

How can I improve my health visiting support of parenting?
The creation of an alongside epistemology through action enquiry

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the
University of the West of England
For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Education, University of the West of England

March 2003

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Abstract

Motivated initially by rights for children, particularly freedom from violence, this thesis explores the enhancement of children's well-being in family life. It shows the creation of a living theory of health visiting as I seek to understand, improve, evaluate and explain my support of developing family relationships. From increasingly collaborative relationships with parents, colleagues, educational researchers and others, alongsideness emerges as an explanation I found appropriate to my parenting, health visiting and researching. Alongsideness, meaning creating and sustaining connections that enhance collaborative enquiry, intends to support the generation of personal theory for application in practice.

The thesis shows how I found theory of human emotional need useful for understanding and raising awareness about the needs of people in relationships and for problem-solving. It illuminates the health-enhancing and educational possibilities of alongsideness for myself, children, their families and the communities they form. It shows how I question personal beliefs arising from my history, as I reflect on my values and attempt to embody them for living as I practise. Self-study enabled me to grapple with the dynamic, multi-dimensions of alongsideness in diverse situations, the dilemmas arising for understanding myself and for clarifying my practice values.

The thesis contributes to a new scholarship of enquiry for health visiting. It shows how values generated and embodied in the process of enquiring can be transformed into living standards of judgement both for evaluating practice and for judging my claims to knowledge. It explains how the generation of living theory through reflective action enquiry has potential for the improvement and explanation of practice.

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Acknowledgements

I found that far from being lonely I have been energised by the collaborative engagement of many fellow travellers. So many people have shown interest and given time to thinking about matters of relevance to my process and contributed to my understanding of being alongside.

I am grateful to the expertise of my supervisors Dr Martin Forrest and Dr Norma Daykin who kept me on track by reading drafts and asking questions. The unstinting generosity of Dr Jack Whitehead, whose stamina in remaining open to the unfolding processes of collaborative enquiry, I found inspirational (see Sources:229).

My 'critical friends', Kate Gammon, Dr Jacqui Hughes, Dr Karen John and Dr Moira Laidlaw, have been integral to my learning through shared experiences and our 'lived' relationships. I am grateful to colleagues Mandy Dams, Jennie Martindale, Caroline Page and Jan Stapleton in the Health Visitor Research Group and Stephanie Bailey and Jenie Rifat for their experienced questioning. The quality of debate and continuing attendance of so many in the Bath Action Research Group is a measure of the value we place in each other's company. Terry Hewitt, Dr Pat D'Arcy, Dr Ben Cunningham and Dr Jean McNiff have been particularly influential since I joined in 1996. I thank John Cudmore for his expertise in creating photographs from video.

I am grateful to the GP Bob Gibbs for his dedication to personal care in general practice and his mediation with the Medical Ethics Committee so that I could begin. I thank all the families I met in the course of this enquiry and believe they can claim to have informed its progress. A number showed interest and allowed me access to their lives, especially 'Marianne', 'Sally', 'Clare' and their families. At home, Kip is untiring in his resilience, optimism and flare with presentation. Graeme and Alistair taught me about real relationships and being a parent and I owe a great deal to my parents and New Zealand family.

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