

## Editorial

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There is currently a lack of material on how feminism has developed and influenced human service practice in Aotearoa/New Zealand and the Pacific region. The activism of second wave feminism in the 1960s and 1970s, which impacted profoundly on professional practice, appears to have lost impetus. Changes in legislation and social attitudes have led some commentators and academics to argue that we are now in a period of 'post feminism', with some even questioning feminism's ongoing relevance.

This special issue arose out of the discussions of a group of counselling educators who questioned the absence of feminist thinking in much of the contemporary therapeutic literature (Wright et al., 2008). We wondered what had happened to feminism over 20 years on, after the publication of a foundational paper written by Wendy Drewery (Drewery, 1986) in the *New Zealand Journal of Counselling*. This special issue is an attempt to discover the ongoing relevance of feminist thinking to other practitioners in the human service field.

We invited contributions from a range of practitioners in Aotearoa/New Zealand and the Pacific, and asked contributors to analyse their professional experience in relation to their understanding of feminist theories. Since we are aware that there are contested versions of contemporary feminism, we encouraged reference to those theories which were found useful, rather than academically informed. We wondered what aspects of these theoretical standpoints were useful to/being used by practitioners 'on the ground' and hoped that this would provide useful indicators for future developments in feminist theory and practice in our region.

In this Special Issue, therefore, we foreground the voices of practitioners as they address women's experience; explore gender as a category of analysis, and further feminist theory and debate in their daily interactions. Our hope is that this collection of papers will provide a map for researchers and practitioners who are interested in exploring current developments in feminist theory in order to enhance and potentially change their practice. We hope it will also provide a theoretical overview for those students and researchers who are engaged with 'third wave feminism'. In particular, we aim to make a difference to those in work and to the people who work with and consult them.

We begin with Jenny Coleman: 'Practicing feminism in a postfeminist age' which sketches the wider feminist terrain in terms of what has been described as various waves. This brings us face to face with what is meant by 'third wave feminism' and sets a challenge for the other papers, some of which engage quite differently with this third term. The second paper by Hine Waitere & Patricia Maringi Johnston: 'Echoed silences: In absentia: Mana wahine in institutional contexts' reflects our original concern by confronting the silence, in particular the absence of Maori women in spaces controlled by Pakeha men and women. We acknowledge the special place held by women who are also Tangata Whenua, their often multiple marginalisation of gender, colonialisation, ethnicity and class. Our hearing is socially constructed and as feminists we have to learn to shift constantly evolving obstacles in order to enhance our ability to hear each other.

Following that, Margaret Pack explores sexual abuse and counsellors' most difficult practice scenarios with embodiment as a key concern. Her research found that by attuning to their

body awareness, counsellors were able to assist the client to connect to what was unspeakable, and which therefore remained unsaid. The next article by Kathie Crocket, Elmarie Kotze, Jenny Snowden and Rachel McKenna is written in the context of feminism in a Women against Violence group. The authors explore the possibilities for practices of feminism that work for collaborative, socially just knowledge making.

Is writing diaries and journals a feminist practice? Jeannie Wright and Pip Ranby consider how their personal writing intersects with feminist thinking and resistance. Finally, Sue Cornforth, Andrea Milligan, Jayne White and Lise Bird use a process of collective biography to expose the gendered influences at play in their early memories and how these positioned them as women academics in the current regime of performance-based accountability and multiple redundancies.

We would like to thank the reviewers, whose comments have contributed to the strength of these papers. Susan Kaiser also played an invaluable role with her proof reading and editing skills. We hope that readers will enjoy reading this special issue and that they will be stimulated to rethink their own practices in the light of some of the positions taken in these contributions.

**Jeannie Wright and Sue Cornforth, Co-editors.**

### **References**

- Drewery, W. (1986). The challenge of feminism and the practice of counselling. *New Zealand Journal of Counselling and Guidance*, 8, 18 - 28.
- Wright, J. K., Webb, S., Sullivan-Thompson, P., Kotze, E., Crocket, K., Cornforth, S., et al. (2008). The 'F' word: The challenge of feminism and the practice of counselling twenty years on. *New Zealand Journal of Counselling*, 28(1), 87 - 103.