



Beneath the Surface



The Potential of Heuristic Inquiry to Capture Full
Neurodivergent Experiences of Emotion and Embodiment

A.I. Statement

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Contents



- **Heuristic Inquiry:** Outline, Philosophical Roots and Processes
- **Objectivity** and **Subjectivity** in Research
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- **Applied examples** of Heuristic Inquiry
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"Many of the most significant and exciting life events and extraordinary experiences - moments of clarity, illumination, and healing - have been systematically excluded from conventional research."

Braud & Anderson (1998, p.3)



(istockphoto, ND)



Heuristic Inquiry

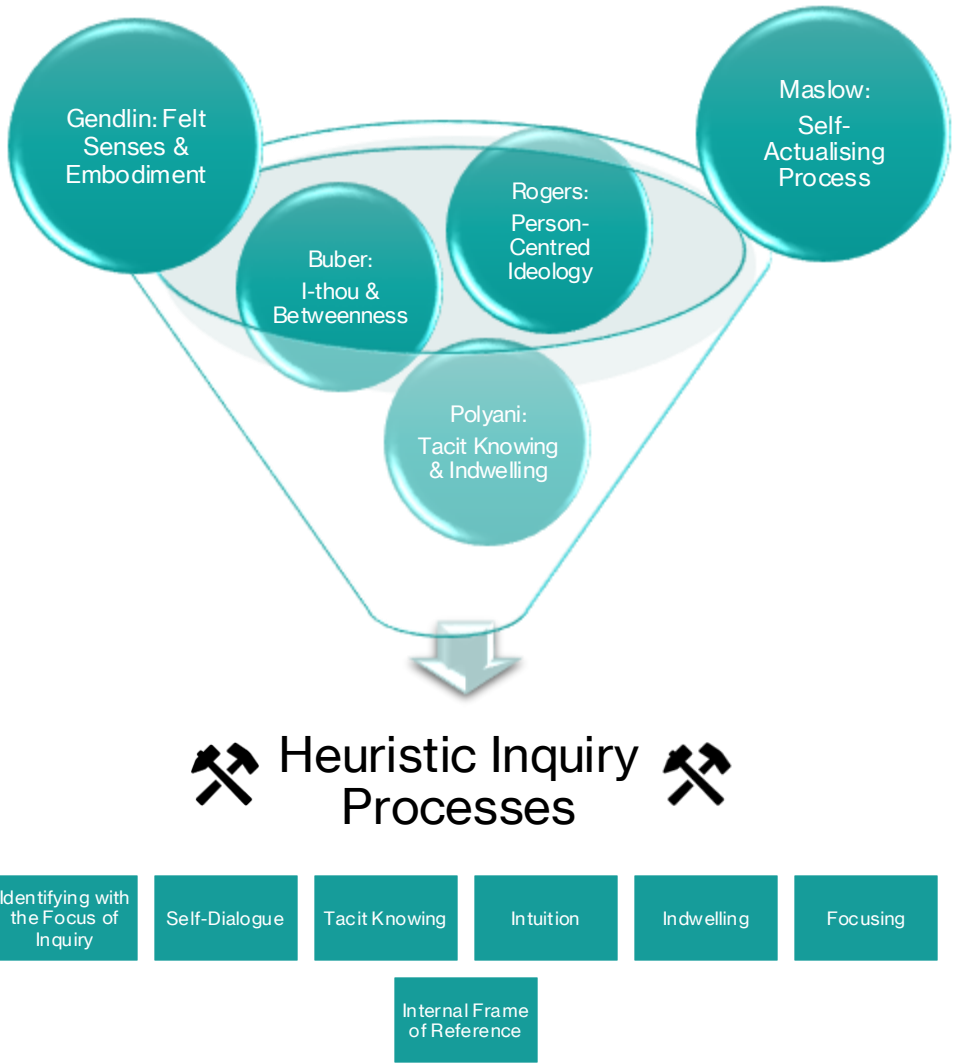
- Qualitative research method
- Human Experiences: hard to quantify/identify
- Researcher-Participant
- Self-search, self-dialogue and self-discovery

(Moustakas, 1990)

“Heuristic researchers explore their own and others’ experiences to expand understandings of phenomena” (Sultan, 2020, p160)



Heuristic Inquiry: Roots, Philosophical Underpinnings and Links to Humanism





“There are as many scientific methods as there are individual Scientists” (Bridgman, 1950)

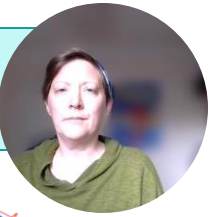
Skimming the Surface: Objectivity and Subjectivity



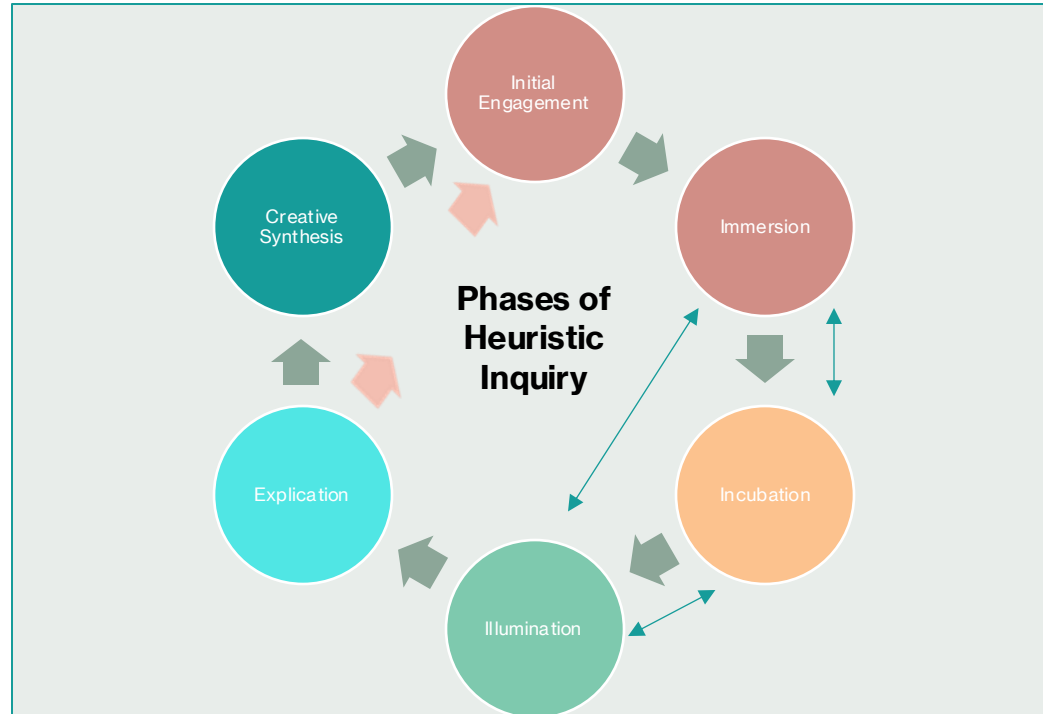
- Social Constructivism: Always a **subjective** person and experience steering the scientifically **objective** outcome (Bridgman, 1950; Moustakas, 1990; Rogers, 1955; Sultan; 2019)
- Objectivity is widely considered the ‘gold standard’ in the world of research (Mulisa, 2022)
- Positionality becoming more commonplace across research methods in an effort to reduce unconscious bias (Hughes & Blundell, 2024; Kalkbrenner, 2022; Yip, 2023)
- Is merging researcher and participant the ultimate act of methodological transparency? (Sela-Smith, 2002)



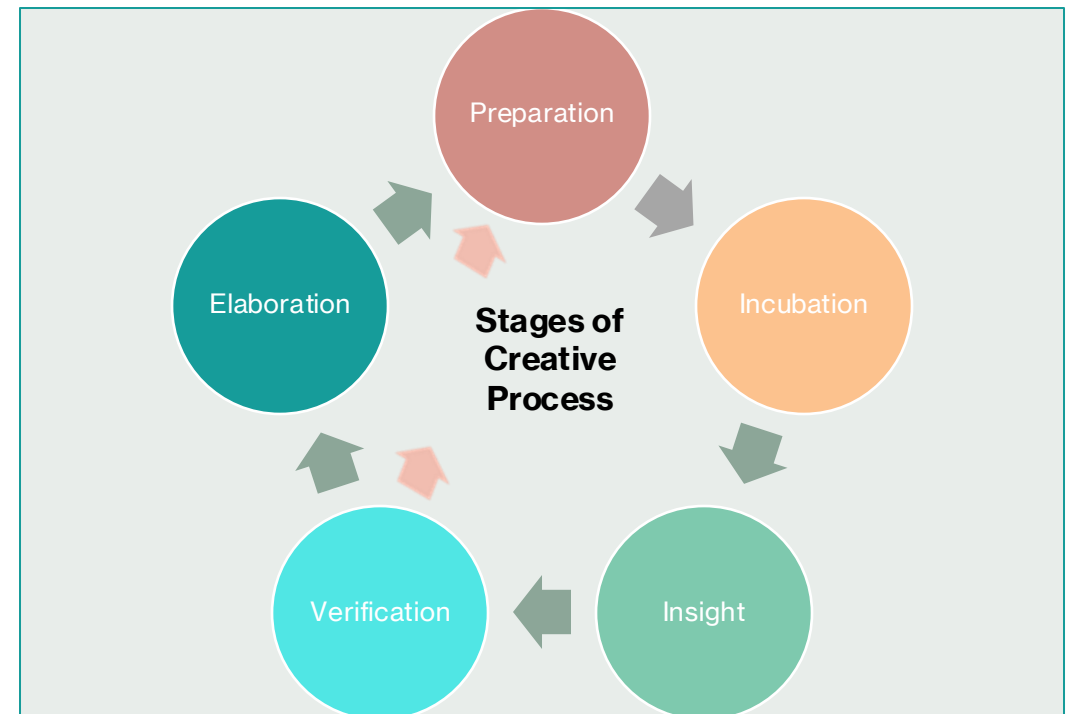
Non-Linear Phases of Heuristics and Creativity



Moustakas (1990)



Wallas (1976, cited in Sultan, 2019)



Experiments require creative thinking, and paintings require trial and error. Both require intuition.

(Cartwright et al, 2022; Lunn & Noble, 2008; Thresher, 2023)

Jeff Tallon, Physicist...

“If you have science without passion, forget it as far as I’m concerned. If you have science without creativity or without insight, well you don’t have science”

(Professor Jeff Tallon cited in Lunn and Noble, 2008, p799)





Count the passes...

(Simons and Chabris, 1999; Simons,
2010)

Selective Attention Test
from Simons & Chabris (1999)

You often only **see** what you're **looking** for...

?



The Selective Attention of the Neuro-normative Frame



- 'Neurotypical Gaze' we see ourselves as others see us, ***losing touch of ourselves as we really are*** (Glen, 2025; McDermott, 2022)
- Few studies ***actually*** look at issues such as emotional dysregulation from the ***perspective*** of the Neurodivergent person (Beck et al, 2024)
- ND experiences have typically been put through the ***ableist*** clinical lens of ***traditional Psychotherapeutic norms*** (Leong and Graichen, 2024)



“Every aspect of our being has been pathologized; examined, unpicked and analysed by baffled ‘outsiders’...” (Benson, 2023, p1447)

Using a new lens for examining experiences of Neurodivergent individuals...



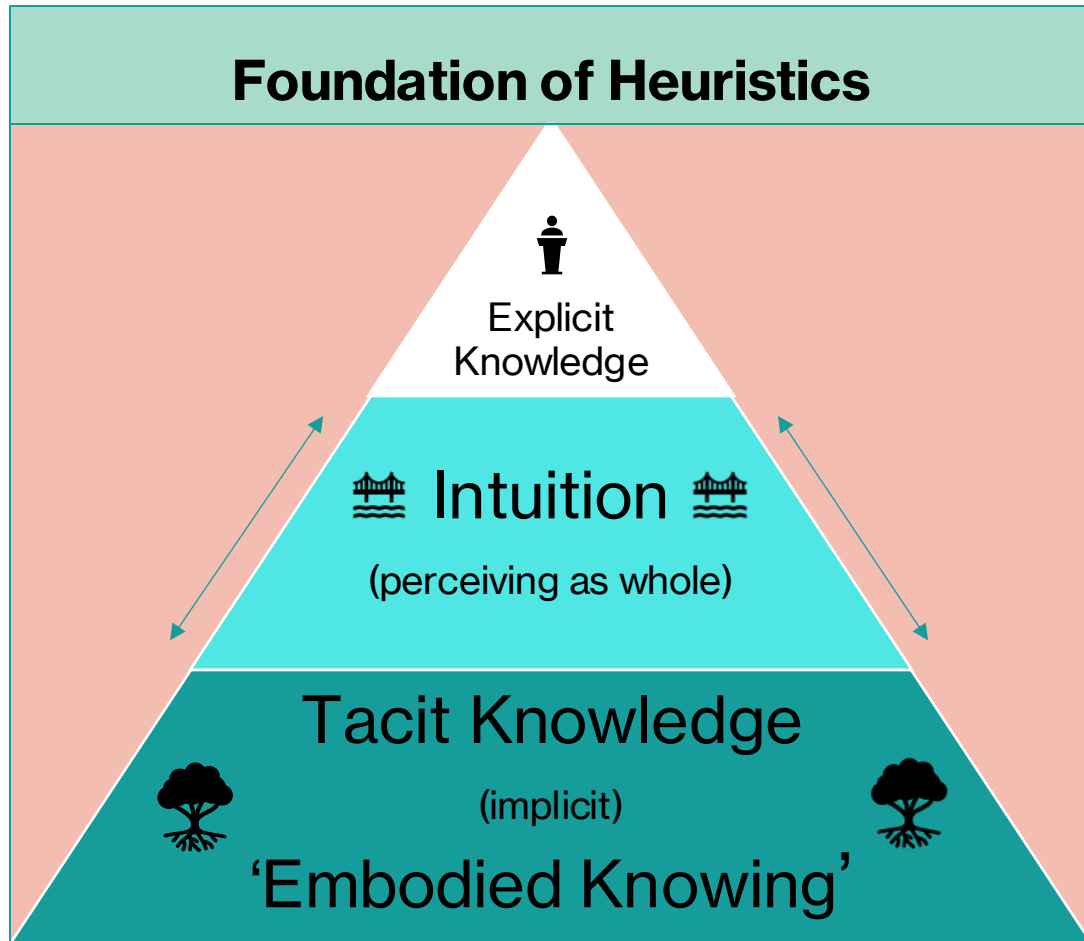
- 8 Principles of **Neuro-inclusion** in Research Methods (Dark, 2024)
- ‘**Nothing about us without us**’: Reducing the double empathy problem within research design (Bertilsdotter Rosqvist et al, 2023)
- #actuallyautistic originating in 2011 (Osorio, 2020)
- In Heuristic Inquiry, researcher **must** have had personal experience of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1990, pp14-15)



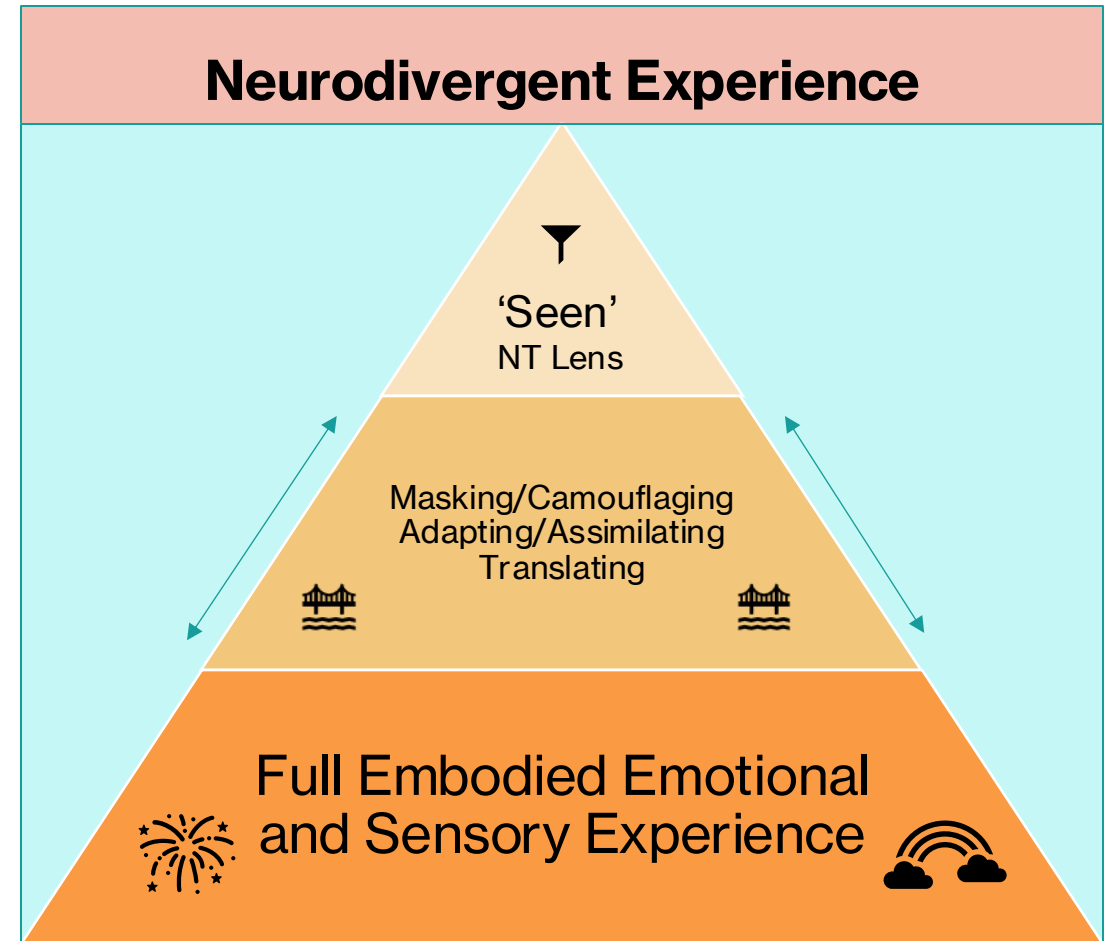


“We can know more than we can tell”

Polyani (1966, p4)



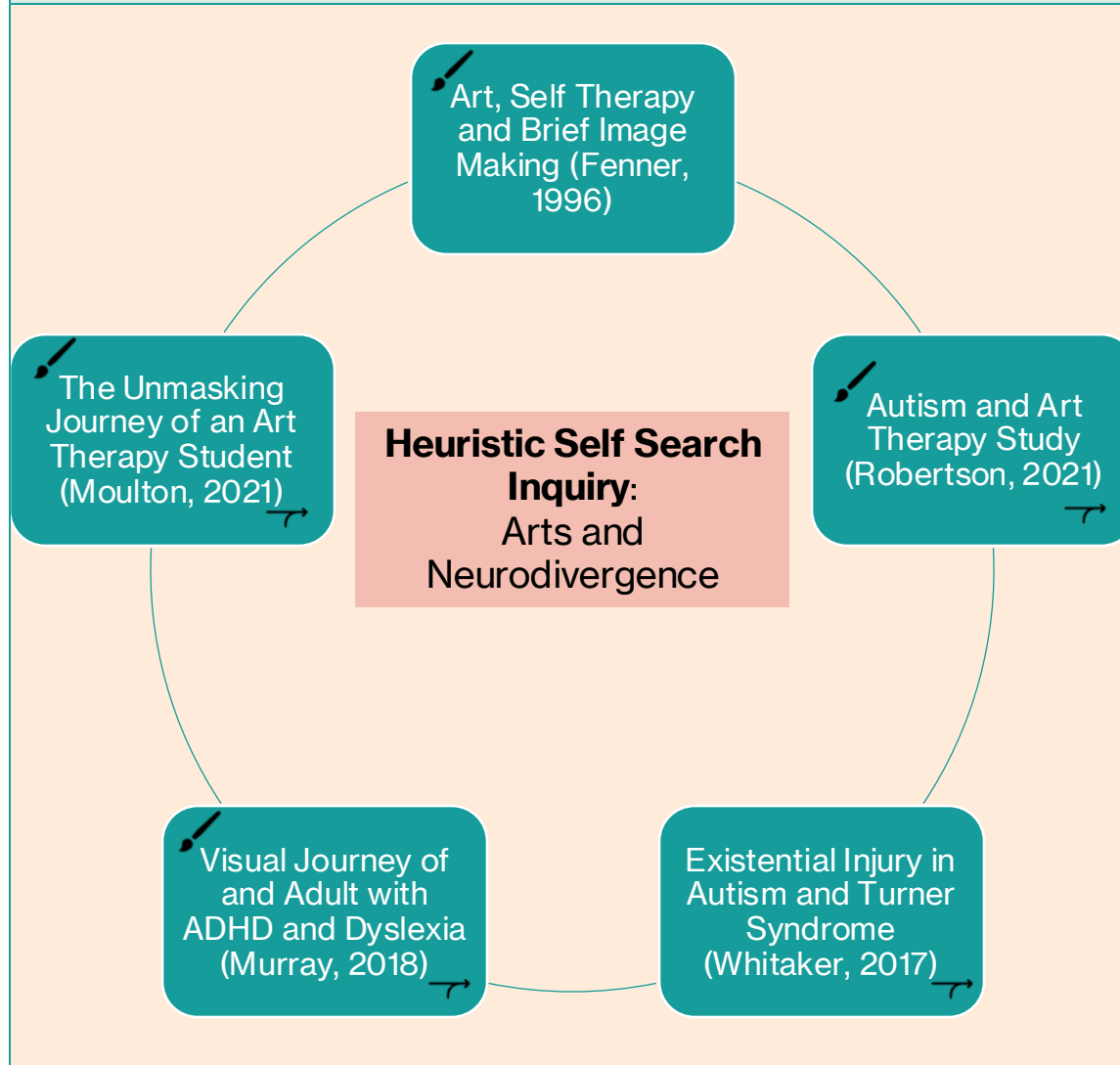
(Fenner, 1996; Moustakas, 1990; Polyani, 1966; Polyani, 1969; Sultan 2019)



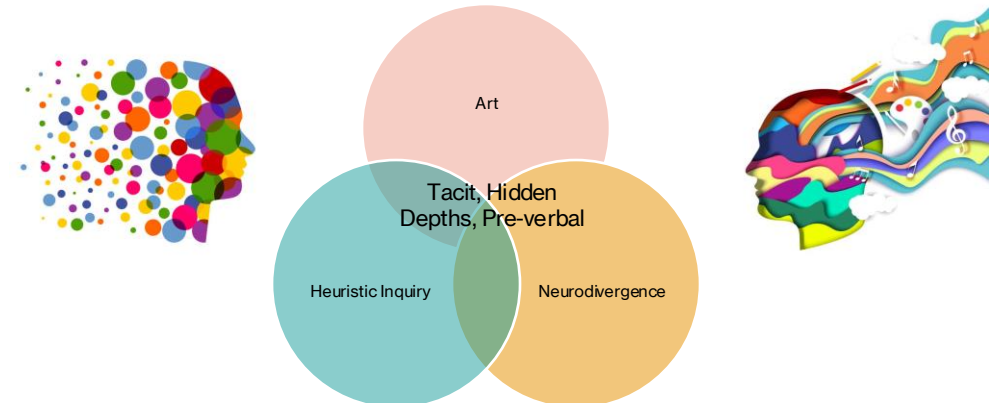
(Cook et al, 2021; Dallman, 2024; Kidwell, Clancy and Fisher, 2023)

Practical Applications of Heuristic Inquiry:

Tapping Tacit Knowledge with Creativity



- **Art therapy** research and **Heuristics** are linked in nature; El Duende One Canvass Process Painting (Moulton, 2024)
- Image can process **duality** and **totality**; Brief Image Making (Fenner, 1996)
- “Art as a tool for unmasking”: what lies beneath? (Moulton, 2024)
- Heuristic Inquiry can provide “new access points to self” (Fenner, 1996, p51)
- Fenner (1996) set up ‘consistent conditions’ for image making to mimic boundaries of therapy



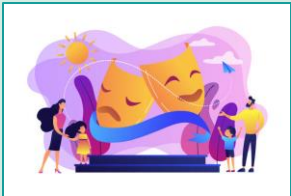
Heuristic Inquiry as a Framework for Other Research Methods



Heuristic Study of Counsellors' Understanding and Experience of the Nature of Shame and the Impact of Shame on Therapeutic Contact



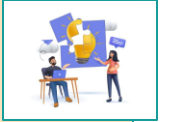
- Collaborating with 'co-researchers'
- Semi-Structured Interviews
- **'Latent' Thematic Analysis**; works with layered/implied/complex meaning



(Carr, 2019)



A Heuristic Inquiry into Therapists' Lived Experiences of the Therapeutic Relationship



- Pilot study HSSI as a form of 'bracketing' ***without*** removing primary researcher.
- Semi-Structured Interviews
- 'Artefacts' from 'co-researchers'
- Heuristic Data Analysis and Theme Identification (Sultan, 2019, pp145-156)



(Archibald, 2024)



Limitations and Considerations of Heuristic Inquiry



Outside Method

- A place for quantitative data: replicable, large sample size, robustness e.g. 'double blind' studies, **topic dependant** (Bager-Charleson & McBeath, 2023; Kalkbrenner, 2022; Lim, 2024; Queirós, Faria & Almeida, 2017; Zyoud, Bsharat & Dweikat, 2024)
- Arguments for mixed methods (Wasti et al, 2022; Zyoud, Bsharat & Dweikat, 2024)
- **Not the only way** for positionality and breaking the mould in Qualitative Data (Benson, 2023; Hughes and Blundell, 2024; Leong and Graichen, 2024)



Inside method

- Arguments for HSSI; coresearchers **dilute method** and moves into the realm of objectivity by **distancing the researcher** (Sela-Smith, 2001; Sela-Smith, 2002)
- Evaluating data collaboratively with co-researchers increases '**rigor** and **transparency**' (Sultan, 2019, p187)
- Co-researchers can increase applicability, provide **nuance** and account for counter-transference (Archibald, 2024)

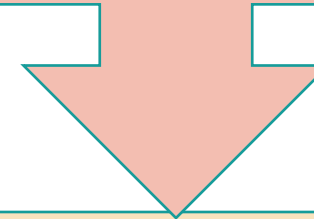




Ethical Issues Within Heuristic Inquiry



Caution around Projection, Transference/Countertransference, Enmeshment and Boundaries **during all phases** from research design, to data collection, analysis and interpretation



Robust self-care practices, journalling, personal therapy, supervision, high levels of self awareness

(Archibald, 2024; Carr, 2019; Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019)

Conclusions & Reflections



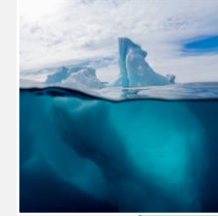
Pros

- Depth
- Transparency
- Neuro-inclusion
- De-objectifies phenomena



Cons

- Caution re boundary issues!
- Topic dependant
- Lack of papers outside of MA/PhD Thesis



Vision

- Integrative research
- Parallels with masking/tapping into non-verbal
- Increases self-awareness of researcher





*You can only meet someone as
deeply as you've met yourself...*

(Levine, 2022)

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