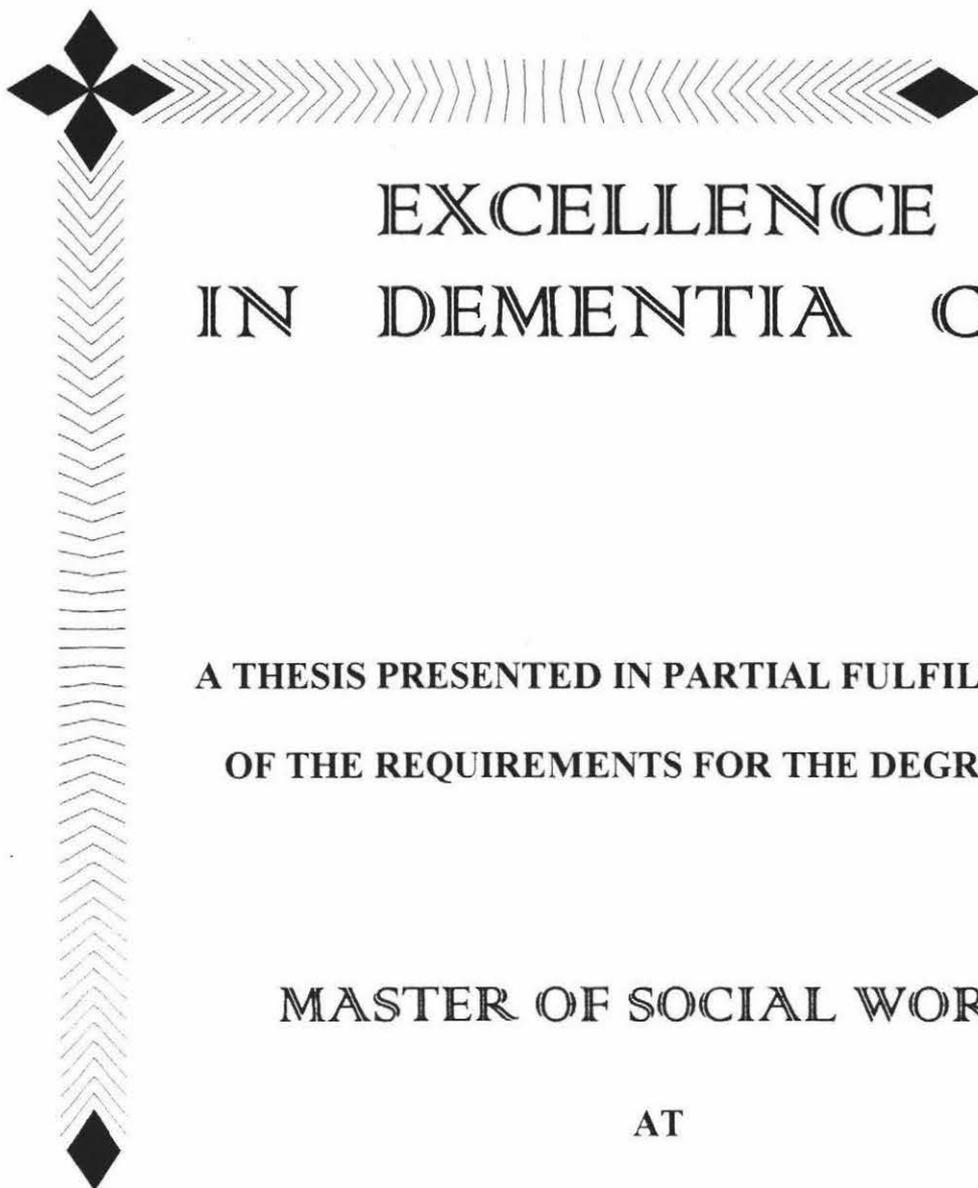


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EXCELLENCE
IN DEMENTIA CARE

A THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

AT

MASSEY UNIVERSITY

PATRICIA MARY MELLING

1997

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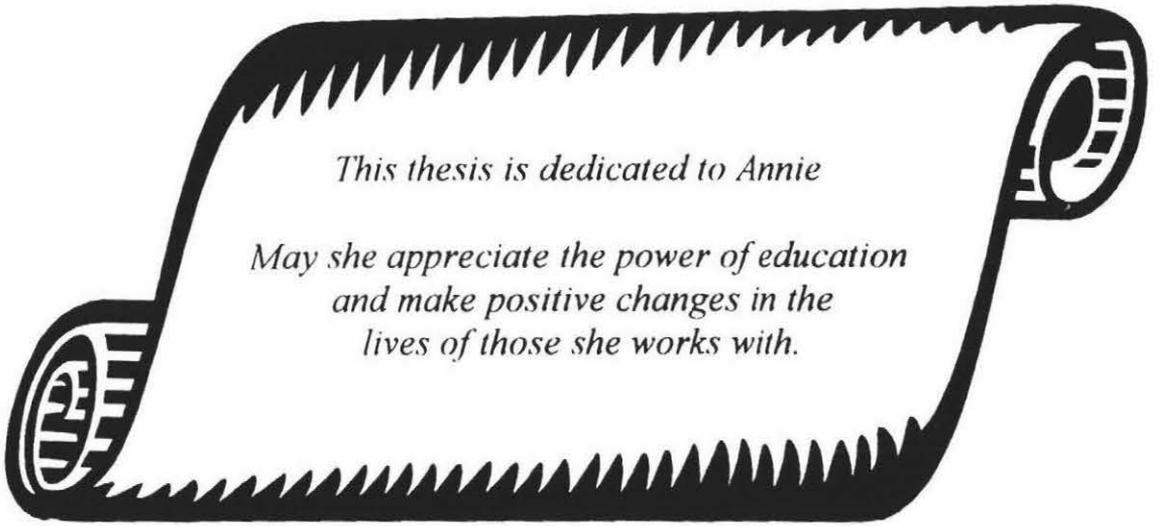
It has been a long journey over the past five years as I hopefully approach the completion of my thesis. There have been many people along the way who have helped and encouraged me. My driving force has been my youngest daughter Annie who has just completed her Bachelor of Social Work Degree. It has been our goal to graduate together hence the final burst on my part as she has just finished her final year and taken up employment.

My thanks go to my employers, Good Health Wanganui for funding my fees and the Alzheimer's Society Manawatu Inc. who have provided me with all the necessary resources, supervision time and support. The support of my peer workers, their assistance collecting material for me and keeping me informed of the latest policy changes in the health and welfare areas, is very much appreciated. There have been so many changes during my time of writing that I have constantly had to update my data.

This thesis necessitated the purchase of another computer and I extend my grateful thanks to Roy who has spent countless hours programming my machine and rescuing my work on many occasions. His patience seems unlimited.

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Finally to my partner Ian, thank-you for putting up with me in my times of stress when fitting in writing this thesis around a busy lifestyle. I hope I can continue to advocate for all people with dementia and add quality of life to the lives I touch.



This thesis is dedicated to Annie

*May she appreciate the power of education
and make positive changes in the
lives of those she works with.*

ABSTRACT

This thesis is based on the belief that the functioning and quality of life of persons with dementia has the potential to improve in an environment where autonomy and independence are fostered within the abilities of the individual and the limitations of their disability. The thesis draws on critical theory to formulate a comprehensive framework aimed at empowering workers and caregivers to improve the quality of life for people with dementia living in residential facilities or at home. The thesis then shows how this critical approach can be applied in practice.

Two surveys were conducted. The first, examined whether workers were able to implement changes in residential facilities following an educational programme. The second evaluated the usefulness of a booklet produced for family caregivers on choosing residential care for their loved ones.

The thesis examines the policy implications and concludes with recommendations directed at policy makers and managers, which, if adopted, would provide the best quality of care for people with dementia.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	i
ABSTRACT	ii
CONTENTS	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1	
Statement of Research. AIM	4
CHAPTER 2	
Perspective	7
Hypothesis	8
Dementia - An Overview	8
CHAPTER 3	
Literature Review	11
CHAPTER 4	
Theoretical Model	19
The Nature of Critical Theory	19
Applying Critical Theory to Working with Elderly Persons Suffering From Dementia.	21
I Theory of False Consciousness	22
II A Theory of Crisis	24
III A Theory of Education	25
IV A Theory of Transformative Action	27
CHAPTER 5	
Reconstruction	28
Plan of Action or Practice	31
I A Theory of False Consciousness	32
II A Theory of Crisis	33
III A Theory of Education	35
IV A Theory of Transformative Action	37

CONTENTS CONT:

CHAPTER 6

What constitutes Quality of Life?	41
Safety	42
Structure	43
Support	44
Involvement	46
Validation	47

CHAPTER 7

The Changing Environment and Policy Implications	50
The National Health Committee	54
Income and Asset Testing	55
Service Description for Residential Services	56
Public Expenditure	58
Ethical Issues	59
Cultural Issues	62

CHAPTER 8

Research Design	65
Method Survey I	67
Results Survey I	69
Discussion Survey I	75

CHAPTER 9

Method Survey II	77
Results Survey II	78
Discussion Survey II	80

CHAPTER 10

Recommendations and Conclusions	84
Facilities	85
Staff Training	86
Activity Programming	87
Education	87
Assessment	88
Research	88
Conclusion	90

REFERENCES

92

INDEX OF TABLES

TABLES	I	Public Expenditure	58
	II	Results of Survey Research on Completion of Dealing with Dementia Course	70
	III	Summary of Survey II	79

INDEX OF FIGURES

FIGURES	I	The Global Deterioration Scale	16
	II	Critical Model for Excellence in Dementia Care	29
	III	Model of Reconstruction	30
	IV	Application of Gunderson's Model of Therapeutic Processes in Dementia Care	41

APPENDICES

APPENDIX	I	Letter to Manawatu Polytechnic
	II	Questionnaire Survey I
	III	Information Sheet for Students
	IV	Excellence in Dementia Care Booklet
	V	Questionnaire Survey II
	VI	A Fair Go For Dementia Booklet