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Bloody footprints:



learning to be with woman



If it does not track bloody footprints across your desk, it is probably not about women

Catherine Mackinnon 1987.

The Footprints Collective:

The midwives of the Footprints Collective are Emma Baldock, Alison Chandra, Rebecca Davey, Megan Evans, Jane Haverfield, Wendy Jelinek, Leanne Meddemmen, Cate Wotley and Jenny Browne.

Foreword

Process and content dictate the layout of this work. I have chosen purposefully to let the voices of the Footprints Collective midwives speak first. Just as midwifery is about being with woman, so research into midwifery needs to reflect a 'with woman' subject position.

To remain congruent with both midwifery and with feminist poststructuralist work, therefore, the chapters 'Midwives speak...' and 'Midwives stay silent...' come before the chapter, 'Hearing voices'. 'Hearing voices' is not a chapter which is designed solely to describe the research methodology. Its intent is to underpin the work of the thesis and therefore the chapter includes a discussion of the relatedness between the methodology, midwifery and education in these changing times.

Of course, in this post-structural world of ours, the reader is free to choose the order in which she or he reads the chapters. (If the reader desires a more recognisable structure it is probably best to begin with 'Hearing voices'!).

The first three chapters are followed by the chapter called 'Saying is believing'. I have specifically chosen to write what would usually be called the conclusion as a discussion of curriculum areas because it illustrates what I believe the Footprints Collective work can contribute to teaching and learning to be with woman. In 'Saying is believing' I suggest teaching and learning areas which evolved from the insights of the Footprints Collective, to help learners construct themselves as midwives: strong, connected, political beings with voice. This chapter is meant to be an example of content and process for midwifery teaching and learning which reflects our midwifery reality - just one path of many along which we could walk.

Birth and midwifery are both formed and formless. Both deal with the known and the unknown. Women's bloody footprints remind us that we need the tools by which we learn our practical and spiritual craft to be both structured and at the same time, beyond structure.

This work grapples with a complex issue, the construction of midwifery knowledge. The work is limited in the time and space afforded a Degree of Masters in Education thesis. There are many issues raised but not dealt with, or raised and discussed only briefly. Many other topics, which the Collective midwives wrote about or discussed, do not appear at all. In my taking up of the author position for this work I chose which issues to discuss in detail and which to leave for another time and place.

To clearly distinguish the words of the Footprints Collective midwives their memory stories are written in this font.

Contents

| | |
|---|----------|
| Foreword..... | Page 5 |
| Midwives speak... Midwifery: being with woman..... | Page 6 |
| Midwives stay silent... A strange journey: learning to be without woman..... | Page 25 |
| Hearing voices..... | Page 46 |
| Saying is believing: teaching and learning for voice..... | Page 76 |
| References..... | Page 101 |