

Research Methods II

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Some tips before data collection...

Review your pilot or first interview!

Top tip: transcribe your first interview before you do any others!

- ▶ Is the schedule working as intended?
- ▶ How did your participants react?
- ▶ How did you handle the situation?
- ▶ How did the interview feel?
- ▶ What do you wish you'd done differently?

Data Transformation

- ▶ Transcript example from Larkin (2001)

R: So I filled in the form, and it came back and I scored 49 [PAUSE] Thought, that's quite good, 49, not a pass but you know, not bad at all - can't be an alcoholic.

I: [Yeah]

R: And then they told me it was out of 50 [BOTH LAUGH] So - for some unknown reason, all the questionnaires here are marked out of 50 - so I scored 49 out of 50 and thought, 'Fuck. They've got a point.' You know, they'd diagnosed me as an alcoholic, and I had a very high reading. So [PAUSE] I still didn't believe them and there's still a certain amount of/ there's x per cent of doubt in my mind.

- ▶ *Top tip: Make notes after each interview; keep a research diary!*

Transcription

- ▶ Can take a LONG time
 - Expect approx. 10hrs of transcription time per 1hr interview
- ▶ Consider your formatting for workable transcripts
 - Line numbers; margins; line spacing
 - Blank template on Moodle...
- ▶ Transcribe the **whole** recording; include any and all semantic content
- ▶ Transcribe only major prosodic features
 - E.g., SIGHS/LAUGHS; interruptions and overlaps; ums and ahhs; and not length of pauses – unless important

Data Management

- ▶ Anonymise information as you transcribe
- ▶ Store securely
- ▶ BACK IT UP!
- ▶ At each stage of the process, think about not only what you will **do** next, but how you will **document it** (create an audit trail)

Preparing for Analysis

- ▶ Aim of qualitative analysis:
 - Develop an *organised, detailed, plausible, and transparent* account of the *meaning* of the data

Preparing for Analysis

- ▶ Objectives:

1. To identify patterns in the data, and eventually to draw these together in to some kind of structure
 - e.g., table of themes
2. To produce a narrative account of this structure for the analysis section of your report

RECAP: Semi-structured interviews

Semi-Structured Interviews

- ▶ Use a schedule (like fully structured interviews) but:
 - Opportunity to establish rapport with participant
 - Ordering/phrasing of questions not as important
 - Follow up / probe interesting areas that arise
 - Respondent shares more closely in how interview goes

Semi-Structured Interviews

- ▶ Smith (1995):

1. Attempt to establish rapport with participant
2. Ordering of questions less important
3. Interview free to probe or prompt discussion of interesting issues that may arise (e.g., how did that make you feel?)
4. The interviewer can follow the respondents interests or concerns (e.g., can you tell me more about that?)

Semi-Structured Interviews

► Smith (1995):

5. Questions to be open-ended, rather than closed (e.g., 'What should the PM do now?' rather than 'Should the PM resign?')
6. Questions should be neutral and not leading (e.g., 'How do you think the PM is doing?' not 'Do you think the PM is doing a bad job?')
7. Questions to be framed in the language and terms of the participant

Semi- Structured Interviews

Pros

- ▶ More natural
- ▶ Allows for more flexibility
- ▶ Can go into novel areas
- ▶ Obtain richer data

Cons

- ▶ Loss of control
- ▶ Time
- ▶ Harder to analyse
- ▶ Can be personally demanding

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis [IPA]

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis [IPA]

- ▶ Qualitative methodological tool and form of analysis
- ▶ Explores how an individual makes sense of their life world
- ▶ Individual viewpoint and experience (phenomenological)

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis [IPA]

- ▶ When we talk about experience in IPA research, we are talking about “something that matters to the participant”, and something of which they have some understanding
- ▶ We then seek to understand **their perspective** on it

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis [IPA]

- ▶ Interest in personal perception of an object or event
- ▶ Recognises that access to a participants world is dependent on the researcher's own conceptions which are needed to make sense of that other personal world
- ▶ Double interpretation – co-construction

IPA - Hermeneutics

- ▶ **HERMENEUTICS:** The study and theory of *interpretation*
- ▶ Understanding:
 - Core of human existence; cyclical process
- ▶ Language:
 - Means through which we get to understanding
- ▶ Negotiated understanding (through conversation) reveals the “things themselves”

IPA - Hermeneutics

- ▶ Explanation and understanding – two modes of knowing...
- ▶ “Human beings therefore have two different tasks. One is to construct and *explain* nature as an ordered whole governed by causal laws from the impressions we receive. The other is to return from nature to life itself where there is *meaning*, value and purpose.”

(Schmidt, 2006, p.36)

Doing IPA

Design:

- ▶ Suitable research questions:
 - Existential moment (e.g., crisis, diagnosis)
 - Experience at varied levels
 - Life transitions

Sampling:

- ▶ Why homogenous?
- ▶ How many...?

Formulating Research Questions

The aims and research questions in IPA research tend to focus upon a person's **experience and/or understanding** of particular phenomena in particular contexts

Other common focal points for IPA researchers are the **perceptions and views** of participants (i.e., as alternatives to 'understandings').

Formulating Research Questions

E.g.,

- What is it like to be a recovering addict within a self-help 12-step program?
 - How do people receiving support from an Early Intervention Service make sense of their experiences of auditory hallucinations?
 - How is a diagnosis of HIV experienced?
- ▶ Set yourselves some CLEAR OBJECTIVES, so that you know when you are finished.

What is a suitable research question for an IPA project?

- ▶ Not hypotheses...
- ▶ Exploratory and not explanatory ('explore', 'investigate', 'examine')
- ▶ Focus on meaning and sense-making
- ▶ Grounded in an appropriate epistemological position (usually suggested by focus on experiences, and/or understandings in a particular context)
- ▶ Answerable.. And worth answering!

IPA: Overview of Analysis

1

Close interpretative reading of first case

2

Establish themes

3

Repeat for subsequent cases

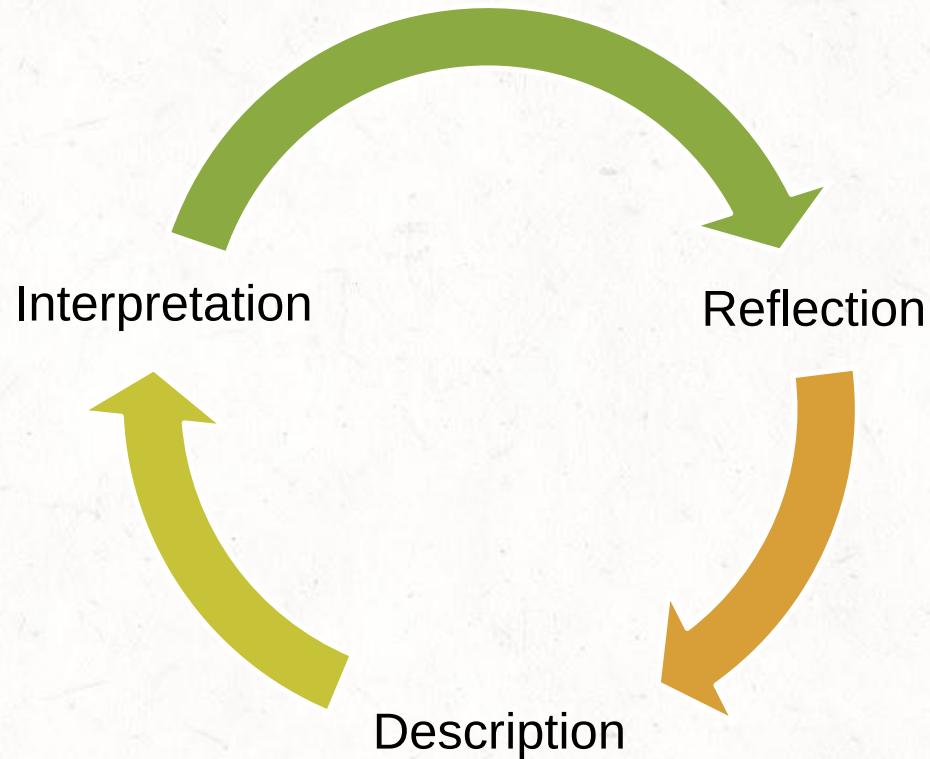
4

Explore patterns across cases

5

Write up account – look to convergence and individuality

Process of synthesis and analysis



IPA: Step 1

Reading and re-reading the transcript

- ▶ Ensures participant is the focus of the analysis
- ▶ Allows overall mapping of interview structure and narrative
 - Develop a mental model of the person and the content
- ▶ Allows awareness of how interview dynamics shape the interview and highlights areas of specific detail

IPA: Step 2

Initial coding

- ▶ The most detailed and time consuming step
- ▶ Researcher essentially notes anything of interest within the transcript (margin)
- ▶ Begins to identify the specific ways each participant talks about, thinks about, and understand their experiences

Alcohol-main
substance
Early recognition
of the problem

"I wasn't ready
to listen to it"

"I was the only
coloured person
and young"

"I was fighting it
so much"

Related to the
"insanity of
drinking"

Morning fears

Four Horsemen
of terror metaphor
(religious background)

Temporality of
"every day"

L: Okay, um, let's start with, how you started in the program?

R: Um, I started in the program, initially, um, when I was 24. My friend recommended it to me because of my substance misuse, which was primarily alcohol at that point. It was, you know, it was leading me into a lot of damage and I kind of knew, then, I had a problem. And, um, I went to meetings and stuff, AA meetings, and, I used to go there and I didn't really relate to what people were saying.

L: So these were the first meetings?

I: Yeah, and I stopped drinking for a few days, but then, drank again, and. That, yeah, it was through a friend basically, he was in the program already and he introduced me. But I wasn't, I wasn't really ready to listen to it, or hear what people were saying, because, um. One, I was the only coloured person in the meeting (laughter). And, two, everyone seemed to be a lot older than me, quite a lot older than me. Up, um, in their forties at least, and I used to go there and listen to these people, and, thought, oh, I can't be one of these people, you know, because they are like, old and they're all white (laughter). And, I just didn't understand it. I did not understand it at all. But, that was probably my first introduction.

L: To the program?

I: Yeah. But at the same time, even though I was fighting it so much, there were certain things that people said, that I really, really, related to as well.

L: Like what?

I: Like, um, you know, just the stories and the insanity of drinking. Waking up and not knowing what you've done the night before, and that feeling of terror, loneliness, bewilderment and despair. You know, like, what did I do? All the panic, you know, all the fear. That morning fear, I really related to that at first.

L: Morning fear?

I: Morning fear is. In the program they call it the four horsemen.

L: Um, I don't know what it is?

I: Terror, and, it is just an expression, you know, the four horsemen, like people have expressions for certain things. But, um, these four horsemen are terror, you know, my god, look what I did! Loneliness, oh my god, I'm the only one in the world, why my life has messed up. Bewilderment, how has this happened to me again? And despair, is, will I be able to stop? Will this ever change?

L: Okay

I: Yeah, every day, that was the same for me. My dad used to come into my room and swear at me, fuck, what have you done. Why don't you stop drinking? Why can, why don't you just drink beer? Why you keep drinking whisky? And {silence} and, I really didn't have an answer. It was just lies. My whole life was lying, basically, at that point.

L: Was it?

Early bottle-wards
help not refuse it

Finds different
from AA people

Struggles with
recognition

Relating to AA
stories

Morning fear

Vivid portrayal
of the
problem

Temporality of
drinking -
every day

Impact on
family

IPA: Step 2

Initial coding

- ▶ Think about:
 - Description and content
 - Language use
 - Also consider HOW language was used in places - paralanguage. Make notes as you go along.

IPA: Step 2

Initial coding

*Being in NA is
challenging*

*Wants to disclose/
tell everyone but
sometimes doesn't*

Conflict

*"but the other part
of me"*

Mixed feelings

Tom: It is really difficult being in this fellowship 'cause I kind of want to tell everyone... but there are times when I don't want to tell anyone. But it's like I want to tell everyone, like I've found this way of life and its really great and its really helping me. But the other part of me doesn't want people to say why do you say that and say 'cause I was very fucking unhappy and so fucked up

IPA: Step 2

Example of initial coding (focus on language use - metaphor)

It's like when you see a **rocket going into the sky** and then as it breaks the atmosphere and the bits fall off it and you just see the fuselage ... I've seen myself change, I've seen other people looking at me differently and they're happy that I've changed, there was someone who said to me something, she said you're growing into yourself.

IPA: Step 3

Developing emergent themes (turning initial coding into psychological themes)

Tom: It is really difficult being in this fellowship 'cause I kind of want to tell everyone... but there are times when I don't want to tell anyone. But it's like I want to tell everyone, like I've found this way of life and its really great and its really helping me. But the other part of me doesn't want people to say why do you say that and say 'cause I was very fucking unhappy and so fucked up

Ambivalence

Fear of disclosure

Enhanced self-consciousness

IPA: Step 4

Searching for connections across interpreted themes

- ▶ The end point of identifying themes is not a one dimensional description of what the participant is thinking about or has experienced
- ▶ It is the development of a map of how the researcher thinks the P is thinking

IPA: Step 4

Searching for connections across themes

- ▶ Consider the relationships between themes
 - Do some cluster?
 - Are some opposites?
 - Are some more important than others?
- ▶ This 'map' provides a structure for writing up results

IPA: Step 4

example of table of themes

Theme: Early days in recovery

Fear of disclosure

Ambivalence

Identification with NA people

Being busy

Setting new temporality

Theme: Sense of self in early recovery

Finding your own place: the meaning of recovery

Changing sense of self

Addict identity

Theme: Maintaining early recovery

Receiving unconditional support

Developing a new social network

Praying as a self-reflective process

IPA: Step 5

Recurrent themes (cross-case comparison)

- ▶ Repeat exploratory analysis with each transcript
- ▶ Repeat thematic analysis with each transcript
- ▶ Rigor of this process ensures new themes can be interpreted

IPA: Table of themes

Table of Themes for Group-Study 2

	Tom	Mike	Dan	Arjun
<i>1. Motives for drinking and using drugs</i>				
Enhancing sociability	3.28	4.09		2.05
Coping with feelings	4.14	2.22		2.10
Awareness of the consequences			4.12	2.26
<i>2. Challenges of beginning the recovery process</i>				
'But the other part of me': Ambivalence	5.01	5.10	3.07	
Conflictive identification with NA people	5.22	11.28	2.29	
Being busy	11.19	14.05	10.17	12.09
Setting a new temporality	7.8	9.18	10.12	14.11
<i>3. Maintaining recovery</i>				
Experiencing cravings	07.43	11.25	12.05	10.09
Missing out on the drugs/alcohol scene	12.20	07.03		
Becoming honest			04.31	09.21
'It give that feeling of belonging': NA's support	9.10	13.01		14.16/18.15
Developing a new social network	7.31	10.04	11.17	18.28
Writing	13.16		7.09	
Praying		8.11	11.31	
<i>4. Changing sense of self</i>				
'Being me and doing what I'm doing': Authenticity	7.14	06.13	04.22	08.23
Identity as an addict	03.31	06.13	13.01	

Final Summary

1. Reading and re-reading; familiarising self with transcript
2. Initial coding
3. Develop emergent themes using coding/notes
4. Connecting themes / clustering themes
5. Repeat for each additional transcript and compare themes between transcripts

Smith, J. A., Flower, P., Larkin, M.
(2009), *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis:
Theory, Method and Research*. London: Sage

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Any Questions?