

**A Phenomenological Study of  
the Influences on First Year Students'  
Decisions to Continue their Pre-  
Registration  
Midwifery Education.**

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# What is the aim of the study?

- To investigate the lived experience of student midwives during the first year of their degree programme and make recommendations for improving retention.

# Why is this study needed?

- It is very desirable that midwifery students complete their degree programmes on time
  - Future stability of workforce
  - Provision of safe and effective maternity care
  - Unique relationship with childbearing women (Snow, 2010)
  - Financial penalties to universities
- It will add to the evidence base about healthcare student retention

# What might the study achieve?

- Understanding the reasons why student midwives are able to stay may help to:
  - Support them better on the programme
  - Support mentors to more effectively identify students' needs in practice
  - Develop robust recruitment strategies
  - Improve retention of other healthcare students

# What am I doing today?

- Work in progress
- Offering some initial interpretation
- *'imaginative dwelling in the immediacy of the participants' worlds'*. (Benner, 1994: 99)

# Literature

- A significant number of student midwives (and nurses) leave early without completion
  - Unexpected life changes
  - Financial difficulties (Glossop, 2001; Urwin *et al.* 2010)
  - Academic/clinical tensions; emotional demands of midwifery; lack of mentor support (Green and Baird, 2009)
- We don't yet know enough about the factors that encourage student midwives to stay
  - Practical support from tutors (Fowler & Norrie, 2009; Cameron *et al.* 2010))
  - '*the right word at the right time*' (Glogowska *et al.* 2007: 74)

# Study Design

- Interpretative phenomenological analysis
  - Popular methodology in psychology
  - Based on hermeneutic phenomenology of Heidegger
  - Identify individual meaning of an experience
- Ask first year midwifery students about their experiences at 4, 8 and 12 months into the programme
  - A group interview at each stage
  - An individual interview at each stage



# Home and away students

- Home

- Post -1992 university
- 10,000 students
- Not ethnically diverse
- Rural counties;  
placement areas spread
- Ages and backgrounds  
varied

- Away

- Russell group university
- 34,000 students
- Ethnically diverse
- City location with  
secondary sites;  
placements areas spread
- Similar ages <30

# Reasons for joining the profession

- Women
  - Helping them
  - Caring for them
  - Liking them
  - Wanting to make changes for them
- Career
  - Interesting and exciting
  - Respectable profession
  - Something to be passionate about

*One of the massive stresses is money isn't it?*

# Push and pull factors

*and their support as well because mum texts me 24/7 'how's your day? What did you do in biology? When she goes on holiday for a week I'm a bit lost*

*there's no personal level or connection or sympathy or anything, it's just like it's so academic*

*I'm a year older than my mentor and she said 'why on earth did you leave a job earning that and doing that...you must be mental'. I find that really hard*

*I've got continuous support from tutors.... feel nurtured*

*It would have been so nice to have someone in second year I think, I would love to in second year help the first years*

*you feel you can't say that to your mentor because she might mark you down in your summative review*

*Unconstructive criticism and I suppose that would be people not being very accepting of my personality*

*even if I'm just going up to someone and telling them a naff joke, makes them feel better for 5 minutes, means that I've made someone feel a bit happier*

# Pull factors

- Support
  - From mentors and peers
  - From tutors
- Family
  - Affirmation
  - Pride
  - Support
- Progression
  - Gaining confidence with clinical skills
  - Being able to make a small difference to a woman's experience
  - Achievement
- Not wanting to fail
- Variety & structure of course

# Push factors

- Home students
  - Not belonging
  - Serious family problems
  - Poor practice
- Mentors
- Away students
  - Money
  - Lack of relationship with tutor/negativity
  - Isolation from other students

# Theme - Intrinsic motivation

***I am going to do this and anyone who says I can't I am going to do it and prove them wrong. April***

***I'm really enjoying the experience but at the same time I'm not losing sight of the end result and where I want to be. Sally***

***I feel like I've got a focus now for my life and it's like there's a good purpose. Claudia***

***But at least I can say that I've helped people's lives, I've done something with my life, I want to look back and feel fulfilled. Charley***

***Nothing is going to get in my way, this is as high up there as my kids that's the importance of it. Willow***

***I certainly suffer from a lack of self esteem and I think that's been something that I've suffered with all my life. Maddy***

# Theme - Mentors as gatekeepers to practice experience

*Well my mentor now, I do like her but she's not overly supportive but I think I make the most out of a – it's not a bad situation but not the best. Claudia*

*Yes mentors really are – I'm sure you know, they are such an influence on your experience. Charley*

*she was fantastic.....and I think it helps that she was a supervisor of midwives as well so extremely thorough and she has taught me a lot about things that will actually stay with me forever. Sally*

*But this midwife was a bit bothered by the fact that I didn't have the experience and I think she was expecting somebody to really help her out so it made me feel a bit wobbly.  
Sally*

# Theme - Tutors as nurturers

*what is important as a student is to have that support and to some extent feel a little bit nurtured....because I do feel nurtured here at university. Sally*

*I think you feel nurtured, you feel safe and you feel nurtured.  
Willow*

*it's like a professional support isn't it where you can go to them, say how you are feeling, they will tell you what's going on and then you can go and work on it and that's it then, you've done it. April*

*So I usually get a really fast response from \*\* or \*\*, she's my personal tutor and that's quite useful and it's like everyone's on the ball. Claudia*

# Theme - Family affirmation

*So I think he's done an absolutely amazing job to encourage me and to go from a situation where really he didn't have any massive responsibility and now it's all on his head from a financial point of view, he loves it that he is looking after me.*

**Maddy**

*My parents are good, financially they've helped me, they've supported me which is like a burden off my mind and if I check English and grammar with my Mum she helps me. Claudia*

*Because he sees that this is the only thing that gets me animated, the thing that gets me really excited, he doesn't want me to end up like my Mum, so yes he's really, really supportive. Charley*



# What am I learning about myself?

- Rapport
- Reflexive
- Empathy



- Easy to ask leading questions



# Next steps



- Continue data collection & analysis
- Identify theoretical framework
  - Tinto?
  - Self-efficacy?
  - Another psychological theory?

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