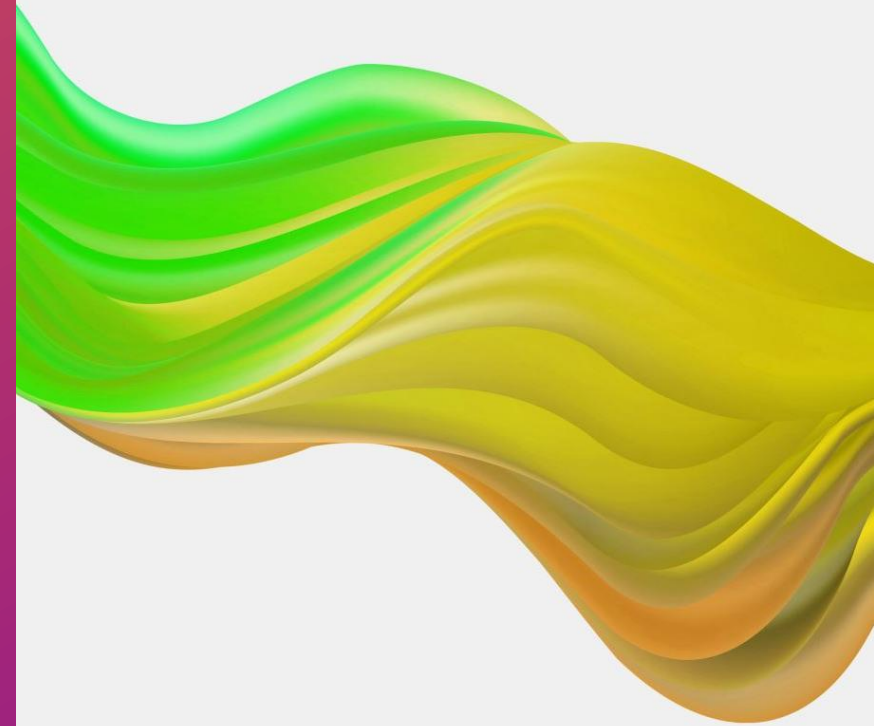


RHIAN RICHARDS

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RESEARCH METHODS ECPR7004

INTERPRETIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS



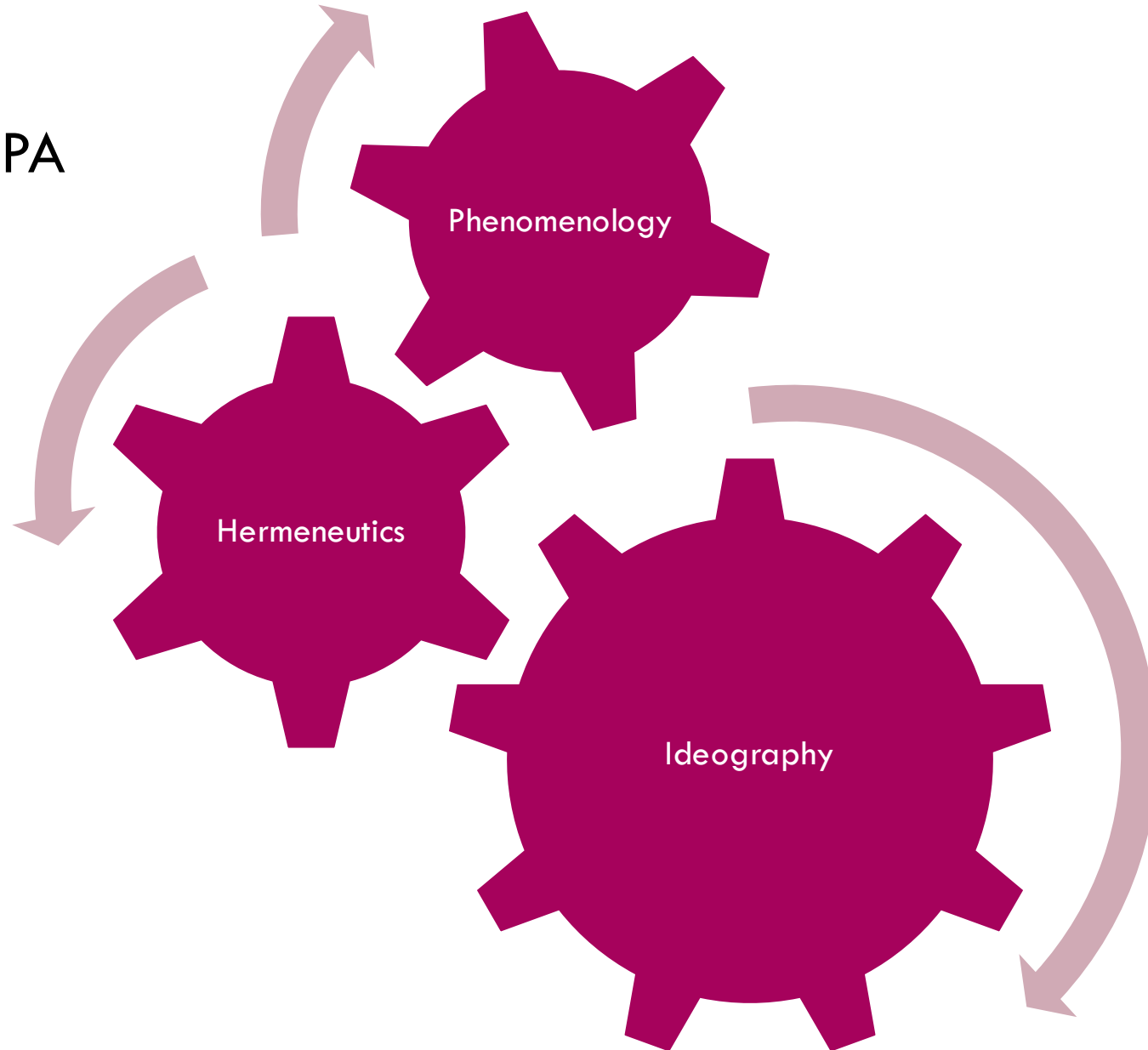
INTERPRETIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS (IPA)

- What is IPA?
 - An experiential qualitative research method formally developed by Jonathan Smith in 1996.
 - Began in psychology with much early work concerned with health psychology in the UK, now expended into many other disciplines with examples of its application worldwide.
 - Created to bring an experiential and qualitative approach into mainstream psychology.
 - Focuses on how people engage with the world.

(Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022, p. 4)

- Committed to a deep exploration of personal meaning making and the participants' lived experience (Smith and Osborn, 2024, p. 25)

Theoretical Underpinnings of IPA



(Cena et al, 2024)

PHENOMENOLOGY

Husserl (1927, cited in Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022, pp.8-11)

Heidegger (1962)

Merleau-Ponty (1962)

Satre (1956)

- Their work provides us with an understanding of experience taking into consideration a person's unique lived experience, meaning making, perspective, embodiment and place in their world.

(Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022, pp. 7-17)

HERMENEUTICS

Schleiermacher (1998)

- To understand the writer as well as the text is an important part of the interpretive process.

Heidegger (1962)

- Enhances the understanding of our prior experiences, assumptions and preconceptions (or fore-structure) and their relationship to interpretation.

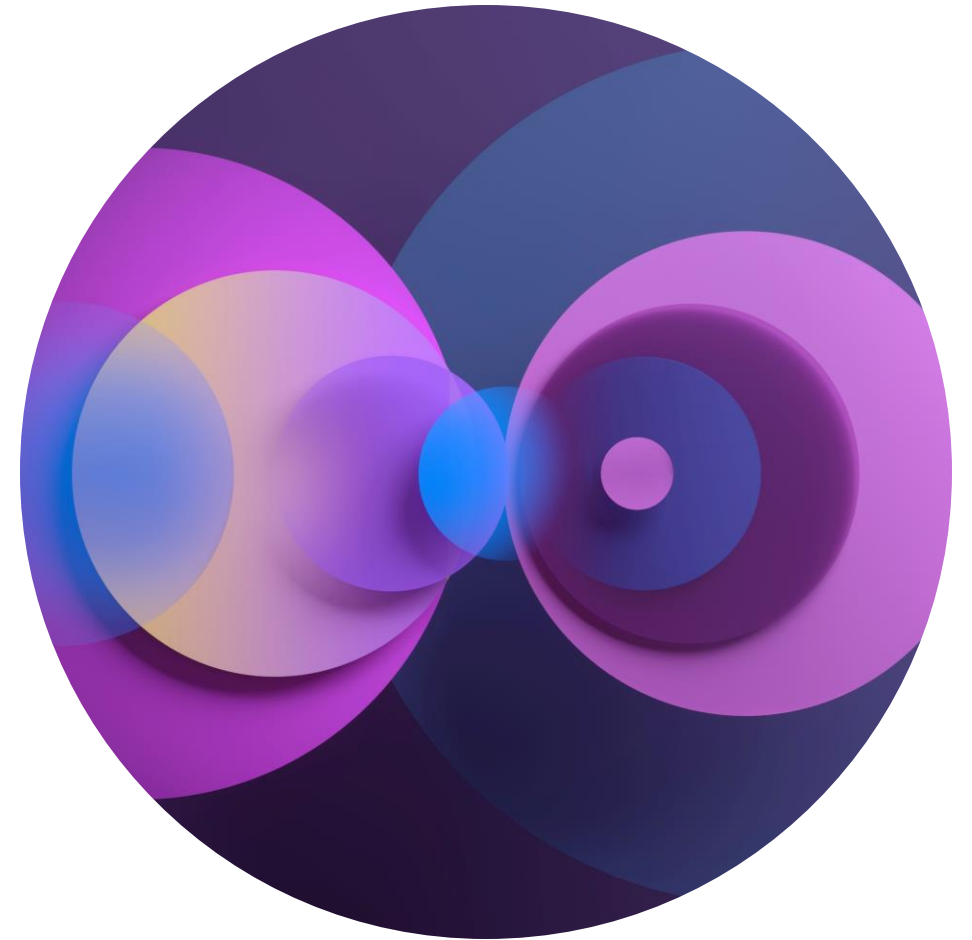
Gadamer (1990)

- Similarly to Heidegger that our preconceptions can hinder our processing of new information, which may be identified in advance or as we engage, but to be open to this.

These three stances combined, strengthen our understanding of the research process (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022, pp. 17-22).

DOUBLE HERMENEUTIC

- Two stage process of interpretation , whilst the participant is trying to make sense of their experience the researcher is making sense of the participant's sense making.
- (Smith and Osborn, 2024, p. 26)



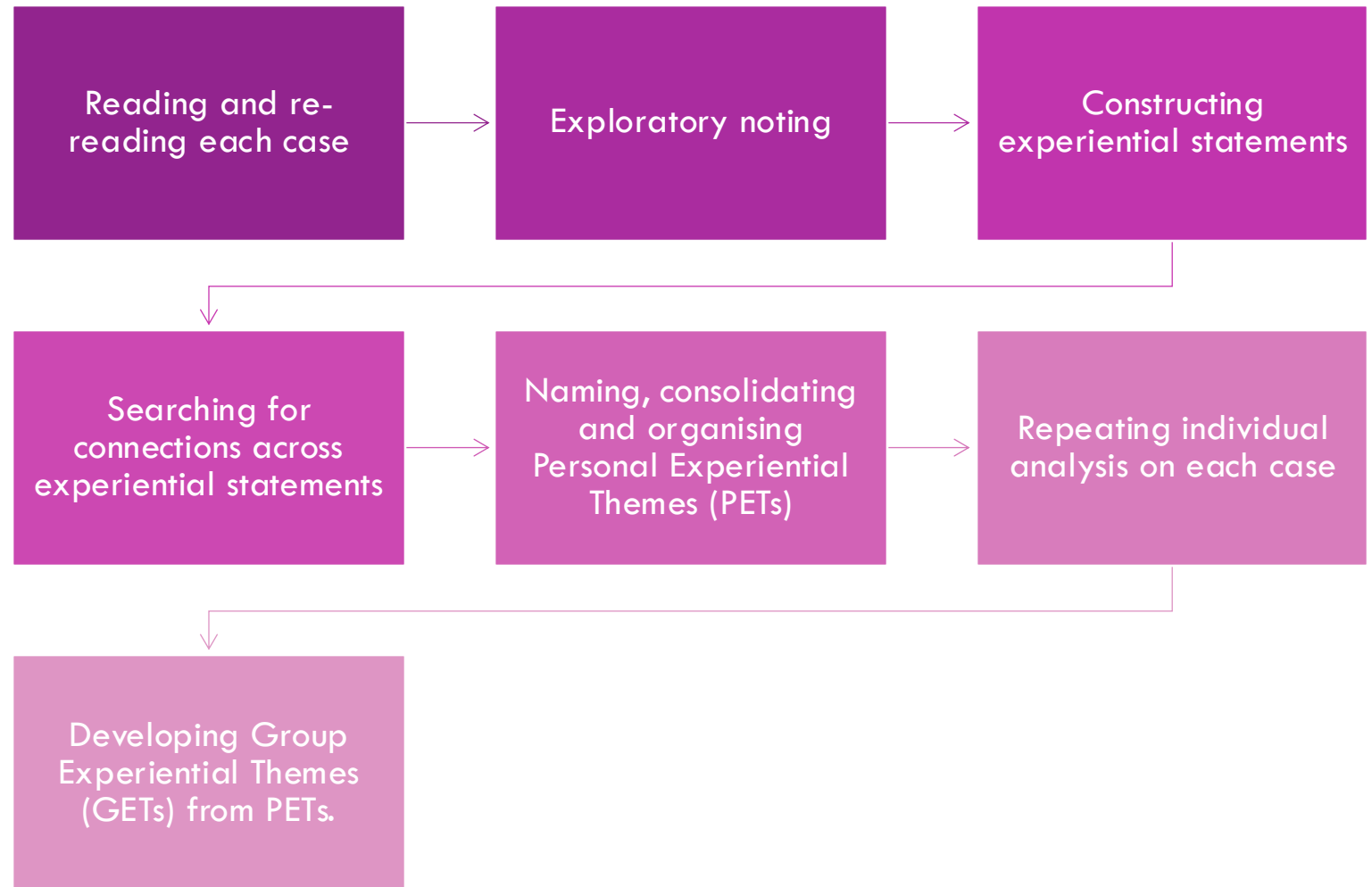
IDEOGRAPHY

- IPA is concerned with how particular people have experienced particular events, making specific statements regarding the participants' experience.
- Examining each case in detail, not generalising, but very cautiously making generalised claims.
- Results present the participants' convergences and divergences of the experience.
- Set apart from the usual nomothetic approach in psychology resulting in probabilistic claims.

(Smith and Osborn, 2024, p. 27)



SEVEN STEP ANALYSIS



(Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022, pp. 75-107)

FOUR INDICATORS OF HIGH QUALITY IPA



Developing an engaging, progressing story or narrative.



A robust focus on the experience and existential meaning of transcripts.



Exploring the significance, with thorough analysis and interpretation of participants words.



Paying close attention to the shared experiences, but also the individuality of the participants experience.

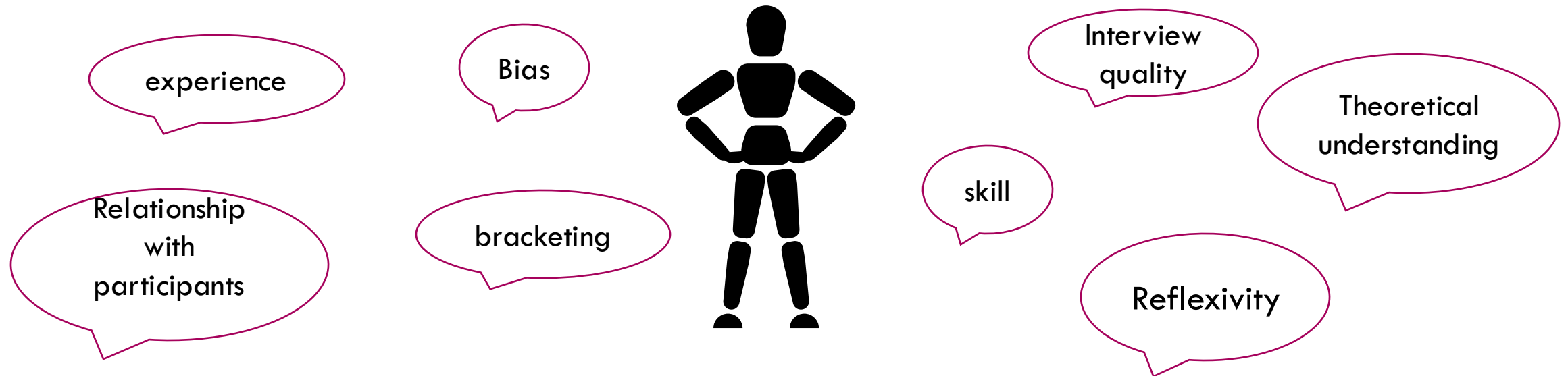
(Nizza, Farr and Smith, 2021)

STRENGTHS

- Rich in-depth data interpretation, the small sample size allows for a thorough case by case analysis.
- Careful selection of participants for whom the research question has significance which provides detailed data from the participants, favouring depth over the breadth of the research. (Smith and Osborn, 2024, pp. 28-29)
- Offers structure for analysis which is intended to be flexible (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, p. 77)
- Relatively accessible with numerous published methods and examples to draw upon (Larkin and Thompson, 2012, p101)
- Data collection methods are flexible and the choice of the researcher
- Updated and evolving (Smith, 2011; Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014; Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022)

LIMITATIONS

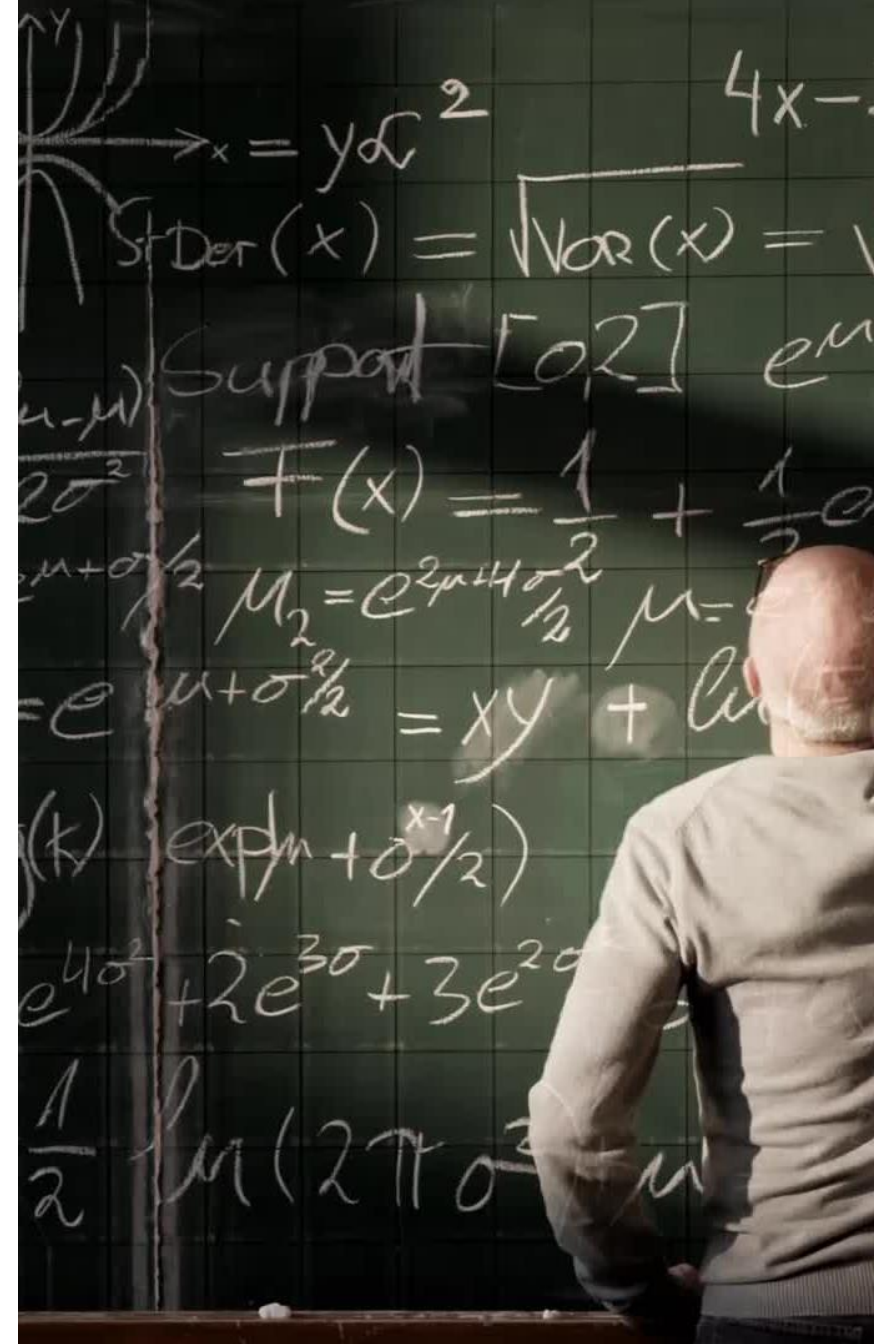
Competence of the researcher



- The IPA researcher needs to be openminded, flexible, patient, empathic and willing to enter into and respond to the participants world (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022, p. 51).
- Smith's (2011) assessment of the quality of published IPA studies found 18% to be unacceptable.

THEORETICAL CRITICISM

- There has been much debate regarding the theory and method of IPA
Georgi (2010) points out, what he considers 4 shortcomings in response to IPA's inception:
 - The existence of steps contradict the claim the method is non-prescriptive.
 - Questions whether working in a personal way meets the demands of science.
 - On the claim there are no rules, he asserts all human scientists adopting a hermeneutical approach must specify some rules to assist the researcher in their analyses.
 - The risk of bias is heightened by the researcher not having to account for all of the raw data.





Giorgi's aforementioned (2010) response to IPA seems emotive in the language used.



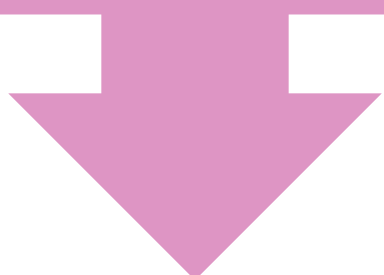
The debate has continued questioning the theoretical background, Gyollai (2019) claims IPA fails to utilize some concepts of phenomenological philosophy and misinterprets others.



The concept of bracketing in the early stages of analysis are questioned and call into doubt IPAs understanding of the hermeneutic circle (Gyollai, 2019).

DISSERTATION TOPIC

Exploring how personal loss, grief,
and or bereavement affects the
psychotherapist and their practice.



Why this particular question?

Personal
experience in
therapy and
practice.

The
therapeutic
relationship

Convergence
and
divergence of
experience

Other
therapists
experience.

“The reality is that you will grieve forever. You will not ‘get over’ the loss of a loved one; you will learn to live with it. You will heal and you will rebuild yourself around the loss you have suffered. You will be whole again but you will never be the same. Nor should you be the same nor would you want to.”

(Kubler-Ross and Kessler, 2014, p.230)

WHY IPA?

The topic according to Larkin and Thompson (2012, p. 103) should matter to the participant. Grief and loss present us with a personal, embodied and unique experience to explore.

There are many examples of IPA studies exploring grief and loss which capture a richness and depth of the participants experience.

‘Loss, Grief, and Growth: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Experiences of Trauma in Asylum Seekers and Refugees’ (Taylor et al, 2024)

‘Something Lost, Something Gained: Experiences of Psychological Therapists Bereaved of a Parent in Childhood’ (Kingston and Nel, 2024)

‘Helpful aspects of bereavement counselling: An interpretative phenomenological analysis’ (Simonsen and Cooper, 2015)

“The bereaved therapist speaks”. An interpretative phenomenological analysis of humanistic therapists’ experiences of a significant personal bereavement and its impact upon their therapeutic practice: An exploratory study’ (Broadbent, 2013)

WHY IPA?

- Other methods have been used to examine similar topic areas:
 - 'When a Music Therapist Grieves' (Sato, 2020).
 - 'Fear of losing it: an auto-ethnographic case study exploring re-triggered loss experiences during psychotherapy training' (Bateson et al, 2021).
- IPA's structure, reflexivity and use of a small homogenous selection of participants and ideographic focus would fit well with the question I wish to explore.

ETHICS

- Informed consent
- potential risks
- Making clear the participants can withdraw at any stage
- Confidentiality (being upfront about who will have access and to what extent) and anonymity.
- Being a study that examines the personal experience at depth there is potential for emotional distress giving need to put measures in place for the participants safety and well being. (Tavakol and Sandars, 2025)
- Power imbalance

CONCLUSION

- IPA would provide an effective and challenging method to explore my chosen dissertation topic area.
- Allowing for a detailed investigation into how the participants have made meaning of their experiences of grief on their practice.
- The method will challenge myself as the researcher at every stage to provide the depth and richness of data required to produce meaningful results to add to the discussion.

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AI 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.