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**FROM ROCKING THE CRADLE TO  
ROCKING THE SYSTEM: WOMEN,  
COMMUNITY WORK AND SOCIAL  
CHANGE IN AOTEAROA**

Wendy Craig  
1991

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# Errata

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- P.84      Typographical error "or" instead of "of"  
paragraph 2, line 1.
- P.115     Typographical error "137" instead of "136"  
paragraph 1, line 7.
- P.137     Typographical error "let" instead of "led"  
paragraph 1, line 6.
- P.185     Typographical error "(1988b:116)" instead of "(1988a:116)"  
paragraph 3, line 7.
- P.195     Sentence 4, paragraph 2 incorrectly worded. Should read:  
"The detailed breakdown of these figures appeared in Chapter  
Five".
- P.197     Typographical error "(Waring 1988b)" instead of "(Waring  
1988a)"  
paragraph 1, line 5.
- P.267     Words omitted paragraph 1, line 3.  
Should read "the bosses focussed on "the structural stuff".
- P.296     Sentence 2, final paragraph incorrectly worded.  
Should read: "This final chapter highlighted the central theme  
of...."
- P.308     Typographical error "(1990)" instead of "(1989)"  
paragraph 2, line 3.
- P.318     Sentence 3, paragraph 1 incorrectly worded. Should read:  
"...outlined in Chapter Two".

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**FROM ROCKING THE CRADLE TO ROCKING THE SYSTEM:  
WOMEN, COMMUNITY WORK AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN  
AOTEAROA**

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

**Wendy Craig**

*Department of Social Policy and Social Work  
Massey University*

**December 1991**

## DEDICATION

This thesis is lovingly dedicated to my granddaughter, Georgia May, in the hope that when she, and other women of her generation, make the transition from rocking the cradle to rocking the system, men will stand alongside and support them.

## Abstract

This dissertation explores women's involvement in community work in Aotearoa. It is argued that women's significant contributions to community work have been hidden, devalued or ignored in mainstream writing and teaching. This study documents women's experiences and their perceptions of these experiences; such stories which are very seldom told. It also focusses on an explanation of social change from the perspective of women community workers. These women view community work as a site of struggle for change, through the processes of empowerment, self-determination and working collectively.

Sixteen women, eight Maori and eight pakeha, participated in this study. These women have been identified as change agents and throughout their stories they constantly link their daily experiences to national, global and structural issues. All of the women have made a commitment to working towards change. This commitment has not always been without cost to themselves and to their families. Although the changes that the women have achieved can, at times, be seen as reformist in nature, it is argued that as women's community work challenges the practices of the state, it contributes to social change processes.

The approach taken is informed by my socialist feminist perspective. Issues pertaining to gender, race and, to some extent, class are considered in this thesis. The study concludes that future theorising about community work in Aotearoa, must, of necessity show, more effectively how gender, race and class are interrelated. The differences between the Maori and pakeha women's stories indicate that gender cannot be examined in isolation from race. The existence of gender, as a category, is shaped also by other relations such as race and class.

In articulating their struggles for change, the women reveal that there is much to be learned about the politics of caring. The women recognise that they have been trained to be the caregivers in society. For these women, however, caring plays an important role in the social change process. Their approach is based on an empowering model rather than a dependency one. Yet, whilst the women celebrate their own capacities related to caring, they are also concerned that men stand back from, and even devalue, this essential role which enables society to function. Thus community work is frequently conceptualised as women's work, and the women have to struggle to be recognised and paid for it.

This thesis also shows that, despite the differences between the Maori and pakeha women, their relationship is generally co-operative and the potential for them to learn from one another exists. Through their collective involvement in the Aotearoa Community Workers Association the women have found ways to work towards a partnership which is based on an understanding of the rights of Maori as the indigenous people of Aotearoa.

This research serves as a celebration of the women's experiences and knowledge of community work in Aotearoa. It is documented in a way that other women community workers can use to reflect on their own work. The challenge of any research and action is to not only record people's experiences, but also to use our knowledge, both written and oral, to provide an explanation of our current reality in order to , if necessary, change this reality. This dissertation, as part of a social process, has attempted to achieve this aim.

## Acknowledgements

Many people have inspired and assisted me in a variety of ways to get this thesis in its present form, and I would like to express my appreciation to them. Without their collective support, I doubt that I would have finished such a major undertaking.

I want to begin by thanking the women who shared their stories with me. Their commitment to community work and social change speaks for itself in this dissertation, and I hope that they think I have captured the essence of their work and their struggles. It is these women in particular, and other women involved in community work, who have provided me with the inspiration to tackle such a project.

My supervisors have been extremely supportive. Celia Briar as my chief supervisor, fresh out from England, probably did not know what she was going to encounter when she agreed to become my supervisor. She has been unendingly enthusiastic, however, and has encouraged me to persevere. I really appreciated that, Celia. Ephra Garrett, my mentor and the very first lecturer whom I encountered when I began studying as a mature student fourteen years ago, has offered boundless wisdom and inspiration. Tena koe Ephra. Ahakoa he mihi poto tenei hei aha ka nui tonu nga mihi.

Robyn Munford has given more than one can really expect of a supervisor. She has always been there when I have needed her and has provided both supervisory support and an ongoing amount of practical encouragement. I love your energy and enthusiasm Robyn. Not only are you such a special friend, but I appreciate the way you have taken on everything I left behind in Palmerston North, including Dorothy. I am going to miss the ongoing exchange. We will need to start another project.

Some of my friends and colleagues from the Department of Social Policy and Social Work have also played a supportive role in my studies. Rajen Prasad and Ian Shirley held the reins until I was able to find women supervisors, and then continued to offer significant encouragement and advice. Mike O'Brien was also exceedingly generous with his time. And to Janet Milne, one of the Golden Girls, I want to say how much I miss those eight o'clock sessions, both morning and night. Those informal 'supervision' sessions often sustained me.

Sharon Brook patiently transcribed all of the tapes and also assisted me in a number of other ways. Thank you very much Sharon. I know that it was not always an easy task. Mary Nash also helped me out by agreeing to read the thesis when it was in its first draft to see if it hung together. Mary, I not only appreciate the constructive comments, but I also want to say how supportive you have been to me throughout this entire project, both as a loving friend and a colleague.

My women friends have been particularly important. My dear friend Liz Gordon helped with the typing and formatting of this thesis, and read and critiqued the first draft while supposedly on holiday. She has given me many years of love, encouragement and support. Thank you Liz. I wish that you could have been with me when I handed this thesis in. We could have celebrated together. As well, my friends Adrienne Baird, Susan Grace, Dolly Larkins, Sally Marshall, Gail Munro, Mary Shirley and Julie Tait have always been there to help me in many diverse ways.

There are others who need to be acknowledged as well: people such as Graeme Fraser and Mervyn Hancock who encouraged me as a student every step of the way, Ken Milne who continually supported me and Mike Smith who talked me into becoming a community worker. Then there is Michael Elliott who inspired me in my early years of community work and who has always been one of my mentors. I am also indebted to Massey University for the Massey University Academic Women's Research Award

that was granted to me in 1990. This Award gave me a term's study leave to write up part of my research findings. I feel privileged for having received the Award, and it certainly came at an important time in my studies.

More recently, with my move to Hamilton, I have discovered new friends and colleagues. In particular, I have found a warm and supportive environment within the Student Services Section at the University of Waikato, and I want to thank all of them for not only tolerating the final throes of the completion of a thesis, but also for actively supporting me all of the time. This acknowledgement includes Sharon Pearson who has given me strong personal support, and Pat Gregory who has also provided some practical assistance which was much appreciated.

Although a number of people assisted with the proof-reading of this thesis, three of them did the lion's share. They were my sisters Dawn Fookes and Paddy Mouat, and a friend and colleague, Paul Goodson. Having done this task for a number of people, I know how time consuming and tedious it is, and I really appreciate their efforts, guidance and support.

Finally, but certainly by no means insignificantly, my family members need to be acknowledged and thanked for their ongoing assistance, support and love. I know the years of me as a student have not been easy for them. Kirsten and Hadley, my two youngest, have no recollection of me being anything other than a student, even during my years as a lecturer. And my oldest two, Michael and Kim, watched each year go by wondering when my student days would come to an end and the house would return to normal. They left home, set up their own homes, and still our house has not returned to normal, if there is such a thing. My husband Alan has patiently waited for this day, but he probably knows something else is sure to follow. Hang in there Alan! Really, I'm not too bad! Life would be boring without me.

## Table of Contents

	<i>Page number</i>
List of figures and tables	xiv
Maori glossary	xv
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
Community work	2
Feminist research	5
Feminist theory	7
Format of this thesis	12
<b>PART ONE</b>	
<i>1</i> <b>Community Work and Social Change within Britain:</b>	
<b>Historical Origins</b>	<b>16</b>
The first phase: The Victorian era - reform and control	17
Feminist organising	21
The second phase: Between the wars - fostering a sense of community	22
The third phase: The 1960s - in search of a profession	23
The fourth phase: In search of radicalism	28
A fifth phase: Retrenchment	31

<b>2</b>	<b>Community Work and Social Change in Aotearoa</b>	<b>33</b>
	The origins of community work in Aotearoa	33
	Women in the community: working towards change	35
	Maori women	38
	Social work and community work: an ambivalent relationship	40
	Community work in the 70s and 80s	44
	Local authority involvement in community work	46
	Central government provision for community work	49
	Community work within the voluntary sector: women's work	56
	Community work as a site of struggle for change	64
<b>3</b>	<b>The Welfare State: Feminist Theorising</b>	<b>70</b>
	Malestream theories of the state	70
	Feminist theories of the state	78
	A socialist feminist approach to the state in Aotearoa	87
<b>4</b>	<b>The Politics of Caring</b>	<b>91</b>
	Women and family policy	91
	The 'family' in Aotearoa	93
	Caring for the family	97
	The politics of caring	99
	Women and employment	105
	Women and paid work	106
	Women and unpaid work in the community	111
	Women in the unpaid social services	115
	Women's unpaid work and the state	120

## PART TWO

<b>5</b>	<b>The Research Process: Methodological Considerations</b>	<b>124</b>
	Choosing the research topic	124
	The relationship between theory and research	126
	The fieldwork	127
	The group participants	129
	Selecting the women for the in-depth interviews	132
	The in-depth interviews	134
	Transcription and analysis	138
	The women's stories	140
	The women	141
	The Maori women	142
	The pakeha women	143
<b>6</b>	<b>What is Community Work?</b>	<b>146</b>
	Defining community work	146
	Self-determination	148
	Collectivity	149
	Power	151
	Social Change	153
	A day in the life of a community worker	154
	Early starts	155
	Morning work	157
	Afternoon work	160
	Evening work	162

	The key tasks in community work	163
	Identifying needs	163
	Networking	166
	Planning	168
	Action and reflection	171
	Changes in community work	172
	Biculturalism and community work	180
	Summary	185
<b>7</b>	<b>Women's Work: The Process of Becoming a Community Worker</b>	<b>187</b>
	Life circumstances	187
	Working class origins	187
	Childhood and adult experiences	189
	Entry points	195
	Why community work?	200
	Community work is women's work	205
	Choosing community work	210
	Surviving community work	215
	Commitment	215
	Support	218
	Training	221
	Summary	224
<b>8</b>	<b>The Context of Community Work</b>	<b>226</b>
	The community	226
	The organisation	235
	The state	250
	Summary	259

9	<b>Working Towards Social Change</b>	<b>261</b>
	Caring: a central theme for social change	261
	Community work and social change	267
	Changes for the women	275
	Organising for change	282
	Changes from within the system	287
	Other issues relating to change	292
	Summary	296
10	<b>The Way Forward: Reflecting On the Past</b>	<b>298</b>
	Weaving the stories together	298
	The context of community work	299
	The state	299
	The organisation	302
	The community	303
	Key issues and themes	304
	On feminism	304
	Gender, race and class	306
	Community work and social work	307
	Training	308
	The politics of caring	309
	Differences in the experiences of Maori and pakeha women	310
	Social change	313
	The future of community work and community work research	315
	<i>Appendix 1</i>	318
	The history of the Aotearoa Community Workers Association	

<i>Appendix 2</i>	325
The Treaty of Waitangi	
<i>Appendix 3</i>	328
Community work training in Aotearoa	
<i>Appendix 4</i>	341
Community work survey and questionnaire	
<i>Appendix 5</i>	356
The interview schedule	
<i>Bibliography</i>	359

## List of Figures and Tables

*Page Number*

### **Figures**

2.1 Trends in the development of services by local authorities	48
4.1 Percentage of various 'family types' in Aotearoa, 1986	94
4.2 Labour force participation by gender, two-parent families, 1986	95
4.3 Work status by gender, single parents (1986)	96

### **Tables**

4.1 Worker type by gender	117
---------------------------	-----

### **Appendices**

Figure A1.1 Structure of the National Association	321
Figure A4.1 Female Maori, Income Status	345
Figure A4.2 Female Tauwiwi, Income Status	346
Figure A4.3 Male Maori, Income Status	347
Figure A4.4 Male Tauwiwi, Income Status	348

## Maori Glossary

<i>Aotearoa</i>	New Zealand
<i>Ariki</i>	Paramount chief
<i>Aroha</i>	Love
<i>Hapu</i>	Sub-tribe
<i>Hui</i>	Meeting, gathering
<i>Iwi</i>	People, tribe
<i>Kai</i>	Food
<i>Karakia</i>	Prayer
<i>Kaupapa</i>	Topic, rule
<i>Kawanatanga</i>	Governor, governance
<i>Kei te pai</i>	Fine, well
<i>Kete</i>	Basket
<i>Koha</i>	Gift
<i>Korero</i>	Talk, speak
<i>Mahi</i>	Work
<i>Matua whangai</i>	Foster parent
<i>Mihi</i>	Greeting
<i>Mokopuna</i>	Grandchild
<i>Pakeha</i>	White man, European
<i>Powhiri</i>	Welcome
<i>Take</i>	Topic of discussion, issue
<i>Taonga</i>	Treasure, possession
<i>Tangata whenua</i>	People of the land
<i>Tauwi</i>	Strange tribe, foreigner, non-Maori

<i>Te iwi Maori</i>	The Maori people
<i>Te kohanga reo</i>	The language nest
<i>Te Kupu</i>	The message
<i>Tino rangatiratanga</i>	Maori sovereignty
	Maori control over everything Maori
<i>Tipuna</i>	Ancestor, grandparents
<i>Tu Tangata</i>	Stand tall
<i>Wairua</i>	Spirit
<i>Whanau</i>	Family, extended family
<i>Whare hui</i>	Meeting house