

Section 4: Mapping the methodological landscape

As I read and explore I feel I have reached a roundabout, with a number of potential directions. But as I go around it again, I wonder if actually this is a spiral moving up into a different level of the journey. The different directions all seem to be moving together on the same path but with slightly different names and purposes. I am now wondering if the spiral is in fact made up of the methods I am using and that it is those that are taking the journey into a different plane...

4: 1 Arts- based methodology

In the context of exploring the art of midwifery with qualified midwives in an education programme, I facilitate them in the use of art, and these midwives are the participants in this study. It is therefore a logical progression to consider how this art may become part of the research and to use arts-based methods as forms of investigation. The aim of an arts-based methodology is to provide:

‘a multisensory exploration of events and behaviours’ (Rapport et al 2005).

The practitioners of art and humanities have consistently explored art in research as part of their profession. Whether dance, music, words, or visual art, researchers have evaluated and tried to understand meanings created. Social scientists also have used visual images to explore society from different standpoints but with some limited acceptance (Pink 2001:7). However, the current explosion of technology enables new developments in the realms of research (e.g. Yardley 2008, Jones 2007, Riley & Manias 2004, Banks 2001, Pink 2001, Rose 2001). Digital developments are creating a new media for social researchers and dance practitioners, as well as those researching music.

The process of the research could take many forms. The visual for example could be researched from the basis of history, from a focus on symbols in the piece or from a technological perspective. The visual could also be used as part of the method of the research, providing the participants with art to view and react to (Harper 2002, Schwartz 1989) or by providing them with the means with which to create their own visual representation (Radley and Taylor 2002). The nature of this

type of research requires extensive reflexivity and the researcher is embedded in the social arena in which she is placed (Pink 2001:80).

There has been limited research currently using creative or arts-based methodologies in relation to midwifery. Midwives drawings have been examined (Barnard & Sinclair 2006) and the use of drawing in pregnant women as a diagnostic tool (Swan-Foster et al 2003). Arts-based pregnancy programmes have been offered (Demecs et al 2010, England and Horowitz 1998) and the use of creative art in education (Hall & Mitchell 2008). Poems have been explored (Hunter 2007), and Lorna Davies (2005) produced a quilt as part of a Masters degree. The use of arts-based methodology will therefore be a relatively new venture.

4:2 *The methodological roundabout*

As indicated above, this study aims to have an holistic approach to the participants, with the use of different visual methodologies. Victoria Foster (2007:364) writes that:

arts-based research can honour the flesh and blood person in the evocative representation of her life.

In writing of *Art/o/graphy*, Springgay et al (2005:897) state that their method is based on:

a belief that arts-based forms of research empower and change the manner through which research is conducted, created and understood.

However I feel there is more to the process of the research journey that is taking place. Peter Reason (1993:273) writes of a need to consider the sacred nature of 'our experience of ourselves and our world' which would involve 'inquiry based on love, beauty, wisdom and engagement'. He continues that 'human inquiry is one path toward creative experience of our world' and states that this includes:

- Experience of the sacred whole
- Representation of that experience in ways that bring beauty
- Understanding and framing of that experience in ways that are not alienated
- Action and engagement to heal ourselves and our planet (p280)

I have chosen to use a qualitative focus to the study to fit in with the intention to explore the whole person. In trying to maintain an holistic approach I am

recognising the sacredness and value of the individual. This study has also been 'intuitive' in that I have been 'feeling the way' and following my responses. Rosemary Anderson (1998:3) has described an 'intuitive' method of research that is 'more inclusive and connected', involving the researcher being deeply embedded in the research and using 'intuitive insight' or 'novel thoughts and ideas; together with insights from non-rational processes' that include 'spontaneous creativity' (p2). She states that:

'intuitive' study involves exploration of subjects that are close to the researcher's heart that: 'claim their enthusiasm, honor [sic] their own life experiences as sources of inspiration, and invite the research process to transform not only their understanding of the topic but their lives (Anderson 2004:308).

I recognise the need here to honour the participants as whole throughout the study.

I considered using Organic methods of research (Clements et al 1998, Curry and Wells 2006) as a framework for my research. This is a:

qualitative methodology which acknowledges that every research study has an inherent and expanding nature which may be realized through subjective and intuitive methods (Clements et al 1998:1).

These methods include a 'sacred' aspect to the study where it involves the researcher being in a place of consciousness of 'other world' domains and to engage in the research practice as a 'sacred' event (Curry & Wells 2006). Though I feel this is a path I am walking I recognise that there is an increased complexity that arises with the wealth of material to be explored.

4:3 Bricolage

I consider the methodological roundabout has reached the path of bricolage. This has been described as:

a complex, dense, reflexive collage-like creation that represents the researchers images, understandings and interpretations of the world or phenomenon. (Denzin & Lincoln 2000:4).

As there are so many parts and elements to the material to be collected for the study and with a desire to maintain a holistic view that brought together the parts in different ways the concept of bricolage attracted me. Bricolage is recognised to be complex, striving to be multi-dimensional, and aiming to go beyond reductionism (Kincheloe 2005). It has also been seen to be able to facilitate greater understanding between clinical practice, research and

education in nursing (Warne and McAndrew 2009) which links with the midwives in this study.

I move on to the next path on the journey...