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Changing frames:
The discursive influence of the
women's movements of
New Zealand and Australia

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Doctor of Philosophy of The Australian National University

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own independent research and that all authorities and sources which have been used are duly acknowledged.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'S. Grey', enclosed within a faint, hand-drawn oval.

Sandra J. Grey

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Abstract

This thesis examines the discursive influence of women's movement activity in New Zealand and Australia from 1970 to 2000. The aim is to further understanding about how and when social movements influence cultural norms and reframe public policy. While there exists extensive sociological research into the conditions under which social movements emerge in societies, there is little empirical research into the effect of these phenomena. Similarly, the influence of social movements is under-researched within political science literature, where the focus has been on the impact of formal actors such as political parties and interest groups. Textual analysis is applied to public debate around the issues of childcare and unpaid work in Australian and New Zealand over a 30-year period. The four in-depth case studies identify the number and prevalence of discourses used in policy debates and the coalitions that defend these differing narratives.

The analysis of discourses and coalitions shows that women's movement activity brought changes to policy discourse in New Zealand and Australia. This influence, however, was often only partial. 'Radical' messages put forward by social movements hindered their discursive influence in the political realm and the attempts of the Australasian women's movements to alter policy debates were negatively affected by the introduction of neo-liberal narratives. Also limiting the impact of movement activity were the discursive legacies found in each of the policy debates, the type of alliances built by grass-roots activists, and the power of entrenched political elites. The analysis shows that messages challenging the status quo will alter the way policy is discussed in society, but at the same time processes of political debate will modify the messages advanced by social movements.

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Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACF	Advocacy Coalition Framework
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
ALP	Australian Labor Party
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
EPAC	Economic Planning Advisory Commission
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
FOL	Federation of Labour
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
NACEW	National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women
NOW	National Organisation for Women
NZCTU	New Zealand Council of Trade Unions
NZEI	New Zealand Education Institute
OSCAR	Out of School Care and Recreation
OSW	Office of the Status of Women
PSA	Public Service Association
SMO	Social movement organisation
SNA	System of National Accounts
UN	United Nations
WEETAG	Women's Employment, Education, and Training Advisory Group
WEL	Women's Electoral Lobby
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association