special space for the doctoral Student mother to express their milk or have some privacy... There was a Room for the new mom to, for breast feeding. But they don't have any more. It was hard for me... I know there's several rooms in the city campus for mummies to bond with their children and express their milk like that. But there's no room here. (Emma)

Emma never asked for a breast-feeding room again from the university. She did not want to highlight her role as a mother while on the campus. As presented in the previous chapter, four participants like Emma preferred to hide their status as mothers at the university.

5.2.2 Access to Childcare

The university does provide childcare support including reduced rates for their ECE centres, and parents' rooms on all campuses. However, no relevant information regarding these facilities has been provided to the students in an official capacity. As Niro in this study implies, student-mothers are often most likely to rely on each other to find and ask peers for this

information. Another participant, Andy, describes a similar lack of information provided to student-mothers in any formal or systematic way. Andy's experience of an orientation day induction offered by the university exposed a lack of institutional knowledge from the organisers and the invisibility of student-mothers in the organisational structures of the orientation itself:

I don't think I have received any support, from school specifically for doctoral mothers, only ECE and our international office. The information is also closed, and I don't know who to turn to if there is anything... When the staff introduced us to the campus, I asked them at that time. They said they didn't know any policy about it [ECE support]. So, I think... well this is a suggestion. I just feel like, when you make that induction for your students, could you tell them about this first... I mean that is, also consider students who may have children. Because I remember I went to ECE and asked by myself at that time. I went there once a week or made a phone call or wrote an email. But this is all my jobs, or this kind of information from peers around you. I feel like I didn't get any help from the university. (Andy)

Andy's statement about a lack of information provided to doctoral students through official induction processes to the universities is echoed by many participants. Like Andy, all the participants in this study confirmed that they did not receive enough information regarding childcare support from the university. They all relied on information from their peers, friends or supervisors. Tessa describes the way she found out about a dedicated parent space within proximity to her office. Tessa explains further:

Even for the parent room. I only know it because I'm in the same building. I don't think it's advertised. So, if they have facilities, they should have made it more obvious to other people. So, I've been telling my friends about this room. And some of them said Oh can I use that. (Tessa)

Irrespective of the faculty or department they studied in or the level of financial support they had access to, mothers of young children participating in this project emphasised that securing dependable, consistent yet inexpensive childcare was essential. Serena, who chose

to leave her child in her home country at first to find a suitable childcare centre and to settle in before she could pick up the child explains this motivation as one of her very first priorities:

The first thing for me (when I arrived) was to find a good and affordable kindergarten for my child. (Serena)

Interviewees also confirm the limited spaces available in the university childcare centres as a significant burden to overcome when they were often unfamiliar with the city. In this study, nine respondents had young children who needed ECE support, five of them enrolled their children in the ECE centre of the university around their campus, and half of them had their children on the waitlist around one year. Monica's experience paints a frustrating picture for these student-mothers who wait for substantial amounts of time to be granted a place for their child:

At our university, I asked three centres. I was not base in the city campus at that time, but because city had two, so I signed in. Since then, I started waiting. There has been no news, just to wait. She (the child) did not have a kindergarten to go. And then my friends told me that I can choose to go to a public kindergarten near my house, or a private one. Then I found one near my house and enrolled her in. But soon I moved and transferred to the [other] campus. I started to wait for the position of the centre of [current campus]. Until my mother was about to leave and there was no one could help me to pick up, pick up the kid anymore. I had no choice but to write an email to the head of the ECE centre, saying that I hoped to enrol my daughter earlier. And then maybe after two weeks, they told me that there was a position. So from the time I filled out the form, it's 2015 or 2016, by the time the child finally enrolled in our university's ECE, I felt that I had to wait for at least a year, and in the end, there was nothing I could do but to ask. My colleagues in the hub told me that you have to keep pushing, then maybe they could arrange it for you. (Monica)

All five student-mothers who have enrolled their children into the university's ECE centre felt "lucky", even though they had to wait and find the support themselves. Andy, like Serena and another two doctoral student-mothers, left her child in her home country at first when she

came to New Zealand. Her plan was to pick up the child when she had found a childcare centre and settled in.

I think at that time, I think this [ECE] was the biggest support during my PhD study. I think the people in ECE are very nice. He [the head of the ECE centre] listed me directly on waiting list at that time. I am very lucky. I have only waited for a month. I know some people have been waiting for half a year or more. But there was nothing I could do at that time. Because the child has never left me that long before. When I left home at that time, I didn't tell my kid. I couldn't bear it and had no choice but to do so. I remember when she fell asleep in the car, I just left without saying goodbye. She was very unhappy in kindergarten that month. I remember once when she was in kindergarten. Her teacher sent me a picture of them doing Mother's Day activities. She made me a card. Then the teacher asked her to take a picture for me with a smile. I could see that smile was fake. It's just a fake, very unhappy smile. Then my family told me that she was not very well at that time. So, I want to pick her up as soon as possible. I want it [ECE support] so much. So, I went to that head of ECE, emailed him and called him, talked to him about my difficulties and he quickly gave me the position. This is what I am very grateful for, personally. (Andy)

There were also mothers who were not that lucky. They had not been able to enrol their children in the ECE centre of the university around their campus because of the limited spaces and the long distance from their house, and thus had to choose private kindergartens that are closer to home but are relatively expensive. One of the student-mothers, Isabella, believed that the ECE support was essential and should be guaranteed for the doctoral students.

It is very expensive actually. So, from our budgeting, my parents actually send me extra income to pay for that part. So, my husband and I work to pay for our expenses here so rent and so forth. But the day-care is one hundred eighty a week. So, from a student perspective... That's another thing I wasn't used to because of my country, Childcare especially as a doctoral student almost guaranteed in the childcare centres on campus as well as it's at a reduced rate. So, it's in a subsidized rate whereas when I came here,

I was amazed it was so expensive even the student base rate, and that wasn't subsidized by the university. (Isabella)

Even though Isabella did not take the subsidized fee of the ECE centre of the university as a financial support, she still admitted the ECE of the university was less expensive than the other private ECE centres. However, she failed to enrol her 2-year-old child in the university ECE centre because of limited space and she had to find another private ECE centre near her house, which was more expensive.

I had to find a different centre near where we live. Which took several months because when we...Because the way New Zealand does the three and over funding. She was two, sort of find a day-care space when they are two is really hard. They like to have them when they are three. Because when they are three, the government subsidized. But when they are two, I had a really hard time finding one and I literally had to go to the most expensive. And it was one of the last spaces available. In most places she had gone on the waiting list because of the demand for childcare. That was really hard. But now she's at a day-care full time. Because she is three. Around near our house. But here on campus, No. (Isabella)

Nevertheless, the mothers who were lucky enough to have their children enrolled in the ECE centre of the university were not always happy. They mentioned the lack of teachers and staff in ECE at the university as having a detrimental effect on their child.

He's getting easily...He's easily getting sick. Because the short of the people. Short of the caregivers in the early childhood centre. That's also something the caregivers from the early childhood centre told me they're short of people, to take care of the babies. That means one people need to take care for 4 to 5 babies. That's hard for them. And it's also increased the chances that people get infected from other babies. (Emma)

Eight of the participants were mothers of children of public-school age and, thus, could rely on the state school system for education. However, support for after-school childcare is another significant challenge. Claudia explains this struggle further:

... because my kids weren't small. I know that there is a lot of support. I've seen, you know, support. you know, like the advertise for the small babies and up to five years old. But my kids weren't babies so there's no support for older kids. (Claudia)

Claudia acknowledged the limitations of a school day that ends at around 3 pm which is usually too early in her working day to stop. She can see the benefits of paying for private day-care afforded to the under-five cohort of children through ECE centres that are open longer hours, and in her experience, there is little support for afterschool activities that would enable her to work a longer day. Study participants adopted different approaches to address these challenges, such as using private facilities, care at home and sharing childcare with partners whilst balancing work commitments. Working families can benefit greatly from private after-school programmes as these facilities often provide the most reliability and security. However, the high costs associated with after-school programmes cannot be justified when compared to the level of income of most student-mothers. Claudia expands on this point in relation to programmes for school-aged care in the school holidays:

So here in New Zealand the other thing is different is you have for my older son. He is in school. But then every term they take a two-week break. So, you have to pay that two week breaks every time that happens it's over two hundred dollars, is thirty-five dollars a day. So, if he goes five days a week, times two, it's a hundred and something so every three months every term. You have another two-hundred-dollar expense plus the after school. So, if I put him in after school, it's fifteen dollars a day. So, between the term is very expensive. (Claudia)

Tessa also acknowledges this problem and explains how the parent room offered on the campus provided a space for after-school and holiday care which she was very grateful for. The parent room was used by two student-mothers of school-aged children for a part of after-school care. Like Tessa, they were grateful for the family-friendly supportive environment of the university.

There is a parent room here. And sometimes if I need to come here during school holidays, I just put my kids there. And it's safe and they're quite happy. So that's one obvious thing but I think the attitude of the academic staff there. They know that you

are mother, so they don't mind having kids around. Or If you know if I have to cancel my conference because I don't have kids care. So that I think the mind of the academic staff here is much more accepting like they know that your life is not just about PhD. You have to combine life. Being able to finish your doctorate on time. While you are also (having care duties). It's already a big achievement so I think they understand that.
(Tessa)

5.2.3 Family Support

Family members, including spouses, parents, and parents-in-law assisted with childcare for 50% of the participants interviewed. This home-based childcare is more affordable compared to private childcare.

I'm lucky. In Chinese culture, families are supportive to each other. That's why when I have my baby, I received strong support from my mother and mother in law. When I talked to my supervisors because one of them is a grandmother. She was really, She was really...Surprised that my mother and mother in law will give up, could have given up their lives and come to New Zealand to support me because in this country or in English culture they won't do that... When my parents away, it's quite different. It's like. If a baby has a caregiver. That means that, that's one job will be done by three persons. But now it's a one job will be done by two people. That's a...That's a game changer. I missed several deadlines after the Grandmothers went back to China. Because I need to more focussing on my baby. (Emma)

Nevertheless, the hardest aspect of this dual role was finding the balance between managing work commitments and managing childcare with their partners or parents in their home country. This option has been taken by 40% of the interviewees. Two of the PhD-mothers in this study chose to leave their children in their home country with their grandparents most of the time during their PhD study. Olivia provides insight into the feelings of guilt and hopelessness having to leave her child behind in her home country. She continues:

Sometimes I wonder what the meaning of this thing [PhD] is. I have made such a small thing, to what extent can I say that my study could benefit the improvement of society

or could promote some relevant progress in my field? I could not help but to think that it would be an inappropriate sacrifice for my family when I am pursuing this PhD.

Because I thought I also had to take care of the feelings of my family. So I brought my kid here for one year and at that time I thought I was mainly a mother... This feeling become stronger this year, because the kid is getting older, and you find that sometimes her ways of thinking is no longer a child, and you can also be aware of her emotional need for her mother. For example, every time I facetime with her, she keeps asking me how much you have written. When exactly will you graduate? I just feel like I need to finish this thing as soon as possible. It's just a very small part of my life.

(Olivia)

Some 60% of those participants interviewed were taking care of their children in New Zealand by themselves for most of time and were trying to find ways to make childcare more affordable. For example, Amy was relying on her neighbours and peers for childcare when she was very busy.

You know when I was working very hard on my revisions, on my writings, I need to come to office at night, you know work late. I can ask my friends, neighbours in the same house, other tenants to take care of him, to stay with him and take care of him for free. They help me without any... so I think that's also the benefit I get. (Amy)

She also tried to ask for after-school support from the university for herself and other doctoral student-mothers.

You know in first year when I and my kid came here. I need somewhere to let him stay after school. So, we talk about... I initiated this issue with the moms. So, our advices, maybe we can gather the kids and get that room somewhere. Then the moms would take turns to... you know to look after them. So, we have more time you know. But the thing is that we have our moms, but we don't have a room. And I applied for a room through the university website, the room was authorized. I think that's Very good. (Amy)

Whilst fully aware this would not be the norm for a doctoral student, each of these individuals was trying to find a way to balance being a student with caring for their children. Those

choosing to use family, or friends as the main method of childcare, are at an advantage compared to the remaining interviewees who could only rely on themselves and private childcare facilities. With the complexities of modern-day demands, it is argued that PhD student-mothers could have more constructive and meaningful experiences if university-led childcare actually addressed the limited space problems of ECE and a student-parents' budgetary restrictions with a structured, progressive approach.

5.3 Immigration and Visa Challenges

According to immigration policy (Immigration New Zealand, 2019), only the international doctoral students who have scholarship funding have the chance to get four years of student visa at one time. For those who are self-funded, they have to renew their student visa annually, and those interviewed believe that conditions for visa applications and the extra visa application fee cause an additional layer of complexity for their financial burden.

In terms of the visa, the other thing right. Related to us each year because I'm fully funded [by myself] with no scholarship. I have to renew my visa every year. So, every year that's another thousand plus dollars. I have saved my budgets because I'm self-paid. But on the other hand, my colleagues who are scholarship based get a four-year visa. So, I don't understand why they get a four-year visa and I only get one and a half for new each year which means in four-thousand-dollar cost on top of whatever I've paid for my fees. So, I think that's not right. And in my case, December comes so, on December I have to pay my new fees for the university. Then two months later I have to reapply for the visa. Now what happens there is that in December I have to still show funds every year that I have that savings. So, I can't touch the savings to cover my expenses here to stay. And then three months later. I have to pay my fees in December. I take those savings and I pay them in university. So, when March comes to renew my visa, I don't have those saving to show the funds. So, they don't even coincide. (Isabella)

The visa challenges for the international PhD student who does not have a scholarship not only causes financial burden but is also time consuming. Andy shared her visa application experience as a PhD student-mother:

We need to renew our visa every year. And I felt that I have encountered too much difficulties and could not get any help and support. Last year when I renewed my student visa, I submitted my visa with my kid's visa together online. The immigration officers made mistakes and only gave eight months' visa to me and my kids. Then I contacted the university, I asked them if they could contact immigration for me. I didn't receive any feedback for a month. I had to call immigration every day, every day. And I had to look all the documents myself and highlight the term to argue with them, because at first, they did not admit the mistake. Then finally the immigration officer apologised that they were wrong and gave me a new correct visa. (Andy)

During this visa application and clarification process, Andy felt that she did not receive any support from the university. What was more disappointing and frustrating for Andy was that she more than once encountered visa problems, and the university failed to support and help her. Consequently, she had to spend more energy and time dealing with the visa issues by herself, which caused avoidable stress during her complex PhD journey.

I wasted a lot of time and energy on visa. Including last year when my husband tried to come here visit me and child, you know visitor visa, they approved the visa but didn't send us e-visa nor any email. It's like, they are constantly making mistakes. Including my parents' visa, too. I think it's all these small things that I have to deal with. I mean if the university can help us get the visa for four years at a time, first we could save lots of money as a student, the application fee is expensive, and secondly, I think it will save so much troubles. You know what's the trickiest? I told the university I would like to pay for my four years tuition fee at once because I wanted to apply for a long visa and don't need to apply every, every year. But the university said no. We wouldn't charge you for four years tuition fees at once. I think this thing really... And I wrote letters to financial office, I tried to find lots of people, nothing worked, and nobody could help. (Andy)

This gap between immigration policies and university policies not only exists with visa applications but also on maternity leave of doctoral student-mothers. Among the four new mothers in this study, only Ella received her Permanent Residents Visa when she was pregnant. Compared to the other three international doctoral student-mothers who were on

student visas, she did not need to worry about the visa conditions, and she had more maternity leave.

The university has provided me that what they can because they granted me six-month maternity leave. They kept my hot desk for me at that time... I didn't know that difference, but I think for the maternity leave, all the student mums could have six months. That's the advantage of being permanent residents. I was told that as long as possible, as long as I want within one year or 18 months I don't remember. But I just took six months, is quite suitable for me. I don't want to totally forget my research when I come back here. (Ella)

The other three international student-mothers who were still holding student visas at the time of their pregnancy were not so lucky. All the full-time doctoral students could apply for a specified period of time" suspension during their PhD study when the candidate "is unable to continue with their research programme because of circumstances beyond their control" (University of Auckland, 2020b, p. 3). However, if the international PhD student takes suspension for more than three months within 12 months, it will result in cancellation of the student visa (2020b). For the international PhD student-mothers, this regulation also influences their husband's work visa which is dependent on them. Therefore, the women in this study who were pregnant during their PhD programme only had three months of maternity leave at most. Emma describes the challenges posed to international students who are unable to switch to part-time study when they become mothers because of the visa restrictions placed on international students and her decision to suspend her studies for a period of time alongside her maternity leave of three months:

The reason I applied for three months suspension at the very beginning is because I'm afraid my visa will expire. That gave me some stress. That means I can't leave this position for a really long time. If from the beginning the government could give us more time for pregnancy leave. We'll have more time to take care of the baby to organize all the things. That's for sure. And secondly, for the doctoral program some people who has PR [permanent residents visa], who are residents in New Zealand, of New Zealand. They could choose part time to do this. I want to do this in part time but for international students they can't do it in part time, that means you need to finish your

doctoral thesis within four years. Meanwhile you need to take care of your baby. That's the timeframe of the international students and so quite a stressful for those who are doctoral students. And also, who is a doctoral student mother. If I have more time I may, I may well expand my time on my study and build up my daily routine for my baby then focussing on my study. (Emma)

Whilst the number of female international students enrolling into university has increased, this study argues that academic institutions and immigration policies fail to recognise the requirements of this special group. As the enrolment patterns amongst females have evolved, a greater volume of opportunities and challenges for women have appeared. Thus, the merger between these experiences and traditional organisational support systems have led to new personal challenges and issues. Without this recognition, achieving a PhD degree abroad presents a challenging scenario for the many women who balance education with raising a family.

5.4 Financial Hardship

Financial support is highlighted as being the biggest concern for international PhD student-mothers. Fourteen participants in this study clearly stated that one of the reasons they chose to do their PhD study in New Zealand is because of the domestic tuition fee policy, which made their PhD journey appear initially affordable.

Domestic fee for the international student that's the first things that attract. Yeah. And then I tried to search about education. So that's the first time I was interested because I heard the fee. It's... you know it's attractive. And then I started to search about the rankings and research, and I found that the University of Auckland is very good in the Asia Pacific region. So, I put it that's one of my preference[s]. (Tessa)

Like Tessa, half of the other participants in this study mentioned that New Zealand was not their first choice until they were attracted by the domestic tuition fee policy.

NZ was not in my plan. But I was, I was applying from other universities in Denmark also Australia because I study my master in France. So, I applied for my PhD there, but

it was difficult to get the offer letter. Although I got an offer letter from Melbourne University. I couldn't afford it. There was so much money for me and I couldn't get the scholarship by then. So, I quit while I was working in Colombia. (Claire)

As the previous study has shown, there is a big gap between the international students' expectations and reality of the living costs in New Zealand (Berno & Ward, 2004). A participant who identified as upper-middle class in her home country and had secured a scholarship, also found the living costs in New Zealand extremely high, in particular when it came to childcare and housing. Tessa thought that studying in New Zealand would not have much of a financial burden. She had a good and constructive plan for herself and her family before she came to New Zealand.

Quite interesting because it's cheap like if I can get a scholarship then I can fund my husband to do his PhD there. I think it's a win-win situation. So that's, that's the first time I was thinking about New Zealand. (Tessa)

However, like the other respondents who did not have a scholarship, Tessa was also surprised by the living costs of Auckland. While childcare and housing costs present international PhD student-mothers with difficulties, the study participants added additional information which made the financial picture more comprehensive and detailed. A number of the participants had decided to move further away from the university campus in order to find cheaper accommodation, but this also meant they had to spend more money on transport and could no longer go to the doctoral hub and study there frequently.

But I think money, like living costs is one big burden for us. Because it limits us to... like even I have to limit my travel to the campus sometimes if I don't have enough money because I drive and the price of petrol is higher and higher and higher, just increase all the time. so that's one big thing that I think limit my participation in more students Associations or students' events. And that's also accommodation is a major factor that I have to live a little far away from the campus. So, it's less flexible for me to do, to combine work and study and family care. Because if I live in this area it's much much easier for me. So that's, that's one thing that I think it's, it's very challenging, living costs and accommodation. (Tessa)

A number of participants stated that on-campus family accommodation was far more attractive, in terms of cost than renting somewhere to live in the city. However, only one participant had managed to secure a low-cost apartment through the University Accommodation Office, adding that this had provided her with a little financial breathing space.

I have to say that is almost impossible to get that accommodation. You know the director told me "oh you know to be honest with you we don't look at the applications because we already have many students"... because it wasn't for me the first time to apply for the accommodation. It was the third time. But fortunately, I met one person and she told me they never look at the applications online. You need to talk to them face to face. And convince her that you need the accommodation. So that's what I did. So, I talked to her. I say okay I have applied for three times. I have a baby. My husband is the only one who is working. We cannot afford any accommodation in Auckland right now. We just have 400, up to 450 to pay every week. So, I need your help. (Claire)

Unlike Claire, who found the accommodation support from the university, because of the financial barrier and the resulting unpleasant experiences, Tessa's husband gave up pursuing his PhD in New Zealand as they had planned.

My husband also studied in AUT for his master. Because he also wants to go for PhD. So he got one year master just to like bridging his qualification from Indonesia to NZ standard. So he finished July or August 2016 and then after that he decided not to continue. (Tessa)

Three participants in this study had received scholarships. As stated in the previous chapter, the PhD student-mothers interviewed who were self-funded had more concern for financial stability during their PhD journey.

No, I don't feel comfortable. I'm not feeling comfortable because of the financial stability. Yeah. Because I have a risk that I don't have a scholarship. It's kind of a stressful time you know. (Niro)

An additional point which emerged from the data is that the majority of students wanted better advice and information about the doctoral study life and academic style in New Zealand prior to enrolling. Both the students and the institutions would benefit from minimising the incidence of false starts. The institutions would waste fewer resources, and the international doctoral student-mothers would waste less time and money and retain more of their self-confidence.

...in my case I knew nothing before I came here. So, I think I was under a lot of pressure. I was stressful. I was anxious, nervous since the second month of my first year. I was worrying about if I can succeed if I can you know walk the whole way till the end of the PhD. (Amy)

There was a consensus by participants that higher education financial support is limited for international students, and the only financial aid provided is more appropriate for those without children. This financial support is not geared towards helping mothers. Claire had applied for a hardship grant from her faculty.

Nothing from the university. Nothing. nothing. I applied for. Have you heard about the hardship grants? It is from ESSA. ESSA is Education Student Association from faculty. So, you can get a hardship grant of 250 if you are single. 400 if you have family. But it's only one time per year. I applied for that and I got for the first time 400. I remembered. and there's also food parcel. It's not that we were hungry. No, I cannot say that. But it was difficult for us to buy some food. So, I went to the ESSA. I had been applying for food parcel many times. But it helps. You know that. You can eat some beans, pasta, Non-perishable food. But that's the only help I found. (Claire)

The money offered within the financial aid system was not enough to cover the full educational period of their time as doctoral students. Therefore, to be able to manage their education smoothly, many interviewed students needed to search for funding from alternative sources, rather than depend upon official financial support programmes.

I used to have. I used to work. I used to have three part-time jobs in the second and third year. But now I ceased all of them because I have to focus on my thesis. (Amy)

From all the students interviewed, 90% worked part-time in addition to their studies. This extra income was needed to pay for childcare, accommodation, health insurance and their education overall. With no other opportunities to gain additional funding, students believe that working for income alongside their study commitments is detrimental to academic progress. Teaching assistant and research assistant posts are regarded as being the most significant methods of receiving financial support. These types of part-time work allow students a little respite from tuition fees whilst also offering the opportunity to experience teaching and additional research in return for a small income. The main purpose of the teaching assistant and research assistant roles is to provide students with the opportunity to gain professional experience and to establish a network of contacts with the faculty which can then lead to further professional networking. Four student-mothers in this study had this employment opportunity at the university, which lessened their financial burden.

Compared to Korea, everything is very expensive. Like living fee, some internet and water, electricity, all the things very expensive. And also, the food, and if I have bought some vegetables like pepper, it's really expensive. But there's no demand from the finance aspect now. Now I save all the money as research assistant and do some tutorial work. But if I have no secure background, financial background and job, it is really challenging because everything related connected with money matters. (Mila)

The issues with the teaching assistant and research assistant roles are that it is not sufficient to last for the full period of a student's time in their PhD journey, and the amount of positions are limited. Not all doctoral students have these opportunities. As a result, the students who did not have employment opportunities in the university often relied on different sources, such as part-time work outside the university or accessing money from personal sources. This is a general problem impacting all doctoral students, not just international doctoral student-mothers. However, those interviewed believed being an international student causes an additional layer of complexity.

You need to have network with the locals to find a job. And for international students it's not always easy to find that network. You need to make conscious effort. I can see and that can be facilitated. Like I could see from my friends if you have good relationship

with your supervisor. But it's also depends on your supervisor whether they want to preview the depth of it. So that's, that can open a door for your career. That's tricky because not all supervisors are willing to do that. Like if I got there, my supervisor in Australia when he needs help with the administrative things in his centre. He asked me if I want to work for him. And then I got other offers from there. Here my supervisor didn't do that. But I know some other supervisors do that. If you don't have that opportunity from your supervisors, you need to find other networks. And for international students it's not easy. It's hard. If you only do it objectively from you know job applications. That's really hard. (Tessa)

Most students did not believe that reliable financial support could be obtained from their educational institution or the wider educational system. As such, students prefer to approach family or partners as a more dependable source of financial aid. Families and partners are seen to be the most valuable source of financial support, leaving student-mothers feeling grateful to their loved ones for providing such unwavering support.

Nothing from anyone. I asked for help. I remember. I was looking for help. ... Although sometimes my husband's brother helps us, just one or two times. My mom, I used to ask for money I don't like that but I, I told her, hey, I live in these... I don't have for these. We are struggling. That's the life we are struggling here. So, she... she sent me some money to help me. (Claire)

The women who have partners' support speak highly of their husbands and how lucky they feel to have found loved ones who support their academic, personal and professional aspirations. Despite this, some women were often uncomfortable about their position, believing that they had to trade their independence in the relationship with the need to secure financial support. The traditional male–female relationship presents the husband as the main income provider. Thus, the financial security provided by their spouse can have a psychological impact on the woman. Claire's husband worked 14 hours per day in order to fund the whole family, thus Claire was the only one to take care of the child and household in the family.

My husband only works. He works between 7-6 and then he starts another job at 9 until 12pm. That's because we need the money. Because I'm also tired. I look after the baby 100 percent. I think the happiest moment during the day is when we are together. You know when dinner. Because we are all together. We can eat. Relax relax. Like When my baby sick. I cannot even look after myself. My husband comes home and asked why I did not cook. I'm not going to give you any excuses, imagine whatever you want. I couldn't cook. So you can hold the baby I can cook, I can't even take a shower.

(Claire)

As discussed in the previous chapter, the data in this study clearly stated that financial issues had a negative impact on international doctoral student-mothers' studies and resulted in emotional stress, including loneliness and shame. Financially relying on the husbands often creates a hard choice between risking losing independence and the need for financial security to be able to fulfil academic goals or focus on starting a family of their own. This choice leaves women with an option: do they accept that they need to sacrifice a specific aspect of their lives or do they simply make the choice of which part of their life they need to sacrifice? Emma found that relying on her husband was more acceptable than losing her identity as a student or family security.

That [financial burden] is a critical thing for everybody, I believe. But, luckily, for me my husband and I like a team so far. He's in charge of financial things. I'm in charge of baby and my study. Although, even though, he takes the most initiative... Before we decide to have a baby, before we are having a baby. My husband and I have discussed about our roles. We've already identified our roles are money... Someone who earn the money, someone who take care of babies. We've already made the decision. So, I don't feel confused about that. (Emma)

Overall, the majority of participants in this study came to New Zealand to pursue their PhD study were attracted by the domestic tuition fee policy for the international PhD students. However, there is a big gap between the ideal financial planning and the reality of the living costs in New Zealand for the international PhD students who have families and children. Eleven respondents discussed the financial barriers they faced. Most of the student-mothers interviewed hold the opinion that the frameworks established for helping students to finance

their doctoral studies are unrealistic or inadequate, failing to fulfil the needs of daily graduate life. Relying on family was regarded as being a positive means of gaining the financial support required to achieve their doctoral education.

5.5 Emotional Support

Across the study, 12 participants revealed that the university facilities and their faculty staff had a positive influence on their academic experience as the faculty academics were proactively involved, remained flexible and had a caring and emotionally supportive approach to the international student-mothers on their studying journey.

I think at the University, I think this learning environment is very relaxing. I think, people here, staff and our peers are very supportive and considerate. We view each other as important. We think everyone has his or her needs. (Amy)

The flexibility shown by the faculty staff was recognised by four of the interviewed students who believed that they were given an open and flexible environment in which to study with their children at the university. Audrey describes the library as an example of the support she welcomed:

From the university, what I can think of is the library. Because I can't imagine that when I have to bring my kids here too. Perhaps attend seminars or to have meetings. I can, I can just get them access to the library and they can read, do the reading, wait for me... I remember once, when I attend the kind of large-scale seminar, I can see some young children joining in with their mothers. Not myself but I can see that scene. And that's so impressive for me. They... even the speakers can accept the questions raised from the children. They can respond. That, that kind of interaction is not, is not perceived as interruption but kind of interaction. (Audrey)

The emotional support provided by the faculty also took into consideration the religious beliefs of the international students. This empathetic approach towards multi-culturalism and differences between cultures was both recognised and appreciated by Tessa.

I started to put headscarf, maybe 2014, so I haven't started that long. And then in 2014 or 2015 there is a big case in Australia. There's a bombing like hostage. Hostage situation in cafe in Sydney. And after that. There was a lot of issues in Australia about Muslims being discriminated and that quite affect me when I first came here. I was not sure how people accept people with headscarf. So, I was quite careful with my headscarf. So, I decided not to put this kind of headscarf but more like a turban. So, it's not as Muslim looking. Because I was not sure, so I wore that for my first meeting with my supervisor for the first week I came to the university. And within months I feel that it's not justified like, people in New Zealand really really knows about equity. Like my friends in the PhD hub they don't mind me praying, as long as it's behind the desk. Like I learn not to push my Muslim agenda, like I need to be able to pray anything everywhere. It's just made your expectation within the culture of this place; they will be accepted. So, I started to feel very relaxed, and I put my headscarf like this. And I don't feel anything. I don't feel threatened. I feel safe. I feel accepted. (Tessa)

Amy highlighted that the emotional support from her supervisor was significant to her as a mother. Before she brought her child to New Zealand, she had a discussion with her supervisors first.

I didn't tell the university that I need that kind of help. So, they did not do anything. But I told my supervisors this decision. They supported my decision. They think that being a mum is more important than being a student. so, the boy should come and stay with me. So, I think with their permission and support I feel stronger. You know I have a lot of people behind me. So, I feel very relaxed. (Amy)

However, other participants reported different experiences in their responses. They discussed their frustration with the faculty as a PhD student-mother. Four participants believed their faculty remained oblivious to their motherhood status and showed little understanding of the process of transition that international doctoral student-mothers had to experience when studying away from their home country with children. An absence of preparation for their arrival by faculty staff was highlighted by Andy and Isabella who believed supporting international student-mothers was not manageable for staff. There was a lack of preparation for them in the faculty and thus, the staff were unable to provide any comprehensive support.

Isabella's experience of finding emotional support from university staff was that the framework of support was not adequate to support her emotionally.

No. Nothing. Nothing from the university. I asked for it. And my supervisors and universities sent me to the counselling services. And nothing else. (Isabella)

The women interviewed in this research all agreed that they received adequate support and encouragement from their peers. The interviewees, who were acquainted with other graduates who also balance motherhood with their studies, felt greater contentment within their peer groups.

We have a small community here in my campus that is supporting each other. So we sometimes we take childcare, caring for others, each other's kids. And we have lunch together so that's relief. (Tessa)

However, with the responsibilities of parenthood resulting in limited time to develop friendships, PhD student-mothers have the risk of feeling like the outsider amongst their peer group. This was highlighted by a single mother who was interviewed in this study:

I think the most challenging is what I said is about the connection with others. The peer connection. Because I ... have to confess that I don't really dedicate my time or effort in interacting with my peers. (Audrey)

When student-mothers did not have many opportunities for connection with their peer group, satisfaction levels dropped significantly. This further escalated when these women were unable to connect with like-minded women or others experiencing the same life challenges of balancing PhD studies with motherhood. Claudia's narrative of loneliness has been presented in the previous chapter because she did not have time to connect with her peers, which made her feel lonely and isolated, "and then it just changes from one type of loneliness to another type of loneliness" (Claudia). Isabella also talked about lonely feelings because of lower levels of connection with her PhD peers.

I do feel I am alone. I have two colleagues that I managed to connect with, and I chat with them so the way I connect them usually through Facebook I chat with them and check on them and vice versa. So those two I've been able to connect with. The reason that was when we first came, we had to do the required workshops and so they were in my workshop. So that's how I connected with them and so I've kept that line. And so when they see me it's wonderful. But yeah. Wish I could see them more than I do.
(Isabella)

Developing a social circle is essential for many students for emotional support. Finding other students who are in the same position, such as studying parents, becomes an important part of establishing a support network. This provides the student with a sense of belonging, emotionally and intellectually.

I feel very secure to be a mum, free and secure to be a student-mom here... As a mum and then, I think the other thing is we have our team, dynamic, very supportive. When I need a hand you know, a lot of peers can help me. You know when I was working very hard on my revisions on my writings I need to come to office at night, you know work late. I can ask my friends who are also mothers, or neighbours in the same house, other tenants to take care of him, to stay with him and take care of him for free. (Amy)

Emma, who was pregnant during her PhD study, also mentioned and appreciated the emotional support provided by her peers in her doctoral hub:

I received many supports. That's for sure. From my colleagues, Of course. It also really interesting because when I applied for my suspension, I applied for three months which is quite short time. And I was still working in my nine months pregnancy. And my colleagues, they are very supportive. They told me if you, if you're in labour we can drive you to the hospital [laughs]. I think that's something very supportive. (Emma)

The emotional support from a respondent's personal network of family, partner and friends was described as essential to prevent stress and feeling isolated. The feedback from respondents confirmed that the family provided the most security and dependability for a doctoral student and their combined identity as a mother. Tessa appreciated her family's

contribution to her doctoral study journey and highlighted the role of the extended family as also essential for providing emotional support to student-mothers:

Because we're in it together. We enjoy things together. It's give me like a course to finish as soon as possible. And also give me time to think about non-academic things. If you'd been too absorbed in your thesis you need breaks. So, I think we planned the journeys together and plan things together and that's really good seeing them enjoying themselves and make me enjoy myself too. That's really good. And also, my in-laws in Indonesia. Although they don't support my decision, but they think a lot about the family. So, when I have to go back to collect data, my in-laws said, "Stay with us", and then we stay with them and they give many many supports to my husband when I have to leave them. So, it's very good. I think, I wrote in my thesis acknowledge...to raise children and to make a woman PhD, that [doesn't] happen without the support of community and family. (Tessa)

Lack of nurturing and emotional support from family forces respondents, who are on their own, to be strong and focused as they continue along their PhD journey. This has been revealed by Andy where these feelings led to greater frustration, intense emotions and loneliness when she was taking care of her child alone without any help from her spouse and extended family.

I remembered that time, four months or five months [when my parents were not here]. I felt very dark at that time... Because I've been very tired all the time, I think it's only two or three hours to really focus on my study... At that time, I remember when my parents were not here, I happened to have a meeting to attend. At that time, I had not finished analysing the data yet. But I'm going to the meeting in a month. I felt like I was devastated during that time. My health was also very bad, but fortunately, I got it all done before the meeting and presented it well at the meeting. (Andy)

In conclusion, international student-mothers perceived that their emotional needs were, at times, overlooked by faculty staff but they generally found support from their peers and supervisors. In comparison to those who could not access support from partners or families, student-mothers received emotional support from specific sources were generally more

content. When a doctoral student-mother cannot access emotional support, feelings of stress and seclusion escalate. Those receiving support, inspiration and assurance from their loved ones are less at risk from these feelings of negativity.

5.6 Supervisor – Formal and Informal Bridge to the University

Andy believed that being known as a mother meant that others would perceive her as being an uncommitted student. She did not tell her supervisor anything about her child at first because she did not "want to have any tag as a 'mum'". The reason was that Andy felt that her status as a serious and dedicated student could be compromised if others realised that she was a mother who had priorities at home over her PhD progress. This perspective was also shared by Olivia and Monica, who also chose not to disclose their roles as mothers within their PhD journey.

Yeah, but I don't say, I won't say that I'm doing this intentionally. I have to say potentially I'm trying to be a person, professional doctoral student. When I am talking to my supervisors. Because, yeah, that's the thing, you [are] rolling things and you're trying to keep things in balance. (Emma)

The role of supervisors and the emotional support they offered played a highly influential role in the students' academic experiences towards gaining their doctorate. As Audrey said:

The supervisor's support is the key thing in everyone's PhD journey. (Audrey)

The supervisor is the first person that doctoral students are in contact with at the university. They are also the person who has the closest contact with doctoral students on the whole PhD journey and is the crucial bridge between the doctoral students and the university. Allison, who came from Hong Kong, felt very supported at the beginning of her PhD study and always had a positive studying experience as a student-mother in New Zealand because of the "first feeling" her supervisors gave to her.

I think that of course, the first people that I met are the supervisors. They give me this kind of feeling first. Because at first, I have to settle down my family. And then for some

meetings, supervisor meetings, I have to negotiate or adjust the time. Because sometimes I just can't be there. So, for that part, I can feel. They understand that. Because I don't think I can have that kind of adjustment in Hong Kong. Because it's stricter and the higher that makes you feel like you have to adjust yourself to accommodate what you want to achieve. But here I can feel the other thing. The other side. It's more friendly or more human. So that's the one... That's starting points that I have that kind of feeling. (Audrey)

Ella was also touched with her main supervisor from the very beginning. The good relationship she had with her supervisor made her PhD studying experience relatively smooth.

[My supervisor supported me] both academically and in my life during my PhD journey. In the very early e-mail communication between me and my supervisor, he asked me to buy a pair of sunglasses, back in my home country. Because the sunglasses here quite expensive. And that thing is quite touching for me. Because I think, my surprise is that a person that pay much attention to detail things. And in the academic perspective, he's a real role model. He got a lot of publications every year. And he worked really hard and as an Asian professor at our university. He was a devoted person. And during my pregnancy, he said yes to everything that I ask for him. Maternity leave and the status have that change from full time student to part time student. So, if I got a thing to discuss with him, he showed his full support to me. I can describe the relationship as a quite close one. (Ella)

The reflection of Tessa's relationship with her two supervisors is symbolic of a student-mother who is highly satisfied with their PhD study. She enjoyed her relationships with her supervisors and was satisfied with their constant academic and emotional support. She described her first supervisor was not very "sensitive" about her personal life like her other supervisors, but still gave her emotional support through tough times.

[W]ell my old main supervisor is less sensitive obviously but when I got big difficulty with my husband at that time like him not wanting to continue his studies. But his negative attitude. I was really stressed out. She shared her own experience. So, a little

effect for me. When I did PhD, my husband wished that I did not start. So that makes me feel better. So, they were supportive and there was a time when she scheduled the meeting around the time I had to pick up the kids. She was quite OK. I brought my kids to the supervisor meeting and so although she looks like a robot she's still understanding and care[s]. (Tessa)

Sixteen of those interviewed in this study believed their supervisors were highly supportive from an academic perspective. However, nine participants did not ask for emotional support, and one did not feel she had any emotional support from her former supervisors. Depriving students of emotional support leads to discontentment and frustration with their education.

My prior supervisors, they said we don't care what you do outside of supervision. There is no excuse. You must do 40 hours a week. We don't care about your other obligations... I asked for it [emotional support]. And my supervisors and universities sent me to the counselling services. And nothing else. (Isabella)

Not only because of the lack of emotional support from her former supervisors, but also because of the different understandings of her research topic, Isabella eventually changed her supervisors. She was more satisfied with her current supervisors' academic support but, when talking about the emotional support and the understanding of her as a student-mother, she said:

...my one supervisor on this campus, because we have the parenting room, she shows me... with me in that parenting room and I can bring them [children] if I have to. ... My newer ones [supervisors] are a little more flexible but... But in general no, there's... They don't quite understand how you balance that [as a mother]. (Isabella)

Five participants in this study were pregnant during their PhD study. They all appreciated the support and/or understanding from their supervisors. Emma appreciated the support for her maternity leave application and suggestions for the pregnancy from her supervisors.

They are very supportive. When I told them I got pregnant, they were happy for me. And they would like to fill the forms for me and give me some suggestions like how to take care of babies and how long you need for your pregnancy leave. (Emma)

Ella never asked for help from her supervisors during her pregnancy and motherhood, but she was still thankful for the maternity leave support from her supervisors.

I think I didn't view myself a different PhD student because I'm a mom. So, I didn't receive any extra support from him, and I didn't ask either. And that's the only thing I ask is the maternity leave thing. And he said yes. So, he showed his full support to me. (Ella)

Sharing a similar view to Ella's, Andy believed that being known as a mother meant that others would perceive her as being a different and an uncommitted student. She did not tell her supervisor anything about her child at first because she did not want to be labelled as a 'mum'. The reason for this is that Andy felt that her status as a serious and dedicated student could be compromised if others realised that she is a mother who has priorities at home over her PhD progress. This perspective was also shared by Olivia, Emma and Monica, who also chose not to disclose their roles as mothers within their PhD journey and talk too much about it with their supervisors.

Yeah, but I don't say, I won't say that I'm doing this intentionally. I have to say potentially I'm trying to be a person, professional doctoral student. When I am talking to my supervisors. (Emma)

However, just like the support Emma received from her supervisor later, Monica's main supervisor's encouragement and emotional support also helped her go through with the pregnancy.

When I knew that I was pregnant, I hesitated. I was thinking about whether or not to have this baby. I told my supervisor maybe I should give up. She said she didn't want me to think like that. Actually, from her perspective she definitely wanted me to graduate as soon as possible and she knew that I would slow down my progress after

pregnancy, but she didn't say that you should give up. Instead she shared her story with me, saying she also had ... "unwanted" thoughts while pregnant with her second child, but later, it's her child [who] gave her more encouragement. She convinced me to keep this kid. When I came back to school after my maternity leave, at the first three months, I basically didn't write anything in my first three months, and she did not push me. After that, she started planning the progress with me again. I really appreciate that.
(Monica)

Monica was not the only participant who had been encouraged to get through the tough times by a supervisor. Audrey never thought to seek support from her supervisors as a mother, but once she had shared, it made her realise that she was not alone, and she was supported as a mother at this university.

I can't say no because I ... haven't ask or I haven't interacted with them as a mother. I shared once with my main supervisor, but she's really supportive. She also shared her previous life experience. And see how I can overcome, or I can move forward in my life.
(Audrey)

Like Audrey, nor did Claire share her financial difficulties and time-management challenges as a student-mother until she proved herself to be a qualified PhD student.

Sometimes you are afraid, because of the culture is totally different. You don't know exactly how well they are going to react, react about the situation. So, I wasn't sure at the beginning to tell her. But I was, you know, really really in hard condition and I decided to talk to her. She said, 'oh that's why I recommend my students not to come if you don't have the money'. So, I didn't find a support at the beginning. I just feel like I wish not to tell her this situation. You know because... I couldn't hear any more that I said I was working, then she was going to say ah, but you need... you know she was telling me all the time you need to focus 100% on your PhD. But that's easy to say. Not for me. Like unfortunately I cannot focus on my PhD 100%. I wish that, but I can't. But you know, then maybe she realized that I was doing my best to do the PhD. (Claire)

Claire's experience demonstrated how important communication is to the relationships between the supervisor and the PhD student and how important it is to the student's studying experience. Through effective communication, her supervisor evolved from an academic guide to becoming a friend of the family. When recounting the influence of her supervisor, Claire stated that the strong influence that the supervisor had on her PhD journey stayed with her throughout her life.

I had three months suspension from the university [for maternity leave]. But it took six or more. I stayed home because my baby couldn't get any offer from the childcare. I had to wait for the childcare. I was stressed and we couldn't get any support. The only support was my supervisor. One day she told me "Do you know one person or two need [who needs] an accommodation". I said, "I'm looking for a new place." The place I was staying was just for couples. It was a smaller studio, the open space, it's kind of the loft. It is not a proper space for baby. So, I told my supervisor yes, I'm looking for a place. And she told me "because I'm going to take a year leave, and I need a person to stay at my apartment. Do you want to stay there?" I said OK. So, we went to see the apartment and it was a one-bedroom apartment in a really good location. It's very convenient for my husband and me. I was like seven months pregnant. Everything was there, a furnished apartment. And she told me you can use everything you want. And she told me you don't have to pay that. You just need to pay the bills like water and power. So altogether was only 250. She told me this is my contribution [laughs] (Claire)

Claire and her husband, with their new-born baby, spent one year at her supervisor's apartment. The free apartment from her supervisor gave them a warm home to start their new journey and financially supported them at their darkest time. Claire was very grateful for her supervisor's prompt support and took her as a family member.

Now she is ... family. She visits us like every Tuesday, like she has it in her agenda that I have to visit my grandson. (Claire)

Unlike Claire's close relationship with her supervisor, Niro also appreciated the understanding from her supervisors, but she stated that understanding to her as a mother was not really the support that she needed.

Not the support but they ask like how I'm going. How my work is going and now they know that I am pregnant, and I will be going on maternity leave. So, I need to go on maternity leave so they care about what I will face in the near future. So, they understand. For me that they haven't put any kind of deadline that you need to finish all these things. (Niro)

Similar to Niro, Olivia also did not equate understanding with support:

No support from school administration [as a mother], that's for sure. Supervisors may give you some emotional...understanding, not support, understanding. Sometimes your supervisor said why your progress was slow, OK I can understand, you are a mum. So that's it. There's nothing else. I mean the academic support is their job. I don't think because I'm a mother, so I have received any special attention or being treated differently? No. (Olivia)

The gender of supervisors was mentioned in the interviews. Emma believed that she was very well supported emotionally and academically because her supervisors were also female.

They're very supportive. I have to say they they're both female. They know my situation. And from their position from their perspective, their work is to urge me to finish my study. So that means I receive more pressure. (Emma)

Claudia stated that she preferred a female supervisor, even though her male supervisors were also supportive.

Like something when I was going through a difficult time in my writing, I was hoping to have a female supervisor, for example. Because even though my supervisors had been really, you know, thoughtful and I just feel that a female supervisor will kind of connect... you know understand what I need, more in a personal way... I don't know if I prefer one. But that up there the moments when I really...like I feel really bad because sometimes I cry, and I don't know I sometimes feel that... When this happened...just maybe it's my thing that I don't feel very comfortable. (Claudia)

Isabella believed that gender is not the main factor that influences the supervisor's understanding of the student-mothers' experiences and challenges but that it depends on whether the supervisor is also a parent and has caring duties.

I don't think it's about gender. It's... I think when you have supervisors who don't... Who aren't mothers or caregivers, don't understand that balance. So, the expectation is you must do, you must study study study. So, I think that does create a problem when they haven't walked the walk and know the journey. I think if you have a supervisor who has done that, they understand that a little better. (Isabella)

In addition, the findings show that there is a distinction between a good level of support and excessive support from supervisors. This was a key subject discussed by the students interviewed for the research. As mentioned in the previous finding chapter, Claudia appreciated her supervisors' emotional support, but on the other hand, too much understanding and less pressure made her feel lost and lacking direction in her research project for a while. On the contrary, Olivia preferred the freedom that her supervisor offered to her.

I think I was on my own for the most of my PhD life. I never asked for specific academic guidance from my supervisors. But of course, they gave me great help when I had the critical difficulties on my research. They gave me great freedom. They trust me. Maybe they think...well my co-supervisor often said I am a capable student. So, how's my progress, they don't bother or worry too much. Actually, I like it because when you graduate, you will be an independent researcher after all... If you don't train yourself to find problems and solve problems during your PhD, you rely entirely on your supervisor to tell you what to do or how to do then you won't go far in academic. So relatively, I enjoy my relationship with my supervisors. In the first year, we met regularly, but later we met every three or four months. Then just want to make sure that I'm not wasting my time. (Olivia)

The data in this section, reveals that the supervisor's support can be offered to a student-mother in both an explicit form and in a more implicit form. Emotional support and

encouragement was evident in respectful relationships, appreciation, quality time spent together, a supervisor's ability to understand their student's personal circumstances and supporting a student with networking opportunities. Communication plays a crucial role in the relationship of supervisors and students, and encouragement is a key part of ensuring support is readily available to the student. In addition, the student-mothers have different views and standards on supervision support. In some situations, if supervisors fail to place pressure on their students, any academic development within the students' research may be suppressed. This would then have an impact on the overall academic performance of the student.

5.4 Getting a PhD with a Lack of Support as a Mother

There was a resounding consensus by participants that there is a gap between the university's support structures and doctoral student-mothers' actual needs. As the data showed in the previous section, the majority of participants were satisfied with the academic and emotional support from their supervisors as doctoral candidates at the university. However, no participant believed that they had received much financial or resourcing support from the university hierarchy as a student-mother.

This study examined women's abilities, agency and objectives when familiarising themselves with living in a new country. All the doctoral student-mothers created personal projects which would help them adjust to the new environment and balance their study and lives. Without sufficient support from the university, the international PhD-mothers in this study adopted various strategies to balance their academic life and motherhood. Amy advocated actively seeking help from the university when needed.

Without asking... if you did not tell them they don't know that you need, what you need. I think that you need, if you tell them you need a room for the kids, but the kids were not their student. The kids were the student's family. You know the attachment. And they say yes. This is, you know, the great support. (Amy)

Claire also stressed the importance of asking for support from the university.

I recommend all the students to go and talk directly. That's what I have learned from New Zealand. You cannot, you cannot use a third person. You have to go directly to the owner, to their director, talk to the person who is in charge. Otherwise it's almost difficult for you to get something. And it applies for everything you want in this university, like the hardship grant, I talked to the director. I said OK this is my condition. She told me OK, can you prove that you are in need. And I said yes. Show me your bank statement. I don't have any income. Show me your husband's. OK, my husband payslip is here. You see my husband pay this for rent, we spent this for food, nothing left. So yeah that's what I recommend to others, if I have the chance to talk to them. That's what I say. You always have to ask. Otherwise no help, no support, no. (Claire)

However, not everyone in this study wanted to seek help and ask for support from the university. Three participants, like Andy, were disappointed when they tried to get help from the university. Another three participants never tried to ask for support from the university because they felt that they could handle the challenges independently.

No, because I can handle myself, so I don't need to seek this kind of help. Anyway, you can solve it yourself anyway. I tried to overcome by myself. (Olivia)

Seven participants believed it was more efficient to find help from their peers or friends rather than reading the policies and information of the university and find support from the university, which they found “time consuming.”

No, I haven't. Actually, I didn't. I didn't bother to find their out. Maybe I could have done that. But actually, it is time consuming when we came...When we come to another country and first, we want to settle down here. So, we want to find a place to live and a job to earn, an accommodation and also... So, when these are settled then we are free then we can work on. (Niro)

Within the study, two women have a uniquely designed support group, catering to the needs of PhD student-mothers in her department. By being part of such a peer group, all members have the same core interests and responsibilities and, as such, are able to share their experiences of finding a balance between being a mother and being a PhD student.

The most important I think is timely support. It means when I need it is there. It is there. It's like you know online. We have a WeChat group for moms, for PhD moms. It's not related to money. It is related to emotional, experiences. when you missed something in this or that. How to tackle them, how to go on, how to move on. You know when you need the help, help is there. I think that's mutual. That's mutual. You help me and I help you. Yeah. Mutual. It [The WeChat group] is started...from you know, from the help I received from other moms. So, I think you know if I stay here for some time, so I know some things or some aspects... So maybe it is not very valuable but it's very helpful to the new moms. So, I think I want to form a team. I'm not a leader of the team, I'm just a very ordinary member of the team. It's, it's like yeah I want to build a team that continuously helping the new comers to settle down. You know if the kids are well, the mom are well. That's my cognition. Maybe it is very limited but it's real. (Amy)

Winnie adopted the same approach as Amy. She also created a WeChat group for all the doctoral students in her department. The responsibility of managing this type of group lies with the student-mothers. To support everyone in the group, online chat groups offering specific guidance and links to other relevant resources were created. The members of these specific groups have the highest satisfaction levels within their peer groups as a result of this network of support. Olivia was a member of both groups.

Sometimes we give advice to each other, like they will give you some advice when you needed, like when the kids don't have any place to go, they will say OK you could put them in my house, etc. I think we have more support from our peers because everyone understands each other. We have built these groups. Everyone in there will share some resources, discount information or anything else. I think it's a way of mutual assistance. I don't think there's any support from the university [as a mother], well it's my experience. It may not right. (Olivia)

In the same context, Olivia, Claudia, and Tessa also built up their networks and found their community supported them to balance their PhD study and their lives more effectively.

After that initial period then I started to make some acquaintances of course and then you start building up your social network. Now I'm really happy and I've settled, and I like my life. I miss my community in Mexico, but my community is there. I have managed to keep my roots. You know, like my family supporting me from the distance. So that matters a lot to me. And I have, I have a lot of friends. I do have a social network now and I'm happy I just feel that I'm late. [laughs] That's the only... Really, if I have one more year, I think I want to... you know I am in the best position to do a PhD now. But now I've only got one year left. When I finish, I will look back, and it will all be worth it. (Claudia)

For Audrey, instead of trying to find ways to force herself to concentrate on the study and be a perfect mother at the same time, Audrey felt her age gave her the ability to adjust mentality and balance her PhD study and her life.

Like now at my age, even though I think studying is the most important thing that I have to achieve for these years. But because the age giving me some life, kids. Sometimes I just can't do that, can't do everything, can't manage well everything. So, studying is part of the lives. It doesn't have to be done within the fixed period of time. So, I should enjoy. I should enjoy and be relaxed in this study and journey instead of... if I were in younger ages, I will just force myself to be concentrated, to work so hard to achieve the goal. But now I'm not. I will, I will feel like I need to enjoy the whole life. And this is a part of my journey in life so I would see more positive parts. Instead of just target oriented to work towards the goal. (Audrey)

As the data showed in this and the previous chapter, international PhD-mothers encountered a number of barriers and challenges in their academic life, including financial hardship, accommodation, childcare, visas, lack of parenting facilities, time management, no efficient family support, etc. Although these barriers significantly impact the doctoral student-mothers' studying experiences, they are not effectively addressed by the university communication or support systems. When these barriers are addressed, they are regarded as personal and individual experiences instead of being part of the university's contemporary structural features. Claudia used the analogy of support being just like “no lifts” for those with “disability” summed up the challenges of international PhD mums in this study.

I never thought that it was a responsibility of the university. Umm, It's interesting question. Because now, after these three years, I've...I don't like to phrase that... because I'm going to phrase it... It's not precise. But I haven't got I mean way of saying that. But in a way is the kind of, kind of disability. Not in the sense that makes you less capable of doing a PhD. It is just that, that you have a different situation. That with which you need to accommodate to it. So, I just think of it as not having legs and having to climb a stairway. And so yeah, that's why the lifts, the elevators, lifts are there. You know if you can't walk you take the lift. and that's why they put them there. But, But there's no lift. (Claudia)

5.7 Conclusion

The findings reveal that support required by international PhD student mothers is deemed to be a holistic system which is made up of four core support structures which reflect the main relationships within their life as a student: university, supervisor, family and friends. Through discussions with students, it was clear that the four core support structures working independently from one another would cause the support structures to fail to support the student effectively.

As revealed by the data, the university has a support system which does not cater effectively for the requirements of international doctoral student-mothers. There is an overall consensus from respondents that financial aid and childcare support is limited and inaccessible to some students. This leaves childcare costs to be managed solely by students themselves, obtaining financial support from their own sources. Most of the participants were attracted by the domestic tuition fee policy for international PhD students to complete their study in New Zealand. Eleven participants discussed financial hardship. There is clearly a gap between the expectations of the doctoral students prior to coming to New Zealand and their real experiences when being in New Zealand (Berno & Ward, 2004; Ward, 2001). There was also a gap between the actual needs of this group of students and the support provided by the university and their supervisors. The data revealed that international doctoral student-mothers rarely used student services, preferring instead to contact friends, relatives and parents when they needed help. All of the participants felt that staff working in international student services

would not understand their problems, so they were more likely to ask their friends or relatives for advice or simply keep their problems to themselves. For half of the students in this study these concerns resulted in loneliness.

In addition, whilst these research results cannot be generalised, it has been identified that common issues of accommodation experienced by doctoral student-mothers can be seen in campuses across the university. The accommodation problem is not always because of financial hardship, but a lack of information, resources and support provided to the doctoral student-mothers when they first came here with their children and family. Each person in this study highlighted the importance of information from the university. The availability of information on support structures at the university is essential in addressing the gaps between the students' needs and university support structures. This will be addressed further in the Discussion Part B Chapter.

Taking all the points raised in this study into consideration, it is to be expected that doctoral student-mothers have an overall impression that they are not supported well by the university, neither financially, nor emotionally. The most emotional support they received from the university is from their supervisors. As a result, student-mothers try to use marriages and families as a source of financial and emotional support. Without the existence of such support models, student-mothers contend with a challenging, solitary and isolated educational path.

The general perspective from international PhD student-mothers is the need to have a more comprehensive support network made up of faculty, academic staff, peer groups, family- and friend-orientated activities and more support provision within the campus itself. There is a requirement for a more varied approach to financial support with additional schedules and childcare options for student-mothers. Whilst each of these areas should be considered by university management systematically, there is a perspective that women have more hurdles to manage, and these have to be recognised and resolved. According to Hooks (1984), a woman's higher education success should not be tarnished with the idea of victimisation as it detracts from her skills, capabilities and restricts any opportunity for her to share experiences with other student parents. As campuses aim to embrace diversity and inclusiveness, it is important that international doctoral student-mothers are visible, and that their needs are respected. As Kasworm (2010) mentioned, adult students in a college environment are multi-

dimensional. They have a number of different identities which have developed over time and which influence their actual higher education experience. The influence of culture and motherhood ideology, as well as the relationship between the international PhD-mothers' experiences, emotions and the structure of the neoliberal university will be discussed in the next two chapters.

Chapter SIX– DISCUSSION PART A: CULTURE LENS OF INTERNATIONAL PHD-

MOTHERS IN NEW ZEALAND

6.1 Introduction

The growing educational attainment of women in recent decades has been accompanied by a similar increase in their economic and political participation. Despite these developments, gender status remains a central social divider in both Eastern and Western contexts, with the lives of women continuing to be shaped by their gender in a manner akin to race or ethnicity. This is confirmed in studies by Parrenas (2005) and Best (2014) investigating the impact of the interrelationships between gender, race/ethnicity, and class alongside the migration patterns of female migrants and their experiences within destination countries. This chapter contributes to the existing literature in the gender and migrant field by exploring and discussing female international student-mothers' experiences – those who are doing PhD study with their children and family in New Zealand. In particular, the challenges facing PhD-mothers are examined, with reference in this chapter to understand how these women challenge and conform to gendered meanings and motherhood. The examination of gender issues in the family and the intersection with ethnicity has led to a refined appreciation of cultural similarities and differences and their intersection with other sociocultural forces such as religion. Moreover, the influence of ethnicity for PhD-mothers' educational experiences in New Zealand is accorded specific attention in this chapter.

This chapter employs an intersectional approach to evaluate the stories of international PhD-mothers, with particular reference to the implications of their migrant status for their identities as mothers and PhD students. This is accompanied by consideration of domestic gender and mothering dynamics in the New Zealand context. The stories of international PhD student-mothers and their PhD journey not only exemplifies the construction (and reconstruction) of social and cultural meanings, but also illustrates the complex manner in which individual lives are enmeshed within social regimes. In other words, the lives of the PhD-mothers are far from self-determined. The first half of the chapter demonstrates the enduring impact of beliefs

about gender and motherhood, which are typically located within the cultural or national backgrounds of women and may also intersect with other beliefs, such as those arising from ethnic heritage or religion. The latter part of the chapter focuses on the international PhD-mothers' both different and common need to balance their family life and PhD study around their own culture and its norms and which they brought to New Zealand.

6.2 The Ideologies of Motherhood from a Different Country's Perspective

Ideologies of motherhood are culture-specific paradigms created within defined social environs (Hill Collins, 1994; Segura, 1994). This means that women from different cultural heritages will interpret what constitutes “good” mothering in diverse ways, all of which have implications for their childcare and employment choices (Duncan & Edwards, 1999).

Care, nurturing, unselfishness and emotional power shape the social bond that is brought to mind when motherhood is referred to although, as a notion, it comprises the biological process of creating a child (Stearney, 1994). Kindness, care and empathy for other people's needs are the characteristics of care providers that are considered inherent in women from this characterisation of womanhood (Stearney, 1994). The image of the selfless, self-sacrificing mother is dominant in the discourses of motherhood in many Western cultures (Collins, 2019a, 2019b; Damaske, 2013; Faircloth, 2013; Gaviria et al., 2019; Harmony & Henderson, 2014; Hays, 1996; Henderson et al., 2016; Loke et al., 2011; Murray, 2017; Shloim et al., 2020; Wall, 2010). This is confirmed by Hays (1996) who identified the dominance of ideologies of devoted motherhood in developed nations, such as the US and the UK. According to Hays (1996), intensive mothering is labour-intensive, guided by expert opinion, emotionally intense, and economically demanding. Moreover, this ideology is not only highly gendered, but also likely to place disproportionate burdens on women since the mother is regarded as the most suitable provider of unadulterated attention who provides their child with emotional, physical, and intellectual sustenance. The dominant position occupied by this ideology is relatively recent, in historical terms. Nevertheless, it has secured a place as a key determinant of female identity and while Hays' work is now nearly 30 years old, the insights remain pertinent to the current state of motherhood as framed in this study.

There is growing literature evidence of the primacy of intensive mothering models in the West (Collins, 2019b; Damaske, 2013; Faircloth, 2013; Gaviria et al., 2019; Harmony & Henderson, 2014; Harsha, 2016; Henderson et al., 2016; Murray, 2017; Shloim et al., 2020). As an example, in the New Zealand context, both “successful woman” and “intensive mothering” ideologies appeared in discussions with 11 mothers who were formerly in full-time employment in research carried out into women in the workplace in New Zealand (Kahu & Morgan, 2007). According to Kahu and Morgan (2007), the New Zealand women who took part in this study considered their role as co-provider for their families. They also saw themselves as financially independent. Despite this perceived independence, the participants communicated their strong views on motherhood and declared that being mothers comprised a major facet of their lives, to the extent that they believed they were the prime caregiver in their families. The intensive motherhood ideology in New Zealand is further demonstrated in a more recent study undertaken by Peterson et al. (2018). The research featured 2,388 working mothers who took part in the Growing Up in New Zealand (GUINZ) study. GUINZ is a longitudinal assessment across numerous disciplines featuring 6,822 demographically different youngsters born between 25 April 2009 and 25 March 2010 (Morton et al., 2014). According to Peterson et al. (2018), employed mothers can struggle to meet the requirements of work and family life. In doing so, they also worry about successfully carrying out their parenthood roles. These studies further prove that, despite New Zealand’s promotion of gender equality and its high global standing, women are still primarily responsible for childcare. According to Henderson et al.’s (2016) exploration of the correlations between notions of idealised maternity and the mental health of mothers, the impacts of intensive motherhood ideologies are pervasive, not least in contemporary neoliberal market contexts. Thus, mothers who have immigrated to New Zealand, and those who are already resident, are expected to comply with these ideals, irrespective of whether they personally support them.

The norms and conventions connected to motherhood will restrict a woman after she becomes a new mother. The dominant motherhood ideology imposes expectations that need to be adhered to by a woman in order to be perceived as an effective mother (McMahon, 1995). Ultimately, women's physiological and biological child-bearing capacity is connected to a perception that they are the only ones who can rear children, under the present ideology (Douglass & Michaels 2004). Mothers are deemed to be the ideal individuals for rearing

children as the sole, principal caregivers, with the ability to fulfil the child's constant needs, as the basic assumption of this ideology. Care to the same extent is not something that childcare nurseries, babysitters, grandparents or the father are considered to be able to offer (McMahon, 1995; O'Reilly, 2004). Therefore, male responsibilities for care differ from the norms around female responsibility for child-rearing. This is confirmed by the stories of nine participants in this study and their perception of the role of mothers. In Amy's first year of PhD study, she was the one who came to New Zealand alone without bringing her child with her. She expressed her view that she felt that she needed more time for her research in the first year, and that she wanted to settle all her child's daily needs before he arrived, including organising his school, medical clinic, accommodation, etc. Like the other three mothers who left their children in their home country at the beginning, Amy picked up her child immediately after she had key parts of her life in New Zealand organised. Amy described motherhood as a "double edged sword".

I think living our life is the most important thing. And taking care of the kid. I cannot, you know, refuse. I cannot refuse as a mom. So, I am satisfied with my life. I'm happy that he's here with me. His dad is very busy working so he cannot take good care of the boy. And I was always worrying about him. It's the nature of mom. (Amy)

Hays (1996) suggested that the labour-intensive version of mothering was most commonly displayed amongst middle-class and upper-class mothers, due to their possessing sufficient material resources to conform to this ideal. Moreover, regardless of their socio-economic status, all the mothers in the research conducted by Hays (1996) not only confirmed their ideological adherence to the tenets of intensive mothering, but also verified the pressures associated with the cultural expectations of good mothering. These expectations required working mothers to redefine their notions of motherhood in order to contain their feelings of inadequacy and confusion (Johnston & Swanson, 2006, 2007). Consequently, mothers often justified their work as being for the economic benefit of, or as the role model of, their children, or by referring to the adage that happy mothers mean happy children. Such assertions were, according to Hays (1996) an attempt to indicate that, as mothers, they were entirely motivated by the welfare of their children.

Furthermore, educated middle-class individuals, in particular, have seen an intensification of the parenting process in the past few decades (Hays, 1996; Wall, 2009). An array of arranged extra-curricular classes and lessons are often engaged in by children, often at a significant distance from home, while adults will supervise children's play outside the home or more typically children will simply remain in the home where they are deemed safe. Ultimately, the increased emphasis on prospective success through early learning, as well as growing fears of strangers, has resulted in parenting's intensification. The notion of *intensive mothering* posited by Hays (1996) is directly connected to the belief that mothers are the only individuals who can carry out supervision. Any personal needs of the mother are constantly secondary to those of the child, with their development during every phase and their associated requirements and needs being identified and carefully reacted to by the mother, based on this model. A substantial level of expenditure and time commitment in the pursuit of suitable child development – as defined by professionals – is deemed necessary, once such development is comprehensively understood by a mother. A significant amount of money, work and emotional intensity are involved in intensive mothering, which is professionally directed and child-focused (Hays, 1996).

Most modern women perceive intensive mothering as the correct form of child-rearing, whether directly or indirectly, whether or not all mothers accord with this ideology's concepts and activities (Chira, 1998, as cited in Zimmerman et al., 2008; Glenn, 1994; Hays, 1996). When the PhD-mothers in this study talked about the education of their children, they mentioned “guilty” and “feared.” They felt guilty if their children's education was affected by their study. As Andy said, she won't let her child be “scarified” for her PhD. Andy is resolute in the view that children must have support from their mother from late afternoon into the early evening. Cultural perspectives often dictate the expectations and supervisory role of a mother and her responsibility for raising children. Whilst grandparents, day-care professionals, fathers or friends can offer support, they are unable to provide the level of supervision and nurturing that a mother can offer. For example, fathers are often tarred with the misconception that they are incapable of cooking a good meal, unable to support children with homework, lack the necessary attention to managing children by themselves and, overall, they need to be supervised themselves, rather than be the main supervisors of their children. It is for this reason that the supervision of children after school and into the evening is seen as being more appropriate for a mother and her natural ability to nurture. No matter how busy she was,

Amy insisted on going back home early to supervise her child practising piano and homework every day and went back to her PhD work later at night. This routine never changed, even when her parents came to help. In the same context as Andy, Amy had the same feeling:

I think it is a great duty. A lot of risk but that is to... You know for him, for his development and his learning and... you know, I am guilty. I always feel guilty when I think he is not fully growing. so that's the main source of my pressure. You know when taking care of him. (Amy)

The ideal of selfless motherhood is at variance with the market-focused notion of self-centred personal success (Collins, 2019; Douglas & Michaels, 2005; Hays, 1996). Thus, whilst an ideal mother sacrifices her time and energy for her children, an ideal worker devotes all their time and energy to their employment, accepting overtime and not letting childbearing or mothering duties interfere with paid employment. This is similar to an ideal PhD student who devotes all their time and focus to their research. The incompatibility of these two idealisations both permeates Western culture and creates disproportionate identity-related challenges for female workers and doctoral students. According to both Venker (2004) and Loke et al. (2011), these challenges arise because traditional views persist in suggesting that mothers cannot simultaneously fulfil their duties as mothers and workers with any degree of success. Hence, most women are unable to achieve satisfaction concurrently as mothers and professionals due to the incompatibility between cultural ideals of their motherhood and employment (Damaske, 2013; Harmony & Henderson, 2014; Thomson, 2011; Thomson et al., 2011).

According to Duncan and Edwards (1999), social networks, such as families or friendship groups, create a sense of belonging and enable social identities to be created and reaffirmed. This means that the local beliefs about what comprises good mothering current in these networks can be tremendously influential in determining the identities of women as both mothers and workers. Hence, geographical location, class, and ethnicity all combine and interact to generate cultural concepts of good mothering. This is a complex notion for the participants in this study as they are bringing their own cultural notions of mothering from their home country into a new country where they are residing for their PhD study. They are

adapting to new cultural norms in terms of how women are mothers and balance their work and home life to perceived good effect.

Duncan (2007) explored policy responses to teenage motherhood and suggested that women make individual choices about childcare and employment in accordance with multiple justifications. This means that the way in which women understand *good* mothering is somewhat heterogeneous in character and dependent upon allegiance to different ethnic and socio-economic groups or intersecting types. In contrast to this supposition, the findings discussed in this chapter all employ concepts of *good* mothering which accommodate PhD study as a core component of the participants' identity in this study. Specifically, eight of the participants did not necessarily regard the constant presence of the mother as integral to the happiness and welfare of their children. Nevertheless, the mothers still displayed certain aspects of intensive parenting, such as taking children to activities. These mothers appear to have employed no hierarchical concepts of mothering, wherein care offered by the mother would represent the top tier as having inestimable value for children, with all lower levels being mere substitutes.

These attitudes were more commonly displayed by mothers originating from mainland China, as is discussed in greater detail below. Despite the clear approval, these mothers felt that PhD study was an integral element of their own identity. They were still influenced by gendered conceptualisations that influenced their working and studying behaviour, as did all the other mothers in this study.

Across varied cultural contexts, there are diverse meanings of motherhood. Akujobi (2011) observed that there is typically religious or cultural significance to the concept of motherhood in numerous societies globally. Therefore, motherhood may be viewed by society in relation to the pervading religion and its understanding of motherhood. In addition, societies will express social attitudes, ideologies and meanings in relation to women based on understandings of motherhood through religious and cultural precepts. Therefore, Akujobi (2011) related that, in time and space, the social, religious and cultural environment serves to impose, construe and mould the institution and experience of motherhood. Accordingly, this study focused on seventeen PhD-mothers from eight different countries and two different identified religions in order for motherhood identity to be critically and comparatively analysed.

The following section focuses on the PhD-mothers from China, Indonesia and Mexico. One participant identified as Muslim while another identified as coming from a Catholic religious background, although she no longer identifies as Catholic. The discussion is focussed on the participants from three cultural backgrounds for two reasons. Firstly, more than half of the participants in this study (10 out of 17 PhD-mothers) come from China. It is important to understand the motherhood ideology of China and to investigate its influence on these students' decisions, experiences, emotions and challenges. In addition, the contrasting narrative of Tessa, from Indonesia from a Muslim culture, and Claudia from Mexico with a Catholic religious background, together with the Chinese PhD-mothers' stories, emphasises the continued existence of gender inequality, as manifest in the historical development of different and parallel gender relations in these countries. The cultural background revealed the significance of paid labour and career to female identity, and the challenges cultural discrepancies present to international PhD student-mothers. These inherent mothering identities are then laid over a New Zealand cultural context which has its own social norms and expectations regarding combining motherhood and career.

6.3 Gender Roles and Motherhood in China

6.3.1 *Confucianism*

This section explores the important place of Confucian ideology in Chinese society, not least in respect to the significant impact it has on the lived experiences of Chinese women. Confucianism has had an enormous cultural impact in numerous East Asian countries (Brinton, 2001). Its influence began during the period of political and cultural expansion which coincided with the Han dynasty (Oldstone-Moore, 2003). In reality, the so-called Confucian tradition originated before Confucius, which is actually the Latinized version of the Chinese name Kong Fuzi, meaning Master Kong (Hofstede, 2001). However, it was Confucius who refined, reinterpreted, and formalised a set of pre-existing ideological tenets, thereby transforming them into an ideological tradition (Clements, 2004). According to Confucian thought, human relationships are manifest through a natural hierarchy which harmonises both the social order and the entire cosmic order (Keum, 2003). The principal Confucian

relationships are between parents and children, husbands and wives, older brothers and younger brothers, rulers and subjects, and friends (Lau, 1979). Above all, filial piety is the preeminent virtue, which denotes the obligation of parents to provide their offspring with education, care, and an adequate moral foundation. In return, children are obliged to be obedient and respectful, and to care for their parents, both in their dotage and after death (Bell, 2009; Chao & Tseng, 2002).

Kim's (1996) evaluation of traditional Confucian roles observed that Confucianism stresses the need for mothers to assume responsibility for child rearing, particularly in respect of the care of younger children. This notion is intimately connected to the physiological fact that women bear children, and the consequent emotional bond which is presumed to evolve from this. The Confucian gender division also requires the husband to assume the roles of economic provider and family protector. In return for this protection, the wife is expected to be obedient and to tend to any domestic duties (Chen, 1986). The concomitant confinement of women to the domestic sphere lays a firm basis for intensive mothering. The Confucian patriarchal system, therefore, regards childcare as an essentially female concern, whereby mothers must discard any individual aspirations and devote themselves to the raising of healthy, well-educated children (Cho, 2002).

6.3.2 *The Post-Mao Era*

The pervading cultural norms pertaining to the rearing of young children are inevitably interlinked with the main cultural principles pertaining to motherhood and mothering. Changing times see shifting cultural and political environments that lead to alterations in principles. In the Western capitalist sphere, the attachment theory of John Bowlby dominated during the 1950s. This posited that a mother fully dedicated to home making and a father providing the income was the ideal, nuclear, middle-class family structure providing an appropriate and wholesome early childhood context. Meanwhile, in 1949 the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) had won the civil war in China, defeating the US-backed National Party, and established a Communist state. Involvement in the salaried labour force as the necessary means of female liberation was an idea from Engels that was implemented by the CCP. Subsequently, during the 1950s in China under Mao's rule, housewives and dedicated house makers largely vanished (Wu, 2011).

Consequently, in China under Mao, female liberation as an ideology proved practically successful. Zhou (2000) emphasised that numerous urban females thus gained the right to paid work and this, too, is reflected by the Chinese participants in my research. Prior to studying in New Zealand, every Chinese mother participating in this research was working full time for a salary. Moreover, full-time employment with a salary had also been carried out by the participants' mothers, as the women had all been born during the 1970s and 1980s. In the research of Barrett and Li (1999), they noted how Chinese workplaces offered childcare provision.

Cultural and social production and reproduction occur in the crucial realm of the family (Bourdieu, 1996). Child raising and childcare are activities that relatives in the wider family traditionally contribute to in China. Barrett and Li (1999) explained that day-to-day childcare and child raising has usually and traditionally included family relatives, especially grandparents. If the father and mother are both in employment, then their child may be cared for by their grandparents in China. Meanwhile, as the grandparents age, they will be cared for by all of their relatives. Maoism and Marxism transplanted feudalism in China through the revolutionary initiatives pursued by the CCP following their victory in 1949. Logan et al. (1998) explained that limited public service provision for older people, insufficient high standard childcare, pervasive waged work for women, as well as a lack of accommodation, all resulted in parents and their married adult offspring living together in urban locations. Given that the children would be looked after by their grandparents, then the family would look after the grandparents as they became older, and as such the long-established family interdependence ideology was affirmed through such cohabitation.

The enduring influence of Confucian ideals over family life in China has been noted by Deutsch (2006). Specifically, Confucian concepts emphasise the prioritisation of the collective benefit over individual needs. Consequently, the family retains importance as the pivotal social unit in China, wherein it performs a critical organisational function (Fincher, 2014; Ochiai, 2013; Riley, 2013). Filial piety remains a highly prized virtue, as does the concept of mutual support within the family. These ethical tenets have endured and survived both the Maoist and Reform eras. Despite the fact that the economic contribution of Chinese women has been facilitated by state childcare policies, the role played by grandparents remains

important (Cook & Dong, 2011; Deutsch, 2006). The involvement of grandparents is itself facilitated by state policies, since the retirement age for white collar men is 60 years old and 55 years old for women in white-collar jobs, and 55 and 50 for blue-collar workers, respectively (Cook & Dong, 2011). In other words, the gender-based nature of retirement policies mean that many women are still physically able to care for grandchildren actively after they retire.

This provides insight as to why five Chinese PhD-mothers in this research would believe it is socially acceptable for them to leave their children with other carers who remain in China, such as their father or grandparents, while they travel to New Zealand. Some mothers aimed to become settled and familiar with New Zealand before their children joined them. Others aimed to concentrate on their PhD research and strike a balance between their studies and parenting prior to collecting their children. Due to the diverse cultural backgrounds that exist, the Western concept of intensive motherhood posits that mothers should not leave their young children with other family members in a different country, with New Zealand mothers unable to comprehend Chinese mothers' decision in this regard (Kahu & Morgan, 2007; Peterson et al., 2018).

In contrast with the PhD-mothers from America, Mexico, Colombia, Korea, and Sri Lanka, Chinese PhD-mothers were able to leave their children in their home country, given that they received sufficient family support from their parents and extended family. In Mao's era, the status of Chinese women in the workplace and domestic life was considerably improved (Jiang, 2001; Kim, 2013). As noted by Croll (1983), Mao's socialist era saw the launch of numerous policy initiatives and programmes designed to reconfigure the role and status of womens' gender in the public and domestic realm. Full participation in the labour market was deemed a prerequisite of female emancipation and essential to the realisation of gender equality (Liu et al., 2010). This cultural context explains that female employment is the norm in China and is reflected in the attitudes of Chinese participants in this study who were prepared to leave their children in China to pursue a qualification in New Zealand that would enhance their employability and prospects.

6.3.3 *The Intersection of Culture with Motherhood in the Chinese PhD-mother*

Despite the apparently equal participation of women in the labour market, research suggests that traditional Confucian gender ideology prevails in other areas of Chinese society (Ren & Foster, 2011). According to Guoying (2013), equal workforce participation does not equate to gender parity – a fact which has yet to gain wide acceptance in China. Many post-Mao studies have confirmed that the prevalence of conventional gendered attitudes and practices in contemporary China continues to place women under disproportionate pressure. Furthermore, Cook and Dong (2011) have postulated that globalisation and economic reform in China have acted to undermine gender equality by reintroducing patriarchal attitudes.

Thus, Rofel (1999) has suggested that Chinese women, rather than being emancipated, are actually subject to oppression from innovative forms of socialistic patriarchal domestic and paid labour. In other words, they experience a double burden. Moreover, the male breadwinner/female caregiver role appears to be subscribed to by both men and women, whereby it is regarded as acceptable that men with higher socio-economic standing make a diminished contribution to household work (Zho & Bian, 2001). Accordingly, Liu (2009) has suggested that the elevated economic participation of Chinese women has often been misconstrued as indicative of gender equality. In reality, according to Liu (2009), the absence of any gender revolution in the domestic sphere during the Maoist period, has meant that Chinese women have had to contend with working for a salary and taking the majority of the responsibility for household-related matters. This lack of parity continues to shape the experiences of women in contemporary China and is also evident in the findings of the Chinese participants in this study.

In the case of Olivia, like all the other Chinese PhD-mothers in this study, marriage does not appear to have impeded her aspirations. Conversely, it actually encouraged her to re-evaluate her career trajectory in a positive manner. The underlying reason for this is cultural. According to Croll (1983), 90% of women in urban areas in China were employed in 1979, the main exceptions being women who were retired or who had disabilities. More recent research by Guoying (2013) confirms the high retention rates amongst Chinese female employees. In addition, Lee et al. (2008) have reported that nearly 90% of Chinese mothers are employed –

figures which compare favourably with comparable nations such as Japan and Korea. These figures explain the high priority accorded by Olivia to her identity as a PhD researcher. In other words, irrespective of whether her work/study was innately satisfying, Olivia defined herself in accordance with her status as an educated working woman. Her strong work ethic is manifest in comments such as:

Sometimes you have to make some sacrifices. For the sake of your personal development and career, sometimes you have to sacrifice the feelings of your family.

(Olivia)

The policies implemented by the Chinese government mean that the Chinese women may have found workforce participation more manageable than participants in this study who came from other countries. Moreover, it is clear from this study that Olivia did not regard childcare as an exclusive responsibility of the mother. That is, primary childcare could be managed by other people close to Olivia, such as her child's grandparents. Moreover, the Chinese women, such as Olivia, in this study articulated no anxiety as to the psychological impact on their children of their workforce participation and PhD study. Nevertheless, these findings must be viewed judiciously because the narratives were indicative of the prevalence of the dual burden which many female Chinese workers continue to experience. Even women like Olivia who put career development in a very important position and have parents to support raising children still bear a certain psychological burden as mothers. This is evident in the following statement from Olivia that articulates the expectations of women who work and who are mothers in the Chinese context:

Because of the ideology of women in this [Chinese] society, you have been taught your responsibility and position in the family from an early age. As a woman, no matter how important your career is, no matter how many motivations you have, when you become a mother, you will be a mother first and foremost in your life, right? This is my opinion. I could sacrifice her [the child] in the short term, but as I often said to my mother, "hold on, I'll be right back. When I'm done [my PhD], I will spend 90% of my energy on her.

(Olivia)

Another Chinese PhD student/mother, Emma, continued her study after becoming a wife and mother which was regarded entirely within the normal parameters of culturally accepted behaviour. Moreover, her own construction of her identity as a mother and worker also placed heavy emphasis on her status as a PhD student. This belief was sustained not only through the childcare assistance offered by her parents and parents-in-law, but also through her beliefs that a woman could not only “just be a mother and a wife.” As the findings in this study illustrate, both Emma and her husband are working full-time, one in PhD study and the other in a full-time job. However, Emma managed all aspects of child rearing, including securing childcare for her child. Therefore, despite receiving support from family members, Emma still had to negotiate persistent, gender-based inequality. Even though as she said she is not confused about the childcare responsibility as they have already “discussed the roles” and “identified the roles that someone who earns the money, someone who takes care of babies.” This confirms the findings of many feminist scholars who have explored Chinese gender issues. For example, irrespective of the systematic provision of childcare by the Chinese state since the Maoist period, and the widespread social acceptance of the employment of women with young children, the conception that women are naturally more adept at caring for children remains intact (Kim, 2013; Riley, 2013).

A participant such as Andy whose husband could not come to New Zealand because of his job in China, had to take all the childcare responsibilities while doing her PhD. On the one hand, Andy’s husband clearly supported her PhD study on an emotional and financial level. However, there is scant evidence that he could offer any practical support by contributing to domestic responsibilities, such as childcare. Despite the invaluable help she received from her children’s grandparents, Andy remained essentially responsible for organising and facilitating childcare. However, as a PhD-mother, Andy, like all the participants in this study, regarded her actions as making a positive, rather than negative, contribution to her child’s life.

This is clearly shown in several participants’ personal narration of their journey. For example, when Andy was asked about both the advantages and disadvantages of her role as a PhD-mother, the first two-thirds of Andy’s responses were devoted to positive reflections of her study. When asked again about the negative aspects of her PhD-mother journey, she conceded that it meant she spent little time with her child, particularly in the first year when she also had to leave her child in China. Like Olivia’s, Andy’s account was notable for its

absence of concern over the psychological consequences of her repeated absences. Nevertheless, Andy's story confirms her support for the professional child rearing approach proposed by Hays (1996) and Vincent et al. (2004).

For example, Andy spent a considerable amount of time and energy on the educational and extracurricular activities of her daughter, taking her to extra classes and supervising her piano practice once her child had moved to New Zealand. Such activities are a form of intensive childrearing, akin to the practices of middle-class working mothers observed by Vincent et al. (2004). However, Andy's focussed behaviour on providing her child with extra tuition, potentially differs from that of Western mothers in that it is predicated upon the close relationship between Confucian ideology, the Chinese socialist movement, and the recent importation of certain western concepts. Furthermore, it should be remembered that education and academic accomplishments are prioritised central to East Asian childrearing. As Andy's comments about her thoughts on her child's education show:

In the past year or two, I think my focus transferred more to my child because I don't want to say that I have studied for four years and I have graduated but my child have missed a lot of their education. I think then what's the point of my doctorate. I think it is better to find a balance, that is, both us could move forward at the same time. I don't want to see her missing a lot of things that she should learn only because I was doing my PhD here. No, she's learning piano, art, then dancing, tennis, swimming, she's learning all of them. (Andy)

The preceding cases all indicate that there is an ideological intersection between the expectations attached to these women and their husbands which owes its origins to the ambiguous coexistence within the Chinese culture of conflicting belief systems and practices. Moreover, the gendered situation of PhD-mothers, as evidenced in the current study, indicates the limited extent to which China's egalitarian discourse has been able to eradicate gender-based inequality. There is consensus amongst scholars that the limited results in this respect are due to the fact that efforts to transform gender relations have largely been confined to the public rather than the private sphere (Cooke, 2010; Guoying, 2013; Ochiai, 2013; Pimentel, 2006; Riley, 2013; Zhou, 2000; Zho & Bian, 2001). The findings of Chinese PhD-mothers in New Zealand in this research confirm that currently, Chinese women are

expected, not only to contribute to family revenue through paid employment and career development, but also to comply with cultural expectations by assuming primary responsibility for domestic tasks and childcare. In light of this double burden, it is possible to rewrite the adage that “women hold up half of the sky” as “women take up twice as much of the sky as men” (Yuan, 2005, p. 62).

6.4 Motherhood in Hongkong

The colonial past of Hong Kong has led to the conception that it is comprised of a blend of Western and Chinese culture and values (Chan, 2006). Interestingly, the legislative reforms introduced in mainland China following the 1946 Communist Revolution were never applied to women in Hong Kong, thereby confining these women to an inferior socio-political status (Brooks, 2006). Moreover, the lack of social security and supportive state policies meant that women in Hong Kong were relegated to the roles of caregivers, thereby perpetuating patriarchal relations and the subjugation of women (Lee, 2002). This legacy of women maintaining a fixed social position can also be seen in the findings of this research.

According to Chan (2006), contemporary women in Hong Kong have maintained their primary caregiver roles, irrespective of whether they are engaged in paid employment outside the home. Even when middle-class, dual-income families engage in the services of nannies or other domestic staff, the mother’s responsibility as the primary care provider remains entrenched (Chan, 2008). However, Wu (2011) found that principal care provision or participation in childcare is usually the role adopted by the broader family members in Hong Kong, which is the same as in mainland China. Hong Kong’s urban professional class usually has the economic means to recruit domestic assistance. Reflecting Wu’s findings, Audrey had been able to continue in full-time employment when she was in Hong Kong, even after she became a single mother, thanks in part to the assistance of her parents and the nannies she employed in the role of helping her with the children.

Living in Hong Kong we don't have to do everything by ourselves. Once we need help, we can. We can seek for help from a specific area but here everything is “Do it yourself.” (Audrey)

In addition, it is worth noting that, when Audrey discussed reducing her study and work hours in New Zealand in order to look after her children, her decision was based on the high costs of additional childcare in New Zealand, rather than on any perception of the importance of maternal presence for children. Furthermore, her comments were indicative of her personal preference for work and her PhD study. In Hong Kong, Audrey could access additional domestic assistance. Such an option was not available in New Zealand due to the financial burden.

Because for some kind of conference meetings or seminars, that has the fixed scheduled time. Even though I can get this arranged early. But still it's not easy to find someone to help out [with childcare]. Because financial is another issue. I know that some other parents may hire a nanny or the babysitters to help out, but it is not easy for us. It's quite expensive for a student. It is not quite expensive but is an additional cost, living costs for me. (Audrey)

Access to affordable childcare was discussed as critical to all the PhD-mothers who participated in this research. Hence, Audrey was not alone in her decision to reduce her commitment to her PhD study not only because of her desire to slow down the pace of her life, but also to reduce the childcare costs experienced in the New Zealand context.

6.5 Gender Roles and Motherhood in Mexico With Catholic Culture

There are considerable differences in terms of gender stereotyping for females and males within traditional societies. Despite the fact that there are commonalities among all countries, for instance submissiveness, emotionality and kindness are considered female traits while power, control, autonomy and aggressiveness are considered male traits (Berry et al., 1996). There are marked gender distinctions and strong power structures in Mexico. There are evident divisions in gender roles in those societies where strong emphasis is placed on masculinity. As Anbari et al. (2003) observed, material acquisition, dominance and strength are expectations on males, whereas living standards, deservedness and sensitivity are the expectations for females.

Female subjugation and male power have stemmed from the robust characterisation of established gender inequities in the Mexican context. Political engagement, economics, health and education are four fields shaped by such inequities (OECD, 2012b). In Mexico, particular positions and responsibilities are imposed on family members, who are obliged to fulfil these requirements. Obedience, acquiescence and unquestioning adherence to parents' instructions are expected of children, particularly females. Meanwhile, women's subservience and male dominance are implicit in the patriarchal structure. As Guendelman et al. (2001) clarified, reliance, devotion and submissiveness to males, as well as reverence of the decisions of their spouse, is incumbent upon women. Self-sacrifice for family members, dedication to family, maintenance of the family's respect and reputation, as well as accountability for the family's physical and affective health, are expectations on mothers. Moreover, Pastor (2010) related that, in the public domain, greater freedom and licentiousness is permitted for males, because of the perceived moral superiority of mothers through their integrity and dedication. There is pervasive adherence to the notions of such an "authentic woman" in Mexico and, indeed, across Latin America. The female exemplar is deemed to be the Christian Virgin Mary, linked to the concept of "marianismo" as women being morally superior. The obedience to males, modesty, abnegation and selflessness are all stressed by the concept of marianismo (Pastor, 2010; Upchurch et al., 2001).

However, legislative overhaul has been especially significant in securing greater autonomy and rights for women in Mexico in recent times, with a shift in established gender norms and positions being visible. Women's rights have been improved and safeguarded through various initiatives, legislative overhauls and legal processes, with the National Institute of Women, as well as the Commission on Equality and the Commissions on Gender in the Congress, being established in 2001 and 1998 respectively as dedicated government bodies (Knapp et al., 2009). Established gender norms have also been altered through female participation in the work force, migration dynamics and globalisation. Improved political power, education access, general empowerment and independence have all been seen for females (Knapp et al., 2009).

This cultural heritage and the improvement of female rights is clearly shown in Claudia's personal narration of her journey. Claudia is a single mother of three children who comes from Mexico City. She grew up within a Catholic culture and in a big family dominated by

women. Her ex-husband is a politician in Mexico. She divorced him because they were separated for most of the time, as he travelled a lot and would be away for months. Claudia was the only participant in this research who had been taking care of the children for a long time until she divorced and moved to her mother's house. Robust cohesion and mutual assistance seem to characterise the relationships between different females in Mexican families, who are focused on and share the burden of domestic activities, according to Solis-Camarra et al.'s (2014) real-life narratives. This is exemplified by Claudia's story. The intersection of culture and family had a significant influence on her decision to pursue her PhD study abroad. She grew up in a big family of women but without a father or grandfather. Her grandmother is a role model in her life and her mother is also an academic at a university in Mexico. When she was growing up, she witnessed the hardship, struggle and strength of her mother and grandmother as women in Mexico. As she said in the interviews:

I come from a place where that [gender] matters a lot and I had to kind of struggle before because of me being a mom and me being a woman. I had to fight my way through it. At the same time, I come from a family with a lot of women like actually there's no man around me. I think that has made me made the decisions that I've made. Like I know that I'm capable of doing this sort of things. and I think is pretty much because my grandmother and my mum. You know they've managed to go through life accomplishing things even when they been on their own, you know, and they've been single moms. And they had to raise their families on their own. Then I'm doing the same. I never doubt it. I never thought I would do it in a different way. In that sense it has influence. My decisions and my way of being here.

The primary reason for Claudia leaving Mexico to pursue her PhD study in New Zealand is because of her identity as a mother. Her children and their opportunities and safety were central to her decision but, at the same time, she was trying to escape from the intensive motherhood expectations and get her own life. As she stressed:

Being a single mother in Mexico was going to be really difficult. In Mexico, you know like violence and drugs and things like that among teenagers are like.... I knew that that I wouldn't be able to control that and that they would come a time where they would want to go away from home, leave the house. And you know walk the city in Mexico

City is not the same like walking the city in Auckland... I'm a teacher so I mean my kids will have the age that my students had when I was teaching in Mexico. I know how difficult it is for parents. They need to take them everywhere and you know if they really want to take care of them, they need to be on top of them all the time you know. And I didn't want that for them. I actually wanted them to be able to move around and be autonomous and be safe at the same time. I was by myself so I didn't have the support of someone else that would, you know, carry this burden with me.

As can be seen in the above quote, Claudia viewed her doctoral study as being emancipatory, not only for herself, but also for her children by providing them with an opportunity to grow up in a safer city context. The result being that she was thankful to have her children growing up in New Zealand and acknowledged the role her PhD studies played in this sense of gratitude. However, as a single mother, the struggle and loneliness of balancing the doctoral study with the role of the mother ran throughout her PhD journey. This can be evidenced in the following:

I think that (being a mother and being a PhD student) are kind of the same project. Because I decided to come here in the first place because it was also a way of parenting. This sounds a little bit contradictory, but it is really difficult. You struggle a lot and it's painful at times.

Being a mother, Claudia questioned her effectiveness as a PhD student. As she said in tears in the interview: "I know that I really like my project, but I just feel that I've missed."

6.6 Gender Roles and Motherhood in Indonesia with Islamic Culture

6.6.1 Motherhood and Womanhood in an Islamic Context

There is a stress on the obligation to marry and have children in conservative Islamic teaching, which has further propagated the significance of Indonesian motherhood (Dzuhayatin, 2002). In Islamic canonical texts, mothers are described as objects of veneration. The key texts of the *Qur'an* and hadith include several passages in which other

people discuss mothers whilst very few references exist that quote mothers themselves. Muslim brides in Southeast Asia often receive a copy of the 100-year-old book *Bihishti Zewar* (Heavenly Ornaments) as a wedding present which, whilst it does not contain the term “self-love” itself, gives unambiguous guidance to young women to enable them to focus on self-care and self-respect in order to feel ready for marriage and motherhood. In addition, *Bihishti Zewar* details several examples of inspirational Muslim women, including academics, doctors, and religious leaders. It is worth noting that most of the inspirational women in *Bihishti Zewar* have achieved their wisdom and reputation with regard to how they meet the desires of men (Metcalf, 1997, as cited in Oh, Irene, 2010). Whilst being in control of ensuring their souls are saved, it is shown that women engage in education to enhance their children and husband’s lives. Educated, literate women are shown to be better at running homes, bringing up children and are consistently aware of the correct status of their parents, husband, and wider family so that they can satisfy the needs of those around them (Metcalf, 1997). This perspective emerges as significant in the findings of the Indonesian participant.

Outside their role as mothers, Indonesian women must conform to a myriad of socially acceptable traits of femininity. Whilst these traits will differ according to age, ethnicity and class, there are several traditional norms that apply to women throughout Indonesia. Indonesian women should not only fulfil their role as mothers, but also perform “maternal self-sacrifice” for her family’s benefit (Djajadiningrat-Nieuwenhuis, 1987). A virtuous Indonesian woman should renounce ideals of self-interest and women are vilified for discussing their own free will or aspirations as this jeopardises existing societal norms and are traits linked with “badly behaved”, unruly women. The ideal Indonesian woman will exhibit control, be polite and unassuming, and remain calm at all times (Tiwon, 1996). Indonesian women are encouraged to always accede to male authority with regard to decisions.

In 1998, the New Order collapsed, heralding marked shifts in Indonesian gender ideologies. Robinson (2000) related how the Indonesian Law No. 1=1974 on Marriage provided formal state approval of the regimented nature of gender ideologies between 1966 and 1998, the New Order era. The obligations and rights of males and females were deemed to be equivalent yet divergent, under this law. Thus, domestic management and housekeeping were the wife’s obligations, whereas the family protector, wage earner and family head was the husband, as stipulated by law. Females also had other fundamental obligations, for

example, bearing children as well as child raising and care, as stipulated by the Family Welfare Movement of the New Order (Robinson, 2000). Furthermore, media domination (Brenner, 1999), the hidden curriculum of state education (Parker, 1997), as well as women's organisations (Aripurnami, 2000; Bianpoen, 2000; Blackburn, 2004; Oey-Gardiner, 2002), were all conduits for propagating the gender ideology of the New Order.

A rather constrained notion of appropriate motherhood was promoted through the gender ideology of the Indonesian state, with "State Ibuism" – "mother" being the literal translation of Ibu – being the term Julia Suryakusuma (1996) assigned to the New Order era (1966-1998). Child rearing, reproductive capacity and the promotion of the nuclear family as a modern conceptualization of Indonesian society were the only principles that women were valued for, while they were formally deemed accessories of their spouses, due to female domesticity being advocated under State Ibuism (Suryakusuma, 1996). Thus, the housewife role was emphasised through this ideology.

6.6.2 Contemporary Indonesian Women in the Post-New Order Era

Action by women's NGOs, gender mainstreaming projects, Islamic modernist movements – which does not exclude movements upholding conservative gender norms – alongside other variables have all resulted in less rigid and more flexible Indonesian gender ideologies emerging during the post-New Order period. Post-1998, there has been a swift expansion in the volume of gender-related NGOs and NGO activity (Parawansa, 2002). Additionally, there are more portfolio-holding women ministers working beyond responsibility for women's issues, while parliamentary representation of women has expanded, thus strengthening the political participation of women.

Previous studies have shown that Indonesian women hold greater economic prominence within a bilateral kinship society (Blackburn, 2001; Saptari, 2000) in comparison with women in the rest of South and East Asia, despite their poor position on international league tables, including the Gender Development Index and Gender Empowerment Measure. Between 2001 and 2004, Indonesia was governed by a female president, Megawati Soekarno Putri, a significant moment in history that demonstrated to women that they had the same rights as men to inherit power, property, and authority. Traditionally, Indonesian women, like their

South East Asian counterparts, had greater influence over money, trade, property, and the family industry than men who were required to focus more on factors involving their status, including participating in higher education or politics which have a more tenuous link to money (Reid, 2003).

Research by Blackburn (2001) determined that, presently, Indonesian women share similar goals and ambitions to women from across different countries and societal norms. Namely, they aspire to improved education, health, and work opportunities. Nevertheless, despite having these goals, career women continue to consider themselves as having a duty to be respectable mothers and wives in line with their religious beliefs. Men and women can both agree that their roles and contributions to wider society and in domesticity can be equal (Murniati, 2012; Rinaldo, 2008). These tensions are aptly demonstrated by Tessa, who is discussed in more detail below.

6.6.3 Tessa: *Being a Muslim PhD-mother Who Studied Abroad*

Within the Islamic cultural background, numerous feminine features are socially enacted in order to comprise the ideal notion of Indonesian womanhood, alongside the concept of motherhood. Nationally, there is a shared understanding of certain standardised concepts and values of femininity, despite class, ethnicity and age leading to differing notions of feminine norms. Thus, the good of the family is deemed to demand a woman's selflessness, beyond the basic role of the mother. The ideal Indonesian woman is a notion entirely transgressed by any sense of individual goals or interest. Meanwhile, a dissenting and unruly woman is one who upsets societal harmony through publicly conveying their independent female needs. Moreover, continuous composure, meekness, good manners and discipline are deemed to characterise the ideal Indonesian female (Tiwon, 1996). Relatedly, abandonment of "natural" motherhood responsibilities and inability to provide appropriate childcare are usually the accusations levelled at females who engage in employment away from the domestic context (Dzuhayatin, 2002). Therefore, the ideology of state development has incessantly emphasised the notion of a domestic housewife and mother, despite females in Indonesia traditionally making a strong and significant contribution to the economy, while assisting their spouse with bringing in sufficient wages for the household. Tessa provides an example of a successful Indonesian woman who has a good career and financially supports her family but,

at the same time, embodies her mother and wife role. Tessa's narrative when her families knew she was going to do PhD study in New Zealand demonstrates, their questioning Tessa's commitment to be a wife and mother:

The day I received notification that I was accepted I have to manage expectations from the whole family. My grandmother said oh why, like why do you have to go overseas. What about your husband. Are you ready to sacrifice your family? And then for my husband's family. Of course, I'm lucky I don't have any parents-in-law. They all passed away. But for my sister in law and then my brother in law, they question my decision. Because they know that my husband's not happy. So you know it's once I decided to go without full consent from my husband it's straight away being seen as a selfish decision.

The above analysis suggests that Muslim women in academia choose their career path because it allows for flexible working and the job itself which is perceived as a more family-friendly role. This is in line with the Muslim tradition that the woman has to consider and enhance her role as a mother and wife. These findings are comparable with those of Western countries, in which women in academia who have husbands or partners with greater earning potential tend to have superior economic status, whilst still remaining predominantly responsible for caring and domestic duties (Baker, 2012). In contrast, though, women in Indonesia tend to follow strict religious teachings which prohibit them from condemning inequality in terms of family life and domestic work and this results in far fewer women deciding to leave their husbands due to their own academic aspirations. Instead, women in Indonesia choose to concede and bargain with their husbands to find agreeable alternatives, rather than negatively disrupting their family life.

According to tradition and religious norms, the idea that husbands should earn most of the household income, whilst the wife earns less money, prevails. It is expected that men will work more hours and women should spend more time doing domestic work than paid employment (Utomo, 2012). The majority of middle-class women in Indonesia aspire to a religiously led, pious, moral life in which marriage and children are central. This does not prevent women from pursuing a career alongside their marriage, so long as they prioritise their domestic work (Utomo, 2012). As such, Tessa stated that a career in academia is

perfect as the working hours can be adjusted to fit around family life and this is also the reason that her husband supported her to pursue her PhD because he preferred that Tessa worked in academia. Tessa stated:

I tried to apply for other jobs which I don't have to be a Dr. He said No it's good to be academics. It's not like working in the company where you have to meet targets. KPI, sales you know and it's much more lenient. It's much more relaxed it's much more intellectual and social spending is good, being academics. So he doesn't want me to apply to other job like he's quite happy for me to work because you know in some Muslim thinking wife is not working, wife stays at home. So he's happy for me to work as academics not as something else.

The above analysis suggests that Muslim women in academia choose their career path because it allows for flexible working and the job itself which is perceived as a more family-friendly role, which is in line with the Muslim tradition that the woman has to consider and enhance her role as a mother and wife all the time. These findings are comparable with those of liberal countries, in which women in academia who have husbands or partners with greater earning potential tend to have a superior economic status, whilst still remaining predominantly responsible for caring and domestic duties (Baker, 2012). In contrast, though, women in Indonesia tend to follow strict religious teachings which prohibit them from condemning inequality in terms of family life and domestic work and this results in far fewer women deciding to leave their husbands due to their own academic aspirations. Instead, women in Indonesia choose to concede and bargain with their husbands to find agreeable alternatives, rather than negatively disrupting their family life.

According to research carried out from October 1994 to April 1996 in West Java, Indonesia, husbands' contributions to household chores, aside from cooking and washing, were connected to their wives' involvement in factory labour (Smyth, 1999). Additionally, Smyth (1999) observed that men were happy to amend their work timetable to assist with childcare if their spouses were working themselves, despite neighbours, female family members and grandmothers typically taking on childcare responsibilities. The PhD-mother, Tessa, participating in this research explained similar trends in her context. Tessa's husband shares

the domestic work and childcare and supports her PhD study because she is the main breadwinner in her house.

The findings from this research support the argument that male parental identity in its ideal, modern form had greater chance of being embraced by a husband if their female spouse had well paid employment and potential career development. Tessa described her career as “a weapon in this journey.” Her statement regarding continuing her PhD study in New Zealand further demonstrates:

It's a bit funny in the way that I always be the better. I have the better income than my husband. So the household income is mainly come from my side. The contribution is maybe 70 30. My argument is we've been married for like more than 10 years and the situation is like this. You just have to accept it. You have to be realistic. I know that. The cultural thing said that you should be the one who finance all the family. But it just doesn't happen. So my career is a priority in this family. If I don't have a good career everybody suffers. So that's my argument, which is a very good argument to give in front of men.

Tessa's story demonstrates that breaking free of repressive patriarchal activities and incessant inequitable circumstances is an enduring challenge for females, despite considerable exertion by females and their allies. In numerous communities across Indonesia, the principal role of females continues to be motherhood (Bennett, 2012). This is exemplified in the narrative offered by Tessa, who, despite having a better salary and more important PhD work, found herself reducing her working hours and not participating in overseas conferences so as to accommodate childcare responsibilities. Tessa discussed how her devotion to her faith and religious teachings does not inhibit her ability to analyse or cogently examine religious values. For example, she chose to not travel away from her home to complete a conference presentation opportunity when she could not gain her husband's permission. She vocalises her frustration with the religious duty to seek her husband's consent in the following:

In the Muslim way you cannot really say that to your husband. Like husband has a higher hierarchy than wife in Muslim tradition. That's quite hard. Like in Indonesian culture and in Muslim culture. Wives are subservient women. You know we serve

husbands. I was and I've always been quite lucky because my husband is not really traditional like that. But there are some expectations that still there. So you don't really ask your husbands too much to take your burdens off.

The result is that Tessa is sincerely thankful to her husband who permits her to do her PhD study in New Zealand because of the scholarship it offers. She does not want to follow a career against his wishes as she does not want to sacrifice her marriage. Since she was able to prove to her husband that she could remain devout and loyal throughout her PhD study, he agreed to let her concentrate and finish her PhD alone in New Zealand, whilst giving her his full support and taking the children back to Indonesia at the last stage of her study. This study found that as a Muslim mother who studied abroad, Tessa had a better PhD experience as she was supported in doing her study in her own space, rather than remaining in traditional domestic roles. Tessa's case does, however, demonstrate that women continue to be seen as the main carers, and domestic workers, within the home in Indonesian and Islamic culture. However, whilst traditional gender roles still prevail to some degree in New Zealand, the Indonesian PhD-mother studying in New Zealand reported greater help and participation from her husband than if they were living in Indonesia, where their families would be present to witness the domestic situation and the societal values would have been more influential.

However, it is worth noting that a woman's reliance on her husband's consent does not necessarily hinder her opportunities because the wider family network can help with childcare. Consequently, women are free to study away from home. For instance, when collecting her data for her PhD back in Indonesia, Tessa received assistance from her extended family as she completed her studies. She said:

I think during the whole PhD year so once you a mature student with family, it's a journey with everybody. It's not your own personal journey to get the PhD and it takes sacrifice from every member of the family. And it's not only your immediate family but also the surrounding because when I went back and did my data collection we need to stay with a relative and we share everything. It makes everybody make sacrifices to that degree.

This is also illustrated in previous studies, whereby Asian women, including Indonesians, are supported in their academic endeavours by multiple people. The support systems not only include their husbands, but also family and neighbours (Luke, 1998; Murniati, 2012).

6.7 Different But Also the Same: Being an International PhD-mother in New Zealand

The attitude towards, and experience of, motherhood within international PhD-mothers both reflects traditional norms within their home country and deviates from them, according to various influences from their religious, current home and country of origin. Whilst the PhD-mothers in this study came from different regions and many had disparate family values, traditions, and norms due to coming from various cultural backgrounds, there was a common need to balance their family life and PhD study around their culture and its norms which were brought with them to New Zealand.

Chinese women raised under the influence of post-Mao concepts of gender equality in the workforce tend to possess more robust identities as workers and value their economic contribution, for their own sakes and for their children. Hence, the five Chinese women included in the current study left their children behind in China, in the care of family members, when they first arrived in New Zealand. Conversely, the mothers from Indonesia and Mexico all possessed a more intense maternal identity and regarded their presence as essential to the emotional welfare of their offspring. Despite the apparent cultural or national differences in maternal identity, all the women in the study continued to be influenced by their inherent attitudes towards gender and motherhood after they moved to New Zealand. For example, despite the fact that a minority of the women claimed to have established an egalitarian approach to household labour, the vast majority clearly undertook the bulk of domestic work and childcare duties. This situation existed irrespective of their national or ethnic background, employment status, and financial circumstances. Moreover, even the minority who claimed to experience a fair allocation of domestic responsibilities were still subject to good motherhood notions and the influence of prevailing gender norms from their country of origin.

Furthermore, PhD-mothers often confront difficulties with childcare because of access to the limited childcare facility and relatives' support being constrained, as respondents from different countries explained. Consequently, alternative assistance measures, approaches

and concessions were engaged in by them. For instance, childcare requirements meant that daily, a number of participants spent just four to five hours working to ensure their adaptability. As the data presented in Chapter Four, the conflicting demands of PhD study and motherhood frequently led women to experience feelings of guilt, regarding themselves as failing both as mothers and PhD students. Thus, gender-skewed expectations meant mothers felt guilty for not spending more time with their children (Henderson et al., 2016). Thurer (1994) explores this eloquently in her description of the long shadow of guilt that the idealised mother casts over the lives of real women. Mothers can readily appreciate the need to maintain an identity independent of their children. In addition to meeting the needs of their children they also seek to establish their own identities. Nevertheless, this realisation does not prevent mothers from being pressurised by the moral and cultural demands made of them as mothers. The following quote from Andy, a Chinese PhD-mother exemplified the emotional dilemma experienced by many PhD-mothers:

I think I am a mother. I think it's very important to me. Because I think I had her first before I started this doctoral study. One of the reasons that I do this PhD is that I want to show my daughter that a woman doesn't have to be at home. You have to work hard. You have to realize your self-worth... I don't want to sacrifice her education for my PhD. She is what my PhD about.

The quote clearly illustrates the challenges involved in juggling full-time study and motherhood. As observed by Thurer (1994), when problems arise with children, it is usually the mother who is held to blame. Thus, Amy's narrative regarding her concerns over her son's psychological wellbeing is redolent of the anxiety experienced by many mothers:

I feel a lot of pressure. You know I think it is a great Duty. A lot of risk but that is to... You know for him, for his development and his learning and... you know, I am guilty. I always feel guilty when I think he is not fully growing. so that's the main source of my pressure. You know when taking care of him.

The comments from 13 of PhD-mothers who participated in this study were child-centred and more akin to the commentary often associated with stay-at-home mothers rather than working women. The participants from China and Indonesia both stressed the idea of combining a

successful family life and career. Tessa, who comes from Indonesia, argued that women should seek employment in addition to their domestic work, despite Islamic teaching that women are not required to earn money. Emma and Olivia, from China, went on to explain that earning money elevates one's social status. It then increases one's self-esteem, allows women to be perceived as knowledgeable and as having charisma, and engages them in more worthwhile pursuits than just being a mother and wife.

Despite the potential challenges presented by PhD-mothers to the sanctified image of the devoted mother, it remains evident that societal expectations dominate the experiences of working women. However, the impact of these expectations varies in accordance with ethnic and religious backgrounds. For example, Chinese PhD-mothers stress the importance of their PhD study and career, whilst the Indonesian and Mexican PhD-mothers emphasised the importance of being available when their children needed them. Nevertheless, the PhD-mothers were all connected by a common desire to support their children and be regarded as good mothers, irrespective of their cultural or national backgrounds.

6.8 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the ideology of motherhood through four different cultural backgrounds, including China, Indonesia, Mexico and New Zealand, and has discussed the intersection between culture and motherhood influencing the experiences and emotions of international PhD-mothers in New Zealand. This study shows that issues surrounding motherhood and the choice of whether to study in a different country and how to balance study and family life are motivated by a person's country of origin, religion and personal relationships, economic status, and education. There are women who will balance their home life and career aspirations throughout the phase of their studies, as well as those who will consistently prioritise family life. This chapter demonstrates that participants' PhD motivation and career decisions were fundamentally shaped by their belief systems. For example, the Indonesian participant's career decision was based on the expectation from her husband and her religion that being an academic is a suitable career choice because it allows her to still maintain her family responsibilities and enhance the lives of others. The Mexican participant's study motivation was based on her family influence and the inspiration to escape from the traditional gender roles of her country of origin.

According to the narratives from both the Chinese, Indonesian and Mexican participants, the PhD-mothers in this research mostly followed patriarchal norms. Traditional gender norms and roles within the family appeared to make women feel more confident within their family, and the women interviewed were not opposed to fulfilling them. It is worth stating that familial norms still varied between the different cultures, which affected how women lived through motherhood. Overall, Chinese mothers have been provided with an option by the norm from Chinese culture that with sufficient domestic assistance, paid work and higher education can both be undertaken by females. For the participants from other religions, such as the Catholic Mexican culture and the Islamic culture in Indonesia, strong career development and higher education were framed as the pathway for women to escape from traditional gender roles.

Moreover, this study indicates that, regardless of the different cultural background and religion of the participants in this study, the ideal mother is selfless, child-centred and devoted to her family. The conflicting ideas of motherhood and career turned out not to be any different within New Zealand's intensive motherhood ideology context and that women remain the principal caregivers for children. This brings tensions related to their PhD study context that the ideal PhD student devotes most of their time and energy to their research. These tensions have an impact on a woman's self-belief, emotion, and self-esteem as well as forcing her to negotiate and adjust her perceptions and roles as the PhD student, mother and partner, even in a relatively family-friendly New Zealand university.

I argue that the challenges of being an international PhD-mother have been overlooked within New Zealand academia because, according to liberal values, raising a family is perceived as an individual decision and remit. Despite some accommodative and useful family-friendly policies being implemented on a national level, university policy does not go far enough to ensure the PhD-mothers who come from different cultures and religious backgrounds in academia experience equal opportunities to progress their PhD. Therefore, there is a need to consider and be flexible about their decision to raise a family against the neoliberal university principles of competence, proficiency, and productivity, which often clash with traditional family values which tend to focus on care and devotion. The influence of neoliberalism on PhD-mothers' experiences and challenges will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Chapter SEVEN – DISCUSSION PART B: PHD-MOTHERS IN A NEOLIBERAL

UNIVERSITY

7.1 Introduction to the chapter

In this research, neoliberalism is positioned as a global economic force that has reshaped the world financial systems and as an ideology that has penetrated all spheres of human society. At the conclusion of the data analysis of the current study, it was evident that the consistent neoliberal transformations of universities have broadly impacted both students and academic workers alike. Brown and Lauder (2001) described neoliberalism as normalising survival of the fittest, a notion derived from Social Darwinism, having developed towards the end of the 1970s as a counter to the welfare state economics of the Keynesian model. As Harvey (2007) related, the key features of neoliberal ideology included a preference for individualism over collectivism, promotion of competition, deregulation and privatisation, and enabling marketing powers to be involved and to influence government decision-making processes. Generally, Wu (2010) stated that personal independence, customer choice, and economic efficacy had been stressed within the Western ideological system of neoliberalism. People, rather than businesses and governments, were now accountable socially.

Increased neoliberalism has caused a major change in how people define their own existence. Charles Wright Mills defined neoliberalism in his *The Sociological Imagination* (1971) as a fundamental public issue that impacts the seemingly private problems of college (university) students and teachers. At present, academics and scholars in neoliberal and capitalist institutions are being converted into human capital (Berg et al. 2016). Instead of being identified by name, individuals are now recognized by the ORCID ID numbers and H-indexes. It is argued by Mountz et al. (2015) that resisting neoliberal and elitist pressures in university settings is almost impossible, as such settings demand high productivity. This productivity is constantly evaluated in short time frames. To overcome this, international mobility is crucial. Mutch and Tatebe's (2017) explorations of neoliberalism in their research reveals that academic work at a large, research-intensive university is largely impacted by

neoliberal policies. Neoliberal influences tend to be discussed in terms of a research context. There is a harsh warning of “publish or perish,” which is evidence of the realities of performativity and accountability, in which research is limited to measurable publication outputs. By stressing the importance of publishing, a culture of competition and individualism is generated, and this, unfortunately, leads to bleak outcomes for the women in academic. Education under neoliberalism is defined as an input-output machine that is the equivalent of an economic production system (Mutch & Tatebe, 2017). Henderson et al. (2016) pointed out that in the neoliberal university, only the results matter. Moreover, Harre et al. (2017) stressed that failure is simply a failure in the university in the context of ‘finite play’. On the other hand, Locke et.al. (2021) explored the gendered effects of neoliberalism and gender inequalities in academia using a self-developed methodology designed to navigate the different ways that leading academic women have navigated the ever-changing university landscape. The key objective of developing this methodology was to create a feminist insight into the vexed question of why gender inequalities persist in universities. Thus, by using this methodology, Locke et.al. (2021) incorporate a poststructuralist interpretation of intersectionality to explore the intricate relations of gender, class and race. They argued that in many contexts, the ways in which certain people and things were made to matter, whilst others were excluded, played a vital role in the creation of many inequalities (Locke et.al., 2021).

Despite there being numerous differences between academic and doctoral student practices and identities, many similarities are evident for both parties within this academic environment. Similar to academics, doctoral students are now embedded in neoliberal discourse, and this has ultimately changed the meanings and practices of doctoral education (Bansel, 2011; Deuchar, 2008). Many different measures have been created to assess performativity, including progress targets, fixed completion times, and heightened publishing pressures. It is also important to consider that a vast number of doctoral students plan to engage in academic careers. Yet, there is an inevitable, developing anxiety when studying for a PhD in a setting where the possibilities of finding academic work are apparently becoming more challenging (Barcan, 2016). In terms of the international PhD students who are also mothers, they must also care for their children and family whilst studying and working under this pressure. They may also feel more pressure to find high-paying academic roles to provide for their families given their sacrificing of income whilst studying. It is important to note that, although exploring the neoliberal context was not an objective of the present work, it emerged as a prominent

theme in the interviews expressed through participants desire to conform to the performance requirements. The researcher thus felt it was important to address the topic.

Cumulatively, such changes have very much affected the PhD study conditions for this set of participants. Monica and Andy are PhD student-mothers who come from China. They both took care of their young children alone while doing their PhD in New Zealand. Their parents would come to help them with childcare when they could, but when their parents' Visitor Visa expired and they had to leave, Monica and Andy had to bear all the pressures themselves. They shared many moments when they had to focus on their study and worked as a PhD student but felt guilty as a mother. The story that was profound was when they had to leave their young children in their home country and came to New Zealand alone. Monica's child was only a year old, and Andy's child was four years old. Of the 17 PhD student-mothers who took part in this study, four other participants also chose to leave their children in their home country when they came to New Zealand for the first time. The reasons for this included their concerns that the first year of PhD study would be too busy to take care of the children, that they preferred to settle down as a PhD student first and to solve the accommodation issues and children's school before picking up the children.

In addition, four participants – Amy, Andy, Monica and Niro – talked about the experience and pressure of publication. They often felt guilt and anxiety for not having already published a journal article, regardless of the fact that this is not a requirement of the PhD degree. Not all of them thought that childcare duties were the only factor that stopped them from publishing, but also identified other reasons. Eight participants mentioned the financial burden of doing a PhD with the family. Ten participants talked about their experiences and challenges of getting proper accommodation for their family and children. Fifteen participants never felt that they had received support from the university administration as PhD-mothers, but only from their supervisors.

Nonetheless, given the pressures exerted on the international doctoral student-mothers in neoliberal settings, 11 international PhD-mothers in this study did not attempt to obtain support from their university departments or supervisors, preferring to bear the burden themselves and accept their dual roles as their own personal responsibility. Two participants – Amy and Audrey, did not think that taking care of PhD students who are also mothers is the

university's responsibility. Neoliberal policies and attitudes that prevail in universities is one of the reasons that this group of students believed they needed to rely on themselves. The data in the findings chapters revealed two participants explicitly stated that the university had no responsibility in relation to supporting PhD international mothers. It was found that many PhD students attach moral value to their role and believe that they are responsible for disciplining and monitoring themselves, which represents an ideological view of a neoliberal university. Under this value system, these participants took most of the responsibilities and burdens on themselves – which had a significant impact on their doctoral experience. Some of the participants believed that they did not do their PhD as well as they expected because of the lack of explicit and targeted support from the university.

Regarding the university's support systems for all the international PhD students, it is evident that an ever-increasing amount of support services are now being offered by the university that was the site of this study. The university has developed policies which focus on the ways students are customers who are attaining value for money by choosing to study at this location. However, the international PhD student-mothers did not receive sufficient support due to the lack of information available which highlights the gap that exists between the university's services and the student-mothers' real needs.

It is argued that the experiences, burdens and anxieties of international PhD student-mothers in New Zealand are influenced by neoliberalism. In this chapter, neoliberal power will be critiqued around enacting gender, individualism, and the neoliberal cultural expectation of PhD study and motherhood. Through this, feminist discourse analysis was employed to bring the gendered workings of neoliberal power. Subsequently, this chapter will draw on the PhD student-mothers' personal experiences to discuss how time and space in neoliberalised universities interact with individualism. To be more precise, a focus on the experiences of splitting humiliation, self-discipline and silencing that has been created will be highlighted. This chapter will also discuss the cultural expectation of PhD study and motherhood in a neoliberal institution, as well as the gap between this group of students' needs and the lack of information provided to them formally or systematically by the university by investigating the intersectional experiences of PhD-mothers in the university space. Weldon (2006) points out that exploring marginalized viewpoints can help us to understand the limits of dominant concepts, which offer a profound insight into social realities that cannot be seen by those in

the dominant group. This chapter will discuss the various subjectivities of student life and motherhood in such a way that these oppressive logics can be challenged.

7.2 Enacting Gender and Neoliberalism

Despite certain specific differences internationally, there seem to be common characteristics towards engaging with doctoral students and this study is no exception. For instance, according to the OECD, females comprise nearly 50% of recent PhD graduates, while university degrees are being accomplished by a higher number of females than males (OECD, 2018). In New Zealand, from the 1990s, there has been a strong representation of women among PhD students, according to national provider-based enrolment data (Education Counts, 2021). In 2020, more doctoral students were women, with 5,540 female doctorates and 4,480 males in total at New Zealand universities (Education Counts, 2020). However, regardless of family-orientated regulations, equity strategies and many years of social development, the experiences and ambitions of students remain affected by gender, as the previous quotes in this study indicate.

I think being, being a female is always a disadvantage for higher study. Starting from the day I received notification that I was accepted I have to manage expectations from the whole family. (Tessa)

I also often think of the gender issue. I think this world is still a man's world after all. Women have a lot of disadvantages. (Olivia)

Feminists have challenged how and by whom happiness is defined. Feminist claims are framed by this political horizon of the 'happiness struggle' (Ahmed, 2010). Ahmed (2010) argues that we inherit this horizon from previous generations. Alternatively, we could describe feminism as an inheritance of the sadness of realizing how gender restricts opportunity, as well as how to overcome this restriction.

Therefore, how PhD student-mothers are affected by established gender roles, how their experiences are also embedded in the experiences of their own mothers and in what manner is described in this research. By concentrating on individual and subjective aspirations,

standard personal and family life circumstances, as well as education and institution-linked issues, three principle aspects of academic life are analysed. Two discrete findings chapters have provided the relevant data, with a strong interrelationship between the issues. The influence of neoliberalism on exploring the inequalities confronting PhD-mothers to ensure the study's practicability is a major factor, although culture and ethnicity are also accepted as other important factors.

While the participants noted many issues that referenced a neoliberal context, the notion of neoliberalism was not directly referred to by any of the participants. Gender norms are significantly intersected by neoliberal governance approaches as they overhaul university work environments, particularly via the dissemination and positive feedback of emotions like need, humiliation, anxiety and rivalry (Moley & Crossouard, 2016). Jensen (2014) explains that motherhood and academia insatiably consume the time and energy of academics, with both lives being full of toxic fantasies of effortless perfection. Britton (2017) defines academia as a cold climate for women and an area of subtle yet persistent effort and not necessarily a realm of oppressive inequalities. Although there are a number of factors that can impede a woman's progress in such an institution, gender plays a vital role in understanding women's experiences of academic work, irrespective of any family obligations that they may have. Mothering is often considered to be a key factor in women's marginal position. Indeed, a higher number of work-associated compromises are engaged in by women, while care provision and unwaged housework are considered to be more their duties. Overtime and full-time employment are often pursued by fathers or partners who are married, to fulfil their earning responsibilities (OECD, 2018). For instance, Claire's husband worked two jobs after childbirth. She became the only person to take care of her new-born baby at home. As an international student, she only had three months' maternity leave because of the visa regulations and had no other family support. Claire stated:

Can you imagine that I couldn't even stand up from my bed. And my husband used to leave me the breakfast done for me. I couldn't get up, but I have to. My husband said this is going to pass. Don't worry. I was crying because, I mean, I feel alone. It's hormone thing you know. I was wishing somebody could cook for me and organize all the things. (Claire)

Detraditionalising of gender, alongside a reaffirmation of hierarchies of gender as a consequence of indirect kinds of rising patriarchal dominance, have both been perceived as stemming from modern neoliberal cultures (McRobbie, 2009). In environments where the domination of ingrained patriarchal relationships has endured, there appears to have been especially powerful neoliberal masculinities. The ideal PhD student is founded on a gendered norm that childcare and other domestic activities could not burden the student, with all life activities being secondary to their study. Consequently, individuals with considerable domestic obligations, especially in the case of female parents, are ignored and devalued within the learning contexts and circumstances shaped by the outmoded understanding of the PhD student norm. Indeed, PhD student-mothers are considered to be compromised, even in the cases where flexible study provisions are utilised through family-friendly regulations, due to the stigma attached to such practices.

Children and domestic chores are problematic to extricate from each other, given that children, particularly young children, tend to create a greater number of domestic chores. Domestic chores have been investigated through both quantitative survey information as part of government-backed time budget research, as well as qualitative research studies. The findings that males opt to undertake particular domestic chores, while mothers shoulder the burden of the majority of domestic chores regardless of whether they are in full-time employment, have been established internationally irrespective of the adopted research method (Bittman & Pixley, 1997; Craig, 2006; Craig & Bittman, 2008; Edlund, 2007; Kitterod & Pettersen, 2006; Lindsay, 2008; Potuchek, 1997). The performance of gender has characteristics which reflect the trends in who is responsible for domestic chores and childcare in numerous countries, in addition to domestic resource availability and relational negotiations (Butler, 1990; Kelan, 2009). Females and males seem to take on an unequal degree of responsibility for domestic activities, including when they are professionals with strong educational backgrounds (Mason & Goulden, 2001; O'Laughlin & Bischoff, 2005). Harmonising domestic responsibilities with careers often involves greater effort from mothers rather than fathers. Meanwhile, the requirements of the father or partner, children, as well as other relatives, are often considered by mothers in relation to their careers to a greater extent than their male counterparts. Responsibility for the vast number of domestic chores and the unfair division of such labour was lamented by half of the participants in this study who are

accompanied by their husbands. For instance, the challenges of childcare for Claire were not only for the first three months – life became harder when the baby was sick.

We [she and her husband] always fight, for nothing. Because he's tired, I'm tired. When my baby sick, I cannot even look after myself. Because he [the baby] wants to be [with me] all the time. He's crying because he doesn't feel very well. He doesn't want to eat. He just want to be carrying. Or sometimes he only wants to [be] breastfeed. So sometimes my husband came home and said, "you did not cook?" I said I couldn't cook. I'm not going to give you any excuses, imagine whatever you want. I couldn't cook. So if you can carry the baby, I could cook or even I could get a shower. (Claire)

The other 12 women involved in the interviews also highlighted the demands made on individuals who undertake the roles of mother and PhD student at the same time. In order to become successful PhD-students, five PhD-mothers (Emma, Isabella, Niro, Tessa, Serena) opted to take advantage of flexible work arrangements and engaged in egalitarian or 'role reversal' parenting. For instance, Isabella emphasised the importance of her husband's involvement in household management when asked how she manages the demands of work and family life. She also referred to his willingness to do the housework and take care of the children, while she engages in a somewhat normative, masculinized, studying week.

For example, if there's things I can't do on the house like I don't get to washing the dishes or something. He'll do it. Or helping get the kids lunches ready in the morning. He'll help with that. We balance our work schedules so sometimes he'll actually change his work schedule so that he can do pickups and when I can't. If I say I have this really bad deadline to meet. He will say OK let me do this and you go. Go to university when you can. If he had not been here, I couldn't do it. I know I couldn't do it.

It is thus evident here that Isabella has tactically chosen to arrange her family life in such a way that it does not compete with her university work commitments. This non-traditional manner of parenting gives her a chance to commit and succeed, something that many of her female colleagues cannot do. Therefore, this case study highlights how family culture reinforces the disadvantaged position that women in academia find themselves in. Women with traditional gender relationships at home tend to find it more challenging to keep up with

their work commitments. On the other hand, Isabella and Claire's story also illustrate the extent to which power and agency can impact a person's work and home lives.

Olivia chose a more progressive and culturally located way to manage her PhD study and motherhood. She left her child at home with her parents during most of her PhD study. Olivia contradicts gender norms in the family and in the academy whilst simultaneously recreating the academic habitus of the 'ideal PhD student', a habitus that is largely based on masculinist norms and generally excludes women and especially mothers.

Throughout the analysis of this research, it became apparent that the PhD-mothers, were out of keeping with the neoliberal times. Monica, who took care of her young child alone in New Zealand, revealed that she always felt like she was in the wrong place at the wrong time because she found it so difficult to separate her time equally between the strongly bounded 'public' and 'private' spaces, a division which has been socially-constructed as normal in academic life. She thus explained that when nobody could help her with childcare in New Zealand, she would either find herself taking her child with her to the university or taking time away from university and other informal activities whenever her child needed to be cared for. This essentially crushed the boundaries of temporal propriety in both directions, as each one was dependent upon unspoken conditions of life that had been created by society.

Furthermore, the impacts of neoliberalisation are more intense when the pressures of neoliberal times cause significant divisions between academic and non-academic dimensions. This can be even more troublesome if the academic-self overtakes the spaces and times of the mother-self, and if there is little understanding of how the ability to think of radical alternatives of criticisms is restricted, criticisms which seem to blame bad ideologies for women's intimate suffering, whilst simultaneously remaining loyal to the structures that initially created these ideologies (Mannevu, 2015). This undermines a woman's capacity to be a mother outside the framework of hegemony, as well as restricting her opportunities to create collective care. What's more, it intensifies social isolation, creating significant pressures and anxieties in one's intimate life. Monica shared one of her heart-breaking memories. In the second year of her PhD study, her child had a bad fever and they had to go to the emergency department. She was focusing on her study before she realized the serious situation of her child's illness.

It was the saddest time for me. I think really... now that I think about it, if anything bad happened to her. I will regret it for the rest of my life. Since then, I feel that her [the child] is more important than my PhD. Although sometimes I still have a bad temper, because I can't control the balance of my study and my life, the conflicts are still there. But every time I remembered the feeling of that time, that lesson, I chose my child. Anyway, I think it's hard to be a PhD-mother. It's too hard. (Monica)

The ideal neoliberal subject is considered to be infinitely flexible and always available. They are essentially de-gendered, de-raced, declassed and do not care so much for themselves and others. Hey (2004) pointed out women today consider their new roles in the economy of new times as a type of performativity that create rationales to justify their commitments and performances. This is a key component of modern-day feminist praxis that is also evident in the lives of my participants.

7.3 Individualism

The culture of neoliberal university space is careless, and this carelessness is created through individualization discourse, in which reproduced relationships are impoverished and structural oppressions are considered to be the results of individual failure, insufficient consideration or selfishness. Moreover, it produces emotional, psychological and physical illness in individuals who are subject to these judgements, who often feel denial, shame, anxiety and guilt as they are not embodying 'the perfect' (McRobbie, 2015). Such emotions are destructive and can even cause people to try and discipline themselves.

Previous research has clearly stated the barriers and challenges faced by mothers in academia and has highlighted how inconsistencies in dominant narratives about academic success and motherhood have prevented women from taking advantage of family-friendly policies at universities (Perna, 2001). The experience and stories of the PhD-mothers in this study provide further evidence that the university's ideal image of the solo autonomous PhD student prevails— while many people sympathise with student mothers and the difficulties they face, they are frequently viewed as victims. As Claudia stated:

What I experience is that people are really receptive and especially here they acknowledge the effort. So, my supervisor is another, you know, lecturer people that came to know my story. They were really empathetic and kind and, you know. But the way that I felt that I was supported and maybe wasn't the best way, they could have been different. (Claudia)

Claudia compared her PhD study to a disabled person with no legs but who had to climb three stairs to class. She self-judged herself by a mothering discourse (Griffith and Smith, 2005) as inconsiderate, unprofessional, inappropriate and demanding of special treatment. Even though she had the sympathy of her lecturers and colleagues, she still regretted the fact that she could not participate and missed a lot. This quote that was used in the previous chapter is provided in more detail here to demonstrate this feeling of innate challenge.

According to Claudia:

There's a stairway and the lecturers say you know I understand that you can't climb the stairs fast so, so you take your time and you can come in when you get here. So well, I would not take into account that you be late. But then you actually do, to climb the stairs with no legs. And that makes you stronger and you learn on the way, you know, of this amazing thing of being a super woman and a super mum. But when you get there, the lecture is over.. So, that's. that's... [tears] I mean after these three years it's a little bit about how I feel like I've learned so much. And I know that I'm...much stronger than I was before. And I know that I really like my project, but I just feel that I've missed out [tears]. (Claudia)

Further, *power feminism* is a notion related to *choice* and *girl power* feminist derivatives. Being autonomous, gutsy, self-reliant and strong are characteristics promoted among women in this regard. However, where ruthless individualism is the foundation of the principles of neoliberalism, this might lend itself to compliance from the *brave new girl* concept, as Mary Caputi (2013) termed it – despite her support for the more resilient notion of womanhood. The individualism and 'brave new girl' concept are leading to a powerful affective economy in which the PhD-mothers attempt to resolve problems independently without approaching their university for assistance and tend to take all the responsibilities on themselves. Stress, guilt,

loneliness and pride are mixed up in the way each participant tries to enact the good PhD student and the good mother in the neoliberal context.

Self-reliance is a typical trait of PhD-mothers in the context of neoliberalism. More significant burdens and higher standards are self-imposed by women in such circumstances. More than half of the participants in this study noted they attempted to tackle issues personally when confronting numerous challenges before seeking external support. A sense that they have to (or should) attempt to resolve problems independently meant that some respondents had not approached their university for assistance at all. Prior to asking for assistance from other people, they may initially obscure their status as PhD-mothers. In some cases, when the university had been approached for assistance, four participants were left dissatisfied. As with the findings in Chapter Five, when Andy tried to ask for support for the Early Childhood Education centre information and support for her visa problems, but no sufficient support has been provided by the university. As Andy comments:

Over the years I think our doctoral fee includes service fees. I have paid the service fees for several years. But where is the service? I haven't ever received any "services" in the[se] years. (Andy)

Meanwhile, as the data presented in the finding chapters demonstrates, several participants believed that seeking assistance from their university or engaging with their university's information, and policies was not as effective as asking friends or colleagues for assistance. Without sufficient information and assistance from the university, four participants chose to leave their children behind in their home country of origin in the initial stages of their study as a way of attempting to mitigate the challenges or resolve the issues.

7.4 PhD students' Motherhood Within a Neoliberal University

Although many institutions have already implemented family-friendly employment policies and systems that comply with equity rhetoric, the unencumbered student is still considered to be the ideal PhD student. In reality, this will be the case for as long as the institutional demand for limitless research productive remains. As Chesterman (2010) explains, the valorised ideal worker is free to make temporal commitments necessitated to accrue academic and scientific

capital and they do not have to manage dual demands or competing devotions to family and work. For this reason, the academic institutions are challenging work settings for parents. It is rarely the case that women walk away from their duties of care. Men, on the other hand, can opt to be absent fathers and can simply compete for top positions in their respective fields. Neoliberalism is thus characterised by very specific, constrained conceptions of “the family”, which marginalize women and render non-heteronormative family formations as being abnormal (Morrish & Sauntson 2010). Consequently, the interviewees in this research voiced their concerns about balancing study and childcare and reported using flexible study modes to achieve a work-life balance. This is a very difficult task in the current climate.

Parents’ rooms are one of the important spaces for the family-friendly environment of the university. At the university this study is situated in, there are two parent spaces at the city campus, and one parent room/breastfeeding facility at each faculty, which is clearly not enough for all the students and faculty staff who are parents at the university. Emma, as a PhD student, talked to me about her embarrassing experience and inconvenience of expressing milk at the campus in; this is reported in the Chapter Five:

There was room for the new mum too, for breast feeding. But they don't have any more. So, it was hard for me. I think also for you to find a place to express your milk. So, the part I'm not quite satisfied with is the special space for the doctoral student mother to express their milk or have some privacy. (Emma)

Two other participants mentioned the “not good” environment of the parent room, and the others who are in need said they rarely use it because of the inconvenience. Isabella states the inconvenience and lack of access to the parent room at her faculty in the following excerpt:

I know that one here doesn't even have a computer in the room. It's just a table and toys. and It's not up here. It's based just in one building. It's not even [in] every building or so reasonable on this floor. Where my office is, there's not a parent room. (Isabella)

The interviews also highlighted the fact that self-management in the flexible study arrangements can be double-edged. Although it can give PhD-mothers greater autonomy

(i.e., to manage their family and work commitments simultaneously), it can also intensify workload and ultimately conceals corresponding work pressures. As Claudia stated in the finding chapters:

They [the supervisors] won't [give me] pressure. Two months, I haven't delivered anything, but they won't ask you to do that because they don't want to push it with me...The help that I was getting was the opposite, was the worry. You don't have time, take it slowly, there's no rush. But there is. Actually, there is, you know. (Claudia)

The approaches adopted by mothers can be more effectively understood if we consider how motherhood and PhD student are defined in the neoliberal context. Pervading cultural understandings of what being an effective student and an effective mother in neoliberalism context entail, influence the behavioural self-management that PhD student-mothers engage in. Nevertheless, there is typically a tension between the PhD student and mother roles' characterisations. A concentrated or, arguably, a comprehensive dedication to pursuing a doctorate is required to be successful. Alongside research production, dedication is also used to assess PhD students. Meanwhile, motherhood's cultural expectations stipulate that children should receive concerted attention, exertion and time from the mother (Hays, 1996). As a result, when effectiveness in both roles is pursued by student-mothers, there is an innate tension stemming from the complete dedication and obligation required as a PhD student and as a mother.

Accordingly, to guarantee that each role is effectively fulfilled and to avert cultural tension, particular strategies were developed by the participants. *Academic invisibility*, where the student role is diminished away from the academic environment, as well as *maternal invisibility*, where the mothering role is diminished within the academic environment, shaped the participants' approaches. Thus, how the PhD student-mothers combined their mother and student roles was typically downplayed, yet both roles were then able to be fulfilled individually in accordance with culturally accepted norms in the neoliberal context. In this study, four participants preferred to hide their status as mothers at the university to balance their PhD study and motherhood. Andy believed that being known as a mother would mean that others perceived her as being an uncommitted student. She did not tell her supervisor anything about her child at first because she did not "want to have any tag as a 'mum'. The

reason for this is that Andy felt that her status as a serious and dedicated student could be compromised if others realised that she was a mother who had priorities at home over her PhD progress. This perspective is shared by Emma, Olivia and Monica, who also chose not to disclose their roles as mothers within their PhD journey. This is the also reason for the gap between the needs of students and the university's support systems, just like Amy stated in Chapter Five:

Without asking... if you did not tell them they don't know that you need, what you need.
(Amy)

The PhD-mothers attempt to create ways of being good mothers and good PhD students at the same time, rather than forcing themselves to choose between them. However, to achieve this, they have to embrace being considered as othered, marginalized outsiders in order to critically understand how acts of othering, marginalisation and exclusion can impact those whom they encounter on a daily basis. It means that, instead of accepting the dominant frames of value, they invent new ways of valuing their academic practice. This research is also an example. This allows the PhD-mothers to keep their institutional devaluation without regret.

Apart from *academic invisibility, maternal visibility/invisibility approach*, the PhD-mothers reveal that the support they have received from other people has helped them to juggle their student and motherhood responsibilities. It is important to note that such support did not come just from spouses and relatives, but also from colleagues and supervisors which ultimately helped them to achieve their goals. 16 participants highlighted the importance of peer support for their PhD study. Emma explained that her colleagues had been very supported her as a new mother.

I was still working in my nine months pregnancy. And my colleagues, they are very supportive. They told me if you're in labour we can drive you to the hospital. I think that's something very supportive. (Emma)

All the other 15 women in the study expressed their appreciation of the kindness from their colleagues and peers, which had helped them immensely throughout their PhD studies. Two

women revealed that they had created support groups for graduate students, one of which was designed exclusively for student mothers. The women participating in these groups stated that these support groups had played a vital role in helping them to juggle motherhood and higher education. To summarise this, Amy explained that:

The most important I think is timely support. It means when I need it, it is there. You know when you need the help, help is there. (Amy)

Moreover, students with informal connections to other PhD mothers (such as friendships with other PhD-mothers in their department and general contact with student mothers from other departments) reported high levels of satisfaction with their peer group relationships. One participant, Isabella, stated that she was in regular email contact with a student mother that she met at the university and that they talked about the daily challenges of combining the roles of motherhood and PhD student.

Mothers play significant roles in upsetting the neoliberal academy and in creating new time, space and ways of existing that generate new opportunities for an educational praxis. This is ultimately a step towards achieving work that is both democratic and democratizing, and work that refuses to conform to the distorted images of neoliberal subjectivity. When PhD-mothers and feminists appear in university settings, the demand to work around self-care and care for others can expose hidden and unmentionable conditions that create the ideal-type forms of neoliberal academic labour. As women, with female selves and bodies, the PhD-mothers presence in such settings can uncover the tacit power operations that create dynamics such as inclusion, exclusion, (mis)recognition and denial. The PhD-mothers' appearance is thus crucial, for this very reason.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the influence of neoliberal power on the experience of PhD-mothers. Neoliberalism is not a unifying global concept but, instead, a process in which unpredictability, bias and pronouncements involving other cultural and political-economic constructs gives it power over the lives of individuals, and this is reflected in multiple ways with the participants in this study. This chapter emphasised the necessity of placing neoliberal

interpretations around enacting gender, individualism, and neoliberal cultural expectations of PhD study and motherhood so that the multiple and contradictory manifestations of neoliberal forces can be identified in the lives of these women. This chapter drew on the PhD student-mothers' personal experiences and discussed how individualism creates splitting humiliation, silencing and self-discipline. Further, given that there is a conflict between their position as mothers and as PhD students due to the cultural environment in this neoliberal context, efforts to clearly convey their identity either as a mother or a student are necessary among PhD student-mothers. The approaches they adopted include *academic invisibility*, *maternal visibility/invisibility*, relying on the support from others and setting up the network with the other PhD-mothers. Their student identity is typically accentuated as a means of upholding the perception of them being effective students in the academic context, with their *maternal visibility* diminished through particular approaches. Maternal visibility arises when their mothering role is communicated with other people, through particular expressions or activities (Garey, 1999). Maternal invisibility arises when an approach is taken to obscure their motherhood identity from others, as explained by the participants. Therefore, their role simply as students can be emphasised by PhD-mothers, showing their complete dedication and full use of their time to be a student in accordance with neoliberal cultural expectations.

This chapter also discussed the gap between what the PhD-mothers want and need from their university or faculty and the current family-friendly provision. The current neoliberal university's principles of competency, productivity and professionalism frequently conflict with traditional family values of dedication and care. Because neoliberal values are at odds with certain views of motherhood, the participants generally view that raising a family is a personal choice which ensures that academia continues to overlook the challenges of being an international PhD-mother. While more adaptive, family-friendly policies now exist in the university, they are usually not enough to ensure doctoral mothers from various cultures and religious backgrounds are able to enjoy equal academic opportunities. Despite neoliberal claims of equality for all who are capable of realising such self-maximising conduct and demeanour, this research is crucial in terms of disclosing the structural barriers of gender inequality that are perpetuated by the university.

Chapter EIGHT – CONCLUSION

PhD students who are also mothers have to deal with multiple challenges that traditional students do not have to face. Mothers' responsibilities and commitments, particularly in relation to childcare, means that they have less time to study. While previous studies (Carter et al., 2013; Haynes et al., 2012; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2015) provide rich information about the conflicting role that female students, especially mothers, experience as doctoral students, few of them focused on PhD student-mothers who are studying outside their home country and those that *do* tend to focus on the United States and Australia (Lobnibe, 2013; Soonga et al., 2015; Zhang, 2021a, 2021b). The current study seeks to contribute to the existing literature in the PhD student-mothers' field by exploring and discussing the experiences of international PhD students who were doing PhD study with their dependent children and family in New Zealand, in a culture that is not their own. In particular, this study explored international PhD-mothers' challenges and barriers in New Zealand, as well as the strategies they utilise to complete their PhD study while taking care of their children in a foreign country.

The present study focused on interpretations and meanings and, as such, it uses a detailed thematic analysis to draw out themes from participants' narration of their lived experiences. This thesis considers that a more in-depth appreciation of international PhD student-mothers' experiences necessitates a focus on giving these women a voice to articulate their own perspective. In designing a qualitative study, this thesis employed feminist discourse analysis to investigate the significant factors that emerge from international PhD student-mothers' challenges and experiences in one specific geographical and university context – that of the city of Auckland and a leading university in Auckland respectively. By providing a cohort of women the opportunity to articulate their hopes and challenges in their doctoral experiences as mothers, this thesis considers these experiences to be reasonably common in other university and geographical settings in New Zealand, and potentially beyond.

It is challenging to interpret the discourse about international PhD-mothers as a group since universities pay little specific attention to them and their needs. An appropriate theoretical framework to study this subject combined feminist and neoliberal perspectives to examine the barriers and challenges that student-mothers face when seeking to combine PhD study with

their mothering responsibilities. This study collected data from 17 participants, which is presented in two Findings chapters and a further two that presented a discussion of the findings. This approach recognises the need for an integrative and holistic approach, where significant themes are interwoven throughout these chapters to create a unique perspective and a diverse blend of analysis.

Chapter Four is the first Findings chapter in which PhD-mothers' feelings and emotions are presented; this is revealing because they often feel they have to remain hidden as they progress through their PhD journey. Feelings such as guilt, shame, loneliness and feeling torn between balancing the competing priorities within their lives emerge as significant and affective forces throughout their academic engagement. However, a dimension of the affective responses to their mothering and academic contexts is the deep feelings of pride and pleasure they take in their work and academic achievements. Distinct strands of doubt and torn emotions can be discerned in this study's interview data, with one of the key findings being the pivotal role played by family support. Those who lacked sufficient family support tended to focus on the problems and hurdles they faced rather than taking time to feel pride in their research and the progress they were making. Some participants advised that being regarded as a role model for their children engendered feelings of pride and intellectual satisfaction.

The affective responsibility involved in identifying the right balance between their academic work in a competitive professional environment and their roles as mothers were highlighted by the majority of PhD-mothers in this research. Thrift (2000, p. 674) refers to this world as one of "emergency as a rule," in which the neoliberal university workplace necessitates maintaining secrets, silence and hidden agendas. It appears that resistance to university neoliberalisation is lacking, not only because of individualising and divisive practices, but also as a result of a pervasive silence, which makes it almost impossible for individuals to resist or even to summon the strength to ascertain what form this resistance could take. Nonetheless, when PhD-mothers are motivated by academic life and what it promises and can find the time to derive inherent pleasure from their studies and motherhood, this can be very fulfilling.

Chapter Five outlined PhD-mothers' engagement with the structures of university life, as well as outlining the support they get from their family, friends and academic supervisors. This

highlights the gap between the university support systems that are presently offered and the ability of PhD-mothers to access and interpret these – as well as the gap between the expectations of the doctoral students prior to coming to New Zealand and their real experiences when being in New Zealand. The international PhD-mothers in this study expressed their desire for a stronger sense of support from their faculty, supervisors and fellow students, more day-care options for children and programming to take this into account, greater financial assistance, more family-friendly campus services and campus events that enabled the growth of support networks. Some of these issues could be addressed programmatically by the university administration or individual faculties, for example, by allowing a flexible studying model. Instead of indicating that current cultural and systematic climates should change, such an approach furthers the idea that PhD-mothers have deficits that have to be considered. Significantly, while people do empathise with the international PhD-mother group and the challenges they face, it is common to view them as victims rather than inferring that culture and society need to change to prevent these experiences from occurring.

A key theme of the thesis is an analysis of how the emotions and experiences of international PhD student-mothers are influenced by the intersection between a neoliberal university culture and motherhood. The ideology of motherhood is explored in relation to four different cultural backgrounds, China, Indonesia, Mexico and New Zealand, while the chapter discusses how PhD-mothers are impacted by two critical ideologies: *intensive mothering* and the *successful woman*. The stories shared by international PhD-mothers about their personal journeys powerfully illustrate the complex way in which social regimes impact individual lives. It is clear that these mothers' lives cannot be wholly self-determined since their experiences epitomise the construction and reconstruction of cultural and social meanings.

A person's country of origin, religion, economic status, education and personal relationship status not only influence their notions of motherhood but also whether they choose to study in another country and how they balance family life with their studies. This study found that the participants' belief systems had a fundamental influence on their motivation and career decisions. The views of Chinese, Indonesian and Mexican PhD-mothers indicated that they largely follow patriarchal norms. The women interviewed for this study were not opposed to fulfilling traditional gender roles within the family and the norms within their culture – these

even served to make these women feel more confident. Since the participants came from different cultures, familial norms were varied, and this affected their experiences and expectations of motherhood. In Chinese culture, women can benefit from adequate assistance in the home, while the Chinese participants did not identify barriers to engaging in either paid work or higher education. In contrast, participants from more religious cultures (such as the Islamic culture in Indonesia and the Catholic culture in Mexico) advised that PhD education and career development were regarded as the tools that could enable them to escape traditional gender roles. Meanwhile, this study suggests that PhD-mothers in this study felt that the ideal mother is child-centred, selfless and devoted to her family, regardless of religious and cultural background. Even in New Zealand, which might be considered progressive, the prevailing trend for intensive motherhood means that women remain the principal caregivers for their children. Set against these ideals of motherhood is the participants' conceptualisation of the ideal PhD student, who is someone who devotes a great deal of time and energy to their research. The tension between these two ideals has a powerful effect on women's self-esteem, self-belief and emotions, while the PhD-mother is forced to negotiate between these ideals as she strives to fulfil her roles as student, mother and partner – even when enrolled at a university that is considered relatively family-friendly.

In the second discussion chapter, the data from the study's findings are used to inform a discussion about the experience of a female international PhD student mother in a neoliberal university today. This chapter emphasised the necessity of placing neoliberal interpretations around enacting gender, individualism, and the neoliberal cultural expectation of PhD study and motherhood. This chapter drew on the PhD student-mothers' personal experiences and discussed how individualism affect the experience of being a woman and PhD-mother in higher education; how they manage to balance motherhood with their studies; what they want and need from their university or faculty versus the current provision. Although neoliberalism optimistically claims that all capable people should be equal, this study further reveals the structural rudiments of gender inequality. Importantly, the neoliberal context of doctoral study for this group of women ensures significant barriers remain that hinder the capacities and abilities to collectively resist the individualising tendencies inherent in doctoral study at the university. Conversely, the support networks these students are able to develop are highly valued.

This research shines a light on several tensions, including a financial imperative for universities with dwindling resource support from governments. While universities need to attract international students and thus market this opportunity appropriately, it is also necessary to communicate about the personal and financial costs involved in a PhD-mother relocating to another country to study with her children and family. Another tension is present because universities today have to consider their international rankings as a primary objective, while STEM-dominated funding streams mean that many students' research has little relationship to the university's objectives (Bystrom & Becker, 2014; Foss & Gibson, 2015; Hughes & Kitson, 2012). Perhaps the greatest tension is the societal pressure to be a perfect mother as well as an ideal scholar.

Several scholars have observed that, while higher education has allowed women in, they have not been entirely integrated into its climate and culture (Ng, 2000; Tierney & Bensimon, 2000), with others suggesting that the notion of students becoming parents by choice (and thus having to manage their studies around this) has been perpetuated in higher education culture (Haleman, 2004). This false notion of choice not only means that student-mothers remain isolated from their peers but also that universities are not motivated to create and implement family-friendly, inclusive policies. For instance, if an international PhD student becomes pregnant while studying in New Zealand, visa regulations prevent them from having more than three months maternity leave. This not only disadvantages them compared to their domestic peers, but also implies that this is their choice and, as such, the responsibility of balancing studying abroad with their new life as a mother rest solely with them. The extant neoliberal university principles of proficiency, competence and productivity are often at odds with the traditional family values of devotion and care, so greater flexibility is called for to alleviate pressure on women and create a culture that welcomes and nurtures families. Adapting and changing the culture of higher education institutions would allow them to move beyond the present model that expects all students to be young, single, childless and full time.

Considering motherhood as a wider concept also means focusing attention on several broader issues, such as gender inequality, child support and welfare, which are not only avoided by the higher education sector but also mainstream society because of the difficulties they present. Focusing on international PhD student-mothers from a critical perspective

challenges the prevailing traditional notions of both students and the traditional family, as well as contributing to academic literature about mothers. The affective accounts in this research contribute rich and granular evidence about the multidimensional nature of international PhD student-mothers and the full, demanding and meaningful lives they lead. Moreover, the unique position of the international PhD-mother straddles the domestic and academic spheres and challenges historical notions of male dominance in higher education. While the findings of this study cannot be over-generalised, the participants reveal complex and multi-layered societal, cultural and practical barriers. Neoliberal values hold that raising a family is the individual's personal choice, which has allowed academia to overlook the challenges inherent in being an international PhD-mother. Although the university has implemented more accommodating, family-friendly policies, these are usually insufficient to ensure that PhD-mothers of different religious backgrounds and cultures can experience equal opportunities in the academic sphere.

This research provides a crucial analysis that covers the intersection of feminism and neoliberalism and embraces differences within the broader framework of mothering and culture. This study chose to focus on the experiences of international PhD-mothers from a critical feminist perspective with the hope that inroads can be made to not only create opportunities to increase and diversify university programmes but also to transform the climate of the higher education sector. As New Zealand universities strive to become more inclusive and diverse, it is important that international PhD student-mothers are a visible part of this diversity. If universities develop programmes and policies in which women's needs are recognised and barriers removed, more support structures and initiatives can be developed that benefit and enhance the experiences of international PhD student-mothers in ways that have potential to improve higher education institutions and wider society. It is an ethical imperative that we try to do this.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer



THE UNIVERSITY OF
AUCKLAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau
NEW ZEALAND

**EDUCATION AND
SOCIAL WORK**

**ARE YOU
AN INTERNATIONAL DOCTORAL STUDENT
WHO IS ALSO A MOTHER?**



**Would you like to share your story
of being an international doctoral student-mother?**

**Is your child here in New Zealand
or back in your home country?**

I would love to hear from you!

**You are invited to participate in a study exploring the experiences,
challenges, and needs of female international doctoral students who
are also mothers with dependent children in New Zealand.**

Contact: VALERIE ZHANG

I am Zeyun (Valerie) Zhang. I am doing this research for my doctoral study in Critical Studies in Education, Faculty of Education, The University of Auckland, with supervision from Dr. Kirsten Locke and Dr. Catherine Rawlinson.

 zeyun.zhang@auckland.ac.nz

THIS RESEARCH HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON JULY, 2017 FOR THREE YEARS. REFERENCE NUMBER 019113.

Contact Valerie
E: zeyun.zhang@auckland.ac.nz
P: 027 386 5562

Appendix B: Consent Form and Information Sheet for International doctoral students

Consent Form (International doctoral student)

This form will be kept for a period of six years

Title: Invisible students: experiences and barriers of female international doctoral students who are mothers with dependent children in New Zealand.

Researcher: Zeyun Zhang

I have read the Participant information sheet and have understood the nature of this research. An opportunity has been provided for me to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to take part in this research project.

I agree to participate in an interview that will take approximately 90 minutes. I agree to have my interview with the researcher audio-recorded.

I understand that:

I will be invited to participate in an interview of up to 90 minutes that will occur at a time and place that is convenient to me.

My participation is voluntary.

The interview will be audio-recorded and I can stop the audio-recording at any time or refuse to answer any questions without giving a reason.

The audio-recording will be transcribed by Audio Transcription & Secretarial Services (ATS) on researcher's behalf. A confidentiality agreement will be signed by the transcribe.

The transcript will be returned to participants for editing and I will have three weeks in which to return it to the researchers. After that time, it will be assumed to be an accurate record.

I can withdraw my interview data within three weeks of participation in the interview.

I will choose a pseudonym prior to the interview that will be used to protect my identity and any identifying characteristics will be disguised.

All data collected will be securely stored in at the University of Auckland for a period of six years in a locked cupboard or on a password protected computer and then destroyed.

I understand that the original recordings, transcripts and consent forms will only be viewed by the researcher and her supervisors and will be kept for six years, after which they will be destroyed.

Data will be used in for researcher's Ph.D. thesis, journal articles and conference presentations.

I will be provided with a concise summary of the research findings in the form of a short paper at the conclusion of the project. I will also be provided an optional request for the electronic copy of the research thesis.

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Contact Details: _____

Nominated Pseudonym: _____

Approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on July 2017 for three years. Reference Number 019113.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

(International doctoral student)

Title: Invisible students: experiences and barriers of female international doctoral students who are mothers with dependent children in New Zealand.

Researcher: Zeyun Zhang

Supervisors: Dr Kirsten Locke and Dr Catherine Rawlinson

Introducing the researcher

My name is Zeyun Zhang, and I am a doctoral student in education at the University of Auckland. I am researching the experiences, challenges and needs of female doctoral international students who are also mothers with dependent children in New Zealand.

What is the research about?

According to the Ministry of Education, female doctoral students constitute the majority cohort of full-time doctoral students at most New Zealand universities from 2008-2016 (Ministry of Education, 2017). Among them are a group of full-time female international doctoral students who are also mothers with dependent children. They are a very important part of the university. This is especially the case when most New Zealand universities state the increase of international doctoral students as a strategic direction for their university.

However, there is no specific data about these students so far and very few specific or targeted policies of supporting them at the university. I would like to investigate the experiences of the full-time female international doctoral students who are mothers with dependent children when they are studying in New Zealand and examine possible intervention strategies that would help support them.

Data will be gathered to answer two overarching research questions: What are the lived experiences of female international doctoral students who are mothers in New Zealand, and, what can be done to better support these women?

Who is taking part?

In order to gather data for my research, I would like to individually interview at least thirty (fifteen eligible from each of the two universities in Auckland) international doctoral student mothers about their experiences at the University of Auckland and Auckland University of Technology. The first fifteen eligible students from each university whom contact the researcher will be selected as the semi-structured interview participants. Each woman would be interviewed once and the interview will last up to 90 minutes. The interview would take place at a place, time and date that is convenient to each participant.

What data will be collected?

Data will be collected from the women who are international doctoral students currently undertaking full-time study in Auckland, New Zealand. The researcher will conduct individual interviews with at least thirty participants that will last around 90 minutes. These interviews will be audio-recorded. Basic information regarding their age, ethnicity, marital status, and spoken language(s) will be gathered. The participants will also be asked if their children stay in New Zealand with them and if they have primary caring duties for these children. Participants will be able to refuse to answer any questions or turn the audio-recorder off at any time during the interview. Audio Transcription & Secretarial Services (ATS) will transcribe the audio-recordings on researcher's behalf. A confidentiality agreement will be signed by the transcriber. The transcripts will be returned to the participants for editing. They will have three weeks in which to return their edited transcript to the researcher. After that time, it will be assumed that the transcript is an accurate record. If participants change their mind, they will be able to withdraw their interview responses up to three weeks after the interview. After that time, any withdrawal of data will affect the analysis.

What am I being asked to do?

I would like to invite you to take part an interview of up to 90 minutes. If you decide to take part, I would like to interview you about your experiences here at the university. The interview will take up to 90 minutes and would take place at a time and date that is convenient for you.

In addition, I give an assurance that your decision to participate or not participate will have no effect on your grades or enrolment status at the university.

Confidentiality

You will be sent an Information Sheet and Consent Form and asked to provide a pseudonym by yourself prior to your interview. This pseudonym will be used when analysing the data and reporting the findings. Any identifying details will be disguised.

Benefits to you

Given the unique challenges of international doctoral students who are also mothers with dependent children, information about how to access appropriate support services provided by your university will be given. This will include information about how to access International Student Advisors and Health and Counselling services.

Potential Risks

For sharing your experience and story as an international doctoral student-mother, your cultural and religious beliefs will be respected. The interview would take place at a place, time and date that is convenient to you. You will be able to refuse to answer any questions or turn the audio- recorder off at any time during the interview thereby minimising the impact of any possible power relationship between the participants and the researcher.

How will data be used?

Data will be used for my doctoral research, journal articles and conference presentations.

What will happen to the data?

The data from the interviews will be securely stored at the University of Auckland. Hard copy data will be stored in a locked cupboard and electronic data stored on a password- protected computer. The original recordings, transcripts and consent forms will only be viewed by the researcher and researcher's supervisors. After six years the hard copy data will be placed in a

secured paper recycling bin and the electronic data permanently deleted from the computer's hard drive.

A concise summary of the research findings in the form of a short paper will be made available to you at the conclusion of the project. And an optional request for the electronic copy of the research thesis will also be provided.

If you have any questions, please contact the researcher, or my supervisors Dr Kirsten Locke, Dr Catherine Rawlinson or Professor John Morgan (Head of School). Our contact details are given below:

Zeyun Zhang, email zeyun.zhang@auckland.ac.nz phone: 0273565562

Dr Kirsten Locke: email k.locke@auckland.ac.nz phone: 09 623 8899 ext48359

Dr Catherine Rawlinson, email c.rawlinson@auckland.ac.nz phone: 09623 8899 ext48736

Professor John Morgan, email john.morgan@auckland.ac.nz phone: 09 373 7999 ext46398

What should I do next?

Attached is a consent form outlining what is involved. If you are willing to participate, please sign the consent form and return it to the researcher by email.

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland, 1142. Tel (09) 373-7599 extn 83711, email roethics@auckland.ac.nz

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE on July 2017 for three years. Reference Number 019113.

Appendix C: Consent Form and Information Sheet for International Office

Consent Form (International Office)

This form will be kept for a period of six years

Title: Invisible students: experiences and barriers of female international doctoral students who are mothers with dependent children in New Zealand.

Researcher: Zeyun Zhang

I have read the International Office information sheet and have understood the nature of this research. An opportunity has been provided for me to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

As the administrator at the International Office, I consent to provide an advertisement to international doctoral student cohort on the researcher's behalf.

I understand that:

- Participants will be invited to participate in an interview of up to 90 minutes that will occur at my university at a time that is convenient to them.
- Their participation is voluntary.
- The interview will be audio-recorded and interviewees can stop the audio-recording at any time or refuse to answer any questions without giving a reason.
- The audio-recording will be transcribed by Audio Transcription & Secretarial Services (ATS) on researcher's behalf. A confidentiality agreement will be signed by the transcriber.
- The transcript will be returned to participants for editing and they will have three weeks in which to return it to the researchers. After that time it will be assumed to be an accurate record.
- The participants can withdraw their interview data within three weeks of participation in the interview.

- All data collected will be securely stored in at the University of Auckland for a period of six years in a locked cupboard or on a pass-word protected computer and then destroyed.

- I understand that the original recordings, transcripts and consent forms will only be viewed by the researcher and her supervisors and will be kept for six years, after which they will be destroyed.

- Data will be used in for researcher's Ph.D. thesis, journal articles and conference presentations.

- I will be provided with an electronic copy of the summary of the research findings via my contact details below.

Therefore, I give my informed consent for the research project Invisible students: experiences and barriers of female international doctoral students who are mothers with dependent children in New Zealand to be carried out through the International Office and for the administrator at the International Office to approach potential participants to request their participation in this research via mass email mailout to all international doctoral students at my university.

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Contact Details: _____

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (International Office)

Title: Invisible students: experiences and barriers of female international doctoral students who are mothers with dependent children in New Zealand.

Researcher: Zeyun Zhang

Supervisors: Dr Kirsten Locke and Dr Catherine Rawlinson

Introducing the researcher

My name is Zeyun Zhang and I am a doctoral student in education at the University of Auckland. I am researching the experiences, challenges and needs of female doctoral international students who are also mothers with dependent children in Auckland, New Zealand.

What is the research about?

According to the Ministry of Education, female doctoral students constitute the majority cohort of full-time doctoral students at most New Zealand universities from 2008-2016 (Ministry of Education, 2017). Among them are a group of full-time female international doctoral students who are also mothers with dependent children. They are a very important part of the university. This is especially the case when most New Zealand universities state the increase of international doctoral students as a strategic direction for their university.

However, there is no specific data about these students so far and very few specific or targeted policies of supporting them at the university. I would like to investigate the experiences of the full-time female international doctoral students who are mothers with dependent children when they are studying in New Zealand and examine possible intervention strategies that would help support them.

Data will be gathered to answer two overarching research questions: What are the lived experiences of female international doctoral students who are mothers in New Zealand, and, what can be done to better support these women?

Who is taking part?

In order to gather data for my research, I would like to individually interview at least thirty (fifteen eligible from each of the two universities in Auckland) international doctoral student mothers about their experiences at the University of Auckland and Auckland University of

Technology. The first fifteen eligible students from each university whom contact the researcher will be selected as the semi-structured interview participants. Each woman would be interviewed once and the interview will last up to 90 minutes. The interview would take place at a place, time and date that is convenient to each participant.

What data will be collected?

Data will be collected from the women who are international doctoral students currently undertaking full-time study in Auckland, New Zealand. The researcher will conduct individual interviews with at least thirty participants that will last around 90 minutes. These interviews will be audio-recorded. Basic information regarding their age, ethnicity, marital status, and spoken language(s) will be gathered. The participants will also be asked if their children stay in New Zealand with them and if they have primary caring duties for these children.

Participants will be able to refuse to answer any questions or turn the audio- recorder off at any time during the interview. Audio Transcription & Secretarial Services (ATS) will transcribe the audio-recordings on researcher's behalf. A confidentiality agreement will be signed by the transcriber. The transcripts will be returned to the participants for editing. They will have three weeks in which to return their edited transcript to the researcher. After that time, it will be assumed that the transcript is an accurate record. If participants change their mind, they will be able to withdraw their interview responses up to three weeks after the interview. After that time, any withdrawal of data will affect the analysis.

What am I being asked to do?

I ask permission to request an administrator at the International Office email the international doctoral student cohort on my behalf to ask if any full-time international doctoral student who is also a mother is interested in taking part in research about their experiences at the Auckland University of Technology. I request that the administrator at the International Office email potential participants on my behalf to invite them to opt in to participate in my research. I request that this email includes my contact information so that potential participants may email me. I will then respond to eligible women participants with a PIS and CF that outlines participant information and consent procedures required for their participation in the semi-structured interviews.

Confidentiality

Prior to interview the participants will be requested to nominate a pseudonym, which will be utilised in analysing data and writing up report, in addition to which identifying details will be disguised.

Potential Benefits

Given the unique challenges of full-time international doctoral students who are also mothers, information about how to access appropriate support services provided by the university will be given. This will include information about how to access International Student Advisors and Health and Counselling services of each university.

How will data be used?

Data will be used in for my Ph.D. thesis, journal articles and conference presentations.

What will happen to the data?

The data from the interviews will be securely stored at the University of Auckland. Hard copy data will be stored in a locked cupboard and electronic data stored on a password-protected computer. The original recordings, transcripts and consent forms will only be viewed by the researcher and researcher's supervisors. After six years the hard copy data will be placed in a secured paper recycling bin and the electronic data permanently deleted from the computer's hard drive.

A concise summary of the research findings in the form of a short paper will be made available to you at the conclusion of the project. And an optional request for the electronic copy of the research thesis will also be provided.

If you have any questions, please contact the researcher, or my supervisors Dr Kirsten Locke, Dr Catherine Rawlinson or Professor John Morgan (Head of School). Our contact details are given below:

Zeyun Zhang, email zeyun.zhang@auckland.ac.nz , phone: 0273565562

Dr Kirsten Locke: email k.locke@auckland.ac.nz phone: 09 623 8899 ext48359

Dr Catherine Rawlinson, email c.rawlinson@auckland.ac.nz phone: 09623 8899 ext48736

Professor John Morgan, email john.morgan@auckland.ac.nz phone: 09 373 7999 ext46398

What should I do next?

Attached is a consent form outlining what is involved. If you are willing to participate, please sign the consent form and return it to the researcher by email. Next, could the assigned administrator please pass the information to all international doctoral students at your university via a mass email.

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland, 1142. Tel (09) 373-7599 extn 83711, email ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE on July 2017 for three years. Reference Number 019113.

Appendix D: Ethical Clearance

Appendix E: Interview Schedule

Guiding Interview Questions

Participants: At least fifteen female international doctoral students who are mothers with dependent children.

Experiences (Family, Gender, Ethnicity, Class, Age)

1. Can you tell me something about yourself, your ethnicity, religion and age?
2. Can you tell me a bit about your home life and your family? (probe: who is in the family/how many/how old are your children)
3. Do your family stay with you here in the NZ or in your own country?
4. Who takes responsibility for care duties in the family and what might these be? (what role do you take in caring duties, how do you feel about it?)
5. Can you talk me through an average day in your life as a student (on this course and at this university)? (probe: would you say that this differs from your life experiences elsewhere?)
6. Can you tell me what it is like to be an international student in this environment?
7. How might you describe yourself in this role/situation? (e.g. as a mother, a student, as international, etc?)
8. What do you feel are the most enjoyable aspects of your life/experiences at the moment? (probe: what do you like about the course, about Auckland, about the university, about the NZ, about life in the NZ, etc)
9. What do you feel has been most challenging aspects of your experience as a student so far? (probe: academically? Socially? Family? In terms of home life? Settling in? wider university? On the course?)
10. Have you ever faced any challenges in caring for your children whilst in this country/working as a student?
11. Is there anything else which you think stops you working/makes it harder to work/stops you getting the grades you want or achieving as highly?
12. How do you balance your family life with your study? (probe: any examples, any challenges to this, what makes it easier? How does university help with this? Do you have any support? Do you get family/friends help? How might this compare to your course mates?)
13. Does your age make a difference to any of your experiences?
14. Does your class status make a difference to any of your experiences?

15. Does your gender and family status make a difference to any of your experiences?
16. Does your ethnicity/positioning as an international student make a difference to any of your experiences?

Supports

1. What support do you receive from the university?
2. Do your children attend a university-based childcare setting? (would you like more? Do you see it as the university's responsibility?)
3. Do you have any financial support as an international student-mother?
4. Do you have any parental leave?
5. Are you offered a flexible mode of study?

Needs

1. Do you think that the university supports you well when you study as an international doctoral student who are also mothers? If the answer is yes, can you cite specific examples? If the answer is no, please also cite specific examples.
2. Are you familiar with the policies for International Students at this university? Are you familiar with the policies that apply to students who are parents?
3. What do you think that the university could do more to support the female international doctoral students who are mothers with dependent children?
4. What do you think that the government could do more to support the female international doctoral students who are mothers with dependent children in New Zealand?