# The essence of the art of a midwife: holistic, multidimensional meanings and experiences explored through creative inquiry

A dissertation submitted to the University of the West of England in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Education

by

Jennifer Susan Hall

Faculty of Arts, Creative Industries and Education,
University of the West of England

March 2012

## Acknowledgments

In the process of the five years of this study there have been a considerable number of people who have walked along the path with me, supporting in different ways, as only individuals can. I apologise if I miss anyone from this list, but if I do, please recognise that I appreciated you.

Thanks firstly must go to those who have supervised me over the EdD; Martin Ashley and Saville Kushner, who gave me the opportunity to start the programme; Jacky Brine, who challenged and supported as my original Director of Studies. But primarily Lynn Raphael-Reed, who has sat alongside me through some difficult times while gently advising and guiding and allowing me the freedom to explore and experiment. You have been a true mentor and I hope to follow your example. Thank you.

Thanks go to the midwives who were prepared to share their stories and 'play' along with me in the context of the study. I am grateful for your willingness to be so open. In doing so you have revealed the reality of being a midwife in the NHS today, which, hopefully maybe of help to others.

To my EdD cohort, especially, Fiona, Lynn, Faye, Richard and Alan and all the others who have been stimulating 'co-eddies', have challenged and inspired and have made me laugh! Thank you for the fun.

To my work colleagues, who have been incredibly patient and supportive and put up with extra work load from me at times: I owe you.

To my friends who have put up with seeing me less and having me less 'with it': thanks for being there and helping me through.

To Becky Reed and The Practising Midwife journal: special thanks to you for loaning the photos for this study.

To my daughters, who have grown up considerably in the time of this thesis, who have lived with the mess, more take-aways and have not understood what this is all about. I hope one day you will read it and see that you have been part of this story,

and have impacted on it. I am sorry for being so distracted at times, but you are always in my heart.

Finally, to my husband Mark: you know this study is yours too, that you have lived it alongside me and have put up with late night working, more house work than you should be doing, extra running around with the children, and no dining room for years! I could not have done this without you and I truly love you and appreciate who you are.

This work is dedicated to my parents, Ken and Maggie, who have had some tough times over the past few years. I hope you are proud of me.

# **Table of Contents**

The front of the quilt		1	
Section1: Introduction	to the journey:	2	
The research question	ns: 3		
Figure 1: Timeline for	the process of the s	tudy 4	
Section 2: The roots of	my enquiry: 5		
2:1 Personal history:			
2:2 Midwifery profess	ionalism - a short hi	story: 7	
2:3 Midwifery education	on - a short history:	8	
2:4 Back to the journe	ey before the journey	y 13	
2:5 The ontological bacreative art	asis of the study: ho 15	listic principles	s, spirituality and
2:5:1 Holism ′	15		
2:5:2 Spirituality	17		
2:5:3 Creativity	19		
Section 3: Grounding t	he study 21		
3:1 Being a midwife	21		
3:2 The art of midwife	ery 22		
3:3 Holistic care and	l midwifery 25		
3:4 Education for hol	istic care and artist	ry 26	
3:5 Creativity and mid	dwifery education 2	7	
3:6 Knowledges of th	ne research 27		
3:7 Considering valid	lity 31		

```
Section 4: Mapping the methodological landscape 34
  4: 1 Arts- based methodology
  4:2 The methodological roundabout 36
Section 5: The journey unfolding 38
  5:1 The steps I have taken 38
  5:2 Ethical considerations 38
  5:3 Changing directions
  Figure 5:1 Study pictures 43
  Figure 5: 2 Study Words describing the meaning of midwifery 44
Section 6: Quilting as reflexive response 45
  6:1 Myself of the path 45
Section 7: Crafting the bricolage 54
  7:1 A junction: putting the pieces together 54
 Figure 7:1 Phases of interpretation of vignettes 64
 Figure 7:2 Colours for the statements in interpretation 65
 Figure 7:3 Text quilt 67a
Section 8: Multi-dimensional meanings of the essence of being a
midwife
  8.1 Who are the participants? 68
  Table 1: Details about the midwife participants from questionnaire 69
  8.2 The research questions 70
  8:3 Mapping the text quilts 71
  Figure 8:1 Text quilts
                             71
```

```
8:3:1 Pamela's quilt
                          73
  Figure 8:2: Pamela- Text quilt Opposites 74
  Figure 8:3 Pairing of words
                                  75
  Figure 8:4 Pamela text quilt interpretation squares 79
  8:3:2 Looking at all four text quilts together 84
  Figure 8:5 Kerry's text quilt from different angles 86
  8:3:3 Asking the midwives their views 87
8: 4 Thematic analysis: meanings of being a midwife 88
    8:4:1 The essence of a midwife 89
          Personal significance 89
          The type of midwife you are 92
          Importance of the impact of the role 95
     8:4:2 The art of practice 99
          Holistic and individualised care 99
          A belief in normality
                                 101
    8:4:3 The physical aspects of midwifery 104
         Personal physical reactions 104
         Physical Working environment 107
         Physical aspects of caring 118
        Time
               121
    8:4:4 Psychological and emotional aspects of midwifery 123
        Positive emotions in midwifery 123
        Negative emotions in midwifery 124
        Need for emotional support 128
        Meeting emotional needs of women 132
```

```
8:4:5 Spiritual aspects of being a midwife 134
         The midwifery role as spiritual 134
         Spiritual care 136
          Instinct/intuition 137
          Spiritual nature of birth 144
    8:4:6 Social context of midwifery 146
           Balancing personal relationships 146
           The importance of relationships with women 150
           Trust and lies 159
8: 5 Using creative inquiry 162
     8:5:1 Looking at pictures 162
     8:5:2 Interpreting the first pictures 162
   Figure 8:6 Looking at the first pictures 163
           Colour 164
            Images 164
  Figure 8:7 The participants explanation of the first pictures 165
      8:5:3 Interpreting the second interview pictures 166
     Figure 8:8 Pictures from the second interviews 167
         Creating the picture 169
          Choosing the pictures 169
          Centralising the woman 171
          Talking about practice 171
  Figure 8:9: The midwives talking about the second pictures 172
         Examining the pictures 185
    8:5:4 The education session 186
            Views of the session 186
```

#### Impact of the session 188

### Section 9: Discussing the findings 192

9:1 Meaning of being a midwife 192

Midwifery as personal identity 192

Importance of being a midwife to them 194

Division in the profession 196

#### 9:2 Art of practice 196

9:2:1 Physical demands of being midwives 197

**Working Environment 198** 

Physical aspects of care 199

**Time 200** 

9:2:2 Psychological and Emotional 200

**Emotional responses 200** 

Need for support 202

9:2:3 Spiritual issues 203

Spiritual care 203

Intuition. 204

Significance of birth 205

9:2:4 Social issues 206

**Personal relationships 206** 

Relationships with women 207

Public health role 208

Partner relationship 208

Mothering by midwives 209

Trust and lies 209

9:3 Final Statement 210

```
Section 10: Finishing the quilt 212
   10:1 The essence of a Midwife 212
    10:2 The art of practice 212
    10:3 The holistic aspects of midwifery 212
          10:3:1 Physical aspects 212
          10:3:2 Psychological and Emotional aspects 213
          10:3:3 Spiritual aspects 213
         10:3:4 Social context of midwifery 213
    10:4 Use of creative inquiry 213
         10:4:1The use of multidimensional 'text quilts' 213
         10:4:2 Using creative methods 214
         10:4:3 Discussing the use of art 215
    10:5 Reaching some kind of end 215
    10:6 Finishing the quilt
    10:7 Sending the quilt out to the world 220
 The back of the quilt
                          224
References
                 225
```

Appendix

249