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Pre-publication proof for UDORA. The images are crucially important for a proper understanding of this text, so I would strongly urge readers to refer to the final print version.

CHAPTER 6

WORKING ACROSS DISCIPLINES: USING VISUAL METHODS IN PARTICIPATORY FRAMEWORKS

Susan Hogan

Introduction

The Birth Project is a sophisticated research project which seeks to draw together applied practice and theoretical scholarship in an interdisciplinary framework using visual methods. The project is concerned to give those connected with birth the opportunity to make art in a variety of formats. Obstetricians, midwives, doulas, birth-partners and new mothers have been given the opportunity to explore their experiences of compassion fatigue, stress, birth suffering and post-natal readjustments using the arts: phototherapy, photo-diaries and art elicitation in groups, which then joined together in ‘mutual recovery’ events in which perspectives have been shared, primarily through elucidation of the art works produced. Narratives from interviews have also been combined into a theatre piece (viewed by all participants). Films have also been edited to produce narrative sequences which explore the key research questions are also a major output.

This project challenges the usual dichotomy between expert healer and patient and acknowledges that all are subject to different stresses. Furthermore, hospital protocols, coupled with the unpredictability of birthing itself, can override what women want and expect in terms of a birth experience, leaving some women frankly in shock, which then can have a knock-on effect on infant development. The arts have been used to interrogate this complex topic.

Key Impacts for the project are as follows:

- To shape and draw attention to new approaches to policy formulation and service delivery
- To bring about a radical shift in how communities of people with mental health difficulties, informal carers and health, social care and adult education personnel can connect more creatively to advance mutual recovery
- To play a significant role in addressing the problem of mental health and well-being issues and so help restore the humanity to healthcare” (online at <http://www.derby.ac.uk/media/derbyacuk/contentassets/documents/ehs/collegeofeducation/centrefofsocietyreligionandbelief/Creative-Practice-as-Mutual-Recovery.pdf>)

To achieve this required working across disciplines. However, as this chapter explores, working across disciplines is fraught with complexity. Contrasting epistemologies and consequently different ideas about how to judge knowledge claims, lie at the heart of this. These competing knowledge claims in turn affect how we conduct the research. So, methodology is concerned with both the underlying

principles and the rules which determine how to proceed with the enquiry. These rules often have disciplinary perspectives, including perspectives on visual methods. Methodology includes the rhetoric of the study, (the tone and tenor of projects), and this represents and reflects a complex range of values and sensitivities of the researcher, embedded in methodological assertions and underpinnings which might not be explicit.

Methodological orientations (often resulting in methods being implemented in particular ways in particular disciplines) have consequences for notions of ‘validity’, the appropriate role and ethical positioning of the researcher. Moreover, the translation of epistemological position into methodology is not always seamless and disciplinary norms invariably feature in that translation. Furthermore, some methodological models of working may fit certain disciplinary endeavours better than others; moving a method developed in community development contexts to a broadly sociological endeavour, for example, may provoke unforeseen tensions, or indeed a loosening of customary constraints; it will certainly provoke epistemological questioning as to where the locus of power should be located, or to what extent outputs should be co-constructed by researchers and participants and how this can be achieved.

The use of the arts in research adds its own complexity, especially in relation to participatory ideals. Artists enable communities of people to think about themselves in new ways, and are important in bringing people together, resulting in enhanced social-networking as well as the production of art works which are sometimes transient. There is a tightrope to walk between not constraining the creativity of the artists, while ensuring that they do not exploit a particular community or context; the community is not merely the subject matter for the artist to be

manipulated for their benefit in the development of their portfolio (Hogan et al. 2015 & Hogan 2015). There may be tensions between participatory expression and aesthetic ideals, or between different notions of appropriate display or between different communicative strategies. Different methodological frameworks have different views about what constitutes valid research ‘outputs’. Modes of exposition are inherently political. The locus of power and control in research in relation to disciplinary norms and methodological orientations will receive further attention with reference to research outcomes and dissemination.

New developments are actively exploring the synergies between disciplines and how they can enrich qualitative research. Below I examine the use of arts-based social science methods, which are increasingly being employed. These include: participatory arts, art elicitation using techniques from art therapy, re-enactment phototherapy, and also monologues, dance, art installation, poetic and theatrical performance; such work provides new ways of engaging audiences, exploring research questions and enabling academic research to have impact in the world. The chapter will explore the nature of interdisciplinary and what visual methods can contribute in particular. The section on the *ways* visual methods contribute to research projects will also give examples from The Birth Project. Since there is some confusion about the nature of interdisciplinary research, the chapter will explore and define key concepts, before moving on to a detailed discussion about the use of film within The Birth Project.

Interdisciplinarity

Disciplines establish a body of knowledge about a subject, have methods to enquire about it, and theories to help order that knowledge. Disciplines are constantly

generating new knowledge and new theories. They are relatively self-contained, having their own communities of experts and specialist trainings. Krishnan breaks this down further pointing out defining characteristics including: 1) that disciplines have particular *objects* in mind as worthy of research; 2) they develop specialist knowledge *which may be esoteric*; 3) disciplines develop theories and concepts which help *to organise this specialist knowledge*; 4) disciplines develop specialist language, or use language in *very specific ways* in relation to a research subject; 5) they develop methods; 6) there is an institutional manifestation of some kind (2009 p.9). As well as being predisposed to approach questions in particular ways, results are produced ‘which are acceptable to particular audiences for validation and recognition’ (Whitley 1984: 21). Indeed, the results produced may not communicate beyond the specialist community of interest. Visual methods can be particularly useful in traversing such conceptual divides between disciplinary communities. The notion of the discourse is helpful here, as:

a particular way of talking (and writing and thinking). A discourse involves certain shared assumptions which appear in the formulations that characterise it. The discourse of common sense is quite distinct, for instance, from the discourse of modern physics, and some of the formulations of the one may be expected to conflict with the formulations of the other. Ideology is *inscribed* in discourse in the sense that it is literally written or spoken *in it*; it is not a separate element which exists independently in some free-floating realm of ‘ideas’ and is subsequently embodied in words, but a way of thinking, speaking, experiencing (Belsey 1980: 5).

However, disciplinary discourses are not equally mutually impermeable, nor are all disciplines intellectually coherent, or stable.¹ Krishnan (2009 p.5) notes that disciplines continuously change and ‘are themselves fragmented and heterogeneous’ and that they ‘interact with other disciplines in many complex ways’. English Literature, for example, is noted to ‘lack both a unifying theoretical paradigm or method and a definable stable object of research, but it still passes as an academic discipline’ (Krishnan 2009 p.10). Some disciplines are themselves interdisciplinary, such as art therapy, which grew as an attempt to combine insights from art practice with ideas about psychological expression, driven forward initially by artists who had read about psychology and anthropology, or undergone psychoanalysis, or were hired by psychiatrists to form part of psychiatric teams (Hogan 2001). Within the discipline of art therapy as a whole, knowledge claims are made which are rather at odds with each other, if not wholly antithetical, and many disciplines live with such incongruities - or to put it another way, with paradigms at odds with one another. It may be that inhabiting conflicting paradigms is more problematic on some occasions for interdisciplinary endeavour, than being located in different disciplines (recall again Belsey’s point about ideology as inscribed in discourse).

Some commentators suggest that the social sciences could be refreshed by adopting interdisciplinary approaches ‘which would help in overcoming artificial disciplinary boundaries, parochialism and narrow-mindedness and would thus improve the overall quality of social science research’ (Krishnan 2009b: 2). Interdisciplinary research is often justified because it gives rise to,

...a process of answering a question, solving a problem, or addressing a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline

and draws on disciplinary perspectives and integrates their insights to produce a more comprehensive understanding or cognitive advancement (Repko 2008:12).

Interdisciplinarity had been described as,

a mode of research by teams or individuals that integrates information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, and/or theories from two or more disciplines or bodies of specialized knowledge to advance fundamental understanding or to solve problems whose solutions are beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice (U.S. National Academy of Sciences, 2005 p.39).

It is a notion of 'integration' which distinguishes interdisciplinary research from a mere dialogue between disciplines, though some researchers use the term in this way (Moran 2001 p.16). A dialogue from different disciplinary perspectives aimed at elucidating a phenomena could become an interdisciplinary method, if it were then incorporated as a research method.

It is obvious from the above definition, that the forms interdisciplinary can take must therefore be varied. When working in interdisciplinary teams, because of the specialised nature of disciplines, we cannot assume that individuals from different disciplines are using language in the same way, as Belsey points out in her discussion of discourses above. So, to take the example of 'participatory research', which will be discussed further, it is likely that researchers within interdisciplinary teams will have

different ideas as to how *participation* should be translated into practice. As each discipline will be predisposed to tackle problems in a certain way, even when research teams agree a primary *modus operandi* such as participatory research, there may be quite different expectations within such teams as to how this will be translated into methods for applied research.

The Main Modes of Working Across Disciplines

Krishnan identifies five main modes of interdisciplinary exchange. It is perhaps helpful to give a précis of these to help teams think about how they stand in relation to them and their potential pitfalls and to avoid muddled thinking about what interdisciplinary means.

1. Multidisciplinarity

Multidisciplinary approaches are those in which different disciplinary components are executed independently and then joined outwardly through editorial links; in multidisciplinary research ‘each separately authored component could stand in isolation from the others’ (Rossini & Porter 1984 p. 27). Krishnan puts it thus,

‘In multidisciplinary research a team of researchers works towards a common aim or on a common problem, but each represented discipline works independently or in sequence. The contributions of the disciplines are purely complementary to the final product, which may just consist of a compilation of disciplinary research on a common theme or object. Alternatively, this collaboration may result in an integrated research product that synthesizes the disciplinary perspectives into a coherent picture. If it does, it means that the synthesis is carried out as a final step by the principal

investigator(s), possibly without any exchange between the disciplines concerned' (Krishnan 2009b p.5).

Risks: Krishnan notes that this model of working puts a lot of pressure on the principal researcher to draw together the different components. There is also the risk of misinterpretation and misrepresentation of research data, so some liaison with teams is essential to solicit feedback on the final work done. Positive aspects include that different aspects of a problem can be interrogated from different perspectives, but nuanced findings could be overridden in the final analysis. This model may be seen to be at odds with participatory ideals, since the final analysis may be completed by one researcher who makes executive decisions about what is relevant. It is also hard for the principal researcher to always have a full grasp of all the disciplines involved. If images are being used, a high-degree of visual literacy is required to prevent the juxtapositioning of images in certain ways as to create unforeseen and unintended narratives. Those used to working visually are acutely aware that the way images are placed in relation to each other can have an impact on the way we assimilate them. Curating is a specialist activity sensitised to meaning making, including a sense of the spectator in the space. In a participatory model (such as participatory action research: PAR) this meaning making should be influenced by the participants. On a pragmatic level, in applied research, if a PAR model is being envisaged in a multidisciplinary frame, then it would need to be a contained and finished piece of work synthesised by the participatory group and then handed over in order to retain its integrity. Krishnan notes that projects in which a summary of disciplinary perspectives is the aim are easier than those which attempt to produce an 'integrated research product that can take into account the various disciplinary perspectives on a give problem' which is extremely challenging.

This description is focussed on a hierarchical incorporation of different approaches without overarching synthesis; but when there is an emphasis on disciplines collaborating to develop a common perspective Krishnan calls this inter-disciplinarity or supradisciplinarity, below (Krishnan 2009b pp.7-8).

2. Transdisciplinarity

Transdisciplinary is a term which seems to be used differently by different researchers, so it a term to treat with caution.

Rossini & Porter suggest it refers to research that encompasses a number of separate disciplines working together to create an overarching paradigm. (Rossini & Porter 1984 p. 27). Lattuca's (2001:113-18) understanding of transdisciplinarity is that it has the aim of applying a concept or method across disciplinary domains 'as to unify those domains - as in socio-biology...' (Holland 2014 p. 3). Seek to understand how authors are defining this term, and define it yourself if you are using it.

Krishnan suggests that transdisciplinary research is always conducted with non-academic partners who are involved in the research process, such as NGOs. These collaborators are actually stakeholders in the results of the research. Krishnan describes it like this:

Unlike crossdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research, transdisciplinary research is not derived from already existing disciplines or the research agendas of disciplines, but is driven by real-world problems and usually entails the opportunistic selection and use of research methods according to whatever 'fits' the problem (Krishnan 2009b p.6).

Risks: Krishnan suggest that such research can be undervalued and lack prestige. Furthermore, academic collaborators may not determine the final aims of the research and could find themselves in a lesser role as a service provider. This emphasis on real world issues might work very well with a participatory research model, in which a community, or communities of interest, may lead the research process. There would seem to be rich opportunities for the use of visual methods and visual modes of dissemination.

3. Crossdisciplinarity (borrowing knowledge and methods) is the application of methods developed in one discipline to the study of phenomena in a different discipline. How can game theory (from mathematics), for example, help a political scientist understand political institutions?

Risks: Krishnan notes that researchers run the risk of being accused of dilettantism, in applying methods they may not completely understand (2009 p.2). Secondly, he notes that this is an approach which must be sensitively handled, otherwise it can seem imperialistic, as areas of knowledge from one discipline are ‘appropriated’ by another. Furthermore, the way the ‘imported’ methods are applied may result in criticism from the originator discipline. For artists working in social-science research the ‘imperialistic’ nature of the endeavour can be felt at the outset in project design when they are brought in as ‘consultants’ or ‘community partners’ in research bids, rather than as co-investigators (the primary development and management team usually consisting of one Principal Investigator and one or more co-Investigators in bids funded by research councils); not being part of the core management of the project can make artists feel like “fodder for high-class race horses”, as one artist-researcher recently put it to me. Integrating artists into project steering groups can help.

In applied research there can be a clash of values between arts practitioners and social scientists which it is useful to be aware of. Reductive interpretation of art works by social scientists is a danger. For example, a project researcher might feel that it is acceptable to make up titles for images to help make them more accessible to the general public; this is done with good intentions in an attempt to help make the work more comprehensible and to enhance the impact of the research. The artist or arts facilitator, in contrast, might feel that this process is impoverishing, because images can contain multiple meanings and part of their usefulness is that they are inherently polysemic and *are complex*, so locking down the meaning with reductive titles is at odds with the artist's values and notions about why visual research is useful. Another artist might feel that the research data was being corrupted and that the validity of the images as data was being compromised by this well-meaning attempt to make them more accessible by making up label titles. Artists following a participatory mandate might argue that it is more appropriate to use the *actual words* of the people who made the art work as the basis for labels, if they tolerate labels at all. Alternatively, any decisions about labels should surely be made by the participants themselves? In a participatory research model, the display of the works, and decisions about it, should be in the hands of the makers of the art works and any text generated by them part of their decision making.

4. Interdisciplinary or supradisciplinary

Krishnan also identifies a sustained effort of sharing theories, methods and concepts as interdisciplinary (corresponding with the U.S. definition given above) or as Supradisciplinary. He suggests that examples of supradisciplinary could include

structuralism, deconstruction, poststructuralism, feminism and complexity theory (Krishnan 2009b p. 7).

Risks: The irony of all this activity is that most disciplines have formed ideological camps; communication between these ‘competing supradisciplinary paradigms’ can be problematic. However, if issues of power are also addressed there are opportunities here for an open exploration of different conceptual camps (within and between disciplines) and the implications for knowledge construction.

5. Megadisciplinarity

This is the sustained effort to rearranging the disciplines into a smaller number of Superdisciplines (Superdisciplinarity or Megadisciplinarity).

For example, it has been proposed to create an Earth System Science, which could combine many elements of natural sciences and social sciences disciplines in order to understand the earth as an integrated physical and social system. Another example might be a global social theory, which could unify all of the social and behavioural sciences. (Krishnan 2009b p. 9).

Risks: Unlike in interdisciplinary, the sharing of concepts, theories and methods, which still respects disciplinary boundaries and leaves the disciplines themselves intact, this approach seeks merger, which is obviously fraught as the weak may be engulfed by the stronger. On the other hand, it may be a pragmatic way of addressing certain problems.

Working Across Disciplines Using Visual Methods: Discussion

Such collaboration is not without its challenges. Although the majority of art therapists, and arts facilitators, resist indulging in reductive interpretations, it may be the case that there is an inherent tension between the polysemic nature of images and the pressure on research teams to formulate social-policy pronouncements, and simple ‘sound bite’ report findings when working within certain models. Academic environments do not always know how to incorporate images into their findings, and have a tendency to attempt to ‘translate’ arts-based research into traditional ‘outputs’. Furthermore, where visual outputs are concerned, how these are presented is obviously of crucial importance to the construction of meaning and how the works actually function: - as a provocation, educational tool, or emollient. It may be the case that project-team debates about exhibition strategy contain within them *irreconcilable* aspirations.

Lattuca uses a different set of terms, but identifies fundamental *ways* of approaching interdisciplinary work.

1. *That in which the methods or concepts of one discipline make a contribution to answering questions posed in another discipline* (which corresponds to the above definition of crossdisciplinary research).
2. *Work in which a research question acts as a ‘bridge’ between them as one or more disciplines are interested in the question* (some multidisciplinary work).
3. *Work to unify domains via concepts and methods across disciplinary domains* (some people’s definition of transdisciplinarity research; interdisciplinary research).
4. *Modes of research which address a research question which has no ‘compelling disciplinary basis’ and thereby constructs a critique of traditional*

disciplinary approaches to a particular issue or problem (Lattuca 2001: 113-18).

This, I would argue, is a useful classification that research teams might consider, and which has different potential impacts for the role of artists and artist-researchers within projects. It is worth spending some time conceptualising and discussing where the art ‘fits’. Is the art being used to enhance the communication of difficult ideas, or ask questions differently? (as in 1). Or could the art act as bridge between disciplines? (as in 2). Could it have a unificatory function? (as in 3). Or could the art be used as a challenge to disciplinary assumptions and approaches? (as in 4). What forms might these different approaches take?

Barry, Born, and Strathern (2007) have pointed out in their article on interdisciplinary working that the dominant British funding model for art-science collaboration tends to employ art ‘to serve the sciences by communicating them or enhancing public engagement with them’ (what they call the ‘service mode’; p. 3). In other words, they are often employed to enhance communication of complex ideas beyond the academic and research communities, and also to educate, inform and solicit feedback from the wider community.

Barry et al. (2007) also identify an ‘agonistic antagonistic mode’ of interdisciplinary collaboration, which they suggest spring[s] from a self-conscious dialogue with, criticism of, or opposition to the limits of established disciplines, or the status of academic research in general . . . [to] contest or transcend the given epistemological and ontological assumptions of historical disciplines. Antagonism, we suggest, is

encountered in the critique of such assumptions, manifest in attempts to propose a new ontology. (2007, p. 3) Recent papers by Hogan and Pink (2010), Pink et al. (2011), Hogan (2011), Hogan and Warren (2012; 2013) and Hogan 2015 (b) touch on this aspect of interdisciplinary working, asserting the unique value of incorporating art elicitation techniques into ethnographic and sociological research projects to explore states of being and knowing, and also to offer a useful challenge to epistemological disciplinary assumptions. Without full discussion teams may be working at cross-purposes, with artists feeling that wish to engage in a agonistic-antagonistic mode of engagement, when other members of the team may view them as service providers with a limited remit.

Visual Methods. Ten Good Reasons to Use Visual Images in Research.²

As noted above, visual methods can be particularly useful in traversing conceptual divides between disciplinary communities, offering distinctive modes of communication and epistemological exploration.

1. Pictures can be used to represent and explore the ineffable.

That which is hard to put into words, including mood tones and feeling states, can often be expressed eloquently by images. Symbols, analogies and metaphors can be sophisticated and metaphors used in conjunction with one another create complex reverberations within a pictorial frame. The materials themselves can be elegantly expressive. Feelings which are indefinable can find expression in a moment of ontological revelation in the act of making. The image and process of production is potentially illuminating. Moreover, it is not just the art object itself, but subsequent interactions with it which may become of significance. The images created in photo-

documentation have been argued to encapsulate, ‘the textures and tactilities, smells, atmospheres and sounds or ruined spaces, together with the signs and objects they accommodate, [which] can be emphatically conjured up by the visual material’ (Edensor, 2005, p. 16). To give another example, one of the midwives participating in The Birth Project was able to explore her aspiration to ‘make special’ the event using glitter and other materials to conjure up her sense of holding and providing a loving magical space – her idealism made evident.

2. *Images can convey an all-at-oneness* (Eisner 1995).

Images can produce a holistic depiction of ideas or feelings. They can also encapsulate eloquently. As images are not linear sequences as are utterances, different levels of meaning can be conveyed simultaneously and contradictory sentiments expressed instantaneously. Equally, images can be used to convey complicated concepts and complex data. The developing field of informatics uses diagrammes and images to summarise chunks of information, which would be hard to digest if simply heard, but are immediately evident when seen. Complicated concepts can be condensed in simple visual formulations, or extended ones such as animations or cartoons. Weber points out that large concepts such ‘poverty’ or ‘war’ are often given ‘visual exemplars’ to enable accessibility (p.44). In The Birth Project a midwife was able to reflect that putting down all her conflicting thoughts and feelings on one page in a visual form was revelatory for her as she was able to see contradictions and tensions in a new way.

Fig. 1.

3. *Images can make us attentive to things in new ways.*

When visual anthropologists or sociologists photograph mundane practices, we are able to see these in a new light. The image can draw attention to previously unnoticed details, but can also enable us to look at objects afresh (Pink 2001; 2015). The images can help us to refresh our sensibilities and to highlight culturally distinctive, but often taken for granted, cultural practices. Similarly, drawing or painting an object can make us look at it intensely. In her photo-elicitation practice, Ruth Beilin has used images to *reveal* landscape conservation issues. In my discussion of this work (Hogan 2012: 58), I note that the images are absolutely revelatory to the viewer not used to seeing the land in such a way, and the images and text combine to open out a new consciousness to the reader. Thus an aesthetically pleasing gash in the ground becomes ‘land problems at the creek’ and a pleasing rolling hill becomes a ‘landslip’ seen by the photographer as like a ‘flesh wound’ or a ‘running sore’, the narrative emphasising the challenges of managing the landscape and also evoking ‘the intense physical relationship between landscape management and identity’ (Beilin 2005: 61). In The Birth Project the birthing room and the birth experience itself was depicted by midwives, allowing them to think about their aspirations for how childbirth should be and their role in the room. They were able to think both abstractly and figuratively about their place.

Fig 2.

4. *Images can be memorable.* From billboards to news footage it may often be the iconic image which stays with us. In The Birth Project particular images stayed in

participants minds and triggered particular memories and emotions relating to their experience of childbirth.

5. Images can develop empathetic understanding and generalizability.

Whilst issues of mass migration or civil war in some far corner of the globe, might feel abstract and remote, images can be used to make these issues feel much more immediate. Often this is done by the depiction of individual people to highlight the issues of many, so the story of one family's migration journey stands for many such journeys, for example. Charities such as Oxfam or Amnesty International often use this approach. The daily threat of rape in Darfur may be hard to conceptualise, but the image of the individual who has to put her self at extra risk, leaving the comparative safety of her village, to fetch water for her children makes the day-to-day menace shockingly real; through the image of the individual, the humanitarian issue is given weight and meaning. There may be 'one born every minute', but it is clear from The Birth Project that not having the uniqueness of the event honoured was a source of distress for new mothers. The poignant images of distress (especially from the art therapeutic elicitation group) reach out to create empathetic reactions in the viewers.

Fig 3.

6. Images can be used to look at changes over time

Photo-elicitation techniques have been used to look at how neighbourhoods change over-time, but also as an ethnographic tool to look at specific cultural phenomena. Clayden et al. (2015) for example, used time-lapse photography to examine the ways that people use space and build informal memorials in natural burial sites. As a

sequence, complex changes, which would be laborious to describe, are easily illuminated. Looking at a series of images can also produce unforeseen and revealing narratives. In The Birth Project women produced narrative sequences about their experience of childbirth, exploring their sometimes ‘naïve’ expectations, the experience of giving birth, their adjustment difficulties to the reality of having a newborn infant and their aspirations for the future.

7. Images may be more comprehensible than most other forms of academic discourse.

Many people who would not read a broadsheet newspaper or academic article can engage with images; also as a ‘stimulant’ to research interviewing, asking a respondent to talk about a photo can provide useful results, replacing abstract or interrogatory questioning (Prosser 2006: 3). In The Birth Project the visceral nature of some of the images was palpably affecting.

fig.

8. Images provoke action for social justice.

Images are often used to provoke social change. Images of police brutality in the U.S. and in Greece were used prominently in campaigns for reform and retribution, and are useful to researchers in lending weight to justifications for research activity. Nick Ut’s 1972 photo of a little girl naked, screaming with pain and terror after a U.S. Napalm attack in Vietnam, is often cited as a powerful example of an image which was used as an anti-war statement. Feminist calls for social justice can be well-met in terms of empowering women, through their ability to bring feelings and experiences of oppression into the public domain (particularly, in The Birth Project, in terms of

revealing, exploring and confronting hospital practices with iatrogenic outcomes).

9. Images making can foster the exploration of embodied knowledge.

Weber suggests that there 'is an unintentional but automatic and visceral identification with some images; we cannot escape contemplating, or even on some level, experiencing the situations depicted, even if they were previously unfamiliar to us' (2008 p. 46). Indeed, images can be affecting almost as though through a process of 'emotional contagion' (Hogan & Coulter 2014 p.95).

Nor should the kinaesthetic aspects of art or image making be overlooked: - Bourdieu, for example, speaks of embodied knowledge as 'habitas'. Others refer to 'muscular knowledge' (for example, I can't remember the numbers I must press to enter into a security zone without using the movement of my hand to create the pattern – it isn't the numbers I recall, it is the shape and the pattern my hand needs to make to press the right numbers. It is embodied knowledge.) See Martens, Halkier & Pink (2014) for a discussion of embodied research practices.

The kinaesthetic qualities of both producing and viewing artwork are of potential importance. One characteristic of an installation exhibition format, for example, is that it uses the total space and invites the viewer to move within it. This physical moving into the discursive space is slightly different qualitatively to simply looking at something on a wall or plinth; it is a more bodily engagement with the artwork and offers a more immersive experience. It is potentially more challenging in its theatrical invitation to the viewer to engage with the subject matter in an embodied way. How the narrative flow unveils itself depends on the participant's movement through the space; one perspective may necessarily cut off another, and new configurations are generated by being at different vantage points in the space. The format evokes

uncertainty, anxiety perhaps, and the entire work cannot be viewed from any particular vantage point... In certain conceptual frameworks, such as one which seeks to emphasise heterogeneity, this might be a very appropriate format to prevent the foreclosure of meaning. The embodied nature of childbirth was depicted in The Birth Project and in phototherapy techniques may be enacted.

10. *Image making can be vitalising.*

Art works can be made in a manner which can jolt our mundane sensibilities, using materials in ways which can refresh our outlooks and capture our enthusiasm. Whether art is being made to reflect on a project to enhance reflexivity, or with communities making and reflecting, image making can create a 'potential space', which affords opportunities to be in the moment; this is a moment that is disengaged from one's usual preoccupations and concerns, it is indeterminate. There is rich potential to struggle with the not-knowing-ness of the situation, to move beyond one's comfort zone in terms of ideas about performance, productivity or preconceived ideas about the quality of the art work. There is the opportunity to be immersed (in the flow) using intuition, serendipity, spontaneously, enjoying the tactile embodied nature of the experience – what many call 'creativity' (though often without defining what they mean). In this indeterminate space individuals or groups of people can become highly attuned to what is emerging – it is an emergent space. If working collectively, there are also potentially productive opportunities to explore interpersonal dynamics (for instance, within teams) or to reflect upon the nature of personal authorship. These are spaces of being and becoming, of ontological uncertainty, spaces in which ways of knowing are explored. In the Mother's Make Art Group, one of The Birth Project's art elicitation groups, the ontological nature of art making was to the fore:

‘The workshop series was distinctive in tenor and tone and focus. Although structured, it was successful in facilitating the women, some whom had never made art before, towards a sophisticated level of engagement with arts-based practice. Art is a complex event that can engage the ontology of the self and brings about the possibility of something new.... Watts’ art practice with its interest in encounter lends itself to a visceral illumination of the transition to motherhood. This was evident in the way in which the women reimagined significant scenes triggered by Watts’ prompts... whilst handling significant objects. Another example was of experimentation with materials undertaken in pairs, in this case exploring different qualities of paper. This led one pair to make a bed with the paper and then to muse upon the significance of the bed for new mothers and its multiple roles, as well as their experiences of exhaustion. The resulting film work has a fresh dimension, depicting the women making and talking and actually *reconceptualising their experiences* in the moment. This focus on encounter follows the work of Deleuze and Guattari who suggest that that the art encounter can challenge habitual ways of being and acting in the world, ways which are potentially undermined and questioned. They suggest that, our systems of thought can be disrupted and that we may be jolted into thought’ (Hogan 2015 p.29-30 italics in original).

Using Film in the Birth Project. A Case Example of Interdisciplinary Potentially Challenging Issues

Here I focus on part of this process which involved filming by Sheffield Vision as a research method and as a documentation of the research process. The aim of the filming is four-fold:

1. Firstly, as a method to capture the research, which will be used to develop new thinking on contemporary birth experience and practice (it is research data).
2. Secondly, the footage is being edited to produce short films which address the research questions. Thus the films are a research output.
3. Thirdly, the short films themselves will also function as teaching and training resources and will be made available for this.
4. Lastly, a documentary film of the entire process is to be made and shown to a public audience.

The notion of using film as research data, familiar to anthropologists, was a foreign idea to some of the research team. The ‘authenticity’ of the material was questioned, because surely people would put on a ‘front’ for the camera; of course the same could be said of much qualitative interviewing and there is a lot of literature exploring this subject (Cameron, 2001, is particularly eloquent). However, there is something particularly inhibiting about the presence of a film crew, the scrutiny of the lens is qualitatively different to the mere presence of a recording device (until one forgets the film crew is there). There is potential for further inequality between more extrovert and introvert members of a group (inequalities a feminist participatory ethos is keen to minimise). Protection of potentially vulnerable participants was an issue, particularly in relation to the thematic art-elicitation group with potentially traumatised new mothers, which was facilitated by an art therapist. Although all participants had signed a permission form stating that they understood they were *not*

participating in art therapy, it is perhaps inevitable, given the intimate subject matter under discussion, that the group would take on a close and intense character. The facilitator also insisted on emphasising the therapeutic character of the group and was very wary of the film crew to such an extent that this may have had an influence on the participants themselves. Probably, slightly more upfront briefing might have defused such issues, but the film crew as an intrusion into the safe space seemed to be a dynamic in this case. This had an impact as to how much research data we were able to capture and on the integration of that set of participants into the research project as a whole. This was less an issue with the other art therapist facilitated group, in which the facilitator had a more relaxed attitude to the presence of the film crew (herself having been a participant in one of my earlier research projects using the same methodology). This was not therefore a disciplinary issue *per se*, though there is a tendency in art elicitation work, facilitated by art therapists, for the work to become intense, which is partly its value (as well as the particular appeal and worth in using imagery and tactile materials, as previously outlined and explored). There are inevitably going to be ‘boundary’ issues which need to be carefully negotiated with participants as to how much access the film crew, or project researcher, can have because of the bounded-nature of the art therapy elicitation model.

The notion of collecting raw footage for further analysis was not too alienating *per se*. Delineating further use of the material *was* felt to be potentially problematic. Would the material be used in the documentary or was it merely data for the stated research outputs? How should we word the permission forms in a way that this was sufficiently clear to participants was something which exercised us and further clarification was

sent around to all participants mid-project to try to ensure that all was as clear as possible.

The footage being edited to produce short films which address the research questions was technically challenging as film relies on coherent narrative flows, and the construction of a 'story line' or the development of 'characters' which create human interest and hold audience attention. Too many disparate people and the film-maker's craft is disturbed and the film may start to feel fragmented. As the researcher, it was easy for me to mark out sections of footage which answered our research questions, but then capturing these and imbedding them into a film sequence was technically trying for the film maker. I was particularly pleased to be working with an excellent film maker who has experience of producing broadcast quality material, so I was aware that my demands could conflict with her ideas about effective filmic communication strategies and her worthy perfectionism. There are also questions of 'validity' in relation to the films as research outputs. In formal research structures such as the HEFCE REF (Higher Education Funding Council for England, Research Excellence Framework), it is uncertain how these films will be regarded in relation to formal research papers for research assessment purposes.

A high-ethical bar was adopted. Participants signed permission sheets giving their consent for the footage to be used, but we appreciate that the films were 'constructed' in a way in which original remarks or gestures might be reconfigured. We therefore felt it was essential that participants see the films and re-approve the use of material and that re-editing then take place where requested by participants. This was also in-line with a more participatory and feminist ethos, in which the researcher does not

simply wish to run-off with the precious data, but rather wishes to negotiate and co-construct outputs. This has implications for resources and is time-consuming, but essential when working with potentially vulnerable participants in a participatory framework.

Making the short films available as resources may require a certain amount of 'reframing' the material (and the films can be embedded in descriptive material which can help their reception to different audiences via situation in a website or with verbal framing in presentations). It is useful to make the films available in addressing the impact agenda for the research. They may be used in the training of midwives, and other health professions, as well as trainee therapists, who may end up working with women who have been defined as experiencing postnatal depression.

The documentary film will be a more accessible summary of the issues and concerns of the project and will reach a yet wider audience. The balance between producing an arresting document and imparting research findings has yet to be explored in fine-detail, but with raise it's own challenges. Certainly, any hope of it being shown on mainstream television depends on certain conventions being adhered to.

Summary & Conclusion

In summary, multidisciplinary, transdisciplinary, crossdisciplinary, interdisciplinary, supradisciplinary and megadisciplinarity models may have different implications for the use of visual methods, and although some friction can be productive, here are some aspects to consider:

- ✓ Is the team as a whole actually clear about which model of research is being used?
- ✓ Tease-out how the mode of interdisciplinary is understood from different standpoints and what its defining features are felt to be.
- ✓ Disciplines are recommended to share their thoughts about the project in terms of what *expertise* is felt to be brought to bear.
- ✓ Group discussion of the model of research and how it will effect the different components, or stages, of the research is recommended.
- ✓ Key terms such as ‘participatory’ need to be discussed from a disciplinary point of view. It is useful for projects to make a list of keywords related to their endeavour and spend a session talking about how these terms are understood from different perspectives. In a recent project these included ‘trauma’, ‘iatrogenic’, ‘motherhood’, ‘PND’, ‘participatory research’, ‘visual methods’ & ‘feminism’.
- ✓ If art objects are generated, how are they regarded? Are the art works data? Will they be translated? Are they outputs? Can they be both? Will they be returned to their makers or kept for research purposes? Will they be photographed? Have storage issues been considered?
- ✓ The sharing of disciplinary expertise might include running experiential ‘taster’ sessions of disciplinary approaches.
- ✓ How key concepts will translate into methods is necessary to consider and not to assume there is a common understanding. If participants will have ‘input’ into research design or dissemination what is understood by that?

- ✓ Explore how supradisciplinarity is operating within teams with a frank exploration of these different positions. If you are all feminists, then does that help give your team a collective starting point? What is that? Tease it out.
- ✓ Don't assume you are approaching ethics in the same way. For example, if you are working with documentary film makers, they won't necessarily think twice about inviting a participant out for coffee to capture extra footage. The project might not have the necessary ethics permission for this to occur, or might want to put in extra safeguards (where, when, how, back-up for if there is distress, referral on to other services ascertained for vulnerable participants, and so forth).
- ✓ How is the concept of confidentiality understood from different disciplinary standpoints?
- ✓ What 'boundaries' are considered appropriate with groups of participants? Can researchers walk in and out whilst an art elicitation activity is taking place, for example? Could a camera crew pop in to snatch interview clips?

To conclude, Holland (2014) notes that there is considerable ambiguity about what is meant by 'integration' in much interdisciplinary research, but endorses Bell et al.'s proposal that researchers 'make a conscious effort... to describe to others both the methodological and epistemological foundations of their research and how these are used to interpret their findings' in an ongoing effort to 'make their disciplinary contribution mutually intelligible' (Bell et al. 2005 p.12). As noted, there are myriad potential tensions in different modes of interdisciplinary working. As elaborated, artwork and film can be used in many ways in applied research.

This chapter should help research teams to think about the principal ways that imagery is functioning within projects. It has also explored in some detail a number of tensions and complexities that arose in The Birth Project. There are particular challenges inherent in using visual methods which have been elucidated and which need to be considered by research teams. Nevertheless, working with others who have different suppositions and ideas is intrinsically interesting, and gives one pause to inspect one's own preconceptions (Hogan 2012).

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Notes

1 'Kuhn coined the term 'paradigm' to express the idea that disciplines are organised around certain ways of thinking or larger theoretical frameworks, which can best explain empirical phenomena in that discipline or field. Results that do not fit into the prevailing paradigm are somehow excluded, for example by limiting the domains of theories, or treated as anomalies the ongoing attempted resolution of which shape its development. Thus paradigms shape the questions scientists ask and also the possible answers they can get through their research. Once the problems with the paradigm become obvious as too many exceptions remain unexplained, a new paradigm that is able to explain more phenomena and / or that is in some sense more efficient might replace the previous one' (Krishnan 2009 p.15). This process of fundamental change within disciplinary paradigms has been called 'paradigm shifts'. One of the arguments for interdisciplinary work is that it can help disciplines see beyond their paradigmatic 'blind spots'.

² Weber (2008 pp.44-47) produces a list of reasons to use visual research (which I'm using as an inspiration and starting point, but refashioning along the way, as I felt her categorisations lacked sufficient distinction); however, these categories are not all mutually exclusive.