TRAUMA, RELATIONAL TRUST AND THE EFFECTS ON THE MIDWIFE

Irene Calvert

A thesis presented in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Health and Social Sciences
Massey University
Palmerston North
New Zealand
December 2011
Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my husband Gordon for all his love, listening skills, support and encouragement throughout this project. His faith that I would one day complete this thesis has been invaluable in getting me there.

To my family Sue, Joanna, Ian and Karin who have also believed in my ability to complete this study. They have listened to my concerns and in various ways provided me with the support to achieve my goal. I wish to express my heartfelt thanks and gratitude.

To my mam who was an ardent advocate for woman’s rights and has been interested and encouraged me with this project from its inception. Unfortunately she died in October 2011 just before the completion of this project.

Many thanks to my supervisors Associate Professor Dr Cheryl Benn and Dr Suzanne Phibbs who have guided me through this study sharing their knowledge and expertise in their particular fields.

When I really felt I could not carrying on writing about trauma any longer I wish to thank my twin brother Les, my colleague Chris, my daughter Sue and daughter-in-law Karin for proof reading a chapter each and telling me I was too near the end to give up.

My thanks to Judith McAra-Couper for her encouragement to get this study finished not only for the participants and myself but for the profession.

Thanks also to Lindsey, Norma and Sally whose encouragement has been invaluable.
Throughout this study I have received support and encouragement from many people who are too numerous to mention. To each of you I wish to express my sincere thanks particularly to my midwifery colleagues and friends.

I appreciate the financial help provided from the Wellington Region NZCOM education fund that enabled me to present at conferences, many thanks.

Thanks also to the Joan Donley Research Foundation for their assistance to present a paper at their conferences.

My thanks to the staff of Massey University library who provide a fantastic service.

Finally, but most importantly, I wish to thank the 16 participating midwives for trusting me with their stories and making this research possible.
Abstract
This qualitative thesis uses a method of narrative research to explore the effects of a traumatic practice experience on the 16 midwives interviewed for this project. It is an investigation of relationships at play influenced by power games and their consequences creating conflict. The issues of partnership and autonomous midwifery practice are the key drivers that make New Zealand midwives more likely to be blamed and their competence in practice challenged. Partnership negates domination for collaboration and as a result challenges the beliefs of the dominant groups of medicine and management. Midwives questioned why when they had coped with similar situations in the past was this incident ‘the straw that broke the camels back’. The investigation uncovers that the trauma experienced was prolonged due to a breakdown of relational trust in organisations, management, colleagues, women and self. The breach of trust altered the meaning of the traumatic event for the midwives which impacted on their personal and professional identities creating biographical disruption and exacerbating the initial stress reaction. Loss of personal and professional identities elicited grief which in most cases was disenfranchised and therefore not supported. Grief associated with maternal death was supported. As a result of the increase of emotional stress some of the midwives suffered illness such as anxiety, post traumatic stress disorder and chronic back pain implying that the aetiology of the disease could be emotions. These illnesses experienced by the midwives contributed to workforce attrition.

Midwifery has an oral history whereby relationships are built and experiences shared, making narrative research an ideal method for this personal topic. The analysis of the study data draws upon the narrative concepts of Margaret Somers (1994), Arthur Frank (2005) and Davis and Harre (1990) and Bourdieu (1982) theory of economic practice to facilitate an understanding of the effects of these traumatic practice experiences for the midwife participants. Midwives in New Zealand are legally required to provide care to childbearing women using a partnership model of care based on trust and mutual respect (MCNZ, 2004). Consideration was given to the influence of the model on the effects experienced by
the midwives. Substantive chapters explore the effects of biographical disruption, grief, support, violence in the workplace, destroyed relationships and disrupted lives, trust and dysfunctional organisations.

In the text gathered from this study I have developed two theoretical models; one explains how the trauma is exacerbated rather than supported; the other outlines the effects of the trauma. The study adds to the literature by providing evidence that biographical disruption occurring as a result of a traumatic practice experience can lead to a chronic illness. My research has addressed gaps in midwifery, biographical disruption, grief, workplace violence and trauma literature.
# Table of Contents

**Acknowledgements** ....................................................................................... ii

**Abstract** ......................................................................................................... iv

**Chapter One** .................................................................................................. 6

- Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 6
- Assumptions of the study .................................................................................................... 7
- Aim of the Study ................................................................................................................. 8
- Objectives of the study ........................................................................................................ 8
- Background to the Study ..................................................................................................... 8
- A traumatic practice experience ........................................................................................ 11
- History of Midwifery in New Zealand since 1990 ........................................................... 12
- The professional midwife ................................................................................................. 14
- Boundary issues leading to violence in the relationship ................................................... 16
- Autonomous midwifery practice ....................................................................................... 17
- Stress associated with autonomous midwifery practice .................................................... 20
- Overview of the study ....................................................................................................... 22

**Chapter Two: Exploring the Literature.** .................................................. 26

- Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 26
- Trauma a general area of exploration ............................................................................... 27
- Overview of carers as victims of trauma .......................................................................... 30
- Women’s experiences of childbirth ................................................................................ 30
- Midwives as carers ............................................................................................................ 33
- Police and Firefighters ...................................................................................................... 37
- Nurses ............................................................................................................................... 40
- Paramedics ......................................................................................................................... 42
- General Practitioners ......................................................................................................... 43
- Psychologists ..................................................................................................................... 44
- Overview of the effects of trauma .................................................................................... 45
- Talking .............................................................................................................................. 47
Chapter Three: Methodology and method

Introduction

Narrative Research

Dialogical Research (Narrotology)

Four Dimensions of Narrativity

Dialogical Listening

Theory of Economic Practice – Pierre Bourdieu

Positioning

Researching the effects of a traumatic practice experience on the midwife: The method

Participant Recruitment

Narrative interviews for data collection

Transcription

Analysis of the Data

Credibility and Trustworthiness

Dissemination of the research

Ethical considerations

Potential harm to researcher

Potential harm to participants

Benefits to participants

Overview of how the analysis was undertaken

Summary

Chapter Four: The whistleblower, the advocate, and the forces against change

Introduction

Susie: The Whistleblower

Judy: The Advocate

Summary
Chapter Five: Traumatic Practice Events Leading to Biographical Disruption ................................................................. 116

Introduction ................................................................................................................................................................. 116
Initial stress reaction to trauma ....................................................................................................................................... 117
Biographical Disruption ............................................................................................................................................... 118
Mertle ............................................................................................................................................................................. 119
  Mertle: Disruptive event - discrimination .................................................................................................................. 120
  Mertle’s Disruptive event - congenital abnormalities ............................................................................................... 125
  Mertle’s Disruptive Event – neonatal deaths ............................................................................................................ 126
  Mertle’s Disruptive event – A complaint .................................................................................................................. 126
Meaning making and the need for preparation to cope with trauma .............................................................................. 131
The disruptive effects of emotions and the need for repair ............................................................................................ 134
Biographical disruption leading to chronic illness ......................................................................................................... 139
Summary ............................................................................................................................................................................ 145

Chapter Six: Trauma, Loss and Grief in the Workplace ................. 146

Introduction ................................................................................................................................................................. 146
Margaret ......................................................................................................................................................................... 147
Wendy ............................................................................................................................................................................ 150
Anita ................................................................................................................................................................................ 156
Support ............................................................................................................................................................................ 162
Lack of Support ........................................................................................................................................................... 165
Midwives perceived support needs ................................................................................................................................... 171
Risk management debriefing ....................................................................................................................................... 172
Psychological Debriefing .............................................................................................................................................. 174
Professional Supervision .............................................................................................................................................. 177
Summary ............................................................................................................................................................................ 180

Chapter Seven: Destroyed relationships – Disrupted lives .......... 181

Introduction ................................................................................................................................................................. 181
Bobby ............................................................................................................................................................................. 182
Violence in the Workplace ............................................................................................................................................ 185
The increase of violence in midwifery ................................................................. 189
The Spiral of Complaints ...................................................................................... 192
Conflicting paradigms .......................................................................................... 193
Rumour and Gossip ............................................................................................... 196
Emma ..................................................................................................................... 197
Silencing .................................................................................................................. 199
Caroline .................................................................................................................. 199
Portia ....................................................................................................................... 201
Harming as a result of the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) complaint process ................................................................. 207
Trust and disrupted lives ....................................................................................... 209
Susan ....................................................................................................................... 210
Summary .................................................................................................................. 216

Chapter Eight: The hidden side of trauma ......................................................... 218
Introduction ............................................................................................................. 218
Louise ...................................................................................................................... 219
Lillie ......................................................................................................................... 232
The Immigrants – Louise and Lillie ........................................................................ 243
Summary .................................................................................................................. 245

Chapter Nine: Trust and Dysfunctional Organisations ...................................... 247
Introduction ............................................................................................................. 247
Trust in Health Care ............................................................................................... 248
  Impersonal trust .................................................................................................... 249
  Interpersonal trust ................................................................................................ 252
Trusting your caregivers ....................................................................................... 258
Dysfunctional Workplace/Organisations .............................................................. 260
Counterproductive behaviour ............................................................................... 265
The effects of a traumatic practice experience .................................................... 271
Summary .................................................................................................................. 274
Chapter Ten: The effects of a traumatic practice experience, recommendations and conclusion. .......................................................... 275

Introduction..................................................................................................................... 275

The effects of a traumatic practice experience ............................................................... 276

An overview of relational trust ....................................................................................... 278

Organisational breaches of trust.............................................................................. 279

Management breaches of trust................................................................................ 280

Collegial breaches of trust ...................................................................................... 281

Women and breaches of trust.................................................................................. 282

Limitations of the study .................................................................................................. 283

Implications for practice, education and research ........................................................... 285

Further research .............................................................................................................. 287

Conclusion ...................................................................................................................... 288

List of appendices............................................................................................................. 290

Appendix A.......................................................................................................................... 291

Appendix B.......................................................................................................................... 292

Appendix C.......................................................................................................................... 293

Appendix D.......................................................................................................................... 294

Appendix E.......................................................................................................................... 298

Appendix F.......................................................................................................................... 299

Appendix G.......................................................................................................................... 301

Appendix H.......................................................................................................................... 302

Reference List.................................................................................................................... 303

List of Figures.................................................................................................................... 359