



Qualitative Methods

INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS (IPA)

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Aims of the Session.

- ▶ To explain the Assumption of IPA as a method of analysing qualitative data.
- ▶ To explain the Historical and Theoretical Background of IPA.
- ▶ The IPA approach and the key steps involved.
- ▶ Collecting Data.
- ▶ How to plan and conduct a good interview.
- ▶ Analyse and Report IPA
- ▶ The Reflexive Account.



IPA's Assumptions

IPA is derived from phenomenology.

Phenomenology:

“is interested in the world as it is experienced by human beings within particular contexts and at particular times” (Willig 2001: 50).



IPA's aims

- ▶ Through qualitative data, such as diaries or transcripts of interviews, IPA seeks to examine an individual's **perceptions (feelings, understandings)** about a situation or event.
- ▶ IPA then seeks to understand how these feelings are structured around **themes** (i.e. regularly reoccurring ideas or concerns).
- ▶ “The aim of IPA is to explore in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world, and the main currency for an IPA study is the meaning that particular experiences, events, and states hold for participants” – Smith and Osborn (2015, p 25)



Historical and Theoretical Background.

- ▶ IPA was developed by Jonathan Smith (1996).
- ▶ Informed by Phenomenological Philosophy.
 - ▶ Detailed examination of the participant's **lived experience** – individual perception of an account or event.
- ▶ IPA also emphasises that the research exercise is a dynamic process with an **active** role of the researcher in that process.
- ▶ Taking in an insider's perspective
 - ▶ Researchers own conceptions are required to make sense of the other personal world.



Interpretative Phenomenological analysis

- ▶ IPA attempts to analyse an individual's experiences in order to understand the world from their point of view.
- ▶ IPA tries to discover how individuals organise their perceptions.
- ▶
- ▶ The method assumes perceptions are themed. That is, when people talk about their experiences, there are ideas or topics that they return to again and again.
- ▶ Individuals may or may not be aware of these themes.
- ▶ The interviewee NOT the interviewer is the expert.



Interpretative Phenomenological analysis

- ▶ I = Interpretative – The interviewer / analyser must INTERPRET the perceptions of the narrative to understand the lived experience.
- ▶
- ▶ P = Phenomenological – The Narrative / Interview will account for a specific phenomena
- ▶ Analysis – The Analysis Process.



Interpretative Phenomenological analysis

- ▶ IPA has a theoretical commitment to the person as a cognitive, linguistic, affective and physical being.
- ▶ Assumes a chain of connection between what is said, the participant's thinking and their emotional state.
- ▶ This though can be complicated (and IPA is aware of this).
 - ▶ People do not wish to self-disclose, struggle to express what they are saying.
- ▶ Interpret their emotional state from what the participants says.



Interpretative Phenomenological analysis

- ▶ Another theoretical underpinning is ideography.
- ▶ IPA is interested in the detailed examination of particularly cases, how particular people have experienced particular events.
- ▶ Not generalisations.
- ▶ That doesn't mean to say the IPA ONLY involves case studies.

Topics of Phenomenological Research & IPA



Being victimized (Fischer & Wertz 1979)

Anger (Stevick, 1971)

Learning (Giorgi 1975, 1985)

Feeling understood (Van Kaam 1959)

All cited in Willig (2013)



The IPA Approach.

- ▶ Small sample sizes – to give a case by case analysis.
- ▶ Tries to find a fairly homogenous sample – purposive sampling.
- ▶ There is no right or wrong answer when it comes to sample size
 - ▶ Depend on how much detail you (as researcher) put to each case when doing the analysis / write up.
- ▶ Interpretative cycle.
 - ▶ Reading the topic of investigation, but then moves to entering the participants world (but aside any knowledge or assumption)
 - ▶ Researcher becomes a naïve listener as the participant unfolds their story.
 - ▶ Analysis must be grounded in the words of the participant.



The Key Steps

1. Choosing a topic/research question

2. Constructing an interview schedule

3. Locating participants

4. Conducting an interview or interviews

5. Transcribing the interview material

6. Analysis of data

7. Writing Up



Collecting Data....

- ▶ Most IPA studies have been conducted through semi-structured interviews.
- ▶ Although you can utilise other mechanisms.
 - ▶ E.g. Diary Extracts / Personal Accounts.
- ▶ High quality data is critical for high quality IPA analysis.



Why the Semi Structured Interview.

- ▶ Attempt to establish rapport with the participant/s
- ▶ Unlike a structured interview the ordering of the questions is less important.
- ▶ The interviewer is freer to probe interesting areas that arise.
- ▶ The interviewer can follow the participants viewpoints / interests or concerns.



Conducting the Interview Schedule.

- ▶ Why Important?
 - ▶ Forces the researcher to think about what we think might cover.
 - ▶ Thinking in advance of the phrasing of the question

- ▶ What an interview schedule might cover.
 - ▶ Think about the key issues you want to cover (often based on research) – use subheadings in your schedule.
 - ▶ Put the topics in the most appropriate sequences (e.g. leave sensitive topics to later in the interview).
 - ▶ Appropriate questions related to each area.
 - ▶ Think of probes and prompts which could follow from answers.



Conducting the Interview Schedule.

- ▶ Avoid leading questions.
- ▶ Avoid closed questions.
- ▶ Try to have as little prompting as possible.
- ▶ Funnelling
 - ▶ Start broad then have more specific questions.
- ▶ Piloting



Conducting the Interview Schedule – Examples.

- ▶ Make sure questions are neutral.
 - ▶ Bad – Do you think the prime minister is doing a good job?
 - ▶ Better – What do you think the prime minister's record in office so far?

- ▶ Avoid Jargon or words that participants might not understand (but know your target participants).
 - ▶ Bad - What do you think of the human genome project?
 - ▶ Better – What do you know about recent developments in genetics?



Conducting the Interview Schedule – Examples.

- ▶ Use open and not closed questions.
 - ▶ Bad – Should the Manager resign?
 - ▶ Better – What do you think the manager should do now?
- ▶ “Tell me about”.
- ▶ Learn your interview schedule – don’t constantly refer to it in the actual interview – use as a mental prompt.



The Interview itself.

- ▶ Things to consider.
- ▶ Timing
 - ▶ Sometimes Interviews can last more than an hour.
 - ▶ Avoid interruption
 - ▶ Try to be alone with respondent.
 - ▶ Sometimes cannot happen (e.g. young children as participants)
- ▶ Location of the Interview.
 - ▶ Familiar to the Participant.
 - ▶ Again sometimes ethical / practical reasons this cannot happen.
- ▶ Your role as the interviewer.
 - ▶ Facilitate to guide not dictate what will happen.
- ▶ Some Tips.
 - ▶ Try not to rush in too quickly.
 - ▶ Use Minimal Probes
 - ▶ Ask one question at a time.
 - ▶ Consider this in interview schedule.
 - ▶ Monitor the effect of the interview on the respondent.



The Interview Itself....

- ▶ Remember.....
- ▶ It does not have to follow the sequence of the schedule.
- ▶ Not every question in the schedule NEED to be asked.
- ▶ Possible to move away from the schedule
- ▶ Always remember your overall research question though if you wish to move it back to the topics of the schedule.
- ▶ Important to judge the participant.

Conducting analysis



- ▶ IPA involves searching for themes in interview or other qualitative data.
- ▶ Themes are: “recurrent ideas or topics which can be detected in the material which is being analysed, and which come up on more than one occasion in a particular set of data.” (Hayes 2000:173)



Analysing data from IPA research

For IPA, analysing data for themes involves three main steps:

1. Making brief notes indicating points of interest in the data
2. Indicating any reoccurring themes that arise in the interview.
3. Grouping the themes under wider headings or categories. These are 'superordinate themes'



Analysis

- ▶ IPA attempts to analyse an individual's experiences in order to understand the world from their point of view.
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Stages of Analysis.

- ▶ Willig (2013) identifies five key stages.
- ▶ The researchers initial encounters with the text.
- ▶ Identification of Themes
- ▶ Clustering of Themes
- ▶ Production of a Summary Table.
- ▶ Reflexive Account.



The Process of IPA research

- ▶ Stage 1 – Reading and Re-reading.
 - ▶ Read the transcript a number of times to become intimate with the account.
- ▶ Stage 2 – Initial Noting
 - ▶ Use right hand margin to document interesting data / thoughts in the form of key words / phrases.
- ▶ Stage 3 – Developing emergent themes.
 - ▶ Emerging themes identified in the left hand margin in a chronological manner
 - ▶ Themes checked back with primary source material
- ▶ Stage 4 – Searching for connections across emergent themes.
 - ▶ Connections looked for between themes – **Superordinate themes identified**
 - ▶ Table of themes produced and Superordinate themes given a name / label.
 - ▶ Identifier added to each instance in the table.



Lets Break this down further....

Analysing data for themes involves three main steps:

1. Making brief notes indicating points of interest in the data (use right hand margin)
2. Indicating any reoccurring themes that arise in the interview.
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Initial Encounter.

- ▶ Similar to the Thematic Analysis approach called “familiarisation”.
- ▶ Ask yourself questions when you first read the transcript.
- ▶ Make notes as you go.
- ▶ Record observations and Insights
- ▶ Try to read in a curious and questioning way.
- ▶ Make notes on your OVERALL observations on the data set.



Initial Encounter

- ▶ Some things to consider.
- ▶ Why are they making sense of things in THIS way? (and not another way).
- ▶ What assumptions underpin this account?
- ▶ What type of world view does this account rely on?
- ▶ How would I feel in the situation?
- ▶ What implications does this account have?
- ▶ The style of writing.



Stage 2: Identification of themes

- ▶ After an impressionistic first encounter with the text, analysis becomes more systematic.
- ▶ The text is organized into themes



Remember what are themes...

- ▶ IPA involves searching for themes in interview or other qualitative data.
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Stage 3: Clustering of Themes

- ▶ When first analysing a text, the researcher may identify a great number of themes. Often, some of these themes will have common reference points. Perhaps they may express a common underlying concern or topic. The next stage is to cluster the themes into 'super ordinate' themes.
- ▶ According to Willig these superordinate themes, or clusters, "capture the main categories of meaning that the author is using in his account of change and transformation" (Willig 2013: 90)



Stage 4: Production of a summary table

- ▶ A summary table is produced to obtain a clear overview of clusters, subordinate themes and related quotations
- ▶ If you write up an IPA report, the results/discussion section should contain a summary table.
- ▶ See Example on next slide.....



Example of a Summary Table.

Remember to
Present your table
in APA format (As
shown here) and
also label your
table.

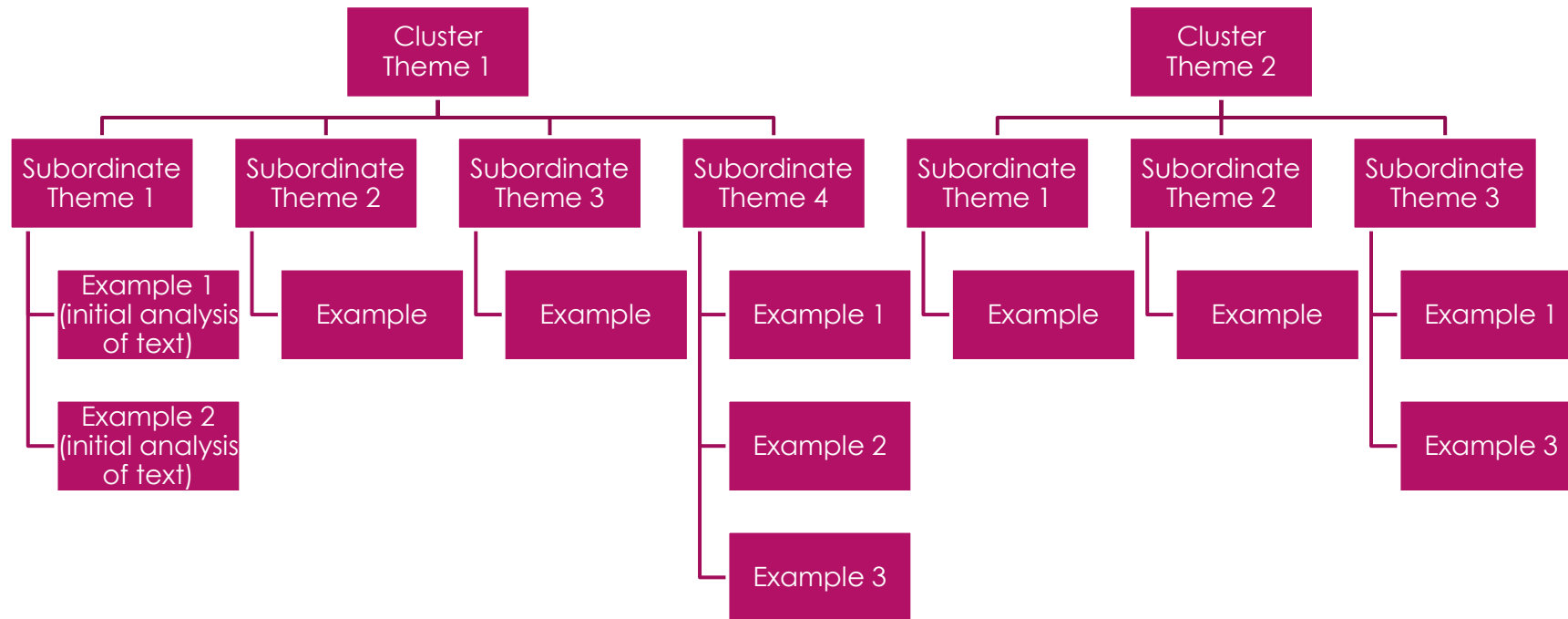
Superordinate Themes	Subordinate Themes	Quote Keyword	Page / Line Number
Superordinate (Cluster) Theme 1	Subordinate Theme 1	Blah Blah	Page 4; Line 20.
	Subordinate Theme 2		
	Subordinate Theme 3		
	Subordinate Theme 4		
Superordinate (Cluster) Theme 2.	Subordinate Theme 1	Blah Blah	Page 10; Line 3 etc.
	Subordinate Theme 2		
	Subordinate Theme 3		



Diagrammatical Representation of Results

- ▶ Not compulsory, but can look good.
- ▶ Use of flow charts to display hierarchical nature of analysis.
- ▶ From the superordinate themes (at the top of the diagram) through to the initial analysis of the data, via the subordinate themes.
 - ▶ You will have this information at hand anyway (with the table).

Example





How to do Flow Charts quickly and effectively.

- ▶ Microsoft Word is your friend.
- ▶ Insert Smart Art Graphics
- ▶ Then when in SmartArt – just click on Hierarchy and flow chart options will appear.
- ▶ The previous slide took less than 2 minutes!



Stage 5 – Reflexive Account.

- ▶ Remember with IPA, Smith and Colleagues highlighted the active role of the researcher in the research process. Therefore for an IPA study, researchers will also often present a more personal reflexive account.
- ▶ During the data collection period it is considered good practice to keep a journal logging your own very personal thoughts of feelings when conducting the research.
- ▶ You can write the account in the first person and this expected to be a personal account.
 - ▶ Why you chose the topic area.
 - ▶ Practical Issues?
 - ▶ What questions were challenging?
 - ▶ Ethical issues or issues linked to your own history.



Stage 5: Reflexive Account

- ▶ Reflexive accounts include personal statements about:
- ▶ Motivations for conducting the research
- ▶ Feelings about the research process
- ▶ Interests in the research area



Features of a Reflexive Account

- ▶ A reflexive account also includes questions of method, including:
- ▶ How useful the method has been for answering the research question
- ▶ What limits have been placed on the ways in which the data has been interpreted?
- ▶ What other methods might have been used to answer the research question?
- ▶ What might have influenced the data?



Reflexive Account Example – From Willig's example.

Students can find qualitative research 'woolly', confusing and, at worst, irrelevant. I chose Willig's example because, like her book, it is clearly written and a relatively easy introduction to qualitative methods.

Previous years work on gender display in advertisements wasn't written up by many students. Students might find analysis of texts easier and more obviously relevant than some other methods such as participant observation and visual analysis

I was concerned that the data (and the young man) seemed a bit eccentric and contrived. Is it really an extract from a diary or did Willig invent it?



The example also has a number of limitations. It is purely inductive. There is no attempt to link the material to psychological theories about, for instance, life span research or adolescent development.

Willig's interpretation is also limited. I have an interest in gender differences. In some respect, the young man's account seems stereotypically masculine – life is seen as an action adventure (e.g. “riding on a wave”). Would young women's accounts be different? Or am I being stereotypical?



IPA Summary

- ▶ Is interested in an individual's lived experience
- ▶ Uses open ended, semi-structured questions to elicit personal accounts
- ▶ Analyses accounts for themes
- ▶ Interprets themes to understand the individual's world view