**Booming Clangs and Whispering Ghosts; Attending to the Reflexive Echoes in IPA Research**

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**Abstract**

In this paper, we propose that reflexivity can be revealed through a deliberate adjunct to the IPA process. This adjunct, which we refer to as ‘echoes’, is a mixture of the participant’s and researcher’s words and experiences resonating with each other during the research process. We argue that explicitly recognising echoes gives a heightened sensitivity to both the researcher’s own place and being in the research, and to the *other* in relation to the researcher. Exploring the echoes enables the researcher to work with, rather than dismiss, their own presuppositions and exposes greater phenomenological sensibility toward the research subject and is-ness of that phenomenon. The purpose of this paper is thus to outline how attending to echoes is a strategy for IPA researchers to promote, and overtly journal, reflexivity as central within their research practices. To exemplify how echoes can be used, practical examples from a doctoral research project are given to demonstrate how resonance can explicate reflexivity in the IPA process.

**Keywords:**

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, Qualitative Research, Reflexivity, Rigour, Writing

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**Introduction and context**

Researchers using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) aim to provide insight into the lived experience, and as a methodology, IPA seeks sense-making of lived social phenomena. Consequently, IPA researchers are both ‘part of’ and ‘apart from’ their research. Reflexivity, as a concept, aids this dual perspective of being both inside and outside the research by informing self-awareness and analysis with the inclusion of the ‘other’. In this situation, the ‘other’ presents opportunity to consciously compare, contrast and connect the researcher-self to the research other and inform researcher-led decisions. A reflexive approach therefore welcomes the ‘other’ as an inherent part of the research process. Indeed, the Heideggarian thoughts of *Dasein*, denoting ‘being there’, suggests that our very nature is meaningfully connected to our context, and Finlay (2003) suggests that reflexivity can be described as an attitude, a deliberate mechanism to bring forward a thoughtful, considered and conscious attentiveness of the researcher in relation to their presence in research practice.

However, reflexivity is often discussed in the literature in broad terms (Engward & Davis, 2015) with limited practical guidance for process or implementation, which can be puzzling. Indeed, in the lead author’s (SG) IPA doctoral study, she became increasingly aware of the echoes in the data that resonated with her life, sometimes as booms, whispers and clangs, which made her think about what she was ‘doing’ with that data. To maintain methodological fidelity, SG had find a way to overtly evidence how her developing interpretations were grounded in the participant’s life world. From academic discussion with her doctoral supervisor (HE), the need to add to IPA became emergent and central within the ‘doing’ of the analysis. Hence, the context of this paper is to share ideas as lived from SG’s IPA research, presenting examples of how echoes were heard, and how these were explained, embraced and used. SG previously worked as an Occupational Therapist in mental health services, now in her role as an academic course lead, her research explored the experiences of the alumni of an undergraduate mental health course, which is delivered via distance learning. Using semi-structured telephone interviews, she wanted to know ‘what the course was like’ from the graduates’ perspective and if the course had any longer-term impact. It must be noted that this paper is not an exhaustive account of this research, but rather a means of initiating discussion about ‘doing’ IPA, and specifically the analytic juncture between Steps 3 and 4, where what we term as ‘echoes’ is a means of explicating reflexivity in the IPA process.

**Reflexive Echoes**

In this paper, we suggest a useful adjunct to Step 3 of Smith, Flowers and Larkin, (2009) six analytic steps of IPA. The inclusion of Sub-step 3b *Attend to* *Echoes* (see Table 1)strives to deliberately highlight the reflexive dimension of IPA by enabling the researcher to clearly position themselves as the data analysis shifts from descriptive observations into deeper interpretive work. In IPA, Step 3: Developing Emergent Themes is pivotal in the analytic process as it is the juncture between description and interpretation (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006) and provides an intellectual space to begin to establish what the descriptive data means to, and for, the research and the researcher. We propose that specific reflexive consideration at this stage is a way to magnify the descriptive data provided by the participants, while preserving the idiographic nature of IPA. It is important to note however that the inclusion of Sub-step 3b *Attend to Echoes* does not negate the need for continual reflexive appraisal throughout the analysis, but rather encourages the researcher to survey the scene of their own understanding, grounded in the initial, descriptively-orientated data, before moving on. In this way, turning researcher attention to the echoes responds to Heidegger's ([1927] 2010) understanding of time, grasped in and of itself through the harmonious appreciation of the three dimensions of future, past and present. As a result, echoes as a concept encompasses the researcher’s own historicity and temporality, relayed on a spectrum from easily detectable, popping-into-mind thoughts to anomalous feelings, requiring clarification.

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| **Step** | **Process** |
| 1 | Read and re-read transcript to get to know the data |
| 2 | Make initial notes to systematically capture observations |
| 3 | Develop emerging (prototype) themes for each case |
| *3b* | *Attend to the reflexive echoes* |
| 4 | Search for connections across emergent themes for each case |
| 5 | Move to the next case |
| 6 | Look for patterns across cases  |

Table 1: Amendment to 6 Steps (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) showing inclusion of Sub-step 3b

The remaining paper aims to demonstrate the reasoning that has informed Sub-step 3b *Attend to Echoes* as both a concept and a process and is discussed in discrete stages. Note that from this point, Sally, as the lead author, will be presented as SG and in the first person as ‘I’ to present the focus of this paper, the thinking and doing of IPA. Hilary’s voice is reflected in the ‘we’, and as HE, to signify both discussions with Sally during doctoral supervisions and within the theoretical discussion of SG’s research.

1. Becoming aware of echoes

In Steps 1 and 2 of doing data analysis, I found the participant’s narrative ‘*rang bells’* with me at different times and with altering intensity; sometimes as mumbling murmurs, sometimes as chiming jangles, but these thoughts and feelings were always triggered by something. In this case, the ‘something’ of the participant’s words, ricocheting around my own, echoing features of ‘me’ - my personal and professional life. I became aware of these echoes during my initial listening and reading of the interview data, and through the use of journaling. My journaling took the form of jottings, annotations, and penned conversations with myself about what I was noticing and thinking. Over time, I found that some of my journal entries were easy to return to, while others made me uncomfortable; the whispering ghosts, recognisable when deep in thought, and often doing something other than the research. For example, an interviewee mentioned her work with mental health carers, and faint memories drifted into my mind, recollections of my former clinical encounters, concealed by the passing of years.

Alternatively, when facing the data directly, I found myself on occasion caught off-guard, due to the sudden closeness and familiarity of the experiences described. Here, booming clangs resounded from one of the participants’ descriptions of their working world burst into my consciousness, taking me back to a challenging time in my professional career, whilst instantaneously sparking my researcher-inquisitiveness. These echoes revealed how close, yet how far I was from the participants’ narratives, and moreover, how the participants, as the other, influenced my thinking. My attentiveness ripened to the highly personalised nature of locating the echoes and the significance of the temporal frame: what resonated with me at that point in time, may not have been the same in my past or future. Besides, ‘echoes’ are idiosyncratic and therefore unlikely to be picked up by another researcher, as evident in my doctoral supervision when HE asked me to ‘track back’ to the raw data, causing me to halt the progression to Step 4 and decipher these undertones, rumbles and booms. Through our supervisory conversations, I realised that I had to check the origins of my descriptive, linguistic and conceptual notes in order to preserve and extend the idiographic accounts by fixing my developing insights in the data. A reflexive tone to the supervisory dialogue surfaced, HE’s questioning channelled and challenged researcher awareness to vocalise inner world assumptions, observations and thinking. Maintaining a focussed discourse, set via the supervisory agenda setting process, sometimes specific or more generalised ideas bounced around the supervisory interaction increasing the reflexive engagement with the data, whilst perceptibly informing the transition from the personal to a shared level of understanding. As a researcher, SG welcomed the opportunity of stepping inside and outside of her thinking to find new perspectives and alternatives. Therefore, the ‘we’ of the supervisory process expounded and amplified the detection and decoding of the initial echoes, which in turn emphasised the need for detailed reflexive appraisal at each step of the analysis. At this analytic juncture, the intentional inclusion of Sub-step 3b allowed me to carefully consider my observations and preliminary conceptualisations, before heading further into the interpretation. The following discussion expands on how echoes can be used as a means of moving between description and interpretation.

1.1 Examples of becoming aware of echoes in IPA research

To begin the IPA analysis (Steps 1 and 2) I added descriptive, linguistic and conceptual annotations to each transcript in turn, and made thumbnail sketch observations in my journal. I travelled back and forth through the descriptive data gaining content, detail and context. What began as a narrow stream of words, brief statements and a few nebulous queries soon became a flood of comments and reflective questions. The more intimately the approach was adhered to, the more meaningful the reflexive process became (Finlay, 2011). My involvement with the data moved toward gathering abstract concepts which enabled me to begin to make sense of the trends of meaning contained within the data. This process felt endless at first, but it did intensify my alertness to the notes developing. For example, a participant’s comment *‘I hated school’* touched a raw nerve. This three word comment unexpectedly threw me into a dilemma, which I noted in my journal as:

*The echoes from the data stay rumbling around me. I’m back on the classroom mat while the other children play. I can either hide or dig into my own worldview and try to clear the analytic air. Reluctantly, I know what I have to do. Unpicking these intellectual obstructions and accustomed resonances between myself and the ‘other’ is hard going, I need to hear the participant’s story by sorting out the distracting sound of my own.*

This example illustrates the unpredictability of reflexivity. Without warning, thoughts and feelings rattle (some of which have little to do with the research purpose), leaving me to decide to either ignore or to examine what surfaces. As an IPA researcher looking into the participant’s world, I acknowledge that I must accept and hold my own position, whilst concentrating on the data. By taking on the challenge of decoding my own forgotten, often topsy-turvy reminiscences and un-checked assumptions, self-evaluation produced new thoughts and interpretations. In this sense, I could respond to Nagel’s (1974) notion that all views originate from somewhere, be it near or far, comfortable or uncomfortable. The learning for me in this instance was not to be weighed down by my experiences, but rather be willing to use them to find new ways of understanding the data.

In a second example, my own assumptive frame regarding the time and significance given to academic work is brought into sharp focus. A different participant described how while studying for his undergraduate degree, he and his young daughter would do ‘their’ homework together. Unpacking this description led me to reappraise my own experiences and think through what this meant in terms of my phenomenological enquiry. In my journal, I wrote:

*A delicate picture of ‘academic’ role-modelling, set within a frame of love and care is emerging. In the data, sharing study time is about being together, even though each person is absorbed in their own activity. I see similarities with my own daughter. At a young age, she would sit quietly with me as I worked, leafing through book pages, waiting patiently for me to share her joy of the crunching, munching caterpillar or whatever the favourite [book] of the week was. The echoes of the participant’s words, shake my taken-for-granted thinking. I’m beginning to think about how study in my own home perhaps promotes togetherness, rather than separation. My guilt at spending hours in front of my computer gradually dissipates, as a new view of unity in an undisturbed space presents itself in my thinking. Perhaps studying was not time I should have obstructed*

*being doing other things with my daughter? I’m developing an alternate view.*

In this example the double hermeneutic process is in motion because the relational intricacy between the interpreter and the interpreted is constantly exercised. Learning through the ‘double hermeneutic’ indicates that, with attention, thoughts are accessed to uncover deeper insight, consistent with Heidegger’s belief that the gateway to philosophical understanding is via self-awareness. A practical outcome from my closer examination unfolded in the decision to return to the raw data and the participants’ use of language relating their studies to their home life. Recognising the echo amplifies a new meaning to potentially overlooked participant comments about adapting their thinking, rather than changing their home and work responsibilities to fit in study time, and consequently what this ‘*protected time*’ (participants words) meant for viewing time for themselves. Responding to echoes and thinking around the issue therefore prompted me, as the researcher to go back to the data and uncover subtle and nuanced insights.

The more reflexively I worked with the data, the more I began to understand and accept the presence of ‘me’ as an analytic instrument (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009), and my confidence developed to intellectually move around the data whilst maintaining my faithfulness to the participants’ data. This critical self-appraisal, prompted by journaling, brought about alternative explanations, fostering integrity as the phenomenological researcher by consistently using the participant’s perspective to challenge and lead my thinking. Without this careful attention, previous experience can sway epistemological and theoretical constructs, causing the researcher-self to inadvertently influence the research work. Journaling in effect gives space for potential interpretative ideas to form, that may otherwise be obstructed or lost. To repeatedly observe the data from the viewpoints of the participant and the researcher accentuates the duality of the interpretation and is illustrative of the ‘double hermeneutic’ in action (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 51).

However, caution is necessary when journaling echoes: Smith, Flowers and Larkin argue that too much reflection can turn the research interest away from ‘the object of inquiry – the thing itself’ (2009, p. 149) and so reflexivity must be purposeful to the research. Indeed, Gadamer ([1960] 2013) points out that a critically vigilant stance allows the distinction between participant, observer and object. In my case, my journal work regularly informed my doctoral supervision and broadened the dialogue, whilst maintaining an emphasis on the data. The stance of critical friendship adopted by HE helped me to move on when I got stuck or challenged me to articulate my thinking when I saw something apparently obvious, which was not the case for others. Hence locating, recording and sharing the echoes made me to be more receptive to the corporeal and incorporeal quality of things and everyday experiences, and initiated tangible opportunities to practise my phenomenological attitude (Finlay, 2008).

Nevertheless, developing a phenomenological attitude is not enough to build confident IPA outcomes (Smith, 2011). Rigorous IPA reports need to show how the phenomenological attitude is applied in the analysis, because for the IPA researcher, there is a constant trap of assuming meaning and incorrectly placing unsupported interpretations upon the participants’ words. Catching echoes, is therefore useful for IPA, but filtering their relevance is equally as important.

1. Catching Echoes

In my case, the analytic process took place over time, interspersed with full time employment and family commitments. It was a busy period, and to catch my thoughts, and to identify relevance, I needed something that that I could easily drop my thinking into and which would expand and supplement the transcript notes. Analytic thoughts came and went, often not when ‘in front’ of the data so a method was required for me to log ‘on the spot’ thinking. To do this, I used journals to record my research observations, thoughts, affective appraisals and experiences whist remaining embedded in the participants’ spoken word. I found myself accustomed to carrying a note book to capture surfacing thoughts and ideas at any time; some of which never got off the ground, while others soared into crucial insights. As noted by Vicary, Young and Hicks (2016), the practice of journaling facilitates an immersed search for the meaning structures rooted in the language used by the participants and therefore, acts as a mechanism to learn more from the data. Transferring my thoughts on the page resembled Smythe *et al’s.,* suggestion that;

‘Writing brings the unsaid into the open space where ideas are exposed to interpretative gaze, to wonder, and to ask still more questions’ (2008, p. 1395).

The ‘in and out of play’ journaling technique adopted needed structure as it was becoming messy and amorphous, diminishing the purpose of gaining transparency for my analytic insights. A balance was required between creativity, faithfulness to the participant narrative and methodological fidelity and so I found the format of Wolfinger (2002) useful: observational, theoretical, methodological, and analytical. Using this framework, I could review my analytic work and produce summaries to sustain focus and consistency. This detailed record of my journaling gave me access to my researcher-self by recognising, confronting and learning from my assumptions. Using summaries to help navigate my journaling, I was able to return throughout the analysis to my thought processes, which I connected back to the participant’s spoken experience and to the extant literature in order to search for higher levels of meaning in the data. The journaling process securely evidenced my interpretations by contributing to an identifiable audit trail and fortified the authenticity and integrity necessary in phenomenological enquiry. An example format of a tracking summary is presented as follows:

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| **Task and Date** | **Example (summarised and pseudonyms used)** |
| Review of summary from last analytic session (relating to Step 2: Initial noting) | * First sweep of conceptual observations and comments completed
* I’ve been swept along by Dora’s narrative pace, I must put the brakes on
 |
| Plan and thoughts at the start of this analytic session  | * Review the initial (descriptive) notes for Dora
* I am tired and this part of the process is beginning to feel endless, making it hard to concentrate
 |
| Summary of insights from this session of data analysis | Observational - Nothing is predictable in Dora’s world of haste. Her efforts thwarted by the demands around her, to which she must respondTheoretical - Dora has a self-surprising view of her new relationship with learning. Her usual expedient strategies didn’t work well in her learning experience, slowing down was difficult Methodological - Dora’s experiences happen, they are not abstract or conceptual but integrated. Her words give a whole picture, unifying the then and nowAnalytic - Would there have been a better time to interview Dora, and better for what? |
| Questions / issues to take forward | * What changed for Dora to be receptive to the tutorial support?
* Why did Dora slow things down in her learning experience – what was the impact?
 |
| Appraisal of this analytic session (thoughts, feelings, actions) | I am taken back to the tough days working on an acute admission mental health ward, where the psychological distress of others crashed into every part of me, and satisfactory and compassionate solutions were frustratingly hard to find. I am connecting to Dora’s world. I need to journal my impressions before I do anything else with the data and work out where the familiarity starts and stops. I will also take a different perspective by de-contextualizing the transcript to check my initial notes again. |

Table 2: Example of a journaling routine

IPA is not about getting insights right or wrong, but it is about taking ownership and presenting readers of IPA research with a report which clearly traces observations, thinking and conclusions back to the data. My research experience of journaling emphasises the unpredictable, fleeting and ruminating nature of thoughts; ideas were quickly lost, while others remained, or billowed out. To fully participate in the dynamic role of the central analytic instrument, I cannot apologise for, or take away, who I am, or how my experiences and assumptions shape my world view. Indeed, it is precisely these features which influence my presence in the research, and to become useful, need to be transparent in relation to the research purpose. However, had my assumptions been left unchecked or such a systematic approach not been taken, the surface of the data may have only been scuffed, without fully appreciating the obvious and hidden gems buried within it. Data analysis is not a single, detached activity, but one that is intrinsically connected to the complex and dynamic life world of the researcher.

Engaging in reflexive research actions, therefore, poses a personal and researcher-level challenge. Finlay (2006) suggests that qualitative researchers need to clearly articulate their intellectual position so that the research audience can apprise issues of rigour. Yet blunt disclosure in itself is not enough to resolve influencing preconceptions, and Finlay cautions against ‘endless narcissistic personal emoting’ (2002, p. 226), while Bishop and Shepard (2011) argue that clumsy reflexivity is unhelpful to the research. In this case example, I found journaling to be one way to evaluate my working with the data and any potential overplay of my experiences clouding the data. By consistently appraising researcher-knowledge in the context of the data I avoided becoming ‘overly self-absorbed’ (Holloway & Biley, 2011, p. 968) or distracted by myself because my gaze remained on the echoes generated from the participant’s words and what these could mean in terms of my research question. I came to the opinion that my responses to the data were opportunities to pause and review. In doing so, I was able to consider the data from multi-dimensional perspectives and make decisions about how to proceed with the analysis. In other words, the data consistently steered my research actions.

1. Using the echoes

In this case example, echoes is a suggested sub-step to linger in the descriptive data, before leaping too quickly into the interpretative phase of the analysis. At the point of moving from description to interpretation, the participant and researcher perspectives can be placed alongside the literature, establishing wide angle and narrow feature viewpoints to get closer to the phenomena under investigation (Shaw, 2010). The phenomenological interpretation can then progress with a heightened sensitivity and interpretative awareness of the lifeworld of others, drawing out obscured thoughts about the researcher’s own place and being in the research. For example, the chiming of clinically based echoes enabled me to firstly, become aware of the influence of previous overhanging frustrations and ‘back of the mind’ interpersonal connections; and secondly catching the echo through journaling, facilitated the appraisal of any overshadowing and helped to illuminate my present moment thinking. I was then able to extend my interpretative insight, situated and developed via the identified echo.

The inclusion of echoes both in the analytic and writing up phases of the research process can be a useful way to mediate concerns surrounding the mystery and jargon of phenomenology (Norlyk & Harder, 2010). Rather than shrouding the researcher’s own phenomenological position and analytic process, the recognition of echoes makes the intellectual transition from raw data to interpretative insights visible. From a practical perspective, in my thesis I informed the reader of the route of my analytic journey by adding a distinct ‘echoes’ section to mark the transition from the descriptive analysis to interpretations. This inclusion accentuated that interpretative insights do not simply appear, they arrive from somewhere and the task of the IPA researcher is to identify and chart where their new understandings come from. The discussion aimed to solve the problem of separating what belonged to the participants and what part of the experience is owned by the researcher, thus integrating the theory and practice of reflexivity in the concern for rigour. For example, a participant’s frustration due to communication difficulties with a particular tutor provoked a pang of vexation for me in my context as a course lead. I could have ignored this, or been defensive in my reaction, but accepting this difference as a researcher, I moved beyond my own, self-based appraisal, where the professional-self and researcher-self often merge, to delve into the experience offered in the data. The practical application of this example connected the data, my reflexive review and the wider evidence-base to identify the significance of how perceptions of support, not just direct tutorial actions, are necessary in the success of distance learning. Here, ‘echoes’ work to combine the descriptive elements of the analysis and the interpretation and to elaborate, I placed verbatim quotes from the participants alongside my journal extracts to validate my intellectual reasoning, interpretative struggles and ‘hard won insights’ (Moran, 2000, p. 10).

In the thesis itself, I used the data analysis chapters to communicate the ‘workings out’ of IPA and bring forth new illustrations of the phenomenon, which I first sketched, then filled in with the thick, rich and nuanced tones created by the participant voice. Exposing my knowledge of my world, phenomenological understandings combine with interpretations of that knowledge; an essential realisation, because in terms of theoretical cohesion, Heidegger ([1927] 2010) focuses on ‘being’, suggesting that we are inextricably linked to the world that we have to make sense of (hermeneutics). As people, we do this via our involvement, contained in the concept of inter-subjectivity, and referred to as ‘being with’. Therefore, in reacting to the echoes, the researcher can ‘be with’, yet separate from the data, as Smith, Flowers and Larkin identify:

At times it may be helpful to draw upon your own perceptions and understandings, in order to sound out the meaning of key events and processes for your participants. (2009, p. 89)

Observing the echoes between the participant and researcher lived experience facilitates a better appreciation of Merleau-Ponty’s declaration that, ‘*man is simultaneously subject and object, first and third person, absolutely free and yet dependent*’ ([1945] 2013, p. 146). Hence, the lifeworld of others can draw out hidden thinking about the researcher’s own place and being in the research and the dataset expands by interlinking the participants’ words with the researcher’s own ideas. Therefore, purposefully responding to the echoes radiating from the data is a way to demonstrate that both vivid and shadowy impressions swirl around and through the process of interpretation, starting in IPA with the researcher’s early descriptive observations. So, when exploring the snapshot of the participant’s experience, the researcher must see themselves in the phenomenological picture too.

Therefore, an IPA study calls for the researcher to consistently discern the ‘me as a person’ and the ‘me as a researcher’, necessitating reflexivity for research decisions. For Gadamer ‘*the important thing is to be aware of one’s own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one’s own fore-meanings* ([1960] 2013, pp. 268-269). Gadamer’s words are significant here because what is seen, heard and felt from the data is influenced by the researcher’s own attitudes, beliefs and experiences. In reality, during the analysis I felt overwhelmed on occasion, as if there was too much data which I struggled to know what to do with, making the analytic process seem awkward and unwieldy. I recognised the clash between the amount of work needed to do justice to participants’ data, my role as the central analytic instrument, and my work responsibilities and my family needs. The weight of being reflexive was cumbersome at times, particularly when I found it difficult to access meaning in certain transcripts and the temptation to skip certain processes crept in. It was ‘just hard work’. The problem however, was with me, not the data, nor the other, and I had to confront this; in my case, through journaling and the supervisory process, but my experience does convey that staying authentic to IPA and to the participants’ data is demanding and brings about intellectual and practical problems which need to be overcome. The research community rarely talks about how personally challenging being ‘in’ research is, and that perhaps this is a conversation to be developed.

**Implications for IPA Research**

In this paper, we have demonstrated that attending to the echoes between the researcher and the data enhances reflexive awareness. Identifying near and far echoes requires the researcher to consider a range of influencing factors and in so doing, to intelligently inform the research process. The requirement of reflexive practice in IPA is essential for the production of robust and creative research, where the researcher can recognise, celebrate and use their own potential bias to inform novel interpretations and the concept of reflexive echoes in IPA research can effectively support this exploratory endeavour.

To catch the echoes resonating from the data, we centralise the role of journaling to bridge the gap between reading about the double hermeneutic and the cognitive, affective and practical implementation into the process of IPA research. Through reading, thinking, listening and notably writing, reflexivity emerges as an active conversation between the raw data and the researcher’s past and present self, unwrapping questions to recognise, then progress ‘taken-for-granted’ appraisals. The constant hermeneutic interplay between the participants’ use of language and the researcher’s own conceptualisations opens up intellectual vistas from which to identify, examine and own subjective experiences. Working in the light of the data to overcome the shadows present in the researcher’s own fore-structures, Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) contend that observable reflexivity is a critical component of the iterative process of IPA research.

Significantly, journaling in the field of research has a subtext based on Morse and Richards’ (2002) assertion that the principles of qualitative research are endowed by methodological purposiveness and congruence, with transparent decision-making throughout the research process. In this case example, SG found journaling helped her to manage being simultaneously inside and outside of the research. Keeping hold of immediate appraisals, gnarly thoughts such as the nature of obstructions preventing access into parts of the narrative; observations including the similarities and differences of each transcript analysis and reminiscences, each contributed to ‘working through’ muddles and to testing areas of seeming clarity. Scribbles, doodles and a textual narrative, visually mapped the research journey, giving focus to the SG’s thoughts in the hermeneutic circle and interpretations grew from the ‘fore-structures’ of her understanding. In IPA, interpretation begins with the voiced experience being heard, then, through systematic analysis, the researcher may represent ‘the more’ of the phenomena, making connections to wider sources of literature and evidence (Shaw, 2010). The act of writing opened opportunities for SG to elaborate on her fleeting thoughts and tease out new perspectives. Hence, reflexively using journaling gives impetus to phenomenological researchers to consciously embed themselves amidst the data, with theory and practice informing their insights (Finlay, 2011).

**Conclusion**

Reflexivity in IPA strengthens the rigour of the research process and enables the researcher to gain deeper interpretive access to the data. In this paper, the researcher’s own experiences and observations of the data, combined with the phenomenological philosophy of IPA, presents a multi-dimensional approach to interpretative work. Intellectual creativity inspired through cognitive and affective movement in and around the data, offers new vantage points to see, feel and ‘hear’, the evolving story. To understand one aspect, Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) suggest researchers must survey the whole, and to understand the whole, the researcher must identify and examine the constituent parts; however, this is only possible when the researcher closely attends to the data through the lens of their own subjectivity.

Yet, thoughts and recollections cannot be presumed to be ‘on tap’, but conversely memories can appear without invitation. Recall and recollection are predictably unpredictable and have an idiosyncratic quality. From a Heideggerian point of view, what joins us all is an impression of what has gone before, because time has moved on and so have we. Experiences get caught up in other experiences, time frames become jumbled. Layered within these perspectives are concealments and personal barriers, those unique features that either hold us back, or propel us forward: the known and the unknown; the shared and kept private. The experience of intensive journaling displays van Manen’s (2006) proposition of the bond between phenomenological investigation and the researcher’s own engagement with writing. Writing necessitates the researcher to find the words to express their thoughts, making a conversation between the participant voice and the researcher’s inner world thinking visible to the external audience.

While doing IPA analysis, SG noted that words triggered and bounced around the researcher’s own experience – booms, clangs and whispers. These echoes emerged as the researcher subtly and acutely noticed the resemblances and differences between the participant’s narrative and their own. Characterising a pivotal point, the analytic adjunct of ‘echoes’ identifies that the first forays into the data via descriptive reconnaissance may carry important realisations of resonance, arising amid the participant and researcher narrative. The overt inclusion of echoes into the IPA analytic process is a way of translating the theory of reflexivity into IPA research activity.

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