

## **Section 7: Crafting the bricolage**

*I have come to a junction on the way. There are a number of choices of direction but the question is which way? As I sit down to write this I am aware of the piles of 'stuff' around me: the evidence that I have been exploring and feeling my way in different directions. The messiness reflects the nature of the study: bits and pieces I have gathered on the way that somehow need to be stitched together to make a whole.*

### **7:1 A junction: putting the pieces together**

**1<sup>st</sup> September 2008**

I can't get into the study again. The girls are still around- I can't find the space and the motivation to pick up this study. What is really stopping me? Is it that this is a final hurdle? Is it that I am not sure I can do the 'analysis' or if I want to? There is another hurdle to get over- not a brick wall this time



I have reached the point of having collected considerable material that I need from and about my participants, a group of nine midwives who have been qualified and in practice for some years. They come from areas of working in the community, in midwife led units and in hospital based situations. Some work in teams, some in the more traditional modes of practice. I am at the stage of considering how to explore and engage with the material I have collected how to piece it together to make sense of it and then explore it in relation to my research questions.

**7<sup>th</sup> December 2006**

The process of engaging and interviewing the midwives feels to be an important one if I am going to maintain a holistic focus. Why am I so resistant to opening

up this data? That is such a good question and very astute. Am I fearful of the emotional minefield this may open in me or finding negativity? I know I need space and time to feel what they are feeling and find that place of understanding. These are voices of their deep selves and I am daring to step inside that space. 'Daring' is an interesting word- I 'dare' because I am 'researching' but I know that they are sharing their innermost selves and values. The 'mini-case study' feels more true- the individualistic nature of spirituality is so key to this- I want to portray them as who they are.



The way I have carried out the study stems from my beliefs about the nature of human beings. These are that:

- Each person is an individual
- We are made up of physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual selves that all interact with each other
- Health and wellbeing of these 'parts' are interlinked
- We are social beings in a social world
- We are influenced by personal history, culture, values, beliefs, upbringing, understandings and the social world of which we are part

These beliefs underpin my ontological approach to this study. It leads me to recognise the wider influences that are affecting participants as well as recognising the need for an 'holistic' approach to carrying out the study and interpret the information. I also see that I, as researcher, am influenced by the same sort of issues as those of the participants. I see their individual views and meanings, as well as their 'voice' to be of worth and value and 'sacred'. It is personal to them and they have entrusted it to me.

The material collected includes written questionnaires with some demographic information, verbal discussions and art work, professional history and maps [see Appendix 3]. All these pieces make up the whole and I believe are of worth and value, and are 'sacred' to the individual (Reason 1993). Each part I believe is integral to the study and need to be 'seen' or 'heard'. I am challenged to consider how I am going to interpret this. If I believe in presenting the participants as 'whole' then reducing their words, and interpreting with my voice will be challenging. I agree with Catherine Kohler Reismann (1993:4) that narratives are 'essential meaning-making structures' that should be kept intact as much as possible and the meanings respected by the researcher. However, presenting them as 'whole' mini case studies has ethical implications, as the participants will then be more recognisable to those they work with, and may affect my future working relationship with them. I am also conscious of the view that

Artistically orientated qualitative analysis seek to engage those receiving the work, to connect with them, move them, provoke and stimulate' (Quinn Patton 2002:548)

Complexity also lies in the differing types of material that has been collected, which includes narrative, answers to questions, artistic creations and photo montages. This led to question how each part may be interpreted and then stitched together, or parts selected to create a whole picture.

I need to take time to 'sit' with the material, to consider the different ways it can be interpreted or represented.

**28<sup>th</sup> December 2006**

I have been given this 'space' to have a go at assessing some of the material I have. Even almost to the last moment I am finding reasons not to do this (even writing this...). My resistance is concerning me- what am I afraid of? But I find a quiet space, away from family, and I have it before me. So here I go...



*Meanwhile I am aware of the other pile in the corner of the room that holds my sewing materials and the quilt that is also part of this journey. It is another distinctive part of this mess.*

In tandem with the quilt I have vast amounts of material in distinctive parts that somehow need to be stitched together to make up a whole. This is reflected in the words of Leigh Ausband (2006) who writes that the process of analysis is like piecing a quilt top, a process that she says is organised and can be followed by others. In examining the piles of material I have obtained I recognise the need for reduction in order to produce a meaningful display in this thesis, but I find a resistance in me, as I wish to preserve the 'complete'. Natasha Mauthner & Andrea Doucet (1998:122) write that:

...a profound level of self-awareness is required to begin to capture the perspectives through which we view the world; and it is not easy to grasp the 'unconscious' filters through which we experience the world. In other words, in analysing the data, we are confronted with ourselves and with our own central role in shaping the outcome.

I reflect on this and wonder if my difficulty with considering and starting the correct way of interpretation of the material is to do with self-awareness that is required and even a sense of humility about my role in this. I question my 'right' as a researcher to present the material the respondents have given me. There is a sense of reluctance about making a 'judgment' or 'interpretation'. There is a challenge too about the ability to judge my own biases and to present them. I then move onto the issues of objectivity with my background as a healthcare researcher and the battle I feel over acceptability of this work. In some levels I have moved out of that, but in others I know it is an 'underlying feeling' and whether I can do this at all. As my quilt is 'messy' in comparison to the simplistic approach of Ausband's steps of a study (and a quilt), I realise the interpretation of the material I have will also be 'messy'. I identify with Maura Flannery (2001:630) who writes of this being a:

quilt, pieced together from a variety of different observations obtained from a variety of different perspectives. This quilt is more a patchwork quilt put together to form a whole from the very disparate elements than a formally unified, embroidered quilt

In attempting to decide how to construct an interpretative method for the material I have considered a number of methods available and none 'feel' quite right. I have considered I am on Clark Moustakas' (1990) heuristic path as I explore my reactions through the quilt of all that is taking place. Through the development of the quilt I am

beginning to make connections with the journey of the study and the internal change of my self as researcher. However I recognise this is just a small part of the whole study, and though I am included in the study the midwives are the core participants.

I consider the frameworks of organic methods of research (Clements et al 1998, Curry and Wells 2006), as indicated previously. The steps described by Curry and Wells (2006) for organising and interpreting data have some useful suggestions but do not quite 'fit' with the type of material I have gathered.

Stephanie Springgay et al (2005) write, in their description of A/r/tography as a form of inquiry, of the need for arts based research to have:

...methodologies in their own right, not as extensions of qualitative research. This means moving beyond the use of existing criteria that exists for qualitative research and toward an understanding of interdisciplinary not as a patchwork of different disciplines and methodologies but as a loss, a shift or a rupture where in absence, new course of action unfold (p898).

I can see in the form this study has taken that I am journeying with a form of living inquiry where I have experienced a 'shift' and perhaps 'loss' in my self during the process. In addition there is freedom to create a methodology that 'fits' the study as opposed to trying to 'fit' in with one that is already there. I conclude that I want to create a form of interpretation that will be true to the whole individual and to start and see where this leads.

I start by creating a narrative pen picture of the participant, which includes pictures of the creations they have made. I have made the decision to fully transcribe all the taped information I have, but to edit out my contributions and remove 'excess' words and sounds that detract from the 'flow' of the participants 'voices. In writing the pen pictures I intend to consider the ethical issues of disclosure and try to maintain anonymity as much as possible to protect the individuals.

I think 'jumping out' is what I am looking for in this somewhat intuitive path. I am almost waiting for some revelation of where the next part of the spiral is taking me. I suspect the 'jumping out' will only actually begin when I start the process. Though I have a vague plan of what to do until I begin I am not sure that the answer will be clear. I have considered comparing the pen pictures I create using an intuitive

framework. As mentioned previously Rosemarie Anderson (2000) writes of the researcher being more deeply embedded, using creative responses within intuitive methodology. This comes from a background of transpersonal psychology and is based on hermeneutical inquiry which uses values and assumptions as lenses to explore similar experience in others (p3). Anderson (2004) maintains there are five cycles to the process of the study:

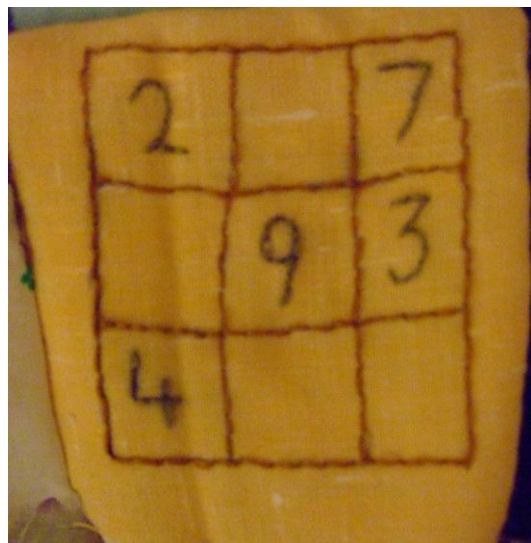
1. Clarification of the topic via creative processes
2. Reflection on the topic and preparation of interpretative lenses
3. Collection of data and preparation of summaries or portraits of participants
4. Preparation of final set of interpretative lenses following engagement with the data
5. Integration of the lenses with theoretical and empirical lenses

I consider I have reached the third stage but I have not fully engaged with the process in the previous stages. This gives concern as to whether I am able to use this process fully and also I am concerned by the prescriptive nature of the instructions ( see also comments by Curry & Wells 2006:83).

10<sup>th</sup> September 2008

I am doing a Sudoku with five separate squares. I appear to have been staring at it for some time then I find one number that slots in. Suddenly, by just inserting one, many more fall into place.

I can apply this to my study. It feels like sometimes I am staring at the same thing and it doesn't work- but I make one step forward and everything else then follows on behind. I somehow feel this is like my decision about a methodology.



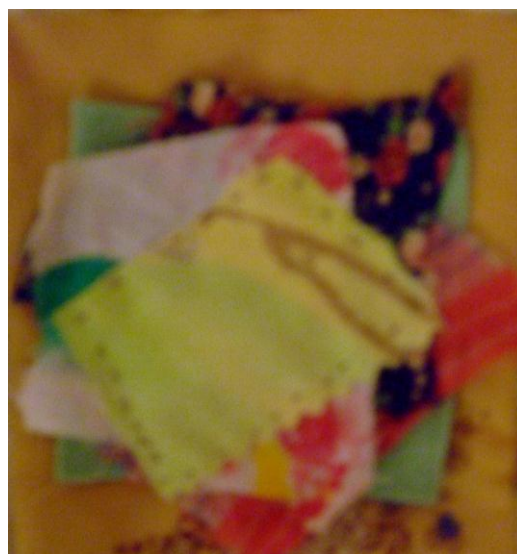
I return to Carl Moustakas (1990:51-52) for information on heuristic research. The steps that are outlined for interpretation that includes making individual



depiction of the participants and then drawing from these a creative synthesis of the experience gives some guidance as to the journey that could be followed. In comparing all these approaches there is similarity at this stage of the study, embedded in slightly differing philosophies. I return to my philosophy of honouring the 'whole' of the individual and the concept of 'bricolage':

**22<sup>nd</sup> May 2008**

The idea of having a quilt methodology that underpins makes so much sense to the analysis of this. Quilts have many layers as well as having many parts. The midwives have many layers and parts as do the data. In some ways these blend together to make the whole, but in others they are distinctive and separate.



I realise then that I am a bricoleur. Yvonna Lincoln & Norman Denzin (2008:5) state that:

If the researcher needs to invent, or piece together, new tools or techniques, he, or she will do so.

I note that through this process I am inventing and creating something new with the information that I have. Joe Kincheloe (2005:342) also writes that the bricoleur:

- Connects object of inquiry to many contexts
- Appreciates the relationship between researcher and researched
- Connects making of meaning to human experience
- Makes use of textual forms of analysis, while not losing sight that human beings are entities around and with which meaning is made
- Builds a bridge between these forms of understanding and action

There is implication here that the bricoleur has an element of freedom in being:

....emancipated from the tyranny of prespecified, intractable research procedures (p340).

This concept of emancipation is in keeping with a feminine form of inquiry that recognises the value and voice of the individual woman and the unlocking of perceptives, experiences and voices that may previously have been marginalised.

In this process of interpretation I need to consider piece by piece, but keeping it as a whole, recognising the difference and similarities between the pen pictures, the different shapes and colours. I also need to find links between them and the connections; to establish where they border, but also the places of dissonance and variety between them. As a quilt maker I also need to consider the layers that will be there. I wrote this entry in my research diary when I attended a seminar presented by visual researcher Sarah Pink:

**12<sup>th</sup> November 2008**

I am interested in her concept of 'entanglement' or 'meshworks'- as we 'mesh' in with each person and in a sociological way- there is not just 'juxtaposition' but overlapping, integration- we don't just 'bounce' off each other but are 'intertwined' sometimes in a small way- but at others in a more intense way even for just a short period of time.



As I consider the quilt metaphor relating the connection of the squares to human 'relational encounters' (Ray & McFadden's 2001:205) I see the use of bricolage methodology as a way of connecting the participants to each other and the question and to me and think this will be more true to the individual and yet to the



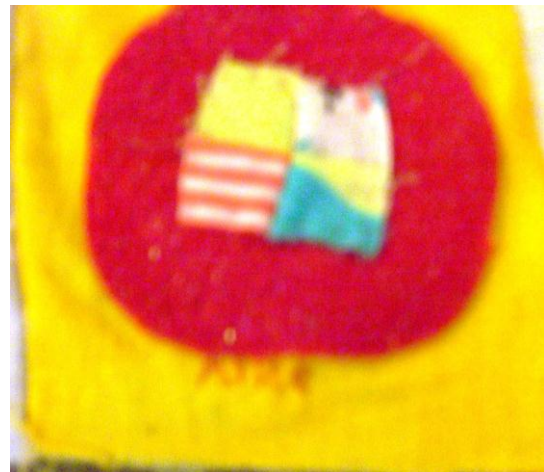
whole. I realise that my study is not just one bricolage, as I have illustrated but nine of them, that will be separate but will bear some similarities; ten, if I am counted in the story.



However, on more reflection, I may be the threads that are weaving this together. The next stage will be in deciding the middle (batting) and crafting the back. I have written in my reflective diary the comments of my friend Alice:

**26<sup>th</sup> May 2008**

*'You will never finish this; it will be finished, but not the end. Like a square is a snapshot, so this as a whole is just a snapshot of a much bigger picture'*



And of course she is so right. The process of my study is a small snapshot of the views of the art of midwifery in the units where the participants work; which is a small part of the art of midwifery in the UK and across the world. In essence the

study, messy and creative, will also be incomplete, and the quilt may remain unfinished.

I move on from this phase of reflection and record this in my diary:

**26<sup>th</sup> November 2008**

I have been working on the interpretation of Pamela's material- truly 'playing' with it. I have made reflections on this on a list of 'phases of interpretation' (see Figure 7:1). The story for her is now complete, and I have made comments as footnotes in ad hoc colours. But I have changed that now to her text being in colours in accordance with a list I have made (see Figure 7:2). I chose the colours quite deliberately in relation to the subjects so that's worth exploring a bit more.



## **Figure 7:1 Phases of interpretation of vignettes**

1. Assemble individual personal history, maps, questionnaires, pictures, and listen to tapes of conversations.

*The aim here is to maintain the individuality of the person and to include as many aspects of their personal selves as possible, while also maintaining confidentiality as much as possible.*

2. Create a Vignette, telling the story of the midwife, using material from the history, questionnaire, and interview information as well as the pictures

*The aim here is to maintain the individual story.*

3. Make comments on the vignette using footnotes and various colours

*By doing this I hoped to begin establishing some links. I started by using ad hoc colours for my comments, but these are not helpful to establish the links*

4. Change the text into columns- the story on the left with my comments on the right  
*I had further hoped this would enable development of the links further. However this felt too linear and not true to the methods I am using.*

5. Highlight the comments made by the participant in different colours using a framework for an holistic approach

*Though this feels more appropriate to the methods it still feels very linear.*

6. Create a bricolage/ text quilt using the highlighted statements in a spiral around a central section of her name, similar to the construction of the quilt I am making.

*This feels like a logical progression to develop a quilt-like framework. When mapping this against the individuals I hope this will show where the differences and the sameness is as well as being true to the methodology.*

7. The final stage is to return to the vignette and establish key words or phrases from the text and these would become the frame of the text quilt by being placed on a continuum with the spiral until the frame is complete

*To do this successfully requires knowing how many spaces are needed to be filled. Following this there needs to be choice between some of the words in order to fill the spaces and to have those that appear to be most significant to that participant.*

Figure 7:2 ***Colours for the statements in interpretation***

<b>Physical</b> – e.g. actions, environment,	<b>Red</b>
<b>Emotional-</b> e.g. feelings	<b>Pink</b>
<b>Personal History-</b> e.g. past story	<b>Brown</b>
<b>Professional History</b> - e.g. own training	<b>Dark Blue</b>
<b>Spiritual-</b> e.g. meaning and purpose, religious, significant issues	<b>Purple</b>
<b>Sociological-</b> e.g. family influences, friendships	<b>Orange</b>
<b>Professional issues-</b> e.g. current midwifery practice	<b>Light Blue</b>
<b>Education</b> – e.g. student midwives, doctors	<b>Green</b>

The colours mentioned I have chosen for varying reasons. Light blue, for example is often used in relation to midwives logos in the UK, so I chose that to represent professional issues. Where they discuss their past professional history, I just chose a darker blue and brown to represent personal history. The choice of red for physical issues has connotations of this often being a colour to represent 'danger'. This may be a cultural view but one that appears to be widespread as 'red' appears to come from a Sanskrit word ruhira that means 'blood' (Gage 1999:110). However Gage also suggests that there may be a biological basis to viewing colour as 'colour effective vision is nearly a hundred times more common among white men than among white females' (p36). Wassily Kandinsky (1977:24) also suggests that there are different types of red:

A warm red will prove exciting, another shade of red will cause pain or disgust through association with running blood (p24)

The connotations of pink representing the feminine with the links with emotion are also a social construction:

Pink was the most obviously feminine colour of all those that appeared in the 1950s domestic interior. It made an appearance in a wide range of shades - from rose pink to salmon pink to 'shocking' pink...The use of pink in the home emphasised the essential femininity of girls and women and showed daughters that their mothers both understood this and wished them to realise the distinctiveness of their gender as well (Sparke 1995: 196-7)

Orange as a representation of social aspects and green for education were chosen without much thought. Purple was chosen to represent spirituality as this is used in religious ceremonies and as a representation of royalty.

I continue in my diary:

26<sup>th</sup> November 2008

But it all still seemed quite linear so now I have decided to make a bricolage/quilt for her of the statements. Problem is there is so much and I have to think what the key statements here are? I put them into coloured text boxes and continued the spiral around the 'quilt' as they have been extracted from the text until the sheet is complete. I suppose this is true to my quilt method in that with my making I am choosing the image that represents the

whole. Here I am just choosing words. Some of the statements are in mixed colours too to reflect the different things she is talking about.



In moving through the process I have changed the linear state of the vignette into a visual representation of the individual (see next page: Fig 7:3). It thus gives a different dimension to representation. The next steps will involve exploring the different ways that the quilts can meet together and be interpreted.

The intention will be to ask the participants to read the individual vignettes to establish whether this is who they perceive themselves to be and whether the text I have created is meaningful to them. I recognise the potential that:

The meaning of a text is always meaning to someone (Kohler Reissman 1993:15).

There is a possibility that the pen pictures will not resonate with them, and I will need to explore what to do in that situation. I will also send them a copy of the individual text quilts to keep but also to establish how they feel about being portrayed in this way, and how they respond to the representations of meanings elicited.

*I continue on this path following a journey to I am not sure where, but still going somewhere...*



