

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: Birkbeck College, University of London
Unit of Assessment: 4: Psychology, psychiatry and neuroscience
Title of case study: The impact of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis on training and practice in academia, applied clinical and health research, and commercial consultancy
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2020
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 August 2013 to 31 July 2020
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p><i>Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)</i> is a qualitative methodology for describing and understanding how individuals make sense of their personal experience that was originated by Jonathan Smith in the 1990s. In his work at Birkbeck since 2000, Smith has developed and applied the IPA methodology, and has established IPA as one of the most popular and influential methods for basic and applied qualitative psychological research. This case study documents the exceptional impact of IPA since 2014. IPA is taught widely across the UK, including in professional training, and is the method of choice for thousands of doctoral theses worldwide. It has affected applied clinical and health-related research and practice, and has recently become an important tool for commercial consultancy and service development in healthcare and other industries.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Professor Jonathan A. Smith introduced Interpretative (or Interpretive) Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) in the 1990s as a new methodology for qualitative research and investigation in psychology and related disciplines, and in applied clinical and social contexts (as reviewed in [1]). Since joining Birkbeck in 1999, he has developed the conceptual and methodological basis of IPA, has applied this method in numerous empirical studies, primarily in health-related contexts, and has established IPA as one of the most widely used tools for qualitative psychological research world-wide. He is the lead author on the seminal book on IPA [2], published in 2009. This book is the definitive guide to the approach, offering theoretical background, methodological guidance, samples of original research and an account of important issues. In February 2020, the book was ranked 6th in Psychological Research on Amazon, and 9th in Social Science Methodology. Smith's personal citation record is also exceptionally high (more than 34,000 Google Scholar citations since 2015); the vast majority of which are to his work developing and utilising IPA. In July 2020, Smith was awarded an Honorary Fellowship of the British Psychological Society in recognition of his pioneering role in establishing and enhancing the place of qualitative research in psychology.</p> <p>IPA explores in detail participants' personal lived experience and how participants make sense of that personal experience. It is an explicitly interpretative endeavour where the researcher aims to make sense of an individual's own interpretation of their experiences. IPA offers a systematic and rigorous set of procedures for conducting this research. IPA has an idiographic commitment to the detailed analysis of each case in its own right, before a move to examine convergence and divergence across cases. The combination of this set of distinctive characteristics enables IPA to provide rich, compelling, nuanced and evidenced accounts of individual lived experience.</p> <p>In addition to providing the definitive guide to IPA in 2009 [2], Smith has published numerous influential articles refining the theoretical and methodological framework of IPA. His highly cited review of the development of IPA provides a specific focus on its critical features (e.g. idiographic</p>

commitment), and describes the different levels of analysis offered by this approach [1]. In another highly cited article [3], he presented explicit criteria for evaluating the quality of IPA publications. He has also published numerous research articles where IPA was applied to understand human experience in various health and social settings, particularly in relation to the experience of pain and suffering. For example, he employed the IPA methodology to identify the complexities of understanding genetic risk in individuals considering taking genetic tests for Huntington's Disease [4], to examine the psychologically debilitating impact of chronic benign back pain [5]; or to uncover links between alcohol consumption and concepts of masculinity in young men [6]. Smith has also collaborated with many other health psychologists in research projects investigating different aspects of health and disease that were funded by NIHR, the NHS, and the Department of Health, among others [a].

During the current assessment period, IPA has grown hugely in popularity, and is now one of the best-known qualitative approaches in psychology and the social sciences. From 2014 to 2019, Scopus shows 13,174 articles referring to IPA in the title or abstract. It is not only employed widely by academic researchers, but increasingly also in applied clinical and commercial settings. This case study demonstrates the exceptional impact of the IPA methodology during the assessment period, both within and outside academia.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Theoretical / methodological work

1. **Smith J.A.** (2004) Reflecting on the development of interpretative phenomenological analysis and its contribution to qualitative research in psychology, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 1:1,39-54. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 1, 39-54.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1191/1478088704qp004oa>

2. **Smith, J.A.**, Flowers, P. and Larkin, M. (2009) *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*. Sage Publications. (Monograph, available on request)

3. **Smith, J.A.** (2011) Evaluating the contribution of interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Health Psychology Review*, 5, 9-27

<https://doi.org/10.1080/17437199.2010.510659>

Empirical studies

4. **Smith, J.A.**, Michie, S., Stephenson, M. and Quarrell, O. (2002) Risk perception and decision-making processes in candidates for the genetic test for Huntington's Disease: an interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 7, 131-44.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1359105302007002398>

5. **Smith, J.A.** and Osborn, M. (2007) Pain as an assault on the self: an interpretative phenomenological analysis of the psychological impact of chronic benign low back pain. *Psychology and Health*, 22, 517-534.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14768320600941756>

6. de Visser, R., and **Smith, J.A.** (2007) Alcohol consumption and masculine identity among young men. *Psychology and Health*, 22, 595-614

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14768320600941772>

Selected collaborative research grants

[a] *Transforming the mental health treatment of young people with epilepsy*. R. Shafran & J. Helen Cross (Lead Investigators); **J.A. Smith** (Co-Investigator with 13 others). NIHR. GBP2,293,450. 2017-2022. RP-PG-0616-20007.

The impact of different patterns of care on the long-term outcome of adolescent conduct disorder: a mixed methods study comparing multi-systemic therapy (MST) and management as usual (MAU). P. Fonagy (Lead Investigator), **J.A. Smith** (Co-investigator with 11 others). NIHR. GBP1,080,728. 2014-2017.

Applying the MRC framework to the development of interventions to facilitate informed choice and optimise treatment-related behaviour in HIV. R. Horne (Lead Investigator) **J.A. Smith** (Co-investigator with 14 others). NIHR. GBP2,412,986. Grant reference: RP-PG-0109-10047, 2011-2018.

Communicating genetic information within families. S. Michie (Principle Investigator), **J.A. Smith** (Joint Principle Investigator) J. Mackay, S. Humphries, C. Jacobs, D. Nair, Department of Health. GBP1,071,000. Grant reference: HSR06A, 2006-2008.

How do families cope with Juvenile Huntington's Disease? S. Watkin (Lead, Huntington's Disease Association), O. Quarrell, N. Glendinnig, **J.A. Smith**. Department of Health. GBP90,000. 2003-2005.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

This case study documents the substantial and wide impacts of IPA, as developed by Smith at Birkbeck, during the assessment period. It presents quantitative evidence to show how IPA affected teaching, research, and professional training within academia, and to demonstrate the ever growing influence of IPA in applied contexts, such as its importance for clinical and health-related practice, and its emerging role within commercial consultancy.

Impact of IPA on Teaching, Doctoral and Professional Training

IPA is taught by many UK higher education institutions offering BPS-accredited programmes in psychology at undergraduate and/or postgraduate levels, including the delivery of doctorates and accredited postgraduate degrees. IPA is employed in research on best practice in medical training at UCL, one of the UK's largest medical schools [Aii]. IPA has also been widely used in doctoral research both within psychology and in other subject areas such as: management studies, social work, education and gender studies. It was referred to in the title or abstract of 1,389 UK doctoral dissertations between 2014 and 2019 [Aiii]. The ProQuest Theses & A.I. Database (the largest global database of theses) lists 2,264 doctoral theses submitted worldwide between 2014 and 2019 that refer to IPA in the title or abstract [Aiii]. Of these, 1,068 were conducted in the US. For example, there were 230 doctoral theses at Northeastern University and 86 theses at the Wright Institute (a professional clinical psychology centre in Berkeley) which explicitly refer to IPA [Aiii].

IPA training workshops for PhD students, professional doctoral students, researchers, academics, and clinicians are regularly provided by Smith himself and by experienced IPA teachers and practitioners. They are coordinated across the 60 active national and regional IPA networks, with the central IPA website at Birkbeck as a hub [Aiv]. Smith ran 15 invited national and international IPA keynotes and/or workshops between 2014 and 2020 in, for example: Florida, Athens, Stockholm, Poitiers (total attendance: approximately 1,000) [Av]. Other UK-based training events since 2014 include five workshops provided by the National Centre for Research Methods, regular IPA workshops run at Glasgow Caledonian University and (in Ireland) workshops at Dublin City University. IPA has also been used to develop professional training within the NHS.

Applied Clinical and Health Research

IPA has become an important tool for clinical and health research aimed at understanding patient experience to improve patient-centred service provision. The guidance on research methodology provided by the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust (a pioneer in mental health services) includes an entire section on IPA, which refers to Smith's 2009 book and other publications by him and his group [Bi]. The National Institute for Health Research (the UK's largest health research funder) lists 7 projects using IPA (1 live, 6 completed) within the assessment period (total funding: >£6m) [Bii]. The North East London NHS Foundation Trust currently sponsors a large IPA-based psychotherapy study on the lived experience of anorexia sufferers [Biii]. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) lists 184 pieces of

research and guidance which use or cite IPA in its online evidence database for practitioners, including 23 evidence summaries provided by government and third sector organisations, such as the Institution for Research and Innovation in Social Services, Centre for Policy on Ageing, Race Equality Foundation, and the Office of the Children's Commissioner [Biv]. IPA is recommended as a research method in the current NICE Clinical Guidance on Self Harm [Bv]. The NHS Health Research Authority website includes 315 research summaries produced from 1 August 2013 to 31 July 2020 that use or cite IPA, covering topics as diverse as mothers' experiences of breastfeeding in public, head injury, and depression [Bvi].

Consultancy and Commercial Applications of IPA

IPA has recently become an important tool for client-centred consultancy, where it is used to improve understanding of customer and patient experience, and to inform the development of products and services in healthcare, retail, and in financial and pharmaceutical industries.

FutureCurve is a business consultancy that uses IPA to identify customer needs for their clients. [Ci]. *Customer Faithful* is a research consultancy that uses their IPA-based Lifelines™ approach as their main method for projects with clients including the NHS, Crabtree and Evelyn, Pfizer, Argos, QVC, Ingeus and DLA Piper [Ciii].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

(A) Evidence of application in teaching, doctoral awards and professional training

- (ii) Website links and screenshots of the UCL Medical School website outlining their use of IPA.
- (iii) Data from E-theses online (EThOS) (summarised);
Data source via ProQuest, summarised with information about how search was conducted;
Data sourced via ProQuest showing disciplinary areas covered by IPA theses.
- (iv) Screenshots of relevant Birkbeck IPA websites, including the lists of regional and national IPA networks.
- (v) Document outlining examples of training, workshops and keynotes delivered by Professor Smith during this period, with website links, invitations and programmes.

(B) Evidence of use of IPA in clinical and health research

- (i) Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust Methodologies website: website links plus screenshots of relevant pages.
- (ii) National Institute of Health Research (NIHR): website link plus screenshot of relevant search (Note: returned search results show 9 studies, but details show that 1 of these is not in period and 1 does not actually make use of IPA in their methodology)
- (iii) Specialist Psychotherapy with Emotion for Anorexia in Kent and Sussex: the SPEAKS Study - website link plus screenshots.
- (iv) NICE evidence summary search engine: website link plus screenshots of search conducted.
- (v) NICE Clinical Guidance on Self Harm in Over-8s (document).
- (vi) NHS Health Research Authority Website. Details of the search conducted plus website and screenshots of results.

(C) Evidence of use of IPA in consultancy / commercial applications

- (i) FutureCurve Website: <https://futurecurve.com/about>
- (iii) Customer Faithful Website: <https://www.customerfaithful.com/> and <https://www.customerfaithful.com/face-to-face-voice-of-the-patient-research>