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**Framed: A Scoping Review of Photo-Elicitation in Interpretative
Phenomenological Analysis and a Qualitative Study of Autistic Mothers
Experiences after a Fabricated or Induced Illness investigation**

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Participant names and non-essential details have been changed to protect confidentiality

Overall Abstract

This thesis explores the methodological applications of combining Photo-elicitation interviewing (PEI) with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and applies this methodological approach to the experiences of autistic mothers, a marginalised group, having undergone child protection (CP) investigations for Fabricated and Induced Illness (FII).

Visual research tools like PEI have gained prevalence within qualitative health research, especially with groups whose experiences may have otherwise been missed by conventional research approaches. IPA, with an emphasis on meaning making from participants with first-hand experience of phenomena, has been increasingly employed alongside PEI, however lacked a mapping of the available literature on how these two approaches have been previously utilised. This thesis includes a scoping review which mapped 43 eligible studies using PEI-IPA which included peer-reviewed and grey literature. A narrative summary and semantic thematic analysis reported that PEI-IPA was reported by the extant literature to encourage participant led sense making for particularly sensitive and complex experiences, positing the possibility of its use in assisting with epistemic justice in research. Variance in the procedural and ethical navigations of using PEI-IPA suggested the potential for considering guidance for future researchers considering the use of PEI-IPA.

This scoping review directly informed the methodological approach taken in second part of this thesis, the empirical paper, which used PEI-IPA to explore the lived experiences of autistic mothers having been subject to a child protection investigation for suspected Fabricated or Induces Illness (FII).

Whilst extant and grey literature posited that autistic mothers are at a higher risk of suspicion for FII than neurotypical counterparts, their experiences are largely absent from extant research and policy making. In this empirical paper, eight autistic mothers took part in one-to-one remote interviews where up to five photos they had taken that represented to them a week in their life after their FII investigation were discussed. Transcripts analysed using IPA (Smith et al., 2009) uncovered three superordinate themes with a total of nine subordinate themes. The themes of “Once accused you are never exonerated”, “I forgot who I was” and

“Strategies to Survive” interpreted how autistic mothers’ expressions of care were misinterpreted by statutory services, resulting in a fracturing of what it meant for participants to be a good mother and requiring survival strategies beyond psychological therapy. For participants, survival demanded an accountability from the institutions that had harmed them, for a transparency in the professional narratives held about them and an opportunity to correct the record. These findings are argued to have direct clinical and policy implications in reflection that without systemic change, future efforts to safeguard families may risk a continuation of institutional harm against a marginalised population.

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Literature Review

“You can see what I mean”: A Scoping Review of Photo Elicitation in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis Research

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Abstract

Visual research approaches like photo-elicitation interviewing (PEI) have been used in qualitative research to deepen participant narratives, especially with marginalised populations and particularly sensitive contexts. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), with its commitment to the double hermeneutic, has been increasingly identified as an analytic method which could be compatible with PEI. However, there has been a paucity in the extant literature on how PEI and IPA (PEI-IPA) have been implemented together. This scoping review systematically mapped how PEI-IPA has been used in research. This included mapping procedural practices, methodological strengths and limitations, ethical considerations and novel approaches across peer-reviewed and grey literature.

A scoping review was pre-registered and carried out in line with JBI guidance. Four databases (PsycINFO, Web of Science, Scopus, and ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global) were searched from inception to March 2025. Inclusion criteria included papers using PEI as the interview approach and IPA for analysis. Forty-three studies met eligibility, including thirty-five peer-reviewed papers and eight dissertations. A narrative summary mapped study characteristics, followed by semantic level thematic analysis to map reported strengths, limitations, ethical considerations, and innovations.

PEI-IPA was reported to improve emotional depth, participant led meaning making and access to experiences that were difficult to verbalise. Papers highlighted flexibility across clinical, educational, and social contexts. Ethical approaches varied on image limitations, safeguarding, and participant burden. No papers referenced standardised guidance for integrating PEI-IPA.

PEI-IPA holds promise for supporting the double hermeneutic, participant empowerment, and epistemic justice. Variations in the literature suggest a future path for methodological guidance

Introduction

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a qualitative analytic method that aims to better understand lived experiences in novel phenomena (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). An element that differentiates IPA from other qualitative methods is the double hermeneutic (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021), a concept where two layers of interpretation take place simultaneously in the meaning participants convey from their lived experience and the researchers interpretation (Nizza et al., 2021). IPA has applications across several research contexts in gathering rich verbal narratives relating to complex and sensitive topics including trauma (Attard et al., 2022), disability (Olsen et al., 2023), and identity (Renshaw & Burton, 2023). Qualitative research uses verbal semi structured interviews to capture data for analysis, however unintended barriers can arise when relying on verbal interviews in isolation (Kahlke et al., 2024). Participants may make assumptions about what facets of their experience others would deem to be important, resulting in changes to what they choose to share or withhold in interview (Barton, 2015). Researchers may underestimate a participants interviewing capability based on their levels of cognition (McFarland et al., 2023). Finally, the levels of uncertainty of emotional reaction, combined with meeting an interviewer for the first time may inadvertently result in barriers to recalling important experiences during interviews (Kahlke et al., 2024).

Combining verbal interviews with visual research methods has been posited as a potential tool to help better connect to target phenomena and redress power imbalances between researchers and anticipated participant capabilities (Glaw et al., 2017). Several visual research methods are available to enhance verbal interviews, including tactile methods using object elicitation (O'Brien & Charura, 2023), graphic elicitation (Bagnoli, 2009) and video elicitation (van Braak et al., 2018).

When using static images, two methods include photovoice and photo-elicitation interviewing (PEI) (Romera Iruela, 2023). Though both share photos between a researcher and participant the rationales for each differ. Photovoice is a form of participatory action research that places participants and researchers as equal collaborators within a project

(Kile, 2022). It aims to generate change in systemic or societal landscapes by drawing on collective voices of marginalised populations using group discussions for photo sharing and analysis (Wang & Burris, 1997). A photovoice approach may ask a group of participants to capture interpretations of a shared experience, followed by group sharing and discussing images together to collaborate on opportunities for societal change (Kile, 2022).

Photo-elicitation interviews (PEI) use photographs as heuristic anchors in a one-to-one interview setting to assist participants to connect to layered facets of their lived experience of a phenomenon (Harper, 2010). In contrast to photovoice, PEI asks participants to produce photos that explore their lived experience of a specific phenomenon, such as living with a chronic condition (Reynolds et al., 2008). In the case of PEI, the resulting photographs prompt participant recollections of experiences, facilitating a deeper verbal exploration through the anchoring of their images (Romera Iruela, 2023). As IPA values linguistic and conceptual layers of understanding from phenomena that may be difficult for participants to express (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021) combining PEI as an interview method with IPA can help collect layered narratives anchored in what participants value most (Reavey, 2011). From a methodological perspective, PEI and IPA may amplify their shared epistemological principles in placing the participant at the centre of their meaning making (Smith et al., 2009).

When considering the extant literature reviewing PEI and IPA, reviews exploring aspects of visual elicitation (Kahlke et al., 2024; Reid, 2018; Torre & Murphy, 2015) do not specifically address the methodological considerations in combining PEI and IPA together. Notably, these reviews use peer reviewed literature only, leaving a gap in understanding how PEI-IPA works in broader contexts like unpublished theses. When considering emerging methodological integrations like PEI-IPA, including unpublished papers like dissertations, known as grey literature, can lower the potential for publication bias (Hoffecker, 2021) where the ability to publish focuses on significance of results which risks obscuring the overall understanding of a given phenomenon (Rothstein et al., 2005).

Whilst several empirical studies have employed PEI within an IPA methodology there is a paucity of knowledge on how researchers have integrated PEI with IPA specifically. This includes variances on the sourcing of photos (whether from participants or from research teams), the instructions given to participants for photo elicitation, how photos are navigated within interviews, how researchers integrate PEI into the IPA process and how issues of consent and ethics are navigated within a PEI-IPA project. With PEI-IPA studies potentially generating sensitive and personal material through the use of participant generated photos and narratives, a lack of overall clarity on how papers combine PEI and IPA risk limitations for the approach, experience and results (Reid, 2018).

To gauge the extant literature on PEI with IPA and to ascertain feasibility for this review, preliminary searches (see Appendix A) were carried out from PsycINFO, Web of Science and PROSPERO's database of registered systematic reviews. Papers retrieved ranged between 38 to 240 depending on the search terms used, however a majority of papers referred to broad visual research methods without focussing on PEI or discussed using IPA without PEI. Several systematic reviews registered with PROSPERO related to visual methodologies, however none focused on the methodological considerations specific to combining PEI and IPA. Manual searches identified three papers relevant to the current review.

In their integrative review, Kahlke et al. (2024) synthesised a broad range of elicitation approaches across qualitative research, however did not consider IPA directly. A systematic review by Torre and Murphy (2015) focussed on PEI in education research with the aim of helping researchers in education understand how to employ PEI to elevate voices in schools and the wider community. This review however did not include grey literature like unpublished thesis and did not focus on how PEI was used within IPA. A conference summary from Reid (2018) refers to carrying out a systematic review of photographic methods of data collection from 2010 to 2018, focusing on fourteen published papers and no grey literature. Notably, this review did not focus on the methodological considerations of using PEI with IPA together. In addition, specific details relating to the number and type of

databases searched, inclusion criteria, screening protocol, extraction process or analytic strategy are not provided (Reid, 2018). Without a clear understanding of these facets it is difficult to ascertain whether this conference summary from Reid (2018) met PRISMA standards for a systematic review (Page et al., 2021).

The use of PEI-IPA is an evolving approach however a gap exists in understanding how PEI-IPA is applied in the extant literature. Psychology research is posited to target phenomena with layered and sensitive experiences which may be held by marginalised populations (Kirkbride et al., 2024). Mapping how PEI and IPA are used in the extant literature could assist researchers to better support participant confidence in sharing their narratives with wider audiences.

A full systematic review could be argued to be an inappropriate approach in that it could risk returning a lack of literature for analysis, resulting in empty reviews (Khalil et al., 2022) on the basis of excessively strict criteria (Gray, 2021). By comparison, a scoping review presented an approach to assist with managing a range of potential methodological variance (Munn et al., 2018). The current scoping review therefore aimed to map existing practices of PEI-IPA using peer reviewed and grey literature to identify methodological strengths, limitations, and adaptations of PEI-IPA (Munn et al., 2018). This scoping review also aimed to provide a foundation to consider the feasibility of developing guidelines for researchers using PEI-IPA in the future.

Method

Protocol and Registration

Scoping reviews are a form of literature review that maps what research exists for a given phenomenon. Unlike a systematic review which may attempt to answer a prescriptive question, scoping reviews seek to better understand from the literature available what has been done in relation to a phenomenon (Peters et al., 2022). This can result in a broader range of eligibility criteria being applied to promote a wider range of papers being included in mapping (Lockwood et al., 2019). Developing a protocol that specified the inclusion criteria,

search strategy and overall method ensured a clear transparency towards the review and reporting process in line with best practice guidelines for scoping reviews (Peters et al., 2022). To further adhere to best practice guidelines, the protocol for this scoping review was pre-registered with the Open Science Framework in advance to data charting and is publicly available (Bowman, 2025).

Eligibility Criteria

The following criteria was applied to confer study eligibility with a review checklist available in appendix B.

1. Primary empirical papers which used PEI as an interview approach within an IPA study.
2. Papers where photos were used as interview prompts during interviews to aid the meaning making process.
3. Papers that demonstrated clear and transparent reporting of how PEI was used in the IPA process, including how data was collected and integrated into a study.
4. Papers that used IPA as the primary analytic method.
5. Papers in any language.
6. Papers disseminated at any time.
7. Papers from all research areas
8. Papers from all topic areas.
9. Papers that had a full availability of text.

This scoping review included non-peer reviewed sources like unpublished dissertations, known as grey literature. The decision to include grey literature was taken to limit the possibility of publication bias (Hoffecker, 2021) and to widen the amount of studies available for data charting (Peters et al., 2022).

Exclusion Criteria

The following exclusion criteria were applied.

1. Papers that used PEI as an analytic tool rather than as an interview prompt.

2. Papers which used photovoice or similar participatory action methods.
3. Papers where IPA was used alongside other methodologies.
4. Papers without clear methodological descriptions of how PEI was applied.
5. Papers without full text availability.

Where the full text was not available, reasonable efforts were made to obtain papers. Efforts included inter library loan requests and making direct contact with authors. Where it was not possible to obtain the full text this was recorded.

Information sources and Search Strategy

In the context of a scoping review, JBI guidance suggests specifying database selection based on the aims of the scoping review and employing a broad approach (Peters et al., 2022). When considering a search strategy, Embase was excluded due to its focus on biomedical and pharmacological studies which feature quantitative designs. Google scholar was excluded due to a difficulty in establishing transparency in the structure of its databases (Giustini & Boulos, 2013). The following databases were selected to balance relevance, breadth and feasibility.

1. PsycINFO due to its emphasis on psychological and mental health research which aligned with the aims of the review.
2. Web of Science due to its interdisciplinary scope, which was believed to improve the rate of capturing relevant qualitative studies from a range of topic areas.
3. Scopus was selected for its broad scope and comprehensive coverage of qualitative research, including access to methodological studies.
4. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global was specifically selected to identify unpublished dissertation projects to mitigate against the risk of publication bias.

The above databases were searched using the below search strings with search terms combined using the “OR” Boolean operator in table 1:

Search strings 1 and 2 were combined using the “AND” Boolean operator.

Table 1

Search strings

Conceptual unit	1. Photo-Elicitation	2. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
Search terms	Photo elicitation OR photo-elicitation OR photo elicitation interview OR photo-elicitation interview OR visual methods OR photo interview OR Image-based elicitation OR Visual elicitation OR image-based research OR visual interview OR picture-based interview	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis OR IPA

The date range of the search spanned from database inception to 19 March 2025. Additional manual searching was conducted on book chapters captured from database results which had aligned to the inclusion criteria to check for additional papers.

To mitigate risks of language and cultural bias and in line with best practice for a scoping review (Aromataris et al., 2024), this review included papers where English was not the first language. Where non-English papers were identified, Google scholar and Chat GPT, a learning language model, were used to facilitate translation for screening and data charting. Whilst the protocol allowed for exclusion where papers were unable to be

translated, all papers in the screening and data charting process which required translation were translated.

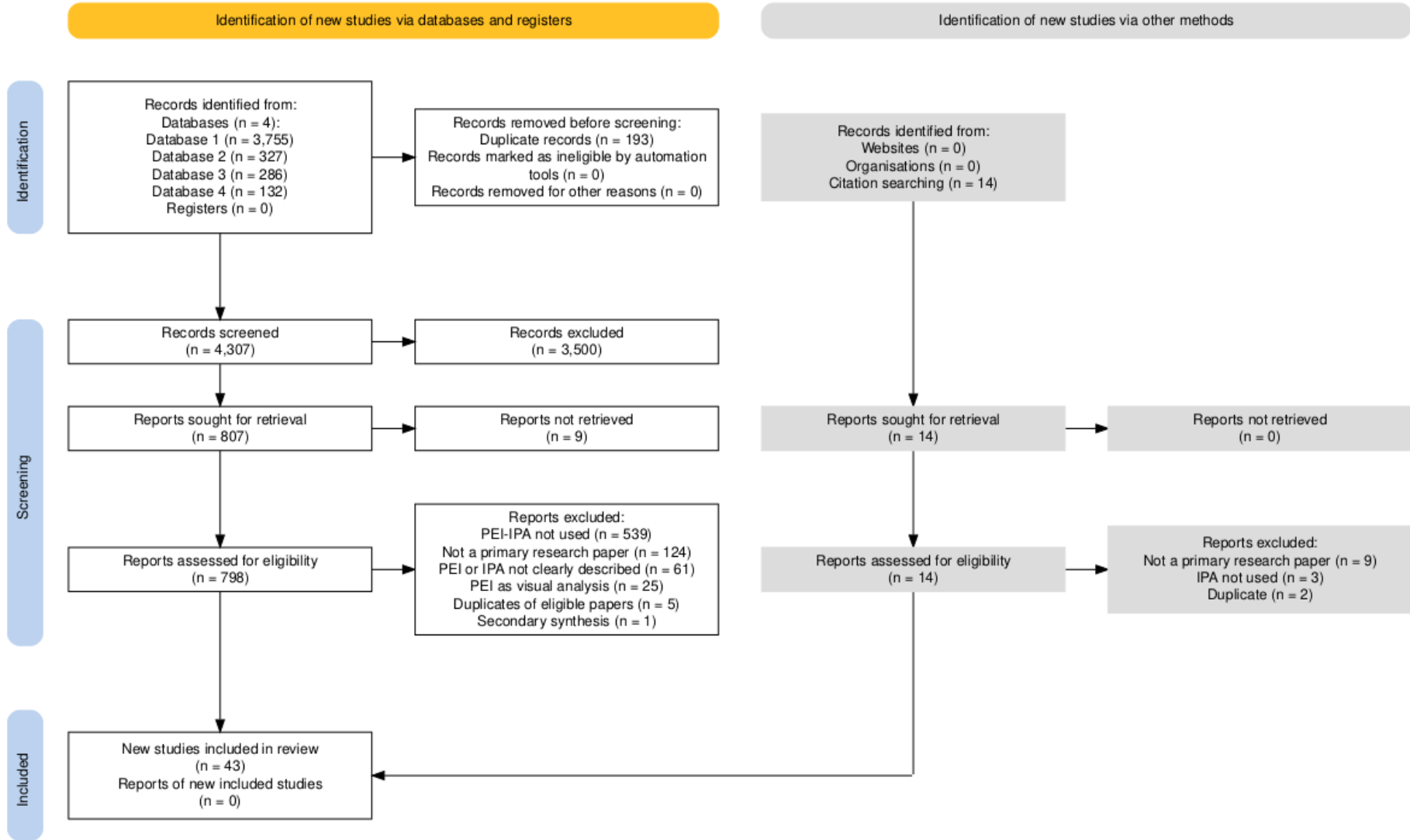
Selection of Sources of Evidence

Searches of all four databases were completed on 19 March 2025. Results were exported from RIS files into Rayyan, an online tool used to systematically screen large volumes of papers. Rayyan was used to de-duplicate papers, facilitate the title and abstract stage of screening and full text screening stages of the scoping review. The main author (CB) proceeded with the title and abstract screening process, excluding papers that were ineligible with exclusion reasons recorded via Rayyan. The remaining papers proceeded to full text screening, completed by CB as the main author with reference to the eligibility checklist (see Appendix B).

A second reviewer (FGS) independently screened a sample of full text papers (n = 15) for consistency in how CB applied the eligibility criteria. A ninety three percent agreement rate was reached on this sample with inter-rater reliability calculated using Cohen's Kappa indicating almost perfect agreement ($\kappa = 0.86$) (McHugh, 2012). One study was excluded following resolution between the first and second reviewer, with a full agreement reached for the final dataset. Whilst best practice recommends ten percent of papers be double screened for scoping reviews, large datasets can result in this becoming unfeasible for a second rater (Mak & Thomas, 2022). Extant literature permits partial double screening when reviewers confer agreement on over ninety percent of papers selected for double screening (Mak & Thomas, 2022) which occurred in this instance. The full selection process is reported using a PRISMA-ScR framework in line with PRISMA scoping review guidelines recorded in figure 1 (Tricco et al., 2018).

Figure 1

PRISMA-ScR Flow Diagram of Study Selection



Reflexive memos (see appendix C) were taken during the screening process which assisted with navigating methodological discrepancies (Mak & Thomas, 2022). Discrepancies included studies that used analyses that were not IPA, allowing participants to opt in to the PEI process and mislabelling visual methods such as photovoice as PEI. Reflexive memo taking helped identify an error where Rayyan reported unpublished theses as book chapters, resulting in manual verification of these items to ensure accurate inclusions of eligible papers.

Data Charting Process

A data charting tool was created by the main author (see Appendix D) in accordance with scoping review best practice guidance (Peters et al., 2022) to extract data from eligible papers. Elements extracted included citation details of each study, publication type (specifically if grey literature or a peer-reviewed paper), context and aims, sampling and recruitment strategy, methods of data collection, how PEI was applied within the study, IPA analysis type, general ethics considerations and those specific to PEI, methodological strengths and limitations as noted by the authors of each paper, reported innovations and adaptations and the findings and implications where relevant.

Data was initially extracted into an excel spreadsheet to assist with revisions as the literature expanded. Each case was individually extracted into NVivo (version 14.2) for semantic thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Using NVivo assisted with memo writing for each extracted paper and facilitated observations relating to the methodology of PEI-IPA at the individual paper level. Memos were assigned to each paper throughout screening, extraction and charting to ground observations in the data, record emerging discrepancies and decisions. This assisted methodological rigour by unveiling tensions in the screening and extraction process relating to study inclusions. This included broad issues, such as a pattern for papers to mislabel photovoice as PEI and IPA for qualitative analyses like grounded theory or thematic analysis. A key reflection was noted when several papers at full text stage allowed participants to decline the PEI process and combine the dataset with PEI

interviews. Through memoing (see appendix C) the main author was able to critically reflect on the strengths and limitations of methodological diversions within a study, resulting in similar papers being excluded at the full text stage in line with the aims of this review. This enabled the review to stay close to the eligibility criteria created at the pre-registration phase, thereby enhancing transparency (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Memo writing also assisted in the narrative summary and thematic analysis stages of the review (Tricco et al., 2018).

Quality appraisal

As this review aimed to map the applications of PEI-IPA and was not seeking to evaluate the quality of individual papers, in line with JBI guidance for scoping reviews no formal quality appraisal was applied in this review (Peters et al., 2022). This decision enabled the inclusion of peer reviewed and grey literature for mapping.

Synthesis of Results

To achieve the aim of mapping existing practices within PEI-IPA, a narrative summary described key methodological properties of PEI with IPA. In line with scoping review guidance (Mak & Thomas, 2022), to organise the variance of methodological applications of PEI-IPA within eligible studies, a semantic level thematic analysis following best practice from Braun and Clarke (2022) was carried out. The extracted data for all eligible studies relating to PEI-IPA was read and re read to achieve familiarisation, with inductive codes assigned to extracted data through line-by-line coding. Codes generated were mapped into described themes (see appendix E) related to the strengths and limitations of PEI-IPA, ethics relating to PEI, the integration of PEI into the IPA process and innovations to PEI-IPA approaches reported. NVivo (version 14.2) was used to manage the data and semantic thematic analysis. Reflexive memos were created during the data charting and analysis which recorded emerging patterns across papers, maintaining transparency to the process (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Results

Study Selection

Database searches produced 4,500 records with 193 removed as duplicates. At the title and abstract stage 3,500 papers were excluded, resulting in 807 entering full text retrieval. Nine records were unable to be obtained due to embargoes on six disseminations and three records being unable to be obtained despite reasonable efforts, including interlibrary loan requests.

After full text screening, 755 papers were excluded. The main reasons for exclusion included PEI-IPA not being used, papers not being a primary research paper and a lack of clear description for how PEI was applied across a dataset. In total, 43 studies met inclusion criteria.

Descriptive Mapping of Included Papers

Designs, Methods, and Aims

The total eligible studies included 35 peer reviewed journal articles and 8 dissertations. Studies were published between 2008 to 2024, covering a variety of phenomena. Common aims related to identifying the relational and emotional experiences of participants in poorly understood areas. All 43 studies used a qualitative design with 35 studies using one interview and eight employing multiple interviews for each participant. Two studies were longitudinal in nature. No papers within extracted studies used a mixed-methods design. A summary of characteristics charted from eligible papers is shown in table 2 with a numerical overview in table 3.

Table 2

Summary of reported characteristics from Included Studies (n = 43)

Author(s), Year of Publication & Title	Publication Type	Country & Context	Population	Sample Size	PEI Use	IPA Use
Lawson and Wardle (2013) A qualitative exploration of the health promotion effects of varying body size in photographs analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	England. To explore how overweight women responded to photographs of slim and overweight female models.	Women with a Body Mass Index between 26-39.	n = 8	Participants shown 5 researcher chosen photos online during semi structured telephone interviews. Used to elicit emotional reflections.	IPA used to analyse interview transcript. Photos not analysed.

Ramalho et al. (2016)	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	Brazil. To explore food relationships between obese children and their parents.	Parents and grandmothers of children with obesity. Children with obesity.	Parents and grandmothers (n = 12) Children (n = 7)	Children took one photo of their dining table after a family meal using a digital device. The image was used to prompt theirs and their family's discussions in semi structured interviews to help with emotional recall.	IPA used by lead researcher on transcripts. Two researchers reviewed transcripts. Photos not analysed.
Witayarat (2020)	Unpublished Dissertation	Scotland. To explore how Thai doctoral returnees understood their cultural identity	Thai University alumni	n = 10	Participants submitted five self-generated images representing their Thai identity through email. Photos used during semi	IPA following Smith et al. (2009) on transcripts. NVivo used for coding, with a

Doctoral Experiences		transformation after studying internationally.				structured interviews to prompt discussions	reflexive interpretation from author on their cultural positioning and participant metaphor use. Photos not analysed.
McLoughlin et al. (2023)	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	England. To explore how male elite athletes made sense of lifetime stress experiences and how these were perceived to	Male Elite Athletes	n = 9	Participants submitted 4 – 5 photos representing key sports moments in career. Used in semi structured interviews to explore feelings and	IPA following Smith et al. (2009) on transcripts. Analysis presented through creative	

performance, and help-seeking behaviors.		influence athletic performance and mental health help seeking.			performance related experiences.	nonfiction vignettes. Photos not analysed.
Burton et al. (2022)	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	United Kingdom. Understand how extended breastfeeding experienced by women in the UK	Women breastfeeding children over 12 months old	n = 9	Each participant took up to six photos across one week that represented their experience of breastfeeding. Semi structured interviews explored the meaning of images to participants in relation to extended breastfeeding and emotions from this.	IPA following Smith et al. (2009) on transcripts. Multiple analysisists for transcripts. Photos not analysed.

<p>Damaskinidis (2024)</p> <p>Exploring the lived experiences of pregnancy: a qualitative semiological study in a mid-/post-COVID-19 context.</p>	<p>Peer Reviewed Journal Article</p>	<p>Greece. Compare lived experiences of pregnant Greek women between mid-COVID-19 and post-COVID-19.</p>	<p>Women who were or had been pregnant during or after COVID19 in Greece.</p>	<p>During COVID19 (n = 10) After COVID19 (n = 10)</p>	<p>Participants asked to respond to four researcher chosen photographs of pregnant women taken from 'The Belly Art Project'. Interviews were structured around ten predetermined questions in collaboration with midwives.</p>	<p>IPA following Smith & Nizza (2022) on transcripts. Photos not analysed.</p>
<p>Higham et al. (2024)</p> <p>"Being a woman in the men's game, it's brutal": A</p>	<p>Peer Reviewed Journal Article</p>	<p>United Kingdom. To explore lived experiences of a female coach while working for</p>	<p>Cisgender Female football coach</p>	<p>n = 1</p>	<p>Participant asked to provide personally meaningful or royalty free images (amount unstated) to discuss</p>	<p>IPA following Smith & Nizza (2022) on transcripts with themes</p>

longitudinal photo-elicitation exploration of a woman football coach's well-being.		a men's professional football club during one season.			during four semi structured interviews to prompt discussions on wellbeing across the football season.	developed across timepoints with the author and a colleague performing reflexive triangulation. Photos not analysed.
Soulard and Lundin (2023) Docents as transformative educators of travellers.	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	United States of America. To explore how docents perceive their roles as transformative	Docents (specialist volunteer guides) for a Holocaust Museum in Illinois, USA.	n = 31	Participants were asked to select one image in advance of a semi structured interview to express their feelings when working with visitors,	IPA followed Bartoli (2020) approach which integrated participant discussion

		educators to travellers.			with interviews exploring the emotions behind their image.	from images. Analysis grounded in double hermeneutic. Photos not analysed.
Olsen et al. (2023)	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	United States of America. To explore the lived experiences of motivation to engage in leisure time physical activity among amputees	People with lower extremity acquired amputations.	n = 6	Participants created a photo diary (number of photos unstated) reflecting their experiences on motivation for physical activity. The diaries were explored in a semi structured	IPA following Smith et al. (2009) on transcripts. Photos not analysed.

					interview to reflect on the images.	
Skorka et al. (2022)	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	Australia. To explore the lived experience of adolescents with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD).	Adolescents with FASD from a neurodevelopmental clinic in Australia.	n = 4	Participants took photos across a two-week period to capture their activities and environments to guide discussion on FASD. Amount of photos not stated by authors.	IPA following Smith et al. (2009) on transcripts. Photos not analysed.
Burman et al. (2022)	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	United Kingdom. To explore how men made sense of managing their mood symptoms when living with bipolar disorder	Men with Bipolar Disorder	n = 6	Participants selected six photos that reflected how they managed their symptoms, as well as helpful or unhelpful experiences since their	IPA following Smith et al. (2009) on transcripts. Photos not analysed.

mood management: a photo-elicitation investigation					diagnosis. Images discussed in semi structures interviews to understand their sense making and prompt reflections.	
Smith et al. (2021) Service user experiences of a novel in-reach rehabilitation and recovery service for people with profound and enduring mental health needs.	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	United Kingdom. What are the experiences of service users who use a novel in- reach rehabilitation and recovery service for people with severe and	Current or previous inpatients (within 6 months) of an inpatient rehab for severe and enduring mental health.	n = 15	Participants took between 5 and 7 photographs to represent their experience of being an inpatient. Semi structured interviews used photos as prompts for discussion.	IPA following Smith et al. (2009) on transcripts. Pen portraits developed for each participant. Photos not analysed.

		enduring mental health needs				
Hughes et al. (2019)	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	United Kingdom. Explore the lived experience of people with chronic pain and paraplegia to identify issues which influence their QoL.	Adults living with paraplegia, using a wheelchair for mobility and self-reporting chronic pain.	n = 6	Participants took photos over seven days that represented elements which enhanced or reduced their QoL. Participants brought 6-7 images to a semi structured interview, using photos as prompts to explore each photos meaning for their QoL and experience of disability.	IPA following Smith et al. (2009) on transcripts. Photos not analysed.
'I am free in my wheelchair but pain does have a say in it though': The meaning and experience of quality of life when living with paraplegia and chronic pain.						
Yap et al. (2020)	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	Philippines. What are the	Adults (but depicted culturally as	n = 7	Participants took 8-10 photos of spaces or	Followed Smith et al.
To build a home: A						

phenomenological approach of reconstructing “feeling-at-home” among children living in households with parents exhibiting depressive symptoms.		spatial experiences of ‘feeling-at-home’ of children living in households with parents exhibiting depressive symptoms.	‘children’) with a parent who would currently or previously meet the DSM-V criteria for a depressive disorder.		objects related to life with their parent at home. Images were referred to in follow up semi structured interviews as visual prompts to explore their experiences of being at home with their parent.	(2009) and Seamons’ place based IPA framework on transcripts. Photos not analysed.
Matthews and Hugh-Jones (2024) What is important to young people in care during adolescence? A qualitatively driven	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	England. To better understand what it is like to grow up in foster care during adolescence.	Young people between 13 to 15 in foster care in England.	n = 6	Participants generated 5-8 images over three weeks to respond to the question “What are important things in your life at the moment?”. Photos were discussed	IPA following Smith et al. (2009) on transcripts. Photos not analysed.

photo-elicitation

study.

at a semi structured
interview using the
SHOWeD technique to
encourage
collaboration.

Young et al. (2024)

Peer Reviewed

United Kingdom.

Care leavers who

n = 6

Participants brought on

IPA following

'I had my guard up

Journal Article

What are care

experienced mental

average 4 photos as

Smith et al.

for a long time and

leavers'

health difficulties

visual prompts for semi

(2009) on

that probably didn't

experiences

without an

structured interviews

transcripts.

help': Exploring

of the barriers to

intervention.

focusing on their

Photos not

care leavers'

accessing

mental health.

analysed.

experiences of the

professional

barriers to

mental health

accessing mental

support during

health support

adolescence?'

during

adolescence using

photo-elicitation
and Interpretative
Phenomenological
Analysis.

Adamson et al. (2022) The experiences of inaccessibility and ableism related to physical activity: a photo elicitation study among individuals with multiple sclerosis.	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	United States of America. To understand the experiences of inaccessibility and ableism as related to physical activity and exercise behaviour among individuals with MS	Adults with a self reported diagnosis of MS who were relapse free across the last thirty days.	n = 23	Participants took up to 27 photos over a 7 day period using a disposable camera, using prompts relating to physical activity, family and their environment. Developed photographs were used in semi structured interviews to explore the meaning of the	IPA following Smith et al. (2009) on transcripts. Photos not analysed.
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					photos to physical activity.	
Morrey et al. (2021)	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	United Kingdom. To understand how psychotherapy environments are experienced.	Therapists and Therapy Clients	Therapists (n = 9) Therapy clients (n = 5)	Researcher generated photos taken by two therapists of therapy rooms were used in semi structured interviews. Participants were asked to select images of an undisclosed amount. Photos were used to try to disrupt visual assumptions of the therapy space.	IPA following Smith et al. (2009) on transcripts with sense making of the photos. Photos not analysed.
"Screaming isolation" when is a chair more than a chair?						
Photographic encounters, IPA and capturing out of awareness experiencing: A novel approach to working with temporal, spatial						

and embodied

dimensions.

Hupkens et al. (2021)	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	Netherlands. To explore the meaning in daily life of community- dwelling aged persons who receive homecare	Older adults	n = 24	A researcher produced photo set was used with participants across a 5 – 7 month period. Participants selected images that represented their meaning in life which was then used to prompt deeper reflections through semi structured interviews.	IPA following Smith et al. (2009) on transcripts. Photos not analysed.
'Meaning in life? Make it as bearable, enjoyable and good as possible!': A qualitative study among community- dwelling aged adults who receive home nursing in the Netherlands.						
Morrison and Williams (2020)	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	United Kingdom. To explore current	Adult caregivers of stroke survivors	n = 3	A month prior to interviews, participants	IPA following Smith et al.

Gaining Longitudinal Accounts of Carers' Experiences Using IPA and Photograph Elicitation.		caregiving and willingness to continue to provide care using several longitudinal caregiver case studies and using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.			were sent disposable cameras and asked to take at least 3 photos to reflect their caregiving experience. Semi structured interviews focused on the participant images to act as prompts to reflect on their caregiving over time (12 months) and to reflect on their emotional responses.	(2009) on transcripts. Photos not analysed.
Kings et al. (2020)	Peer Reviewed Journal Article.	Australia.	Adults from a hoarding group	n = 10	Participants photographed 5-10 possessions that	IPA following Smith et al. (2009) on
Using photo-elicitation and		To explore the importance of				

interpretative						reflected their identity	transcripts.
phenomenological						or that of others. Semi	Photos not
analysis to explore						structured interviews.	analysed.
possessions as							
links to self-							
concept and the							
identities of others							
in hoarding							
disorder.							
Lecomte et al.	Peer Reviewed	France	Families and	Parental	Adolescent participants		IPA following
(2019)	Journal Article	To better	adolescents	couples (n =	were asked to take a		Smith et al.
The role of food in		understand the		3)	photo of their family		(2009) on
family relationships		role of food in		Mothers (n =	table after a meal using		transcripts.
amongst		family		2)	their mobile phone.		Photos not
adolescents with		relationships		Adolescents	Participants were		analysed.
bulimia nervosa: A		among teenagers		(n = 5)	asked to reflect on the		
qualitative study		diagnosed with			photo taken by the		

using photo-elicitation.		bulimia nervosa and their families.			adolescent participant before, during and after their meal.	
Bird (2022) An exploration of parents' and professionals' experiences of school entry deferral	Unpublished Dissertation	England To explore the lived experiences of parents and professionals making or supporting school entry deferral decisions in England.	Parents and Professionals	Parents (n = 4) Professionals (n = 2)	Participants submitted an image of an item that represented school deferral.	IPA following Smith et al. (2009) on transcripts. Validity demonstrated using Yardley's (2015) criteria. Photos not analysed.
King et al. (2017) Using photographs to explore self-	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	United Kingdom To use photo-elicitation	Adolescent boys with an ASD	n = 5	Participants given a disposable camera to take up to 27 photos	IPA following Smith et al. (2009) on

understanding in adolescent boys with an Autism Spectrum Condition.		interviews to explore the nature of self-understanding in adolescent boys diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Condition			relating to who they felt they were. Semi structured interviews across three interviews using photos to prompt reflection and deeper exploration of research question.	transcripts. Photos not analysed.
Lachal et al. (2012) Qualitative research using photo-elicitation to explore the role of food in family relationships among obese adolescents.	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	France To explore how family and food interact and what place food occupies in family relationships among obese adolescents	Adolescents with obesity and their parents	Adolescents (n = 7) Parents (n = 5)	Adolescents were asked to take one photo of the table after a family meal using a mobile phone. Semi structured interviews used photos as discussion prompts.	IPA following Smith et al. (2009) on transcripts. Photos not analysed.

Elliot et al. (2016)	Peer Reviewed	Scotland	Non-British	n = 14	Participants were given	IPA following
Capturing visual metaphors and tales: innovative or elusive?	Journal Article	To understand pedagogical, sociocultural and psychological challenges experienced by international doctoral students	postdoctoral academics		a disposable camera and asked to take photos relating to their PhD experience, using prompts to capture surprising moments. Semi structured interviews had participants select photos to discuss their lived experience of the image and of taking photos.	Smith et al. (2009) on transcripts. Photos not analysed.
Mansfield and Burton (2020)	Peer Reviewed	United Kingdom	Older adults in	n = 7	Participants were	IPA following
Exploring the	Journal Article	To explore the experiences of	assisted living facilities		asked to take photos across a two-week	Smith et al. (2009) on

meaning of quality of life for assisted living residents: A photo-elicitation study.		QoL within an assisted living environment using PEI and IPA.			period to capture elements they felt impacted their QoL. Participants brought six photos to semi structured interviews to prompt sharing their responses to their photos and what these represented for QoL.	transcripts. Photos not analysed.
Lim et al. (2022) How do people with dementia make sense of their medications? An Interpretative	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	United Kingdom. To explore how people with dementia view medication taking.	Patients with dementia	n = 12	Participants were loaned digital cameras and asked to take photos without help over two days about anything that related to them about taking	IPA following Smith et al. (2009) on transcripts. Photos not analysed. Two researchers

Phenomenological Analysis study.					medication. These were used to prompt participants during semi structured interviews with the assistance of family members in some instances, to help explore their personal experiences of medications.	analysed the transcripts and met to agree final themes.
Smith et al. (2023) Staff experiences of a novel in-reach rehabilitation and recovery service for people with	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	United Kingdom. What are the experiences of staff who work in a novel in-reach rehabilitation and	National health Service (NHS) and Community Voluntary Organizational staff	NHS staff (n = 15) Community staff (n = 3)	Participants were given electronic tablets to take 5-7 photos across two weeks that related to their experience of the service. Semi	IPA following Smith et al. (2009) on transcripts. Pen portraits created from

profound and enduring mental health needs.		recovery service for people with profound and enduring mental health needs?			structured interviews asked questions using their photos to prompt reflections about their experiences.	participant answers. Photos not analysed.
Phuong et al. (2023) Navigating the river: Experiences of women academic leaders in Vietnam.	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	Vietnam. To explore the lived experience of Vietnamese female academic leaders.	Female Vietnamese academic leaders.	n = 6	Participants were asked to bring (not described how captured) 5-10 photos to a semi structured interview that was felt by them to best represent their lived career experiences. Photos were used as visual prompts to elicit discussion which the	IPA following Smith & Nizza (2021) on transcripts. Photos not analysed.

					team queried might not be forthcoming using a purely verbal approach.	
Guest (2021) Congenital Melanocytic Naevus (CMN) through the lens: Exploring the positive experiences of young people with CMN using photo- elicitation interviews	Unpublished Dissertation	United Kingdom. To explore the lived experiences of young people with CMN who self-identify as having positively adjusted to their condition and/or had positive experiences, using photo- elicitation and IPA.	Adolescents with giant CMN.	N = 4	Participants were asked to share up to five photographs that to them signalled positive aspects of living with CMN. Interviews were semi structured using photos as a prompt and included rapport building to help with power imbalances.	IPA following Smith & Nizza (2021) on transcripts. Photos not analysed.

Oluseye (2021)	Unpublished	Nigeria.	Female young	n = 24	Participants were	IPA following
Exploring the lived experiences of unmarried young mothers in South-Western Nigeria	Dissertation	To explore the lived experiences of unmarried young mothers in South Nigeria using interpretative phenomenological analysis and photo-elicitation	mothers from Nigeria.		asked to take photographs on their mobile phones that best represented their life as a Nigerian young mother. Participants were asked to select one photo which was used to prompt their reflections in a semi structured interview about their life as a young mother,	Smith et al. (2009) on transcripts. Photos not analysed.
Hill (2014)	Unpublished	United Kingdom	Undergraduate	n = 12	Researcher generated	IPA following
Understanding Drinking	Dissertation	To understand the meaning that	University students		fifty photographs of bars which were then	Smith et al. (2009) on

Behaviour:		alcohol-related			shown to students.	transcripts.
Affordances and an Ecological Approach to Cognition		affordances had for drinkers between individuals and their drinking environments.			Semi structured interviews focused on what the participants saw in each photo and what aspects felt meaningful in the photos to their own drinking.	Photos not analysed.
Lucas (2019) The Lived Experience of Active Charcot Foot in Diabetes Mellitus	Unpublished Dissertation	United Kingdom. To better understand how people experience a diagnosis and subsequent management of active Charcot	Patients with active Charcot foot	n = 8	Participants were asked to bring 3-5 photos to a semi structured interview that represented what being diagnosed with Charcot foot meant to them. Participants	IPA following Smith et al. (2009) on transcripts. Photos not analysed.

		foot and how patients make sense of their experience.				could use personal electronic devices or a disposable camera.
Wainwright-Stewart (2018)	Unpublished Dissertation	Canada How do students, who have engaged with the learning opportunities at Prairie Site College, make sense of being engaged in these experiences?	Graduating students	n = 10	Participants took between 6-15 photos that represented their lived experience of engaging and learning at their college. Photos were used during a semi structured interview to elicit their thoughts about their learning experiences	IPA following Smith et al. (2009) on transcripts. Photos not analysed.

					from the photos provided.	
Elmi-Glennan (2013)	Unpublished Dissertation	United Kingdom. To explore how relational social processes influence older students' decisions to participate in and engage with higher education.	University students over thirty years old	n = 6	Participants were asked to produce at least 8 photos relating to barriers and motivations to their learning experience. An interview using a semi structured format used the photos as prompts to discuss thoughts related to higher education.	IPA following Smith et al. (2009) on transcripts. Photos not analysed.
Influences of past and present relational social processes when entering higher education post 30 years: Experiential accounts of foundation and year one students						
Renshaw and Burton (2023)	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	United Kingdom. What is it like to experience	Adult females 12 months post cancer	n = 5	Participants were asked to select up to 5 photos that reflected	IPA following Smith et al. (2009) on
"I don't know if I						

understood the whole process from the beginning": A photo-elicitation exploration of the experience of mastectomy and breast reconstruction decision making.		breast cancer diagnosis followed by mastectomy?	treatment and with a mastectomy.		their mastectomy experience. Semi structured interview used photos as prompts during discussion relating to their mastectomy experience.	transcripts. Photos not analysed.
Rayment et al. (2019) Using photo-elicitation to explore the lived experience of	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	United Kingdom. To explore the lived experiences of informal caregivers supporting a	Informal caregivers of people with dementia.	n = 6	Participants were given a disposable camera and asked to capture up to 27 photos that reflected their everyday experiences of being a	IPA following Smith et al. (2009) on transcripts. Photos not analysed.

informal caregivers of individuals living with dementia.		person with dementia.				caregiver across a 2 to 4 week period. Semi structured interviews used the photos to elicit a broader discussion.	
Khlar Zerrouk et al. (2014) The place of food in family relationships of adolescents with anorexia nervosa: a qualitative study using photography	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	France. To explore how adolescents with anorexia perceived food in their family life using photo- elicitation interviews.	Adolescents diagnosed with anorexia	n = 6		Participants were asked to take a photo of their family table after a meal, whether or not they participated in the meal. The image was then used as part of a semi structured interview to explore the emotional meanings participants linked to the photo.	IPA following Smith and Osborn (2003) on transcripts. Photos not analysed.

Reynolds et al. (2008)	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	United Kingdom. Did participants ascribe symbolic meanings about cancer to their selected artwork?	Female survivors of cancer	n = 12	Participants were asked to photograph 4- 6 images that they felt were personally significant of their artwork before their interview. The photos were used during a semi structured interview to explore what emotional significance the images brought had on participants meaning making in coping with cancer.	IPA following Smith and Osborn (2003) on transcripts. Photos not analysed.
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Fehily and Schlösser (2020)	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	United Kingdom	Adolescents	n = 10	Participants were asked to choose 10 photos that represented their aspirations and futures, being given two weeks to gather the photos. Semi structured interviewing focused on looking at photos and asking participants to describe and explain the significance of the photo relating to their aspirations.	IPA following Smith et al. (2009) on transcripts. Photos not analysed.
An exploration of the aspirations and future orientation of adolescents from low-income families.		How do young people from low-income families describe their aspirations and make sense of how these have been influenced?				
Subramaniam and Mehta (2024)	Peer Reviewed Journal Article	Singapore.	Young adult caregivers	n = 6	Participants were asked to take photos	IPA following Smith et al.

<p>Exploring the lived experiences of caregiving for older family members by young caregivers in Singapore: Transition, trials, and tribulations.</p>		<p>caregivers in Singapore perceive their role in caring for older adults in their families?</p>			<p>(of an undisclosed amount) that reflected their experience of caregiving. Semi structured interviews used photos to deepen discussions.</p>	<p>(2009) on transcripts. Photos not analysed.</p>
<p>Nikiforos and Karakitsou (2020) The phenomenology of revisiting lived experience through photographic images: Memory formation, narrative</p>	<p>Peer Reviewed Journal Article</p>	<p>Greece How do fragments of someone's experience survive in their internal world and what does it feel like to revisit the past through</p>	<p>Adults</p>	<p>n = 3</p>	<p>Participants were asked to bring up to 20 photos that were associated with pivotal moments in their life. During semi structured interviewing participants were</p>	<p>IPA following Smith et al. (2009) on transcripts. Photos not analysed.</p>

construction and
self-empowerment.

photographic
images?

invited to reflect on
their choices of photos.

Table 3*Overview of Included Studies (n = 43)*

Characteristic	n	%
Peer-reviewed articles	35	81%
Grey literature (theses)	8	19%
Studies using participant-generated photos	39	91%
Studies using researcher-selected photos	4	9%
Studies reporting standard ethical safeguards (right to withdraw)	39	91%
Studies reporting specific PEI-IPA ethical adaptations (photo ownership, identification)	24	56%
Studies reporting methodological challenges (participant burden, image selection issues)	29	67%

Note. "Standard ethical safeguards" relates to standard consent procedures including the right to withdraw. PEI-specific adaptations include decisions stated for managing photo ownership, identification, and emotional safeguarding.

Study aims included understanding transitions in identity after chronic illness (i.e. cancer), trauma (post amputation), experiences of caregiving (caregiving in dementia, parenting experiences with disability), lived experiences of mental health (bipolar disorder, eating disorders) and neurodevelopmental presentations (autism). Several studies used PEI-IPA within health and clinical psychology, specifically exploring the personal lived experiences of disability and chronic physical and mental health. Papers also situated PEI-IPA within the context of social care, sports psychology, education, and business. Papers employing PEI-

IPA were applied to a range of populations, including UK, Brazilian, Thai, Nigerian and Canadian populations.

Settings and Contexts of PEI-IPA

Participants were interviewed in a variety of locations, including mental health and rehabilitation settings and in the community. Community venues included schools, workplaces, university spaces and participant homes. All studies used private areas to conduct PEI and ran either face to face or, following changes to access after COVID-19, via the telephone or remotely through MS Teams or Zoom with participants referring to shared images during calls.

PEI Applications to Data Collection

Four papers used photographs sourced by the research team to elicit participant experiences. Rationales for employing researcher sourced images included preventing harm to participants in an alcohol study (Hill, 2014), as a strategy to gather specific reflections towards a therapeutic environment (Morrey et al., 2021) and to bring to life different identities in service to the research aims (Damaskinidis, 2024; Lawson & Wardle, 2013).

Participant generated photographs were employed by 39 studies to visually prompt participants into discussing what mattered most to them. Participants were asked to produce photographs themselves or invited to select stock imagery that was representative or symbolic of the realities of their lived experiences. Participants were asked to take photos that represented the day-to-day experiences of a phenomenon or photos that symbolised their interpretation of a phenomenon.

Instructions for Participant Generated Photos

Participants were asked to take photographs before interviews, with mediums for capture including disposable cameras in the post (Adamson et al., 2022), tablets (Smith et al., 2023) and participant personal smartphones (Burman et al., 2022). The timeframe for photo generation ranged between 3 days to 7 months in the case of studies using longitudinal IPA

(Hupkens et al., 2021) with most studies requesting photos within one to two weeks. Some studies gave specific guidance, including the number of photos to take, the aim of the research in line with the request for photos and photo guides on what would be accepted into the study (Soulard & Lundin, 2023). The number of photos available for participants to discuss could vary. Studies that provided disposable cameras had up to the number of exposures within a given camera reel, usually approximately twenty-seven potential photos. Interviewers however tended to set a limit on photo choices for the interviews, ranging from 3 to 10 photos. In three studies, participants were limited to one photograph (Khar Zerrouk et al., 2014; Lachal et al., 2012; Lecomte et al., 2019) which attempted to capture the lived experiences of adolescents with eating disorders after a family meal.

Most interviews used a semi structured interview process where participants would discuss each photo in turn and narrate their significance in relation to the target phenomenon. Interview approaches varied in reported structure, consisting of open-ended questions designed to prompt reflections, descriptions, comparisons, and emotions from participants. One study (Matthews & Hugh-Jones, 2024) utilised the SHOWeD technique (Wang & Burris, 1997), a structured framework for interviewing which asked participants what they saw, what was happening and how this related to the target phenomenon (Matthews & Hugh-Jones, 2024). One study opted for a closed interview structure with specific questions related to pregnancy and the ante natal experience, generated in collaboration with student midwives (Damaskinidis, 2024).

IPA Analysis Approaches

Thirty-nine papers followed the six-step approach to IPA (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Nizza, 2022). Four papers utilised the recent update for IPA from Smith and Nizza (Smith & Nizza, 2022) which uses Group Experiential Themes (GET) to assist in transparency for analysing across cases. All papers were consistent in reporting the use of IPA to focus on participant meaning making. All papers reported using the transcripts generated from the PEI interview to analyse through IPA. No papers analysed photos using IPA. Eighteen studies cited

specific checks for rigour for PEI-IPA, including employing second coders, engaging in reflexive memoing and mapping photographs to superordinate themes to structure the narrative of later publications.

Unaddressed Methodological Elements

Homogeneous Discussion of IPA analysis

Although all papers stated using IPA, specific facets of IPA, such as the double hermeneutic, triangulation, or clear references to rigour were reported variably within the dataset.

Lack of Standardised Guidance

While studies highlighted aligning PEI with IPA ideographically (Ramalho et al., 2021; Rayment et al., 2019), none referenced a specific framework for using PEI with IPA. Instructions for PEI varied from open ended prompts in photo taking to represent experiences, to offering project websites where participants accessed project information and guidance without a researcher present (Elliot et al., 2016; Lawson & Wardle, 2013).

Semantic Thematic analysis

A semantic thematic analysis (theme table with illustrative quotes available in appendix E) mapped how PEI was integrated into IPA, the methodological strengths and limitations of the approach, ethical considerations reported from studies and innovations reported from using PEI-IPA.

Integrating PEI-IPA

All papers extracted reported using PEI during their interview phase with the resulting transcripts being analysed using IPA. Photos were reported as tools to elicit narratives from participants, rather than as data points in themselves for analysis (Rayment et al., 2019). Photographs were reported to shape the content and direction of interviews, triggering reflections from participants directly related to the target phenomena (Elliot et al., 2016; Khiar Zerrouk et al., 2014; Lawson & Wardle, 2013). Combining PEI with IPA was reported to anchor superordinate themes to specific images produced by participants to encapsulate

the theme as a whole (Hughes et al., 2019; Matthews & Hugh-Jones, 2024). Photos were reported to help research teams remind them of the participants experience alongside transcribing and during the initial stages of the IPA coding process (Burton et al., 2022). Papers highlighted that integrating PEI resulted in a consistent influence to the data analysed through IPA, with papers highlighting PEI being incorporated with IPA to align with the idiographic nature of IPA as the analytic method (McLoughlin et al., 2023; Rayment et al., 2019).

Reported Strengths

Twenty-six papers reported strengths relating to using PEI-IPA as a methodological and analytic approach. Strengths included increasing participants access to difficult emotions and memories, ensuring discussions were anchored in the lived experienced of participants and facilitating access to participant reflections reported to be inaccessible through standard interviewing.

Increased Access to Emotions and Memories.

The PEI-IPA process was reported to increase the level of emotional recall and connection to participants narratives of their lived experiences (Guest, 2021). Accessing photos as prompts in the interview process was reported to help increase participants ability to reflect on what mattered most to their experience when discussing the target phenomenon (King et al., 2017). Studies reported that the use of photos helped transport participants to the memories of their experiences through their photos, prompting a layered approach to uncovering detailed emotional responses through accessing their photographs and how they felt when these had been taken (Rayment et al., 2019).

Deeper Access.

Studies reported that combining photo-elicitation to prompt discussions for interviews gathered facets of understanding that researchers questioned would have been possible through standard interviewing (Elmi-Glennan, 2013; Lawson & Wardle, 2013; Lucas, 2019; Nikiforos & Karakitsou, 2020; Wainwright-Stewart, 2018). Authors credited PEI with helping

participants to reflect on the research aims (Elmi-Glennan, 2013) in a manner which represented them instead of “using researcher derived topic schedules or researcher-led questioning” (Burman et al., 2022). No studies compared participants using a PEI approach against other approaches, including standard IPA interviewing without photo elicitation.

Participant Ownership of Meaning Making.

Twenty-two papers highlighted how PEI directly facilitated a sense of ownership for participants when photographs were involved in the interview process. Several studies asked participants directly for feedback on their experience of using photos in the interview process, with participants enjoying the process of sourcing photos for interviews (Lucas, 2019; Smith et al., 2021) and reflecting how bringing their photos into the interview environment felt “empowering” (Smith et al., 2021). Studies reported that PEI gave participants control over the meaning-making process (Witayarat, 2020) with participants seen as co-creators of research outputs for populations where ensuring a fairer distribution of power could be difficult, like in underrepresented populations (Lim et al., 2022).

Participant Led Understanding of the Lived Experience.

Twenty-one papers highlighted how incorporating PEI into the IPA process for interviewing had “enabled participants to take the lead and identify issues of particular importance and relevance to them” (King et al., 2017). PEI was reported to facilitate control for participants in what photos to share, therefore determining “the subject of the images and which images to talk about” during their interview (Olsen et al., 2023). Facilitating a participant led approach to the interviews through PEI was achieved in populations reported by research teams to be marginalised in being afforded control, like autism (King et al., 2017) and dementia (Lim et al., 2022). Papers highlighted that PEI created a freedom for participants to talk about the elements of their lived experience that mattered most, including comparisons of identity before and after experiencing health conditions like cancer (Renshaw & Burton, 2023) and to explore the facets of their experiences that held specific psychological significance (Reynolds et al., 2008).

Reported Limitations

Twenty-nine papers reflected on the limitations PEI-IPA could bring. Threats to participant confidence, increasing burdens in managing the ethical and governance requirements for a PEI-IPA study and an overall lack of clarity detailing how to integrate PEI into IPA effectively were reported.

Participant Confidence and Burden.

Papers highlighted participants reporting uncertainty when asked to produce photos for interviewing (Oluseye, 2021). Studies noted a confusion from participants in what was expected from them (Damaskinidis, 2024) and concerns in getting instructions correct (Morrison & Williams, 2020). Practical increases in participant burden unique to PEI integration included difficulties remembering to take photos (Hupkens et al., 2021) and keeping disposable cameras close when an opportunity to capture a research aim arose (King et al., 2017).

Ethical and Governance Restrictions.

Across the dataset researchers reported navigating a desire to promote flexibility in image choice alongside ethical and governance restrictions. Some papers reported excluding photographs that identified third parties due to issues with obtaining consent (Oluseye, 2021) whilst others sought to offer flexibility in allowing third party images, provided participants adhered to strict consent processes that were argued to have limited freedom in image choice (Elliot et al., 2016; King et al., 2017). Governance considerations, like encrypting images on the side of the research team (Witayarat, 2020) and concerns at identifying participants and those close to them were reported to limit the choice of photos available for participants (Damaskinidis, 2024; Smith et al., 2021).

Ethical Considerations

Authors reported navigating consent procedures specific to the PEI-IPA process, enhancing flexibility in promoting participant selections of photos in line with ethical frameworks and

maintaining privacy for participants when considering the use of transcript data coupled with photographs during study writeup and dissemination.

Layered Consent, Privacy and Ownership.

Consent to participate within each study was gained from every paper included within the review. Adaptions to the PEI-IPA process included providing guides on the types of photos allowed into a study (Smith et al., 2023), the opportunity to decline to share or withdraw images (Oluseye, 2021), the use of pseudonyms to protect participant narratives during the IPA analysis and subsequent disseminations (Lawson & Wardle, 2013) and to have faces blurred from photos (Burton et al., 2022). Three studies (Elliot et al., 2016; Guest, 2021; Witayarat, 2020) highlighted additional statements to explain to participants the nuances for photo consent, including using photos of third parties and used layered photo consent for ownership, including whether participants granted dissemination of their photos beyond the scope of the research writeup phase.

Ethical Care of Participants.

Sixteen papers highlighted additional steps taken to acknowledge potential emotional sensitivities attached to participants capturing photographs relating to their lived experiences. Studies highlighted encouraging participants to choose the order of photos for discussion (Mansfield & Burton, 2020; McLoughlin et al., 2023; Morrison & Williams, 2020; Renshaw & Burton, 2023) and debriefing with signposting after the interview to assist with any distress (McLoughlin et al., 2023; Young et al., 2024). Studies also highlighted the steps taken to meet governance requirements whilst encouraging freedom of expression, including using photos that symbolised third parties without identification (Nikiforos & Karakitsou, 2020) and 'no face photos' which included body parts of people the participant considered important to their lived experience (Elliot et al., 2016).

Innovations

Novel Applications of PEI-IPA

Ten papers highlighted their studies had been the first attempt of using PEI-IPA with the population and phenomena being studied. Novel applications included using PEI-IPA for body image studies (Lawson & Wardle, 2013; Ramalho et al., 2016), amputee post rehabilitation experiences (Olsen et al., 2023), Foetal alcohol disorder (Skorka et al., 2022), dementia (Rayment et al., 2019) and cancer (Renshaw & Burton, 2023; Reynolds et al., 2008).

Discussion

This scoping review aimed to map how PEI-IPA was used in peer reviewed and grey literature. This review has mapped reported methodological strengths, limitations and adaptations of PEI-IPA from forty-three eligible papers. Researchers employed the use of PEI-IPA across a diverse range of populations and disciplines, with studies encouraging the use of photography as anchoring points for discussing difficult to verbalise experiences. Whilst this review excluded papers where PEI had not been clearly applied, there was notable variation from papers during screening that labelled PEI as an umbrella term for a range of visual elicitation methods, including studies relating to object elicitation and photovoice. The mislabelling of PEI for a different visual elicitation method occurred throughout the screening process, indicating a potential limitation in the wider literature to identify the visual method being used. Notably, peer reviewed, published papers were amongst those screened out which mislabelled PEI which raises wider systemic questions for how researchers interested in PEI-IPA can obtain a clear understanding of the process.

Strengths

A promising element that emerged from mapping was the diverse range of populations and phenomena PEI-IPA was used with. Participants with dementia, adults navigating serious long term health conditions and neurodivergent adolescents were amongst those sharing their narratives through PEI-IPA. Researchers reported how PEI-IPA supported participant independence in sharing deep layers of experience related to the phenomenon that in some cases they had not expected. This could indicate that PEI-IPA

has promise as a tool for methodological justice by empowering participants to narrate their experiences using a frame of interpretation that holds most value to them (Teo, 2021). It could also be argued that these particular populations may experience higher levels of marginalisation and could be at risk of being overlooked by research teams when considering methodological fit for studies (Moree, 2018). PEI-IPA in this instance may have a use in redressing epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007) where those in positions of power select who's experiences are researched. As PEI has been reported by research teams to expand participants capacity to access emotive, symbolic layers of their existence and IPA assimilates those layers into a deeper understanding of a phenomenon, there is the potential for novel combinations like PEI-IPA to extend epistemic reach (Teo, 2021)

A dilemma that studies reported navigating was meeting ethical and governance requirements around managing identifiable photographs of participants and third parties. The concept of relational ethics may help underpin this experience (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Restricting the types of images participants could bring into their discussions was highlighted as a limitation from papers in the dataset. Prohibiting certain types of photographs, particularly those of people that might be integral to the lived experience of a participant, could be argued to risk flattening the layers of narratives participants discuss. Relational ethics encourages research teams to balance ethical and governance restrictions against the impact these limits could have on the strength of their methodological designs (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Studies that incorporated symbolic photos, pixilated photos and photos of limbs as part of 'no face' photo approaches could be argued to have tried to balance ethical restrictions whilst limiting a flattening effect on what their participants discussed.

When considering the strengths of this review, a robust set of inclusion and exclusion criteria ensured extracted studies used photo-elicitation interviewing and interpretative phenomenological analysis. This was pertinent when reflecting on earlier stages of the screening process, where methods like photovoice, object elicitation and video elicitation were mislabelled by papers as PEI. These criteria also assisted in sifting studies which labelled descriptions of analyses like thematic analysis and grounded theory as IPA. Grey

literature from unpublished dissertations offered a wider mapping of PEI-IPA from multiple disciplines. As this review focussed on methodological applications for PEI-IPA, using grey literature gave a depth towards understanding PEI-IPA methodology, including detailed rationales, alongside peer reviewed papers (Paez, 2017).

A semantic thematic analysis was employed to map how papers used PEI-IPA which is argued to keep within the scope of mapping, not interpreting, the extent literature (Mak & Thomas, 2022; Peters et al., 2022). Using reflexive memoing in the screening, extraction and analysis process helped maintain a semantic approach to analysis in keeping close to the source data (Braun & Clarke, 2022) and transparently capturing tensions relating to papers for inclusion. An example of this was excluding studies where papers had allowed a subset of participants to opt out of the PEI phase of their work and amalgamated datasets for analysis with participants who had engaged with PEI. This raised a question in justifying exclusion based not only on methodological adherence, but also to the ethical considerations on limiting burden for participants (National Institute of Health Research, 2020).

Limitations

Whilst this review adhered to conditions set out in the pre-registered protocol and maintained the aim of mapping the methodological applications of PEI-IPA, limitations exist. Whilst screening and analysis were undertaken by the main author (CB) with a subset of papers double screened by a second reviewer (FGS) in line with scoping guidance (Peters et al., 2022) the absence of a fuller review process could be argued to have introduced the risk of subjectivity to themes produced. Keeping an electronic trail via Rayyan of exclusion and inclusion reasons for each paper at the abstract and full text phases and engaging in reflexive memoing was used to foster transparency within the review.

The eligibility criteria were specific to avoid including studies that erroneously claimed to have used PEI-IPA and risk methodological dilution. This may have excluded approaches using PEI-IPA in wider ways, like using PEI-IPA alongside multiple visual and analytical approaches. This limitation highlights a wider difficulty in keeping fidelity to the conceptual

requirements of a scoping review whilst promoting inclusivity and diversity of papers which may have considered novel applications that fell outside of eligibility.

As the review focussed on methodological applications of combining PEI-IPA, extraction omitted participant results. Outside of papers that explicitly sought participant feedback of PEI-IPA and highlighted this as a novel application, any additional insights offered from participants into their experience of PEI-IPA were not captured. Future research may wish to consider a standardised approach to seeking feedback from participants on PEI-IPA to maintain the spirit of maintaining methodological justice (Teo, 2021).

Finally, this review included peer-reviewed and grey literature. This bolstered the range of methodological reporting available and introduced variance in the detail of methodological discussions between peer reviewed and grey literature. Peer reviewed journals require manuscripts to adhere to word restrictions (Paez, 2017) which can limit transparency relating to PEI applications versus grey literature. Equally, whilst grey literature offered layered explanations of methodological choices and detailed rationales, study rigour is harder to establish when compared to peer reviewed processes (Adams et al., 2017). While considering a quality appraisal tool may have facilitated comparisons of methodological quality between peer reviewed and grey literature, this approach could have also risked widening the aims of this review which was to map, not evaluate, the literature available. Despite the above limitations, this review suggests there is a feasibility to consider strengthening the application of PEI-IPA through formulating comprehensive guidelines for future research teams who wish to use PEI-IPA in their projects.

Recommendations

This scoping review mapped grey and peer reviewed literature to better understand how photo-elicitation was applied to interpretative phenomenological analysis. PEI-IPA was reported to assist participant meaning making, with application in empowering populations from marginalised populations alongside sensitive and layered experiences. Due to difficulties arriving at clear definitions of PEI and IPA within the extant literature at abstract and full text, alongside variation in papers' navigation of ethical and procedural nuances in

PEI-IPA, it is reasonable to suggest that PEI-IPA may benefit from methodological guidelines for future researchers. In line with JBI guidance for scoping reviews (Peters et al., 2022) the current review does not seek to define specific guidelines in relation to PEI-IPA from the results of this paper, however the below elements have been considered as potential areas for future focus.

Clarifying PEI-IPA

Future research could consider how PEI-IPA is best classified, including the specific differences methodologically and procedurally to other visual methodologies. Improving what terms researchers could set to ensure their methodology fits with a PEI-IPA framework could assist in strengthening any resulting methodological fidelity.

Consistent Reporting Standards on PEI-IPA

Introducing clearer reporting for PEI-IPA is suggested to benefit future papers in demonstrating transparency at dissemination. This could include details on the participant onboarding process specific to PEI-IPA, photo sources, interview technique, integration with IPA and documenting the ethical nuances of PEI-IPA.

Ethics and PEI-IPA

Due to the limitations relating to ethical restrictions on what was permitted for participants to capture, future research could consider what strategies may best assist participants in fully expressing themselves whilst aligning with ethical considerations.

Feasibility of Future Guidance for PEI-IPA

Developing a researcher focussed guide on how to combine PEI-IPA is arguably warranted for the field. Future research could consider the common difficulties research teams face at points within a PEI-IPA design, including recruitment, procedural and analytic processes specific to PEI-IPA. A Delphi study could be a potential follow up to the present scoping review to bring together researchers, clinicians and participants experienced in PEI-IPA to develop and build on these areas of potential guidance (Brady, 2015).

Conclusion

This review has provided an initial map of how PEI-IPA currently works from peer reviewed and grey literature, demonstrating the strengths and areas of future development for the method.

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Young, H., Melia, Y., & Chance-Lawton, L. (2024). ‘I had my guard up for a long time and that probably didn’t help’: Exploring care leavers’ experiences of the barriers to accessing mental health support during adolescence using photo-elicitation and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. *Adoption & Fostering*, 48(3-4), 302-325.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/03085759241292624>

Appendices

Appendix A

Notes from preliminary search

Date of preliminary search: 19 December 2024

Search one: PsychINFO

Search strings:

[1] Photo-elicitation OR photo-elicitation interview

[2] Interpretative phenomenological analysis OR IPA

[1] and [2] combined with AND Boolean operator

Results:

Papers retrieved, $n = 38$

Brief scan of topic areas indicated in titles:

- Psychology
- Mental health
- Physical health
- Sport
- Experiences for populations of a global majority
- Identity
- Neurodivergence

Filtered by methodology, systematic reviews only

$n = 0$

Search two: Web Of Science

Search strings:

[1] Photo-elicitation OR photo-elicitation interview

[2] Interpretative phenomenological analysis OR IPA

[1] and [2] combined with AND Boolean operator

Results:

Papers retrieved, $n = 46$

Brief scan of topic areas indicated in titles:

- Psychology
- Mental health
- Physical health
- Sport
- Experiences for populations of a global majority
- Identity
- Neurodivergence
- Education
- Disability

Within-search keyword search (term = “systematic review”)

$n = 0$

Initial thoughts

- Quite a small number of papers are getting returned. This is a preliminary search, so I imagine this is to be expected?
- There are no systematic reviews coming back.
- There's a lot of variances in the sorts of papers coming back from different disciplines. Is it an idea to broaden the terms when I go to full search?
- Might not come through in the actual scoping search, however there's a lot of variance coming through on what is being labelled as PEI (specifically photo-interview, visual methods) which might be worth thinking about when I move to the full protocol.

Next steps

To rerun these searches with additional terms to broaden out.

Search three: PsycINFO, additional terms added

Search strings:

[1] Photo-elicitation OR photo-elicitation interview OR photo-interview OR visual methods

[2] Interpretative phenomenological analysis OR IPA

[1] and [2] combined with AND Boolean operator

Results:

Papers retrieved, $n = 53$

Filtered by methodology, systematic reviews only

$n = 0$

Search four: PsycINFO, additional terms added

Search strings:

[1] Photo-elicitation OR photo-elicitation interview OR photo-interview OR visual methods

[2] Interpretative phenomenological analysis OR IPA

[1] and [2] combined with AND Boolean operator

Results:

Papers retrieved, $n = 240$

Within-search keyword search (term = “systematic review”)

$n = 0$

Search five: Manual search using Google

When running a manual search with the search terms “photo elicitation and interpretive phenomenological analysis systematic review” two relevant documents come back.

1) Torre & Murphy (2015): “A Different Lens: Changing Perspectives Using Photo-Elicitation Interviews”

This is a systematic review of PEI in the specific context of applying the method to education. It is not a methodological review and does not focus on IPA. It also does not examine papers in the fields of psychology or health and social care.

2) Reid et al. (2018): “Reflecting on the Use of Photo-Elicitation Methods in IPA Research”

This is not a peer-reviewed systematic review. It’s a reflective conference presentation

summarising 14 IPA studies that used PEI between 2010 to 2018. This does not go into detailed methodological considerations and has not been subject to peer review.

Search six: PROSPERO

The PROSPERO database was searched to identify any currently registered systematic reviews of PEI. 20 systematic reviews were identified.

The titles and review questions of each registered review were looked at to gauge whether there is any overlap for the review planned.

No projects focus on a methodological application of PEI using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). While several reviews explore visual research methods like Photovoice or arts-based approaches, these assess outcome-driven areas like health promotion, recovery, and refugee wellbeing. None are specifically considering how photo-elicitation functions as a qualitative research tool in IPA or considers the methodological strengths, limitations, and innovations.

This gap justifies the potential for a scoping review examining how photo-elicitation has been integrated into IPA studies, highlighting methodological processes, and considering the feasibility of potential steps around building guidance.

Summary and conclusions of preliminary scoping searches before running the scoping review

A set of preliminary scoping searches were run to understand the volume of existing research on photo-elicitation interview (PEI) methods within the context of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and to gauge whether any systematic reviews with a methodological focus have already been ran.

The searches ran do not show any prior systematic reviews specifically addressing the methodological intersection I plan to run a scoping review for (i.e. PEI-IPA). While several reviews are registered on PROSPERO, none of these take a methodological perspective on PEI or its application within IPA research. Whilst the number of papers would not be viewed as low, it is also not massive either. This potentially indicates that PEI-IPA as a topic might be under researched. Running a full systematic review could be argued to be premature for

this area. After having a look through the different types of review available, running a scoping review to clearly map what has been done with PEI-IPA runs like the best approach for the intended review aims.

Appendix B

Eligibility Checklist

Inclusion Criteria uploaded into Rayyan

To include if the study meets each element. All criteria must be met for inclusion.

1. Primary empirical study using PEI as an interview tool in IPA research.

The study must generate original data through participant interviews using PEI with the resulting transcript analysed using IPA.

2. Photos used as prompts during interviews to facilitate meaning-making.

Studies must use photos explicitly as prompts within interviews rather than as a standalone analysis.

3. Clear and transparent description of how PEI was used in the IPA process, including data collection and analysis integration.

The study must explain how PEI informed the interview process and its integration into IPA analysis.

4. IPA used as the primary analytic method, not as a supplementary approach.

Studies where IPA is mentioned only briefly or used alongside unrelated methodologies should be excluded.

5. Study published in any language (translation feasible).

Non-English papers are eligible if a translation can be reasonably obtained through methods like ChatGPT translation, or Google Translate.

6. Study published at any date.

No time restrictions apply; older and newer studies are eligible up to the intended date for data extraction.

7. Study conducted in any research context or topic area.

The research setting is not restricted (e.g., health, education, social care).

8. Study has full-text availability.

Only full-text studies will be reviewed. Abstract-only papers are ineligible.

9. Study published in peer-reviewed or grey literature.

The study must be published in a peer-reviewed journal or come from a thesis or dissertation.

Exclusion Criteria uploaded into Rayyan

To exclude if any exclusion criteria apply. If one or more areas come up in the sift, exclude the study.

1. PEI used only for visual or photographic analysis, not as an interview prompt.

Exclude studies where images are the subject of analysis rather than tools for meaning-making through interviews.

2. Photovoice or similar participatory methods used.

Studies using photovoice, community-driven projects or other visual methods that do not apply PEI with IPA should be excluded.

3. IPA used only superficially or alongside incompatible methodologies.

Exclude studies where IPA is only mentioned but not used as the main analytic framework.

4. Lack of clear descriptions of how PEI was applied methodologically.

Studies that fail to explain how PEI was conducted or integrated across the entire dataset should be excluded.

5. Full-text unavailable.

Abstract-only papers, inaccessible articles, or unavailable theses should be excluded

Appendix C

Reflexive Memoing for Audit Trail Illustrative Purposes

Reflexive memos were taken during the process of data charting and semantic thematic analysis phases of the review. This was to strengthen transparency and show decision points in real time. Memoing did not form part of the analysis of this review, however was used as a reflexive tool to refine eligibility decisions and document tensions from the dataset as these appeared. This adheres to JBI guidance to demonstrate clear audit trails within the review process. Three memos have been selected which demonstrate tensions and decision points highlighted in the main body of the review.

As required by Newcastle University, this appendix does not form an additional element of the review, neither does this appendix necessitate additional reading by an examiner. The main elements that form the later decision points of these memos are clearly discussed within the main body of the paper.

Memo Example 1: Excluding Studies that have a partial PEI uptake.

Context: Full text screening. Seeing inconsistencies in how PEI was stated in abstracts to be applied to the dataset and then on further reading at full text, did not apply PEI to the full dataset.

Date of memo: 15th of April, 2025

Memo: *“So there were ones where they said they had done photo elicitation with people, where like, maybe they’ve got like, ten of them, but maybe one or two hadn’t brought photos on the day. What they decide to do is do an alternative interview schedule with them...but then they’ve got them in the same analysis dataset with no differences? Made me pause and think, well, if you’re essentially saying you can clearly get that information from a person without using photos, then what’s the point in using the photos with the others?”*

Memo Example 2: Ethics restrictions limiting participant expression.

Context: Extraction. Questioning if there are patterns in how ethics conditions influence the selection and use of photos.

Date of memo: 15th of April 2025

Memos: *"...They said ethics restricted what kinds of photos participants were allowed to take, and they questioned if this might have limited what participants felt able to express..."*
"...it got me thinking, are there other papers where ethics is having an impact?"

Memo Example 3: Methodological mislabelling of PEI in the full text

Context: Full text screening. Noticing visual methods labelled as PEI incorrectly.

Date of memo: 13th of April 2025

Memos: *"...what I'm noticing is that a lot of papers that said they were PEI at abstract, so bringing them into full text, they say they did photo elicitation and then in the methods they say they used photovoice which is a different method..."*

"...the mislabelling of PEI for different elicitation methods like videos or photovoice occurred persistently at screening...in the end I didn't want to dilute the extractions by including several different methodologies and it's in my exclusion criteria, so these were excluded..."

Appendix D

Data Charting Tool

This data charting tool was used when extracting data eligible papers. Each of the rows displays a category which was consistently applied across all forty-three studies.

Study Number	
Citation	
Publication Type	
Study Context	
Research Aim	
PEI Application	
Data Collection	
Data Analysis	
Ethical Considerations (study)	
Ethical Considerations (PEI)	
Methodological Strengths	
Methodological limitations	
Innovations / Adaptions	
Integration with IPA	
Findings and Implications	

Appendix E

Theme table for semantic thematic analysis

Superordinate Themes	Description	Subthemes	Data to corroborate
Integrating PEI-IPA	<p>PEI was reported as a tool to produce verbal data relating to the target phenomenon in interviews, with transcripts then analysed using IPA.</p> <p>The images were not reported to be analysed through IPA.</p>	<p>Images prompted the narrative then analysed using IPA</p>	<p>“Photos were used as an elicitation method to facilitate deeper insight.” (Study 20, Hupkens)</p> <p>“... researchers can inadvertently impose their interpretation of a picture onto one of the participants...To avoid this pitfall, this study employs the approach of having the docents interpret their own pictures” (study 9, Soulard)</p> <p>“Photographs were used as a tool to facilitate the interview process and therefore were not themselves analysed” (Study 24, King)</p> <p>“The use of photographs is not designed to represent empirical truths or ‘reality’. They are there simply for researchers to use as a tool to expand on questions and simultaneously to provide a unique way for the participants</p>

			to communicate dimensions of their lives” (study 34, Lucas)
			“Analysis involved familiarization with each interview transcript in conjunction with the original audio recordings and corresponding photographs, making notes on specific aspects of the transcript (descriptive, linguistic and conceptual), interpreting and then classifying these notes to develop initial themes (similar clusters of ideas) and subsequently a master list of themes and subthemes to capture the essence of each participant's account.” (Study 28, Lim)
Strengths	Reported strengths of eligible papers using PEI-IPA	Increased access to emotions and memories	<p>“...using a novel photo-elicitation approach to empower participants to direct the focus of the interview discussions towards personally relevant experiences” (study 12, Burman)</p> <p>“The photographs provided an innovative way of capturing the lived experiences of formal dementia caregivers and</p>

Deeper access

allowed the interview data to be grounded in their daily living, centring around their own lived experiences. It was clear that the photographs had multiple meanings for carers which enabled them to discuss the physical and tangible aspects of their lives, often not discussed within an interview setting. This then allowed for further prompting into their emotional reactions and responses with the photographs, transporting them to how they felt when the photograph was taken” (study 39, Rayment).

“The denoted part of the photograph’s dual nature was functioning, by and large, as a catalyst in unfolding the participants’ present account of what was really happening at the time and provided the opportunity for re-signification of feelings and events.” (Study 43, Nikiforos)

“Several participants commented that they would have found it more difficult to talk about themselves without photographs” (study 24, King)

Participant ownership of meaning making	“A key strength of this study is the combined use of photo-elicitation and IPA...which allowed our participants to share concepts and stories which they felt were important and meaningful to their experiences of living with bipolar disorder and making sense of mood management, something which may not be easily accomplished when using researcher derived topic schedules or researcher-led questioning” (study 12, Burman)
Participant led understanding of the lived experience	“This afforded individuals the opportunity to prioritise and highlight areas of importance to them...” (Study 34, Lucas) “The technique of photo-elicitation provided clarity in understanding, gave depth to the conversations I had with each participant, and allowed each participant to be creative. Photographs made it easier to follow the participant’s story” (study 35, Wainwright-Stewart)

“This enabled parents and professionals to select something meaningful that reflected their realities. All visuals added a further layer of insight into each participant’s perspective and exploring these at the start of the semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to quickly learn about something important to the participant from a person-centred perspective” (Study 4, Bird)

“ using participant’s own selected photographs to structure and aid interview discussions provided insight into carer cognitions, illness perceptions and motivations, related often to specific care tasks or anticipated role expectancies” (Study 21, Morrison)

“Respondents were viewed as experiential experts on the subject and were allowed the opportunity to tell their own story” (Study 25, Lachal)

Limitations	Reported limitations of eligible papers using PEI-IPA	Participant confidence and burden	<p>“Interestingly, when asked about the experiences of engaging in this research, some participants commented that the photo element of the study elicited fears of ‘getting it wrong’. It also appeared to add an additional demand on participants that may have deterred some potential participants.” (Study 17, Young)</p> <p>“whilst we advised carers to take photographs they felt represented their situation, thoughts and feelings, they may have felt unable or unsure about taking certain photographs: we as researchers have no control over this and could only work with what was presented” (Study 21, Morrison)</p> <p>“Within the current study, there were also concerns that the participants may try to find photographs that they thought</p>
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Ethical and governance restrictions on image choice

the researcher would want to see, which could have disrupted the participant-focussed nature of the research” (Study 31, Guest)

“Whereas ethics permeate overall research design and methods, the extra layers of complexity with visual research pose extra ethical challenges (Mitchell 2011; Rowe 2011). Even out with the strict scrutiny by the College of Social Sciences’ Ethics Committee, the research team carefully upheld the research protocols concerning clarity and transparency, voluntariness, anonymity and informed consent, storage, research dissemination and avoidance of harm, to address the complexities and tensions concerning confidentiality and anonymity that are prevalent when images are used” (Study 26, Elliot)

“ Overall, photo-elicitation encouraged service users to

take part and aided their expression. However, rules restricting images, such as not photographing people for reasons of privacy, potentially reduced participant choice and scope.” (Study 29, Smith)

“...select a visual stimulus such as an object, drawing or photograph that represents an aspect of your experiences of school entry deferral. This needs to be something that you own (i.e., have taken, made, or found), that is safe to share (i.e., that you feel comfortable with sharing in the study and that does not include identifiable information about other children/adults or people who are not in the study), and that you consent to being recorded (i.e., having a photograph or screenshot taken)” (Study 4, Bird).

Ethical
considerations

Ethical considerations
reported by eligible

Layered consent,
privacy and
ownership

“Participants were informed that if
they wanted to take photographs of other people, they
needed to ask for permission and for the individual/s

papers relating to using
PEI and IPA together

to sign a consent form. In accordance with school policy, and taking into account the Data Protection Act (United Kingdom Parliament, 1998) and Human Rights Act (United Kingdom Parliament, 1998), participants were permitted to take photographs within the school setting. As creators of the images, participants are the legal owners

of the photographs, so permission to feature photographs in this report was sought from parents and participants.” (Study 24, King)

“Consent for the researcher’s right to disseminate photographic content in academic outputs was obtained as part of those approvals” (Study 21, Morrison)

“As required by the ethics committee, the photographs were neither published nor stored.” (Study 25, Lachal)

“ Participants were furnished with clear explanations and instructions regarding the use of their own photographs

and photographs depicting other people. Similarly, it was mandatory for participants to give (a) the 'Plain Language Statement' to photo subjects which detailed the purpose, procedures, publications, consent, confidentiality requirements and contact details of the research team; and (b) consent forms for photo subjects to sign regarding usage (interview only and/or wider public dissemination), storage and destruction of these visual data In the instruction document" (Study 26, Elliot)

Ethical care of
participants

"Interviews began by exploring generic perceptions of QoL and experiences ('if I asked you what a good quality of life meant to you, how would you describe it?', 'what factors in your life do you think contribute to or hinder your QoL', 'Do you think the type of care you receive at an assisted-living facility helps or stops you from achieving a good QoL?').

The participant and interviewer then looked at the photographs together and participants chose the order in which the photographs should be discussed. Sequential photograph discussion then took place using prompt questions from the interview schedule ('tell me why you chose this picture?' 'in terms of your quality of life, what do you think this photograph represents?', 'how did you feel taking the photograph/looking back at it now?', 'What makes this photograph important?')" (Study 27, Mansfield)

"Participants were invited to choose the order in which to discuss the photographs. Interviews were scheduled for one hour; however, participants were encouraged to talk about their experiences for as long as they wished to" (Study 37, Renshaw)

"Interviews...were concluded with a verbal debrief to ensure participants were not experiencing any unreasonable

Innovations	Reported innovative methodological practice from eligible papers using PEI-IPA	Novel application of PEI-IPA in the field	<p>emotional distress. No negative effects were reported, and all participants were sent a debrief form and signposting information about services to access additional mental health support". (Study 17, Young)</p> <p>"Prior to this study, there were no post-rehabilitative, theory-based qualitative studies done on the lived experiences of amputees with motivations to be active. IPA lends itself to a wide variety of data collection methods, the most common of which are in-depth interviews (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). This study integrated an uncommon method—photo-elicitation—to augment in-depth interviews and add to participants' opportunities to express their lived experiences of complex and ambiguous topics such as motivation in a variety of mediums." (Study 10, Olsen)</p> <p>" This study makes an important contribution to the innovation of healthcare through illustrating the novel value of photo-</p>
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elicitation as a research

method for exploring breast cancer experiences” (Study 37, Renshaw)

“ To the researchers’ knowledge, the current study is the first of its kind to utilize photo-elicitation when investigating the experiences of caregivers of dementia; thus, providing a unique insight into these experiences” (Study 39, Renshaw)

Empirical Paper

"Once accused, you are never exonerated"

**A Photo-Elicitation Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Autistic mothers'
experiences of Child protection investigations for Fabricated Induced Illness.**

Carlie Bowman (C2063346)

Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

Newcastle University

Supervised by:

Dr. Fiona Gullon-Scott

Word Count: 9894

10,000 word extension granted in July 2025

Excluding: Title page, abstract, references and appendices as permitted

Abstract

Autistic mothers are reported to be disproportionately subject to child protection (CP) investigations for allegations of Fabricated or induced illness (FII), however their experiences are notably missing from policy and extant literature. Whilst recent literature has begun to explore facets of motherhood from autistic women relating to stigma from professionals, a gap existed in understanding specifically how autistic mothers experienced CP investigations for FII. The current study aimed to better understand how autistic mothers made sense of their experiences of life after a CP investigation due to FII, and what types of support would have been helpful to have experienced.

Using photo-elicitation interviewing (PEI), 8 autistic mothers took part in remote one to one interviews discussing how their choice of up to 5 photos reflected a week in their life after their FII investigation. Transcripts were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

Three superordinate themes emerged from the data with a total of nine subordinate themes. The superordinate themes of “Once accused you are never exonerated” and “I forgot who I was” highlighted how autistic expressions of care were misinterpreted as risk factors from statutory organisations, resulting in participants experiencing a destabilisation in how they experienced trust with statutory services and in their sense of selves as mothers. The final superordinate theme of “Strategies to survive” explored how for autistic mothers, surviving a FII investigation depended not on seeking individual therapy, but on institutional accountability, corrections of records and systemic reform.

The findings highlight a need for revising current guidance on FII and institutional reform to provide clear pathways for autistic mothers to challenge and correct records related to unsubstantiated FII allegations. Without these changes, it is argued that future attempts to safeguard by statutory services could risk perpetuating a sense of epistemic injustice and institutional wide harm towards an under-represented cohort.

Introduction

Motherhood can be viewed as a transformative experience creating unique changes in identity (Dugdale et al., 2021). For autistic women, motherhood introduces complexities separate to neurotypical parents (Louie et al., 2017) like sensory processing (Talcer et al., 2023), increased social isolation (Pohl et al., 2020) and systemic challenges from professionals (Dugdale et al., 2021; Pohl et al., 2020; Radev et al., 2024). In a survey of autistic and neurotypical mothers Pohl et al. (2020) found eighty percent of autistic mothers reported a reluctance to share their diagnoses to allied professionals in the event this negatively impacted perceptions of their parenting (Pohl et al., 2020). A recent systematic review from Lockington and Gullon-Scott (2025a) echoes these difficulties for autistic mothers, where findings from twenty three qualitative studies highlighted how unique strengths of autistic parenting, like developing expert knowledge on children, coincided with systemic marginalisation from professionals and services.

When considering the experiences of autistic mothers, the extant literature has relied mostly on survey data which can limit the opportunity to understand unique facets in how they make sense of experiences relating to motherhood (Radev et al., 2024). Dugdale et al. (2021) used a qualitative approach to interview autistic mothers in how they understood their motherhood identity, which identified key strengths to autistic motherhood, including utilising analytical approaches to thinking and pragmatic approaches to solving problems with their children. An element highlighted from Dugdale et al. (2021) indicated autistic mothers experienced misrepresentation by professionals, where their efforts to gain certainty and translate experiences of their child to professionals were met with confusion or negative judgements (Dugdale et al., 2021). Radev et al. (2024) found similar experiences with autistic parents when qualitatively interviewing their experiences working with statutory services. Whilst Dugdale et al. (2021)'s and Radev et al. (2024)'s work broadened the extant literature on the unique experiences of autistic mothers using a qualitative approach, their aims focused on routine interactions with professionals and statutory services.

Understanding how autistic mothers may experience acute statutory interventions like those within child protection investigations is warranted to better understand specific psychological and relational impacts to these particularly high stakes events.

In the United Kingdom (UK) Section Forty-Seven of The Children Act (1989) permits professionals who believe a child is at risk of significant harm to trigger a child protection (CP) investigation. While designed to safeguard the protection of children, the nature of these investigations can invite institutional disruption into family life, including interruptions in the form of temporary or permanent child removal (Welbourne, 2016). The extant literature posits that neurodivergent parents are more likely than neurotypical parents to be subject to a CP investigation (Blower, 2021). Autistic parents are posited as particularly vulnerable to investigations due to the potential for professionals to misread autistic expressions of parenting as risk factors compared to traditional parenting narratives (Clements & Aiello, 2023). When considering categories of harm used to justify CP investigations against autistic mothers, Gullon-Scott and Long (2022) argue reasons relating to Fabricated Induced Illness are unfairly levied at a higher rate than in neurotypical populations.

Fabricated or Induced Illness (FII) is a term which refers to a type of suspected abuse against a child by a parent (RCPCH, 2021). FII is posited by the suspicion that a parent may be attempting to persuade education, health or social care teams to provide care to a child by exaggerating, falsifying or inducing clinical symptoms (Bilson & Talia, 2025; Glaser, 2020). FII in itself does not belong to a clinically diagnostic category (Gullon-Scott & Long, 2022) and risks misinterpretation with Factitious Disorder imposed on another (FDIoA) (Gullon-Scott & Long, 2022), a diagnosis recognised by the ICD-11 which requires evidence of parental intent to deceive professionals (World Health Organization, 2019) which FII does not stipulate (Gullon-Scott & Long, 2022).

In the absence of empirical evidence to help allied professionals identify instances of FII, the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health published guidance in 2009 (RCPCH, 2009) which was argued to include behaviours that could reasonably be viewed as positive

approaches to parenting, like note keeping or seeking second opinions (Gullon-Scott & Bass, 2018). Updated guidance in 2021 highlighted twenty-one 'alerting signs' where parental behaviours could be suspected for FII while a child's medical condition was unknown, therefore demonstrating a 'perplexing presentation' (RCPCH, 2021). When applying these behaviours to autistic mothers, where literature indicates their styles of parenting could be viewed negatively by professionals (Dugdale et al., 2021; Radev et al., 2024), the behaviours autistic mothers view as strengths in caring well for their children may be at risk for being misrepresented as indicators of abuse (Bilson & Talia, 2025; Clements & Aiello, 2023; Gullon-Scott & Long, 2022).

Outside of the extant literature, recent grey literature from Clements and Aiello (2023) and the West Midlands Association of Directors of Adults Social care team (WD-ADASS, 2024) have assisted in better understanding prevalence and initial experiences of the autistic population with FII. When considering phenomena that has a paucity of published literature, grey literature can assist in bridging the gap between academia and real world implications in a timelier way than from publications (Kousha et al., 2022). In their large scale survey considering the prevalence rate of cases relating to FII, Clements and Aiello (2023) found eighty four percent of FII cases brought against parents were either abandoned by the institution who triggered proceedings or resulted in no further action, with ninety five percent of children staying with the accused parent. When considering autistic parents specifically, the 'Blamed instead of helped' report (WD-ADASS, 2024) argued autistic parents were up to three times more likely to receive an allegation of FII compared to neurotypical parents, with autistic parents describing feeling scared and experiencing trauma after an FII investigation. Whilst both Clements and Aiello (2023) and the WD-ADASS (2024) draw crucial initial understandings to an underreported phenomena, the reliance in both studies to use large scale surveys are argued in this instance to limit the specific experiences of autistic mothers navigating FII investigations. Survey data is argued to limit the ability to follow up on better understanding the complexities of specific phenomena (Safdar et al., 2016), which could be

argued to have taken place with Clements and Aiello (2023)'s short free text approach to asking participants about their FII experiences. When considering the WD-ADASS (2024) a mixed methods approach was taken in using a survey and aggregated focus group of autistic and neurotypical parents. There is a difficulty, however, in understanding the analytic approach used to synthesise the qualitative data within the WD-ADASS (2024) report, which in combination with limitations relating to potential flattening of experiences for some focus group participants over more prominent voices (TÜMen Akyildiz & Ahmed, 2021), limits the interpretive scope of the report towards the experiences of autistic mothers.

While a recent preprint by Lockington and Gullon-Scott (2025b) explored the lived experiences of autistic mothers challenged by professionals using reflexive thematic analysis, the aim of the paper focussed on the wider experience of parenting and stigma attached to this, versus the specific experiences of autistic mothers subjected to a child protection investigation for FII. It is therefore currently unknown, based on the extant published and grey literature, what autistic mothers experience from a CP investigation for FII, how this event is experienced across time and what, if any, wider psychological support could assist autistic mothers in the aftermath of an FII investigation. This is especially prevalent as autistic parents are more likely than their neurotypical counterparts to be accused of FII (Clements & Aiello, 2023), with guidance positing mothers as more likely than fathers to be potential perpetrators (Glaser, 2020). When considering the current landscape of how FII is defined (Bilson & Talia, 2025) there is a risk that if researchers continue to use approaches that do not focus on individual voices of autistic women, notably not consulted for the FII guidance (RCPCH, 2021), their experiences will remain silent within this phenomena. To address this gap in the literature, this study used a qualitative approach employing photo elicitation and interpretative phenomenological analysis to explore how autistic mothers made sense of life after a CP investigation for FI, including what support they would have considered helpful afterwards.

Research Question

How can we better understand the experiences and needs of autistic mothers after a Child Protection Investigation for Fabricated Induced Illness?

Methodology

The Journal Article Reporting Standards for Qualitative Research (JARS-QUAL) (Levitt et al., 2018) have been used throughout reporting.

Design

A cross sectional qualitative design was chosen, combining participant sourced photo-elicitation interviews (PEI) (Harper, 2010) alongside Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Nizza, 2022). PEI invites participants to generate photographs relating to a research question which then act as prompts to begin conversations during the interview, thereby assisting participant sense making (Harper, 2010). PEI can assist with memory recall and in making sense of particularly difficult or emotionally charged experiences (Romera Iruela, 2023). A scoping review mapping how PEI-IPA was combined within published and grey literature highlighted PEI-IPA to have utility in assisting marginalised populations to share their lived experiences, especially when considering characteristics like disability and gender (Bowman, in preparation). When considering PEI use in autistic communities, a further recent scoping review advocated for using PEI to offer flexibility where there was the potential for discussing distressing content with a new researcher, thereby grounding interviews in a manner that was most meaningful to their lived experience (Courcy & Koniou, 2022). In the context of this study, PEI was chosen to enable autistic mothers to direct each interview using their own photographs as anchor points to assist in making sense of the ways in which their life had changed after their FII investigation. Due to the nature of FII investigations being reported as traumatic in grey literature (Clements & Aiello, 2023), the use of PEI was considered as an appropriate tool to facilitate a trauma informed approach to interviewing in giving participants control in what was discussed based on their photo choices (Glaw et al., 2017). Combining IPA with PEI

complemented both approaches in helping participants to make sense of their experience of the target phenomenon through the use of photographs that anchored discussions in what most mattered to them (Bowman, in preparation). By keeping meaning making centrally with the participant, IPA's ethos was maintained in preserving the double hermeneutic across the cohort (Nizza et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2009).

Researcher Positionality

PEI-IPA helped mitigate my position as a neurotypical researcher working with autistic participants. I identify as a childfree, cisgender woman in my late thirties who works in the NHS as a trainee clinical psychologist. I have academic and clinical experience in trauma and mental health and while I am trained in safeguarding, I had no personal experience of autism or CP processes relating to FII.

Literature posits neurotypical researchers may be less skilled in gathering rich qualitative data from autistic participants compared to neurodivergent counterparts (Radev et al., 2024). I reflected I can over-elaborate at times which could have risked limiting opportunities for autistic participants to understand me and make sense of questions being asked. This reflection illuminates an example where the double empathy problem (Milton et al., 2022) could lead to a mismatch between autistic and neurotypical communication styles and interrupt understanding one another at crucial moments. Adopting a traditional qualitative interview approach using semi structured conversational topics generated by the researcher (McGrath et al., 2019) risked flattening participant expressions of the phenomenon. Combining PEI with IPA interviews ensured participants led each interview through the discussion of photographs brought by them. This approach was argued to lessen the impact of personal characteristics as a neurotypical researcher within a neurotypical research paradigm and foster a clearer, inclusive and collaborative analytic process through IPA (Bowman, in preparation; Courcy & Koniou, 2022).

Research Paradigm

Selecting PEI-IPA as the methodological framework was underpinned by considering the ontological and epistemological positioning of the study, my own understanding of how we experience reality and how knowledge is shaped (Yadav, 2021). When considering the study's ontological positioning, critical realism (Bhaskar, 2013) acknowledges how systemic structures like health, education and social care hold real world influence on participants irrespective of how this is individually experienced (Haigh et al., 2019). When considering this study critical realism acknowledged that participant experiences of FII investigations were influenced not just by their own meaning making, but by systemic influences like health and education services which were beyond their control. This mapped to IPA's emphasis on reality being understood from the empirical domain, in how people experience the world, and assisted in using IPA as the analytic approach to better understand how participants made sense of their identities in relation to these institutions (Fletcher, 2017).

Epistemologically I relate to an interpretivist approach which posits that knowledge is developed collaboratively in understanding the meaning people give to their experiences (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). An interpretivist stance reflects my positionality as a neurotypical, childfree researcher without experiential knowledge on this area. IPA's double hermeneutic is also posited to align with an interpretivist epistemology in how the researcher is positioned to take an analytic role in interpreting the meanings participants ascribe to their individual experiences (Smith & Nizza, 2022).

Participants

Sampling Strategy

A purposive sampling strategy was used to recruit participants with first-hand experience of the target phenomenon, aligning with IPA's idiographic focus on lived experiences (Smith & Nizza, 2022). Eligible participants were women over eighteen, living in the UK who had been subject to a CP investigation for suspected FII between 2018 to 2024 and identified as autistic through formal diagnosis or self-identification. Eligibility criteria was placed across a

five year period to assist participants with memory recall and to maintain a relative homogeneity relating to their experiences (Gregory & Maddern, 2023). This approach reflected the substantial barriers autistic women face in accessing formal diagnosis, including inequity of access to NHS assessments (Overton et al., 2023) and assessor bias when diagnosing autism in women (Wilson et al., 2023). Excluding participants who self-identified could risk undermining the ethos of IPA in exploring lived experiences of phenomena which may converge or diverge (Ardeleanu et al., 2024), as well as repeating historical exclusions privileging who is included in research (D'Mello et al., 2022).

Sample Size

Information power was used to determine sample size by considering the aims for the study, specificity of sample, available theory and interview quality (Malterud et al., 2021). The aim of the study was argued to be narrow in scope (experiences of autistic mothers from an FII investigation), high in specificity with participants having direct experience of the phenomenon and a paucity of psychological research in the area. Whilst I had past qualitative research experience to a publishable standard (Watson et al., 2017) my status as a neurotypical researcher risked limiting interview depth without employing PEI as a visual approach to ensure participants led their own meaning making (Bates et al., 2017). Based on these considerations alongside guidance suggesting optimum sample sizing for professional doctorates to be between six to ten participants (Smith & Nizza, 2022) the study aimed to recruit between six to nine participants.

Recruitment Strategy

Sunshine Support, a UK based special educational needs advocacy organisation supporting autistic families promoted the study during their FII Awareness week in May 2024. The main author also attended a trauma informed webinar as part of Sunshine Support's FII awareness week to promote the project. A research flyer (Appendix A) was shared from Sunshine support's social media team inviting prospective participants to a study website (Appendix B). A project website was designed using autism accessibility guidelines from the

National Autistic Society and Hassell Inclusion (Frankowska-Takhari et al., 2019). The project website provided photo introductions to the research team and plain language summaries of study aims, expectations and eligibility. Expressions of interest were submitted through Microsoft Forms. Prospective participants were sent a written participant information sheet (Appendix C) and video version (Appendix D) via email. Interested participants provided informed consent (Appendix E), completed a demographic questionnaire (Appendix F) and a Microsoft forms version of the International Trauma Questionnaire (Appendix G). Sixteen women expressed an initial interest in the study. Three were ineligible to take part due to not being autistic ($n = 1$) and ongoing CP investigations ($n = 2$). Five prospective participants did not engage after the initial expression of interest.

Participant Characteristics

Eight women in total completed the study with an age range between thirty to fifty-nine years living in either England or Scotland. All CP investigations concluded as no further action. Demographic and contextual descriptions for each participant are presented in table 1.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age Range	Autism Diagnosis	Year Child Protection investigation began	Year Child Protection investigation concluded	Outcome	Region
Adele	30–39	Self-identified	2022	2023	No further action	Greater London
Anna	40 - 49	Formal adult diagnosis	2022	2022	No further action	Yorkshire and Humber
Eleanor	50 - 59	Self-identified	2018	2023	No further action	Scotland (Region withheld)
Kelly	30 - 35	Formal adult diagnosis	2020	2021	No further action	Northwest England

Lucy	50 - 59	Formal adult diagnosis	2020	2020	No further action	Southwest England
Millie	40 - 49	Formal adult diagnosis	2022	2023	No further action	Southeast England
Naomi	30 - 39	Formal adult diagnosis	2022	2023	No further action	Midlands
Vanessa	40 - 49	Formal adult diagnosis	2022	2023	No further action	Greater London

Note. To maintain anonymity for participants, data has been aggregated (Diaz et al., 2021).

Trauma Contextualisation using the International Trauma Questionnaire (ITQ)

The ITQ is a validated measure to assess for PTSD and complex PTSD (CPTSD) symptoms in line with ICD-11 diagnostic criteria (Cloitre et al., 2021). The ITQ captures symptom clusters related to re-experiencing intrusive memories, avoidance and heightened threat (Cloitre et al., 2021). All participants were asked to complete the ITQ in relation to a specific event from their FII investigation as part of the pre-interview process. The ITQ was not used for eligibility or analysis. This was approved for non-diagnostic use by Newcastle University's Ethics board as a tool to contextualise interview adaptations like PEI to assist with potential distress from interviews. The rationale to include the ITQ was informed by grey literature suggesting FII investigations could increase the likelihood of trauma responses from autistic mothers (Clements & Aiello, 2023). By asking participants to complete the ITQ with consideration to a specific event from their FII investigation, the study was able to contextualise reported trauma symptoms from participants to each FII investigation experience. Table 2 highlights that seven of the eight participants met ITQ thresholds for possible PTSD and four participants met the ITQ threshold for possible CPTSD.

Table 2

[Redacted]

The outcomes of this measure underpinned the rationale to use PEI within the study to explore participants sense making in a manner that assisted them to retain control of the pacing and nature of discussions.

Ethics

Approval was granted by Newcastle University's ethical review board (Reference: 2672/40181, see Appendix K). Participants received comprehensive written and verbal formats of the study aims, confidentiality, voluntary participation and right to withdraw. Written informed consent was obtained before data was collected. Participant and third-party details were anonymised. Data was held securely on password protected university servers accessible only to the research team. Photographs were reviewed before interviews for identifiable content and in one instance a photo was substituted through collaboration with a participant (Bates et al., 2017).

As the potential for participant distress had been highlighted in the ethics process, a trauma informed approach to interviewing was undertaken (Alessi & Kahn, 2022). This included pre-interview supervisions relating to the potential impact of FII experiences, checking of interview questions from a supervisor with extensive experience in autism, substantive risk protocols to manage disclosures in interview, monitoring of interview pacing including returning to photos pre-identified from participants as soothing to avoid re-traumatisation and using a reflexive memoing process throughout the study (Alessi & Kahn, 2022). Reflexive memos (see Appendix L for a sample) were written after each interview to maintain methodological transparency, bracket researcher reactions and view early patterns of interpretation (Smith & Nizza, 2022).

Procedure

Participants who agreed to the study and provided informed consent received email guidance explaining the photo elicitation process (Appendix H) with a guide on acceptable and unacceptable images (Appendix I) to assist with limiting participant confusion on image selection (Bowman, in preparation). Participants were given up to two weeks to submit up to five photographs that captured 'a week in their life following their FII investigation'.

Participants were encouraged to take photos that mattered most to them, with an assertion through email that there were no 'right' answers. Photos were submitted through email with brief orienting captions for interview. Following completion of interviews, participants were verbally debriefed, sent a written debrief document (Appendix J) and offered a fifteen-pound Amazon voucher for their time. This study was pre-registered with the Open Science Framework before data collection began (Bowman & Gullon-Scott, 2024).

Data Collection

Data collection took place remotely using Microsoft Teams between May and August 2024. During interviews participants were invited to select a photo to begin their discussions on life after their FII investigation. A semi structured interview format (see Appendix M), consisted of the following four open ended questions with a final question to capture additional thoughts from participants:

- Why did you choose this photograph?
- How does this photo represent your experience with the CP investigation?
- How did you feel when taking this photograph?
- How do you feel now, looking back on this photograph?
- Is there anything else you'd like to share about this photo, the investigation, or getting support?

Follow up questions to deepen meaning making were used flexibly (Nizza et al., 2021) and the questioning process was repeated for each photo selected. Participants were not

required to discuss all photographs submitted, with some images producing deeper reflections depending on their personal significance. To assist with accessibility and relational rapport, an iterative update to the interview schedule was included after interview one (Eleanor), explaining to participants that closed alternatives to open questions could be facilitated.

Interviews ranged from fifty-nine to ninety-one minutes with an average time of sixty-eight minutes. This reflected the participant led approach of using PEI and a natural variation between participants in communicative approach.

Recording and Transcription

Interviews were recorded and transcribed using Microsoft Teams. Recordings were automatically transferred to a password protected Microsoft Sway folder only accessible to the research team. Transcripts were anonymised at the point of transcription. A document linking participant codes to pseudonyms was held for four weeks after each interview to enable participant withdrawal.

Analysis

Transcripts were analysed using Smith et al. (2009)'s six stage process for IPA. Transcripts were read several times with memos supporting familiarisation with the data. Line by line coding was achieved using NVivo (version 14), coding initial descriptive, linguistic and conceptual interpretations. Initial codes included 'doesn't trust services (descriptive)', 'bravery in voice' (linguistic) and 'traumatic' (conceptual) (see Appendix N for a sample of coding).

Emergent themes developed by gathering related codes together using several strategies for analysis. These included abstraction, temporal coding, understanding the functional role codes played in the lives of participants and subsuming similar codes under central themes (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). For example the quote 'I forgot who I was' subsumed similar feelings expressed relating to the loss of identity (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). After emergent themes were uncovered, higher level, individually based

superordinate themes were established. Individual case studies were produced (see Appendix O) using coded material and memos before moving to the next case (Smith et al., 2009). Cross case analysis established group superordinate themes through an interpretive synthesis across all cases with additional memoing to avoid flattening individual experiences (Smith & Nizza, 2022). To retain methodological transparency, pseudonymised quotes with line numbers to substantiate individual and cross case superordinate themes were included in the final analysis (see Appendix P) (Nizza et al., 2021).

Methodological Integrity

Methodological integrity was upheld through a commitment to recruiting and interviewing participants with firsthand experience of the target phenomenon (Nizza et al., 2021).

Supervisor peer review of a transcript, its corresponding emerging theme framework and the final cross case superordinate framework (Appendix P) assisted with triangulating the results and demonstrating rigour (Yardley, 2008). This approach maintained the double hermeneutic (Smith et al., 2009) while maintaining an ethical respect for avoiding participant re-traumatisation.

Reflexive memoing was used throughout the project and was key in noticing shifts in the interpretive approach. This was significant following the terminal illness and subsequent death of a close family member during analysis, where I noticed an increase in my identification with participant distress using healthcare systems (see Naomi's memo in Appendix L and ethical reflection). This resulted in a voluntary pause on the analysis with agreement with my supervisor for eight weeks. My decision to pause analysis aligned with Karcher et al. (2024)'s scoping review considering researcher responsive reflexivity when analysing emotionally sensitive phenomena. Memoing continued during this phase which assisted in assessing when to return to the analysis. This helped maintain a rigour to the analytic process and honoured the sense making participants had volunteered during data collection whilst ensuring my parallel experiences were sufficiently bracketed out and reflected on (Karcher et al., 2024).

Results

Three superordinate themes emerged from the analysis with each containing several subordinate themes highlighted in table 3.

Table 3

Group Level Superordinate Themes

Superordinate Theme	Subordinate Themes
Once accused you are never exonerated	Smart, articulate, autistic, dangerous Living with the record
"I forgot who I was"	"I don't know who I am anymore": Identity erasure "I felt very cursed": Trauma in the autistic body Fear of re-accusation
Strategies to survive	Occupational Reclaiming Nurturing Environments Private Validation "What we need is justice"

Each theme is reported using participant quotes to illustrate convergence and divergence within the cohort (Smith et al., 2009). The use of '[]' and '...' have been used to assist in building the interpretive narrative across multiple participants.

Superordinate Theme One: "Once Accused, you are never exonerated"

This theme explores how attempts to advocate for their children were reported to be repeatedly misrepresented by professionals as an enduring risk.

Subordinate Theme: Smart, Articulate, Autistic, Dangerous

All participants except Eleanor reflected on how behaviours they linked to being a good mother, like researching conditions, asking questions and advocating for help were reframed by services through a lens of suspicion once FII was brought into the narrative. Kelly was framed as suspicious for "[asking] lots of questions...[looking] at journals" (Kelly). Vanessa was described as "so high functioning [she could] pull the wool over any clinicians eyes because she comes across as being so normal" (Vanessa), highlighting how their

approaches to expressing legitimate concerns for their children were framed by services as deviant. This resulted in instability for how participants saw themselves as mothers, expressing self-doubt in their actions as Naomi highlighted "...professionals that weren't part of our usual life were like, 'well, educational neglect, social isolation', all this horrible stuff and I thought it 'am I actually the problem?'" (Naomi). For Anna, advocating for her child resulted in her being "punished...victimized...profiled...treated like you are abnormal...health professionals with their MDT meetings saying things like 'Mum is over medicalizing for children'" (Anna).

Attempts to care were reflected to deviate from what services expected of a "standard parent that comes in off the street...sits down and [is] compliant" (Anna). Being intelligent and articulate was misrepresented as being concerningly different, attracting a lack of understanding from services to the extent where autistic traits were interpreted as risk signs for FII. This interpretation of risk was highlighted by participants to permeate beyond multi-disciplinary meetings and into their personal records which was reported to add an insidious, persistent layer of risk to their experience of FII.

Subordinate Theme: Living with the record

All participants except Lucy highlighted how statutory records continued to misrepresent them after their investigations which held a lasting impact over their lives and influenced professional interactions, producing a sense of injustice. While a legal case ruled Eleanor not to be a risk to her children, her files list her as a "child abuser" (Eleanor). The disconnect between verbal confirmation of no wrongdoing and written records indicating an ongoing risk echoed as a concern across all participants. Eleanor reflected on the anger of how there should have been "...an easy way of having such a factual inaccuracy corrected, but I haven't managed it..." (Eleanor). Vanessa's account agreed with Eleanor, highlighting the vulnerability in that "once accused, the spotlight is on you. You don't ever, ever get exonerated..." (Vanessa) which created a fundamental distrust of statutory services. For Anna, her discovery of a separate FII investigation being hidden from her was likened to

services seeing "...if they can get enough evidence together then 'should I drop this bomb on you?'" (Anna). Being unable to correct their records resulted in participants reflecting on a range of approaches to lower the risk of being reprofiled by professionals for FII. Some participants, like Kelly, masked their knowledge to medical professionals in medical appointments to avoid suspicion, opting to "...act dumb...because I don't trust them..." (Kelly). Other participants diverged from dumbing themselves down and avoided services. Millie's reflection of "...never trust[ing] any school, any government outfit, children's services..." was preferable to her compared to being "...inside of it is torture, under their duress, you know, 'You're horrible'" (Millie). Participants reflected on how the knowledge of inaccuracies remaining on their record impacted their ability to feel safe seeking help within those systems. For them, their record was a living reminder of an ongoing threat to their perception of being good mothers.

Superordinate Theme Two: "I forgot who I was"

All participants reflected on how the aftereffects of FII created a fundamental shift in how they connected to themselves and the world. Their previous sense of being good mothers and morally safe members of society was "obliterated" (Eleanor), leaving all eight participants with an inability to return to pre-investigation versions of themselves. All participants reflected on how their experiences of CP investigations for FII transformed from discrete events to an enduring state of being, contaminating relationships with their bodies and their sense of identity.

Subordinate Theme: "I don't know who I am anymore": Identity Erasure

For all participants the aftermath of FII investigations severed who they thought they were from what services suggested they were. The impact of maternal expressions of care being misinterpreted resulted in existential levels of questioning of their right to be mothers. For Anna, the aftermath reached a crisis where the gap between how she knew herself as a mother and her post FII identity became unbearable: "It was awful, and I honestly felt suicidal because it was just horrible...like I should have never been a mum..." (Anna).

Anna's reflection makes sense of how the aftermath of an FII investigation not only fragments participants' understanding of what it means to be a good mother but extends to questioning their right to be in the world at all. Whilst Anna was a diverging participant in the intensity of reported feeling about the right to exist after FII, others echoed her sentiment of FII erasing their sense of identity so extensively it had rewritten their terms of how to meaningfully exist in society. Eleanor reflected on how for her and her family, their "complete way of life was destroyed..." (Eleanor). Eleanor reflects a wider participant sentiment of change in what was previously a clear understanding on the rules for motherhood in wider society. Millie represented the impact this new sense of identity erasure had on her feelings of isolation and subsequent withdrawal from the world in how "...They put me in a cave....it changed the landscape of my life" (Millie).

[Image redacted from repository versions]

Millie's experience was that her FII investigation disconnected her sense of safety. Instead, she reported feeling "...locked in, sort of hostage in your own home because you're too scared to leave your child..." (Millie). For her, exposure to services had rewritten everything

beyond her own 'landscape' as dangerous. This resonated with other participants in how the investigation held them captive from their sense of self. For Kelly, recalling this period reminded her of the totality with which the investigation had rendered her unable to identify with herself: "...I forgot and who I was. I become really low, that, I'm going to cry, and I didn't see a way out of it..." (Kelly). Across all interviews being investigated for FII created a sense of identity collapse which was reported to have not come from a logical place. For the autistic mothers interviewed, where identity relied on accuracy and clear moral logic, this sense of erasure was fundamentally fracturing. Who they believed they were had been viewed by professionals as requiring intervention, resulting in a feeling of loss and inability to return to the person they were before FII. For all participants, that prior identity felt unreachable.

Subordinate theme: "I felt very cursed": Trauma in the Autistic Body

All participants reflected that the aftermath of investigations not only rewrote their sense of identity but impacted how their bodies expressed stress and how they responded to themselves. Perceived expectations to look regulated on the outside meant that for some mothers, they could not safely show the outside world that they felt unwell from the investigation, resulting in them wrangling with the physical aftereffects of a traumatic experience in silence. To illustrate this idea, Adele brought a photo of her Dossett box as an anchor for how trauma had reshaped her health:

[Image redacted from repository versions]

"That represents the mental health issues...the trauma is there and I am so easily triggered these days" (Adele). For Adele, the aftermath of the FII investigation was viscerally felt in her body and required medication to manage. Anna brought a photo of her home phone to illustrate the increase in vigilance she developed in hearing the phone ring unpredictably, reflecting that this was not her typical response:

[Image redacted from repository versions]

“...the phone rang, and instantly I fear it...that panic inside of you. It's a trigger...it will always set off trauma within me...” (Anna). Similarly, Kelly reflected on the unpredictability with which “...something will happen, somebody will say something and it'll just trigger all the memories and then I'm back in that deep hole of listening to people say I'm a monster...” (Kelly). Vanessa named the disconnect experienced “...after our investigation closed... I did kind of just wonder and a bit aimlessly...still pretty much in a sort of PTSD scenario because I couldn't sleep. I would still think that the investigation was ongoing...” (Vanessa). This highlighted the pervasive nature in which participants experienced a slowing of time, a disconnect with their sense of reality in everyday objects like phones triggering off new and unpleasant sensations related to their sense of safety. When traumatic sensations arose, Millie likened the feeling to what she experienced “...when someone pulls out in front of me. I'm quite startled by it...” (Millie). Some bodily expressions of trauma were felt as “...very numb... it doesn't stay and I really struggle to find the actual real sadness... I think I layer it with every other emotion to stop the sadness...” (Naomi) which expressed a form of trauma processing that may not be associated with ‘typical’ trauma processing from a neurotypical perspective. Experiencing trauma physically and psychologically permeated participants everyday experiences of their bodies. As autistic women, the somatisation of their trauma from their FII experience was reported not only as a response to what had happened during their investigation, but as a reminder of what could return.

Subordinate Theme: Fear of Re-Accusation

Four participants specifically reflected how the end of their FII investigations created a new landscape of self-censorship and vigilance based on the fear that the systems that had harmed “...would say ‘oh, no, we found something else now, and we’re gonna reopen the case and do this all over again’” (Vanessa). Services were perceived as unpredictable with opaque approaches by services adding further unsafety. This was evident in Anna’s reflection on how she “...found out that we had been subjected to accusations before, but we

were never told of them...” (Anna) highlighting a shared assertion that their fear of systems returning to cause further harm was not irrational. The likelihood of services “...spark[ing] something else again...” (Anna) had been proven. As a result, Naomi reflected on the difficulty of being “...in a constant state of not trusting professionals, I mean professionals that work within statutory services, and that's really hard and it's difficult to overcome because we all rely on them...” (Naomi). The physiological cost of living in an in-between state, having been found to have done nothing wrong but holding a permanent record of suspicion, having to appear functional as a mother and continue to navigate the same systems which caused harm, resulted in some participants like Adele experiencing extreme bodily changes as a result of trying to keep everything together: “...you're living on adrenaline... I've lost 15 kilos twice in two sessions over the last four-year period...” (Adele). Eleanor's experience diverged in that she disappeared from relationships, systems, locations and parts of who she was. Her metaphor as the “...little red hen who gains no help from others and has to...do everything by myself” (Eleanor) reflected that for some autistic women experiencing life after FII, to survive in the aftermath meant disappearing into homes that felt unsafe in bodies no longer recognisable.

Superordinate Theme 3: Strategies to Survive

After living through their FII investigation, participants navigated how they lived beyond the experience, reflecting their new emotional terrain.

Subordinate Theme: Occupational Reclaiming

Kelly, Vanessa and Lucy reflected on how they used their experience of FII as a pivot to rebuild new identities to advocate for others. For Vanessa, moving into research after FII enabled her to embrace her analytical strengths without being punished. In doing so she uncovered a new community where she could “...be honest with [my boss]...why I've come to [the academic team]...she knows how easily [autism] is missed for girls...” (Vanessa). On her new role as an NHS professional, Kelly shared a photo of an inspirational badge, sparking a reflection that others in her position might “...go the opposite way and hide, I went

straight back to [the hospital] and was like ‘no, there's a gap here and it needs to, something needs to change’” (Kelly)

[Image redacted from repository versions to protect participant consent]

“...And so with that photo, it was kind of a reminder that I am amazing and I can get through anything and hopefully I can make a difference...” (Kelly). This spoke to Kelly’s insistence not to shy away from the hope and pride in her decision to actively change the system that harmed her from the inside. Participants reflected on the effort they went to in leaving previous careers to retrain, rise up and prove they were not the threats to society institutions had suggested.

Subordinate Theme: Nurturing Environments

Participants reported an absence of statutory support after FII, resulting in four of them finding complimentary strategies to sooth themselves. In her photo of her garden, Lucy recalled that she could “...feel unsafe sometimes...my garden is quite grounding...it feels the same with...any type of nature things or animals...” (Lucy).

[Image redacted from repository versions to protect participant consent]

Tending to plants helped her feel “...safe enough in the world of safe enough for what I tell myself...” (Lucy). This was echoed by participants in how experiencing nature provided a temporal comparison of a before and after when reflecting on the investigation. Naomi’s photograph of a beach she visited during and after her investigation contrasted “between the two experiences, like one, feels like it was very stormy... it feels like it was very dreary and this time it felt it just felt like transformation” (Naomi).

[Image redacted from repository versions to protect participant consent]

For Kelly, her gaming environment served as a vital thread connecting her to a fragment of her previous identity and provided her with "...another world essentially, where none of that matters" (Kelly)

[Image redacted from repository versions]

"It doesn't matter who you are, you can make someone completely different..." (Kelly).

Whilst participants reflected that sensory activities did not erase the trauma they experienced, these acts of soothing served as critical mechanisms to abate a sense of overwhelm from memories of the investigation.

Subordinate Theme: Private Validation

All eight participants explored private psychological assessments or therapy due to a distrust of NHS services. Some like Millie had institutionally mandated counselling with her practitioner "...minimising the seriousness of the issue, not understanding...how these things work...I don't even think it was intentional, but the feedback would be 'OK then, Well, it was nice to listen to you today' and they'd summarise what you've said, which I guess must be some kind of counselling formula..." (Millie). This led to a weariness on Millie's part in having

to engage with this approach to therapy. Other participants chose private therapy to regain a sense of credibility from state opinions which had pathologised their experiences.

For Naomi, her private practitioner who "...was also autistic...she validated the fact that I wasn't being weird...you kind of gaslight yourself when you go through the whole FII thing like...'Am I really this? but am I this bad person?'" (Naomi). Naomi reflected that not only did she receive a sense of validation in redressing her thoughts as someone dangerous, but "...she helped kind of ground me...that look, this is like she calls it organisational coercive control..." (Naomi). Participants echoed in varying intensities the discoveries made about their relationship to their autistic identity and how this understanding helped gain a firmer footing in relation to their mothering identity post investigation. Vanessa's private practitioner "...could appreciate the enormity of what happened...the fact that [investigations] can happen, even though it's completely wrong..." (Vanessa) which she reflected would not be possible in a prescriptive modality through statutory services. As Vanessa highlighted, the ramifications of experiencing a FII investigation "...is something that you cannot CBT your way out of...the last thing I needed was someone to make another safeguarding referral on the basis of what I was saying..." (Vanessa) which was a point emphasised by other participants in that statutory services felt unsafe environments to express the pain caused through FII.

Anna's strategy to survive differed to other participants through her positioning as a blueprint for other autistic mothers experiencing FII. Her willingness to share her account in her interview fulfilled a wish of having "...somebody with me of the future...who could have said 'I got through this and here's basically what happened to me', shared their experience, validated me..." (Anna). Across all participants except Eleanor, participants reflected on a unique containment either through private validation from practitioners, or in private acts of repair. As an approach to survive and grow from FII, participants highlighted rare opportunities for validation and to regain facets of their identities.

Subordinate Theme: “What we need is justice”

All eight participants emphasised how true post CP support from FII could not come from talking therapies alone in repairing the physiological and psychological erosion of their concepts of being good mothers. Whilst therapy was reported as helpful when sourced privately, participants unified in needing “...the person who accused you to say, ‘I got this really wrong’... ‘this should have been investigated properly before putting it in as a significant safeguarding issue’ and ‘we’re sorry.’” (Vanessa). Adele echoed this sentiment of seeking accountability from systems with a sense of anticipatory anger at the thought of services “...fucking clos[ing] ranks. Cover[ing] their arses and go[ing] away and do[ing] it all again to someone else...” (Adele). Adele’s and Vanessa’s reflections highlight the wider unmet need from all accounts for retribution from opaque institutions. Naomi linked the lack of accountability to wider national scandals where “...it’s becoming so normal for so many people... it’s not the odd family get[ting] accused of FII, but this is happening everywhere and it’s like the [Horizon] post office inquiry, isn’t it? ...in years to come, is there gonna be an inquiry?” (Naomi). Her metaphor of the Horizon scandal pointed to an attempt to contextualise the magnitude of distress from experiencing accusations of FII that resulted in no further action and no further support.

Finally, participants echoed Lucy’s concern that reparation was also needed for professionals in “...understanding that they’re actually kind of actively harming families rather than helping and being believed...and supported rather than if people don’t get it” (Lucy). For all participants, true repair could only be considered through clear acknowledgements from the systems that harmed them. Without accountability from the professionals and institutions who had misrepresented their expressions of care, both in person and on record, engaging in therapy without justice risked placing the accountability to heal within an institutionally harmful system at the door of each autistic mother with no feasibly safe support system.

Discussion

This study is the first to explore the lived experiences of autistic mothers following a child protection investigation for suspected fabricated induced illness. Participant sourced photo elicitation interviews (PEI) anchored participant narratives to what mattered most in making sense of their experiences. Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, three superordinate themes emerged. The first theme 'Once Accused, You Are Never Exonerated', reflected how autistic forms of showing care were misinterpreted as risk factors. This risk endured through the permanence of a record participants could not correct. The second theme, 'I forgot who I was', reflected how the aftermath of FII existentially destabilised participants identities as mothers, the safety in their bodies and erased a wider safety in institutions they had once sought help from, reflecting an anticipatory threat of FII returning. The final theme, 'Strategies to survive', highlighted how participants tried to rebuild after being investigated. Whilst good therapy experiences focussing on the intersection between gender, autism and trauma with neurodivergent practitioners was beneficial, participants emphasised true support after FII depended on institutional recognition of the harm caused, corrections to participant records and wider systematic reform.

When considering extant literature to help underpin these experiences, epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007a), institutional betrayal (Smith & Freyd, 2014) and moral injury (Litz et al., 2022) hold relevance. Epistemic injustice occurs when knowledge someone possesses is dismissed or minimised based on the belief that the 'knowers' characteristics are lesser than others based on their assumed identity (Fricker, 2007a). Across participants, attempts to provide knowledge about their children to health, education, and social care professionals was minimised and repurposed as risk factors for FII. By treating autistic mothers' attempts to advocate for their children with suspicion rather than as strengths aligns with testimonial injustice (Fricker, 2007a). Experiencing testimonial injustice led to participants questioning their ability to mother and advocate for their children. There is a dearth of understanding in diagnostic settings for how female autism is expressed (Leedham et al., 2020). In the

absence of empirical information on how autistic women, and therefore autistic mothers express care, hermeneutic injustice (Fricker, 2007b) argues that where institutions do not have the resources to individualise support, professionals may filter behaviours through a dominant cultural narrative on what is acceptable conduct. When considering the paradigm of 'good mothering', the lack of understanding of the intersection between autism, gender and mothering (Douglas, 2013) may lead to misinterpretations of care when applying neurotypical expectations of good mothering to autistic women (Gullon-Scott & Long, 2022).

These epistemic factors can be understood in the broader context of the triple empathy problem (Shaw et al., 2024) which extends Milton et al. (2022)'s understanding of the double empathy problem to institutional frameworks. When institutions use recommendations created through a neurotypical lens, this can lead professionals to misread care that deviates from the culturally defined norm and result in systemic level misrepresentation of autistic mothering, where care is mislabelled as alerting signs and a risk for safeguarding (Gullon-Scott & Long, 2022).

When participants asked for help from services their behaviours were experienced through a lens of institutional betrayal (Smith & Freyd, 2014). Participants reported suspicion, punishment and in some cases covert surveillance which violated expectations of statutory services treating them fairly and safely. All cases were closed with no further action, however the lack of accountability from services for misreading them broke any remaining trust in statutory services, linking to the final concept of moral injury (Litz et al., 2022). Participants reflected on the multi layered nature of their psychological and embodied experiences of distress after reporting a sense of institutional betrayal and gaslighting. The aftermath of being falsely accused of FII created hypervigilance, difficulty sleeping, anxiety and an avoidance of systems that previously harmed them. These accounts illuminate not only the traumatic nature of being falsely accused of FII, but how on an institutional level mislabelling the autistic mothering experience fundamentally violated participants' expectations about being treated with care and fairness. While not analysed, the contextual

information gathered through the ITQ highlighted seven out of eight participants reported symptoms in keeping with a PTSD presentation, which aligned with narrative accounts and subsequent analysis.

When taking the above experiences into consideration, participants emphasised that therapeutic interventions alone were not enough and could not be delivered by the same systems that had caused harm. While participants highlighted helpful clinical experiences with neurodivergent practitioners on connecting to their autistic identity after their investigation, true support required getting justice. The nature of this justice requires accountability, corrections and structural reformation. This study therefore argues that meaningful support in this instance cannot be fully realised within a specific psychological model. True support requires systemic level changes with implications for how professionals, policies and legislation formulate, interpret and manage risk alongside neurodivergence.

Strengths

This study is the first to have explored the experiences of autistic women subjected to CP investigations for FII using the combined approach of PEI-IPA. Recruitment was supported by 'Sunshine support', who provided real time feedback on the study's website to strengthen accessibility. The website was created with an accessible design following guidelines commissioned by the National Autistic Society and Hassell Inclusion (Frankowska-Takhari et al., 2019) and assisted participants in understanding the aims and expectations for the study prior to expressing an interest. These facets assisted in the study's attempts to support an ethically grounded, autistically affirming methodological approach.

The study also directly addressed reported methodological gaps from the extant literature in combining PEI-IPA (Bowman, in preparation). PEI was embedded into the project from the recruitment stage and was a core component in the interview phase, serving a key function in creating an accessible and trauma informed interview process. In a cohort rarely afforded the opportunity in research to share their sense of meaning making (Dugdale

et al., 2021), the choice of methodology in combining PEI-IPA facilitated a redress of control from a neurotypical researcher to each participant. Each photograph served as an anchor for discussion and facilitated a joint understanding of what mattered most to participants with the target phenomenon. PEI also assisted in providing participants with a cognitive and emotional scaffold which helped support authentic recall and reduced the likelihood for masking, which can be regularly placed on autistic women in professional settings (Dugdale et al., 2021). PEI assisted with gauging the emotional landscape in each interview, giving participants range to change to images which signalled pride, humour or closeness, like pets or nature, which was particularly key given the emotional weight of the target phenomenon. Finally, PEI in this instance directly safeguarded interpretive fidelity when using IPA. An example of this was where Vanessa shared the following photograph of a swimming pool:

[Image redacted from repository versions to protect participant consent]

Had the study attempted to interpret this photograph without Vanessa's sense making about this image, a researcher may have coded this as a calming image. However, through Vanessa's account in interview, this image transformed into a symbol of survival and psychological maintenance in the absence of safe access to statutory mental health services. This example highlights the methodological strength of using PEI as a tool to elicit meaning for transcript interpretation using IPA, versus analysing images as individual data points. These decisions reflect the fidelity the study held to Yardley (2008)'s qualitative

standards relating to sensitivity to context and methodological rigour, specifically in relation to amplifying the voices of marginalised groups.

Limitations

While rich accounts were shared from participants and information to safeguard in the event of risk was captured, the study did not collect demographic data specifically relating to ethnicity. As a result, it is beyond the scope of this study to consider how the experiences of FII investigations for autistic women may have converged or diverged with facets of identity relating to race. While attempts were made to ensure autistic mothers could participate regardless of formal diagnosis, it is of note that self-identified autistic participants were in the minority of the overall sample. This may have inadvertently limited the experiences of other autistic women seeking a formal route to diagnosis, or those who may be questioning their autistic identity. Participants self-selected to the study with the design requiring their experiences of FII being retrospectively recalled. While the design met ethical appropriateness in not placing prospective participants still going through an investigation at risk of harm, the retrospective approach to recall a time highlighted through the pre-interview ITQ completion as being traumatic for seven of the eight participants, may have led participants to feel compelled to share accounts in a manner which limited representation of other experiences, including neutral or uncertain accounts of life after FII.

As a neurotypical researcher I have reflected on how my positionality influenced the study, particularly in the interview phase. On reflection, during the first interview with Eleanor, my intent to adhere to 'good' qualitative approaches in using open ended questioning created an initial disconnect rather than a clear rapport. Whilst the interview schedule was shared within supervision, this disconnect was not foreseen. The interview schedule was changed iteratively during Eleanor's interview and caveated to ensure participants could ask for questions to be changed, however this highlighted how running a pilot interview with an autistic mother prior to data collection could have assisted with this. Whilst the study sought feedback from Sunshine support and from a supervisor with expertise in autism, the study

missed an opportunity in utilising Patient and Public Involvement at the initial design stages of the project. On understanding the traumatic and institutionally precarious nature of the phenomenon, asking autistic mothers to engage in sustained involvement was perceived to risk an unfair level of emotional burden. On reflection this could also represent unintentional paternalism (Suri et al., 2024) on the part of the author. Whilst the decisions taken represented sincere attempts to produce a trauma informed design process, future approaches to using PEI-IPA with an autistic community would greatly benefit from using PPI from the outset to mitigate the above ethical tensions.

This study aimed to exclusively capture the accounts of autistic mothers who had been falsely suspected of FII which adhered to IPA's approach of capturing data relating to phenomena from first hand participant experiences (Smith et al., 2009). A limitation, however, exists in triangulating these findings across other populations, including professional populations who may hold critical convergence or divergence to the phenomenon. Finally, this study opted to use peer validation instead of member checking to demonstrate transparency and rigour (Yardley, 2008). While member checking is posited as a common approach to securing transparency and rigour in qualitative work, the use of member checking is discouraged in IPA (Monaro et al., 2022; Smith et al., 2009) due to the approach conflicting with the nature of the double hermeneutic and interpretive epistemological approach to IPA.

Clinical, Policy and Research Implications

Therapeutic Accessibility

Participants reflected that statutory routes for psychological therapy such as NHS Talking therapies services were fundamentally unsafe avenues to seek support. Statutory services legally require professionals to raise safeguarding concerns and when placing this mandate to report within the context of autistic mothers having experienced investigations for FII, this raises a valid concern around the possibility of re-traumatisation. Implementing an

independently commissioned pathway that understands the harms relating to institutional betrayal and epistemic injustice in relation to autism and motherhood are critically needed for this cohort. Without institutional levels of reform, the risks to autistic mothers from statutory therapeutic services are likely to remain, disabling access for many autistic mothers after experiencing an FII investigation.

Correcting the Record

This study recommends policy reform to enable autistic women to seek corrections to their record where FII investigations result in no further action. Participants reported enduring feelings of injustice and trauma based on how statutory services had reframed their identities without the ability to correct or challenge. There is a case to be made for local data management policy adaptations and national institutions to implement mechanisms to alert allied professionals to unsubstantiated FII allegations. This could be considered in the same way that professionals receive a notification on opening a patient file that contains substantiated risk. The addition of an independent advocacy service outside of health, education and social care systems could ensure corrections are applied in a timely way. Without an independent organisation to ensure accountability, the current approach from statutory services is argued to risk breaching the human rights of a marginalised population to dignity, justice and accurate representation within their private records.

Contextualising 'Alerting Signs'

Finally, this study recommends adjustments to the specificity of current FII guidelines, specifically in relation to autistic mothers. Service reliance on 'alerting signs' to suspect FII risks institutional level testimonial and hermeneutic injustice when applied to an autistic population. This recommendation aligns with the recent independent review of safeguarding policy relating to FII (St George's House, 2025) which highlighted many of the concerns independently raised within this study. With medical, educational and social care professionals using FII guidance documents to enhance practice, failing to revisit these

guidelines risks perpetuating the cycle highlighted by the participants in this study, leaving professionals and autistic mothers at risk.

Future Research

Future research may consider the perspectives of healthcare, education and social care professionals who have collaborated on FII investigations specific to autistic parents. By understanding how FII guidance is applied in practice, this could assist in identifying areas of divergence and convergence when compared to the experiences of autistic mothers from this study. Future research may also consider capturing the voices of children of autistic families having been falsely accused of FII. Understanding the immediate and longer-term impact of growing up where a false accusation of FII took place could help gather a comprehensive understanding of intergenerational differences relating to the experience of a FII investigation. In considering these areas for future research, academics and clinicians alike would have a fuller understanding on how cultural norms of parenting applied to autism assist or harm.

Conclusion

The aims of this study were to better understand the experiences and needs of autistic mothers after a Child Protection Investigation for Fabricated Induced Illness. Using PEI-IPA this study found that the intersection of 'alerting signs', FII and the aftermath of investigations point to a larger, wicked problem for autistic mothers. In a system where negotiating care for children operates within institutionally unsafe frames, a multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional response is required. Without this, autistic women wrongfully accused of FII will be required to continue navigating the care of their children themselves in systems that promote a flattening to, rather than a recognition of their identity.

Reflection on Ethical issues**[EXCLUDED FROM WORD COUNT]**

An extended ethical reflection was included in the examined version of this thesis. In the repository version, personal material has been removed to protect researcher privacy. This omission does not affect the findings or conclusions of the thesis

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Appendices

Appendix A

Study Flyer

This is the recruitment advertisement which was posted by Sunshine Support via their Facebook page during FII Awareness week 2024. The post included the lead researcher and supervisors name, University of affiliation, study purpose and the direct link to the prospective participant website in Appendix B.



The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook post. At the top, it says "SEND Crisis March - Birmingham · Join" and "Sunshine Support · 11 May 2024". The main text of the post asks for help with research for University of Newcastle's Carlie Bowman and Dr. Fiona Gullon-Scott. Below the text is a flyer with a blue speech bubble containing the text "CAN YOU HELP CONTRIBUTE TO FII RESEARCH?". The flyer also features the Sunshine Support logo and website. Below the flyer, the post is attributed to "Sunshine Support" dated "10 May 2024". The post text describes the research aim and provides a link to the research website, along with several hashtags. At the bottom, it shows "1" like and "6 comments".

SEND Crisis March - Birmingham · Join
Sunshine Support · 11 May 2024

Can you help with this research? Please share. It's for University of Newcastle's Carlie Bowman, Trainee Clinical Psychologist at Newcastle University and Dr. Fiona Gullon-Scott, Clinical Psychologist and Academic at Newcastle University.

CAN YOU HELP CONTRIBUTE TO FII RESEARCH?

SUNSHINE SUPPORT
Award winning SEND Consultancy
www.sunshine-support.org

Sunshine Support
10 May 2024

Want to help make big changes in the world of false accusations of FII?
Here's your chance to be a part of the movement for change.
This study aims to understand what changes in life for autistic mothers after a child protection investigation relating to Fabricated Induced Illness.
Read more below...
<https://c2063346.wixsite.com/cbresearch>
#fi #fiiawareness #fiiawareness2024 #Send #autism #autistic

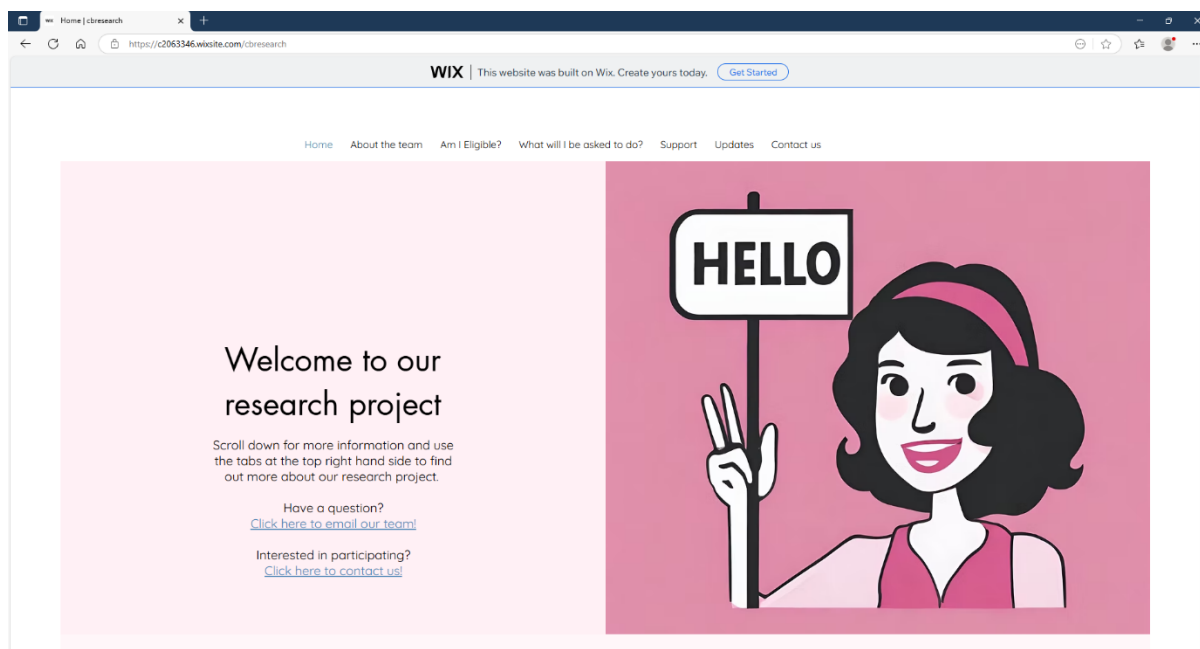
1 6 comments

Like Comment

Appendix B

Study website and accessibility rationale

To widen accessibility a clear layout using a 'sticky' main menu at the top of the website assisted visitors to the site to navigate between different sections of the study website.



A plain language summary of the aims of the study, eligibility criteria and study procedure using short paragraphs was integrated. Images were used sparingly and deliberately to add clarity to the information on each page. Examples include photographs of the lead researcher and supervisor alongside first-person language to foster psychological safety for prospective participants prior to interviewing.

The website can be accessed here (LINK REMOVED)

Appendix C

Written Participant Information Sheet



Information sheet for participants

Title of Study: Autistic mothers' experiences of life after a child protection investigation due to Fabricated Induced Illness

Invitation and Brief Summary

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether you wish to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read this information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. You can also access an audio version of this information sheet [by clicking here](#). If there is anything you do not understand or if you would like to get more information, contact Carlie Bowman, the principal investigator on C.Bowman3@newcastle.ac.uk. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time before your interview and up to four weeks after your interview without giving any reason.

What is the purpose of the research?

This research study is being undertaken as part of the requirements of completion of the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at Newcastle University. This study aims to understand what changes in life for autistic mothers after a child protection investigation relating to Fabricated Induced Illness (FI). We hope to learn more about autistic mothers' experiences after their investigation and what support autistic mothers need from professionals after going through such an investigation. We hope that your participation will help us better understand and support autistic mothers in similar situations.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You are being asked to consider taking part in our study because:

- You are over the age of 18 and identify as an autistic female (through a diagnosis or through self-identification).
- You live in the United Kingdom
- As a parent you have been in a child protection investigation for the reasons of fabricated induced illness and;
- The investigation started and ended within the last five years, between 2018 to 2024.

In the United Kingdom, there are considerable barriers for those identifying as female to access autism assessments and diagnoses (Overton et al., 2023). Challenges to receiving a formal diagnosis may include differences in assessor experience when diagnosing for gender (Wilson et al., 2023), equality of access to an NHS primary care referral (Overton et al., 2023), long waiting times (Lewis, 2017) and financial barriers for those trying to fund private assessments (Russell et al., 2022). As a result, we welcome participants who have self-identified as autistic.

What does taking part involve?

Our study will ask you to complete a questionnaire, take 5 photos to show what a typical week is like for you now after your child protection investigation and speak with Carlie Bowman in an online interview for up to 60 minutes.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

As a thank you for your generosity and time, you will receive a £15 amazon voucher for your participation. Outside of this direct benefit, we hope our work may lead to improvements in support systems and help shape policies to support families in similar situations.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Completing the questionnaire asks you questions on how you feel in relation to having experienced a child protection investigation which could cause distress. The interviews will involve talking about your experience of life after your child protection investigation which may feel upsetting. The focus of our interviews will center on



the photos you have taken and the meaning of these photos in relation to the week in your life after the investigation. You will not be expected to discuss specific details of your investigation.

Speaking with someone new online can be tiring and anxiety provoking for some autistic people. Our website at (<https://c2063346.wixsite.com/cbresearch>) has pictures of our team along with information about them to help you feel more comfortable. You are welcome to stop at any time during our interview, take a break or turn your camera off.

Confidentiality and the limits to this - All information provided will be treated in confidence. There are specific situations where we may need to take additional steps to ensure your immediate safety or the safety of others. If, during our interview, you share something that raises concerns about your safety or someone else's, we may need to talk to our supervisor and, if needed, take further steps. With your permission this may include speaking to your GP to ensure your safety or signposting you to resources for assistance.

How do I withdraw from the study after I have completed my interview?

You are free to withdraw up to four weeks after your interview. After this time, your research data will be permanently anonymized and we will not be able to remove this. If you wish to withdraw from the study after your interview, please contact Carlie Bowman using the contact details at the bottom of this information sheet. Please provide your anonymous code which you can find at the bottom of your consent form so that the team can locate your linked data for removal.

What if I need support?

If at any point you feel that you would benefit from further advice either during or after the study, please click here for a list of services and charities that can support you. If at any time you feel suicidal, in the first instance please contact your GP who will be best placed to listen to your concerns and provide any support that may be helpful at that time. If you feel at any time that you are in crisis and unable to keep yourself safe, please call 999.

What information will be collected and who will have access to this information?

The name and email address you give to us would be used to contact you and identify you if you decide to withdraw from the study. This information will be kept on a secure server at Newcastle University and deleted after three months. For four weeks after your completed interview, your identity will be linked to your research data using a "link document" which is stored separately from your research data. After four weeks have passed, the link between your research data and your identity will be permanently deleted with no possibility after this of linking your identity back to the data.

The demographic information you provide and your consent form will be stored in separate locations places to your name and email address on a digitally encrypted server at Newcastle University which meets GDPR. Your research data (including photos and anonymized interview transcript) will be used for data collection and analysis. This data is owned by Newcastle University and will be stored for ten years after the research paper is submitted.

An important part of conducting research involving interviews is including direct quotes and photographs to show key findings from the study and to demonstrate credibility should the findings be questioned. We would only use anonymized data collected during our research period (using quotes from transcribed interviews and photos from the study) to write academic articles, present at conferences and as part of website and infographics to explain the results of the study.

Has this study received ethical approval?

This study is in the process of receiving ethical approval. Ethical approval was sought in December 2023.

Who should I contact for further information relating to the research?

Carlie Bowman, C.Bowman3@newcastle.ac.uk

Who is the sponsor and data controller for this research?



Newcastle University is the sponsor for this study based in the United Kingdom. Newcastle University will be using information from you to undertake this study and will act as the data controller for this study. This means that Newcastle University is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. The lawful basis for carrying out this study under GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) is Task in the Public Interest, (Article 6,1e) as research is cited as part of the University's duties.

Your rights to access, change or move your information are limited, as Newcastle University need to manage your information in specific ways for the research to be reliable and accurate. If you withdraw from the study within four weeks from participating, Newcastle University will keep the information about you that has already been obtained however this will be omitted from the research study.

Who should I contact to file a complaint?

Research Study: Autistic mothers' experiences of life after a child protection investigation due to Fabricated Induced Illness.

Principal Investigator: Carlie Bowman, C.Bowman3@newcastle.ac.uk

Research Supervisor: Dr Fiona Gullon-Scott, Fiona.gullon-scott@newcastle.ac.uk

If you wish to raise a complaint on how your personal data is handled, you can contact the Data Protection Officer who will investigate the matter: rec-man@ncl.ac.uk

If you are not satisfied with their response you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO): <https://ico.org.uk/>

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Appendix D


Video version of Participant Information Sheet

A video version of the participant information sheet was sent to participants to support them in accessing information about the study in a format that best suited their preferences.

The full video can be accessed here (LINK REMOVED)

Appendix E

Participant Consent Form



Consent Form for Participants


Title of Study: Autistic mothers' experiences of life after a child protection investigation due to Fabricated Induced Illness

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this research. Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet or listened to an explanation about the research study.


You will be sent a copy of this Consent Form.

* Required

Participant consent


1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet dated *8 March 2024* (version 5.2) for the above study, I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and I have had any questions answered satisfactorily. * 

Yes


2. I understand that my participation is voluntary. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time before my interview and up to four weeks after my interview without giving any reason. I understand that if I decide to withdraw up to four weeks after my participation, any data that I have provided up to that point will be omitted. I understand that if I decide to withdraw after four weeks, my data will have been anonymized and will not be able to be removed from the data. * 

Yes

3. I consent to the processing of the following personal information for the purposes of this research study, as described in the information sheet dated *8 March 2024* (version 5.2).

- My full name and email address
- Date of birth
- GP details
- My Gender
- The date of my autism diagnosis (or if applicable, the date I self-identified as autistic)
- The year the child protection investigation began
- The year the child protection investigation ended * 

Yes


4. I understand that my participation will not be able to go ahead if I do not identify as an autistic mother or if I am currently in a live child protection investigation. * 

Yes

5. I understand that part of this research requires me to complete a questionnaire and that I will not be told the outcome of this questionnaire. I have read the information sheet that signposts where I can go for additional support if needed.

* 

Yes


6. I understand that participating in this study will require me to send up to 5 photos of my own choosing that reflect a week in my life after a child protection investigation for reasons related to Fabricated induced illness. I understand that I will be given a guide as to what photos are appropriate and not appropriate to send to the team. * 

Yes


7. I consent to my *pseudonymized research data* data being stored and used by others for future research.

* 


Yes

8. I understand that my anonymised research data may be published as a report and presented at conferences if applicable. * 

Yes

9. I understand that my research data may be looked at by individuals from *Newcastle University*, where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. * 


Yes

10. I consent to being recorded and understand that the recordings will be destroyed immediately after transcription. I can request to have my camera off for my interview and to request that my interviewer turns their camera off. * 


Yes

11. I understand that I can contact the principal investigator, Carlie Bowman, on C.Bowman3@newcastle.ac.uk for any questions
* 


Yes

12. I agree to take part in this research project * 

Yes

13. Full name of participant * 

Enter your answer

14. Today's date * 

Please input date (dd/MM/yyyy)



15. PARTICIPANT CODE FOR IDENTIFYING YOUR DATA

Please enter a code made up of three letters and three numbers.

These letters and numbers can be random and this will be your personal participant code.

As an example your code might look like this: CSM 654

Please make a note of your code before submitting your form.

* 


Enter your answer

You can print a copy of your answer after you submit

Submit

Appendix F

Demographic Form




Demographic Details for participants


Title of Study: Autistic mothers' experiences of life after a child protection investigation due to Fabricated Induced Illness


Thank you for your interest in taking part in this research. Please complete this form after you have consented to our study.

* Required


Demographic Details

1. Date of birth * 


Please input date (dd/MM/yyyy) 

2. Please confirm that you identify as female * 

Yes


3. GP Details (Please note your GP will only be contacted in the event that the team have concerns for your safety) * 


Enter your answer


4. Please tell us if you have had a diagnosis of autism or if you have self-identified as autistic (we welcome both routes to our study) * 

I have self-identified as autistic

I have been diagnosed as autistic

5. The date your autism diagnosis was confirmed or the date you self-identified as autistic * 

Please input date (dd/MM/yyyy) 

6. The year the child protection investigation for reasons of fabricated induced illness (FI) began * 


Enter your answer

7. The year the investigation ended * 

Enter your answer

8. PARTICIPANT CODE

Please enter your unique 6 digit code which you created when you signed your consent form.

As an example this might have looked like: CSM 654 * 

Enter your answer

Submit

 Microsoft 365


This content is created by the owner of the form. The data you submit will be sent to the form owner. Microsoft is not responsible for the privacy or security practices of its customers, including those of this form owner. Never give out your password.

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Appendix G

International Trauma Questionnaire


Newcastle University
Questionnaire

Please identify the experience that troubles you most in relation to the child protection investigation and answer the questions in relation to this experience.

* Required

Brief description of the experience *

Enter your answer

When did this experience occur? *

Less than 6 months ago

6 to 12 months ago

1 to 5 years ago

Below are a number of problems that people sometimes report in response to traumatic or stressful life events.

Please read each item carefully, then circle one of the numbers to the right to indicate how much you have been bothered by that problem **in the past month.** *


	Not at all	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
Having upsetting dreams that replay part of the experience or are clearly related to the experience?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having powerful images or memories that sometimes come into your mind in which you feel the experience is happening again in the here and now?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Avoiding internal reminders of the experience (for example, thoughts, feelings, or physical sensations)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Avoiding internal reminders of the experience (for example, thoughts, feelings, or physical sensations)?

Avoiding external reminders of the experience (for example, people, places, conversations, objects, activities, or situations)?


Being "super-alert", watchful, or on guard?

Feeling jumpy or easily startled?

In the past month have the above problems: * 


	Not at all	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
Affected your relationships or social life?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Affected your work or ability to work?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Affected any other important part of your life such as parenting, or school or college work, or other important activities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Below are problems that people who have had stressful or traumatic events sometimes experience. The questions refer to ways you typically feel, ways you typically think about yourself and ways you typically relate to others. Answer the following thinking about how true each statement is of you.

How true is this of you? * 

	Not at all	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
When I am upset, it takes me a long time to calm down.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel numb or emotionally shut down.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>


I feel like a failure.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel worthless.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel distant or cut off from people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find it hard to stay emotionally close to people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

In the past month, have the above problems in emotions, in beliefs about yourself and in relationships: * 

	Not at all	A little bit	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
Created concern or distress about your relationships or social life?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Affected your work or ability to work?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Affected any other important parts of your life such as parenting, or school or college work, or other important activities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

PARTICIPANT CODE

Please enter your unique 6 digit code which you created when you signed your consent form.

As an example this might have looked like: CSM 654 * 

Enter your answer

Submit

Appendix H

Email instructions to participant for photo elicitation task

Hello [Participant name]

Thank you very much for completing your questionnaire.

I am getting in touch to tell you about our photo taking phase of the project. If you have any questions after reading this email and reading our attached photo guidance, please email me and I'll be happy to talk with you.

Taking and sending your photos.

You will have two weeks to take five photographs that show what your life looks like and feels like now after the child protection investigation. The photos you take will be used in our interview to help understand your experience and learn what support you would have found helpful to have had after the investigation.

To help with taking your photos we have attached our photo guide to this email. Please read this guidance as there are certain types of photos we cannot accept for the project. This includes sending photos of children or photos that show other people.

After you have taken your photos please send these to me at

C.Bowman3@newcastle.ac.uk. In your email please write a brief description for each photo you send. This will help us identify these when we have our interview. As an example, you might write in your email 'Photo 1 is of my dog Charlie in his bed', 'Photo 2 is a picture my child drew of our house'. You do not need to give any more detail at this stage.

Photo checking

As part of our data governance the team check the photos that have been sent to ensure they meet our guidelines before booking into an interview. If there are any photos that do not fit within our photo guidelines, we will let you know and you will have the option to submit a new photo if you would like.

After sending your photos: Interview slots

You will be sent a booking link to book an interview slot shortly after the team receive and

check your photos. Slots are available on weekday evenings and on Friday daytimes. You will be sent a Microsoft Teams invite after you have made your booking.

If you have any questions at all about this stage, please email me and we can talk this through together. I'll check in with you in two weeks, however you are very welcome to send your photos before the two weeks is up.

Thank you again for working with us, we really appreciate your time.

Carlie

Carlie Bowman, Year 2 Trainee Clinical Psychologist

Appendix I

Photo Elicitation Guidance

Photo Elicitation Guide - Understanding Autistic Mothers' Experiences of trauma after a child protection investigation due to fabricated induced illness

Thank you for joining our study on the experiences of autistic mothers after a child protection investigation into fabricated induced illness. We appreciate your involvement, and we want to make everything as clear and comfortable for you as possible.

What we would like you to do:

- **Capture 5 Photographs:** Please take 5 photos that show a typical week in your life after the child protection investigation. You can use your mobile phone to do this.
- **Send Photos:** Email the photos to Carlie, our principal investigator, at C.Bowman3@newcastle.ac.uk before your scheduled interview.
- **Meet for our Interview:** We will meet online for a 60 minute interview to discuss the photos and your experiences.

Guidelines for Taking Photos:

- **Appropriateness:** Make sure your photos don't include anything inappropriate or illegal, like nudity or illegal activities.
- **No photos of other people:** Please don't send photos where other people over the age of 18 (third parties) are included. These will not be able to be used and will be removed at once.
- **Age restrictions:** Please do not send photos of individuals under 18, including your own children. If a child appears in a photo, our team has to inform our data protection officer.
- **Protecting your identity:** Photos of yourself are allowed for us to speak about. If a photo shows your face, to protect your identity these will either be pixilated or cropped.
- **Safety First:** Never put yourself at risk to take a photo for this project. This includes avoiding photos of documents with identifying information related to the child protection investigation.

Appendix J

Participant Debrief Document



Project Debrief Form: Autistic mothers' experiences of life after a child protection investigation due to Fabricated Induced Illness

Dear Participant,

Thank you for being a part of our project.

Our project's aim was to explore the experiences of autistic mothers who had gone through a Child Protection Investigation related to Fabricated Induced Illness (FI).

FI is a poorly defined umbrella term which can be used inappropriately by healthcare and social professionals when a parent is worried about their child's health (Clements & Aiello, 2023). Recent research has suggested that when undergoing such investigations, autistic parents can experience symptoms like those seen in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder which can affect different areas of a person's life (Clements & Aiello, 2023).

Our reasons for using Photo Elicitation in our interview were to help you consider what photos best represented what was most meaningful for you when thinking about what life has been like following your child protection investigation.

We hope that your contribution will help us better understand the journeys that autistic mothers navigate after a child protection investigation for FI. We hope this in turn will help services think better about how to support people in a similar situation, and help other autistic mums understand they are not alone in their experiences.

What if I need support?

If at any point you feel that you would benefit from further support, please [click here](#) or see below for a list of services and charities that can support you:

Mind operates an Infoline to provide information and signposting for individuals wanting information on where to get help in their local area, mental health information and treatment options. Contact Mind's Infoline on 0300 123 3393 (calls from the UK (United Kingdom) charged at local rates)

The Samaritans are a source of support who offer a 24-hour, free confidential listening service to support people in crisis. The Samaritans can listen to your concerns with no judgement – call on 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org



The National Autistic society can give information and advice for those with autism spectrum conditions and their families. The team has a helpline you can contact on 0808 800 4104, which is open Monday to Friday. The National Autistic Society website (www.autism.org.uk) has information on a wide range of areas, including diagnosis, education, healthcare, mental health and advocacy.

Your General Practitioner is a further source of support who can discuss concerns with you and work together to refer you to an appropriate service for support.

How to access the results of the study.

We would be happy to keep you updated on our project's progress and results. At the end of your interview, you were asked if you would like to be added to our distribution list.

You kindly told us you would like to know the results and we have added the email you provided to our distribution list. We will be happy to send you a summary of our results once our analysis is complete. We hope to be able to send this by early autumn 2025.

Thank you once again for participating,

Warm regards,

Carlie Bowman and Dr. Fiona Gullon-Scott

Research Team

References


Clements, L., & Aiello, A. L. (2023). *The prevalence and impact of allegations of Fabricated or Induced Illness (FII)*. U. o. Leeds. <https://cerebra.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/FII-Final-report-2023-Nov-01.pdf>

Appendix K

Ethics Approval Confirmation

15/07/2025, 15:19

Email - Carlie Bowman (PGR) - Outlook

 Outlook

Application for ethical approval 2672/40181

From Marjorie Holbrough <marjorie.holbrough@newcastle.ac.uk>
on behalf of
nethics <fmsethics@newcastle.ac.uk>
Date Tue 19/03/2024 09:04
To Carlie Bowman (PGR) <C.Bowman3@newcastle.ac.uk>
Cc nethics <fmsethics@newcastle.ac.uk>

Applicant: Carlie Bowman

Project Title: Autistic mothers' experiences of life after a child protection investigation due to Fabricated Induced Illness

Reference: 2672/40181

Dear Carlie

Thank you for submitting an ethics application for the project listed above. On behalf of the FMS Ethics Committee, I can confirm that ethical approval is now in place and that work on the project can now commence.

All researchers are expected to abide by the approved protocol in line with the University's Code of Good Practice in Research. You should therefore notify the FMS Ethics Committee of any changes to your project by emailing fmsethics@newcastle.ac.uk and quoting the project title and application reference number.

It is the researcher's responsibility to maintain a record of ethical approval alongside other project documentation such as the approved version of the research protocol, participant information sheets and evidence of consent. If your project is externally funded, the terms of the grant may include certain data retention requirements. For audit purposes, the University recommends that all project documentation should be stored securely for a period of 10 years. If you leave the University during this period, please ensure that this information is retained within your School or Institute.

On behalf of the FMS Ethics Committee, I hope the project goes well.

Best wishes

Marjorie Holbrough
Admin Support to FMS Ethics Committee
[marjorie.holbrough@ncl.ac.uk]

Marjorie Holbrough
Operations Coordinator
FMS Operations
Henry Wellcome Building
Faculty of Medical Sciences

 [Call or send me a chat message on Teams](#)

Appendix L

Memo samples

Redacted from repository version to protect participant confidentiality and researcher privacy. These omissions do not affect the findings or conclusions of the thesis

Appendix M

Interview Schedule

Draft Interview Schedule developed in line with IPA recommendations to include questions that ensure a deepening of data (Smith & Nizza, 2022):

Welcome, X! Thank you for taking the time to meet with me.

Today we're going to talk about the photos you shared with us. These photos help us understand what life has been like for you after the child protection investigation. Our goal is to understand your experience and learn about the support you would have found helpful before and after the investigation.

Firstly, it's essential to know that you can choose not to answer any questions you're not comfortable with. There are no right or wrong answers, just your answers.

Your personal information is confidential, unless something you share raises concerns about your safety or someone else's. In that case, I'd need to talk to my supervisor. If necessary, we might need to involve other people, like your GP, but we'd always discuss this with you first. An example of this would be if you said to me that you were getting hurt right now. Any details that could identify you or people close to you will be changed after our interview to create a pseudonym. If you change your mind about taking part, you can withdraw your photos and interview from the study within four weeks from today (which is DATE).

While our focus is on your photos from a week in your life after the investigation, I'm open to any other topics you think might be important for autistic mums. About ten minutes before we finish, I'll check in to ensure we've covered everything you wanted to say.

Do you have any questions?

Can we start?

Photograph 1:

- Tell me why you chose this photograph?
- How does this photo represent your experience with the child protection investigation?
- How did you feel when taking this photograph?
- How do you feel now looking back on this photograph?
- Is there anything else important to share about this photo, the child protection investigation, or getting support?

Repeat for photographs 2-5

Summary

Thank you so much again for sharing what you have done so far. Is there anything we haven't covered that you think is important for us to know? Thank you so much again X

Debrief

Appendix N***Annotated Transcript example***

This material was included in the examined version of the thesis but has been removed from the repository version to protect participant confidentiality

Appendix O

Individual case summaries, superordinate themes and emergent themes for all participants

Detailed individual case summaries were included in the examined version of this thesis to demonstrate idiographic depth in the analytic process. These have been removed from the repository version to protect participant confidentiality. Their omission does not alter the findings or conclusions presented

Appendix P
Superordinate Cross Case Matrix

Theme	Subtheme	Adele	Anna	Eleanor	Kelly	Lucy	Millie	Naomi	Vanessa
Once Accused you are never exonerated	Smart, articulate, autistic, dangerous	Y	Y	Not raised within case level themes	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Living with the record "I don't know who I am anymore":	Y	Y	Y	Y	Not raised within case level themes	Y	Y	Y
"I forgot who I was"	Identity erasure "I felt very cursed":	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Trauma in the autistic body	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Fear of re-accusation	Not raised within case level themes	Y	Y	Y	Not raised within case level themes	Y	Not raised within case level themes	Y
Strategies to survive	Occupational reclaiming	Not raised within case level themes	Not raised within case level themes	Not raised within case level themes	Y	Y	Not raised within case level themes	Not raised within case level themes	Y

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
DOCTORATE IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY
Research Course: Sign off sheet for Research Projects

	Please tick if it does not apply	Please tick if completed. If not ticked, please provide an explanation	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">Trainee name:</td> <td>Carlie Bowman</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Project title: Framed: A Scoping Review of Photo-Elicitation in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and a Qualitative Study of Autistic Mothers Experiences after a Fabricated or Induced Illness investigation</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"><i>Please add date for each action Please provide brief comment as necessary.</i></td> </tr> </table>	Trainee name:	Carlie Bowman	Project title: Framed: A Scoping Review of Photo-Elicitation in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and a Qualitative Study of Autistic Mothers Experiences after a Fabricated or Induced Illness investigation		<i>Please add date for each action Please provide brief comment as necessary.</i>	
Trainee name:	Carlie Bowman								
Project title: Framed: A Scoping Review of Photo-Elicitation in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and a Qualitative Study of Autistic Mothers Experiences after a Fabricated or Induced Illness investigation									
<i>Please add date for each action Please provide brief comment as necessary.</i>									
In line with participant consent, raw and electronic data where consent has been subsequently withdrawn has been dealt with appropriately (e.g. removed) and communicated in writing to the supervisor with responsibility for data keeping.	<input type="checkbox"/>	COMPLETE	<p>Date completed: 10/09/2025</p> <p>Withdrawn participants consents were deleted from consent files and from onedrive.</p> <p>Communicated to FGS via email on 12/09/2025</p>						
In line with participant consent, where permission to use data in future studies has been asked for and not been granted, this has been appropriately identified in data bases (e.g. properly labelled) and communicated in writing/document to the supervisor with responsibility for data keeping.	<input type="checkbox"/>	COMPLETE	<p>Date completed: 10/09/2025</p> <p>In line with the approved Data Management Plan this dataset will not be deposited in open repositories or shared beyond the supervisory team.</p> <p>Restrictions are in place due to the vulnerable nature of discussions from the participant group.</p>						

<p>In line with your approved data management plan/ethical approval, the informed consent forms and contact details are</p> <p>a) securely stored in a separate place from any other data, or</p> <p>b) securely destroyed, as the case may be.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>N/A</p>	<p>Date completed: 10/09/2025</p> <p>In line with the approved Data Management Plan and participant consent, consent forms, demographic details and layered photo consent for those who have submitted have been stored separately under encryption. Email sent to FGS on 12/09/2025 to state this along with additional notifications for passwords (given separately)</p>
<p>In line with your approved data management plan/ethical approval, IDs or codes linking personal data to other data have been securely destroyed.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>COMPLETE</p>	<p>Date completed: 11/09/2025</p> <p>Link Document containing linked data destroyed</p>
<p>In line with your approved data management plan/ethical approval, recruitment logs and other documents containing personally identifiable information have been securely destroyed.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>COMPLETE</p>	<p>Date completed: 10/09/2025</p> <p>Participant recordings confirmed as being securely deleted.</p>
<p>In line with your approved data management plan/ethical/HRA/sponsors approval, the raw data (e.g. questionnaires, test sheets, data collection logs) have been</p> <p>a) pseudonymized,</p> <p>b) properly labelled and</p> <p>c) appropriate arrangements for their storage have been made;</p> <p>d) indications for date of destruction are clearly indicated</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>COMPLETE</p> <p>COMPLETE</p> <p>COMPLETE</p>	<p>Date completed: 10/09/2025</p> <p>There is a README attached inside each folder within the 'Project Closure – Key Documents' folder. Each 'README' states the purpose, contents, handling, retention and access, data management and sharing and further important details relating to each folder containing data. This also includes the date of destruction for each folder.</p>

	Please tick if it does not apply	Please tick if completed. If not ticked, please provide an explanation	<i>Please add date for each action</i> <i>Please provide brief comment as necessary. :</i>
<p>Any concerns about participants, adverse effects, follow-up with participants due to distress, concerns raised by participants, disagreements/ incidents that could lead to participant complaint, etc., have been discussed with supervisors, suitably recorded in an appropriate manner, addressed (if required), and signalled (if necessary) to the appropriate ethics and governance frameworks, including the Course and the sponsors.</p> <p>Any correspondence about these matters has either been archived (and pseudon/anonymized if necessary) or destroyed as appropriate</p> <p>Please seek guidance about what is appropriate.</p>	N/A		Date completed: N/A
Participants have been debriefed as laid out in Ethics approval.	<input type="checkbox"/>	COMPLETE	Date completed: September 2024
Participants have received a lay summary of the results of the study if requested or originally announced.	<input type="checkbox"/>	COMPLETE	Date completed: 12/09/2025
Gatekeepers and others facilitating access to participants have been thanked and, wherever relevant, sent a copy of the lay summary.	<input type="checkbox"/>	COMPLETE	Date completed: 12/09/2025

Participants and/or institutions, groups, organizations that have facilitated access have received the announced vouchers/course credits/reimbursements and/or the prize draw has been completed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	COMPLETE	Date completed: Voucher requests sent to dclinpsy.expenses@newcastle.ac.uk with FGS copied in for audit trail purposes on 10/09/2025
Contact details for gatekeepers have been provided to supervisors.	N/A	N/A	Date completed: Sunshine support known to supervisor FGS
All study advertisements have been removed from websites or other postings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	COMPLETE	Date completed: Project Website unpublished on 09/09/2025

	Please tick if it does not apply	Please tick if completed. If not ticked, please provide an explanation	<p><i>Please add date for each action</i></p> <p><i>Please provide brief comment as necessary.</i></p>
<p>Note: At least one final report should be completed for each project.</p> <p><i>As a minimum a final report should indicate a) title, b) number, c) statements to the effect that study has been completed, no/some adverse incidents were noted, all obligations toward participants and gatekeepers have been completed, and all data and study materials have been securely destroyed/archived according to the data management plan, d) contact person (normally supervisor) for any further correspondence about the study.</i></p> <p><i>Some organizations have specific reporting requirements – see their websites/information.</i></p> <p>If no final report has been submitted, please indicate clearly why not.</p>			

NHS Ethics Committee has received, as required, progress and final reports about the study.	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A
University Ethics Committee has received, as required, a final report about the study.	<input type="checkbox"/>	COMPLETE	Date completed: 12/09/2025 Name of person contacted: fmsethics@newcastle.ac.uk
Other approving body or Ethics Committee (e.g. charitable organization) has received a final report about the study.	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A
Relevant R & D Departments or other sponsoring organizations have received a final report about the study.	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A
HRA site file has been completed and archived according to sponsoring organizations wishes.	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A

	Please tick if it does not apply	Please tick if completed. If not ticked, please provide an explanation	<i>Please add date for each action</i> <i>Please provide brief comment as necessary.</i>
All project related costs have been appropriately been dealt with and outstanding financial issues with the Course, supervisors, or funders have been resolved (e.g. copy costs, travel expenses, vouchers, materials, etc.).	<input type="checkbox"/>	COMPLETE	Date completed: Voucher requests sent to dclinpsy.expenses@newcastle.ac.uk with FGS copied in for audit trail purposes on 10/09/2025

<p>Doctorate Director informed that all project related expenses have been claimed</p> <p>Employer's representative that all project related expenses have been claimed</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>N/A</p>	<p>COMPLETE</p>	<p>Date completed: Email sent to Doctorate Director inbox with FGS copied in on 10/09/2025</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>Funding bodies have received any required progress and final reports about the study.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Any test materials (including unused recording sheets if purchased), manuals, programs, software belonging to the Course, supervisors, University or other sources or purchased for the study have been returned to the appropriate organization/person.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Any equipment (including recording devices, storage media, mobile phones, sim cards, credit, software, books, manuals, etc.) that belongs to the Course, supervisors, University or other sources or purchased for the study have been returned to the appropriate organization/person.</p> <p><i>(add additional items as needed)</i></p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>If literature review has been registered on PROSPERO or other data base, status has been updated including closing it down if there is no intention to publish. Note who holds registration (trainee or supervisor)</p>		<p>COMPLETE</p>	<p>Review Registration DOI (OSF):</p> <p>https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/3MWTZ</p> <p>Status: Active</p> <p>Who holds registration? Carlie Bowman</p> <p>Updated on: 10/09/0205</p>

	Please tick if it does not apply	Please tick if completed. If not ticked, please provide an explanation	<p><i>Please add date for each action</i></p> <p><i>Please provide brief comment as necessary.</i></p>
<p>All correspondence concerning the study (e-mails, .pdfs or image files, or paper documents that have been scanned) has been handed over to the supervisors in either/both hard media and/or as an electronically transferred zip file. This includes approvals (peer, ethics, funding agencies), extensions to approvals, amendments, registrations, letters of support or permission, etc.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	COMPLETE	<p>Date completed: 10/09/2025</p> <p>Transferred Electronically.</p>
<p>All study materials in electronic form have been handed over to the supervisors in either/both</p> <p>hard media (CD/DVD; flash drive) and/or as an electronically transferred zip file.</p> <p>This includes: project proposals, ethics applications, requests for amendments, protocols, invitation/ recruitment materials, information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, tasks and induction materials developed for the study including those on various platforms (e.g. E-Prime, Matlab, Qualtrics, apps, etc.), SOPS, debriefing materials, etc.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>N/A</p> COMPLETE	<p>Date completed: 10/09/2025</p> <p>Transferred Electronically.</p>

Final copies of the electronically saved raw data, transformed data, and syntax files been handed over to the supervisors in either/both hard media and/or as an electronically transferred zip file.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A COMPLETE	Date completed: 10/09/2025 Transferred Electronically.
Final electronic copies of thesis as well as the project presentation power point have been sent to supervisors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	COMPLETE	Date completed: 10/09/2025 FGS had kindly added electronic copies of thesis. CB has added powerpoint presentation of scoping review.
If appropriate, data has been archived (along with all meta-data) in NU's Data Repository.	N/A	N/A	In line with the approved Data Management Plan this dataset will not be deposited in data repositories.
Other	N/A	N/A	N/A

12/09/2025

Carlie Bowman