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Knowing Me, Knowing Them: Using Pinned Illustrations with Known Participants

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Abstract

In practice-based studies, participants are often known to the researcher as part of their professional realm. This can result in the researcher bringing preconceptions of the participants to the study, which may influence the findings. In this paper, we demonstrate how researchers can utilise reflexivity and imaginative curiosity to expose often unconsidered presuppositions about such participants using penned illustrations. We suggest that penned illustrations of known participants should be undertaken to unpack preconceptions of the known participants creatively and imaginatively. This paper provides an applied demonstration of how penned illustrations can be used in a hermeneutic phenomenological study, along with the philosophical foundations supporting this method. The paper guides the reader through why penned illustrations can be helpful in qualitative, hermeneutic phenomenological research when the insider-researcher needs to recognise, manage, and ethically work with the duality of their overlapping researcher and professional roles.

Keywords

hermeneutic phenomenology, insider-research, penned illustration, positionality, professional doctorate, reflexivity, qualitative

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Knowing Me, Knowing Them: Using Penned Illustrations with Known Participants

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In practice-based studies, participants are often known to the researcher as part of their professional realm. This can result in the researcher bringing preconceptions of the participants to the study, which may influence the findings. In this paper, we demonstrate how researchers can utilise reflexivity and imaginative curiosity to expose often unconsidered presuppositions about such participants using penned illustrations. We suggest that penned illustrations of known participants should be undertaken to unpack preconceptions of the known participants creatively and imaginatively. This paper provides an applied demonstration of how penned illustrations can be used in a hermeneutic phenomenological study, along with the philosophical foundations supporting this method. The paper guides the reader through why penned illustrations can be helpful in qualitative, hermeneutic phenomenological research when the insider-researcher needs to recognise, manage, and ethically work with the duality of their overlapping researcher and professional roles.

Keywords: hermeneutic phenomenology, insider-research, penned illustration, positionality, professional doctorate, reflexivity, qualitative

The term “known participants” refers to those who have a relationship with a researcher before a study is conducted. These situations are increasingly common in practice-based research (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). For example, known participants could be used by a teacher conducting research with their students or a nurse researching their patients’ experiences. To view, interpret, and develop an understanding of the meanings given within the experience of a participant, the qualitative researcher must become aware of and recognise their assumptions in the research (Bourke, 2014; Dodgson, 2019).

Several research papers have provided information for researchers about reflexive methods, including presuppositional or bracketing interviews (Graber & Mitcham, 2004; Rolls & Relf, 2006; Tufford & Newman, 2010; Barrett-Rodger et al., 2023). However, these focus on the researcher’s prior understanding of the phenomena of interest to better understand how this may impact their research. For example, whilst bracketing interviews provide researchers with the opportunity to question their assumptions, the majority of studies which employ bracketing interviews are not within the context of studies conducted on known participants. Consequently, methods to specifically enable researchers’ preconceptions of known participants are lacking in the literature. This is particularly important to professionals participating in practice-led research in their routine work environment.

This paper puts forward the use of penned illustrations as a creative reflexive method for practice-led researchers to consider their preconceptions of known participants and the impact this can have on their research. By detailing the development and implementation of this new reflexive method, this paper provides a guide to conducting penned illustrations for practice-based researchers who wish to better understand their relationships with known

participants. Whilst the development of the method of penned illustrations is embedded within a hermeneutic phenomenological context, which will be explained in greater detail later in the article, it will also be useful for practice-based researchers using known participants employing various qualitative methodologies.

Study Context

I (first author) am the deputy headteacher of a primary school in the UK. I have over a decade of experience teaching across the primary phase and am a mathematics subject specialist, leading primary mathematics training for an initial teacher training provider. I strongly support outdoor learning as a pedagogical approach, which is at the centre of my school's ethos. Combining my passion for mathematics learning and the outdoors, I am currently undertaking an Educational Doctorate (EdD), studying the experiences of primary-aged children learning mathematics outdoors. My hermeneutic phenomenological study involves the participation of the children I teach daily. My positionality as an educator has led me to want to learn more about how it is for my students to learn mathematics outdoors. However, my positionality has also led me to consider my insider-researcher context when considering how my preconceptions have impacted the way my study has been conducted.

The second and third authors are my doctoral supervisors. They have been instrumental in supporting me in developing my reflexive techniques. Together we have written this paper to describe the process I went through in developing the method of penned illustrations to confront my preconceptions about my participants. Throughout this paper, there will be shifts in person as it moves between the context of my study and reflexive practices and our development of the penned illustration method.

The Problem with Using Known Participants

At the heart of practice-based insider research is the desire to understand and improve the practices of professionals (Scott, 2004). Cooper and Rogers (2015) claimed that insider positionality allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the context in which they operate. In this way, professionals are well placed to ask questions about their practice, but this interconnectedness can present a range of practical and ethical dilemmas. Insider-ness can create tensions in respect of differentiating what belongs to the researcher and what belongs to the participants (Goldspink & Engward, 2019). This is because the embeddedness of practitioner-led research means that the research takes place in a familiar world with familiar relationships. Therefore, the position of the insider research calls into question the researcher's established ways of knowing, which impact how the study is conducted, data is analysed, and findings are presented.

One particular set of assumptions for the insider researcher to consider is their pre-formed ideas about the participants in their study (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Whilst familiarity may help gain access to participants and holds valuable insights to bring insider knowledge to the research, pre-existing relationships between participants and researchers need careful consideration regarding the ethical consequences and the bearing of research preconceptions (Costley & Gibbs, 2006). It is also the case that what researchers know about the participants and what they perceive about their participants can become unintentionally muddled. For example, by knowing that a child is athletic and enjoys sports, it may be fair to assume that they have similar hobbies and interests to other athletic children. We may even expect them to behave in a certain way based on our experiences of others with similar characteristics. These assumptions can lead to a researcher looking for their expectations to be realised in data collection or analysis, resulting in bias confirmation.

My research is not immune from these presuppositions. Teaching mathematics outdoors regularly, as well as talking to the children and getting perspectives from colleagues all develop the preconceptions that I inevitably bring to the research. I deliberately chose hermeneutic phenomenology as the methodology for my study because central to hermeneutic phenomenology is the researcher's obligation to expose their assumptions and preconceptions (Crowther & Thomson, 2022). Therefore, identification and deeper understanding of preconceptions can be facilitated by recognising that the beliefs and opinions originate from somewhere, are continually influenced and may change over time. For teacher inquiry studies, this insider involvement involves a complex web of tacit knowledge generated from personal and professional experience, professional identity and position issues, everyday insights gained from working in the school-based environment, and the broader educational system (Babione, 2015). As a teacher, I am inextricably linked to my research and those involved. As such, hermeneutic phenomenology provides the philosophical underpinnings needed to find ways to unravel the overt and subtle connections he has with the participants.

Hermeneutic phenomenology guides research towards a better understanding of what it means to "be." Therefore, to investigate Being is to study the meaning of phenomena, or as van Manen suggests, "the world as we immediately experience it pre-reflectively rather than as we conceptualize, categorize, or reflect on it" (2016a, p. 9). Central to this methodology is Heidegger's (1927/1962) assertion that we are thrown into a world and are therefore immediately and deeply entangled within that world. This means that phenomenological researchers can only illustrate what is already understood, which can only be done from the researcher's experience of being-in-the-world. For applied phenomenological studies, this means that the researcher is required to become aware of how they see the world and how their ideas and opinions formed by their own experience of being-in-the-world can shape how their research is conducted and have influence over the findings of the research (van Manen, 2016b).

Practice-based research therefore often involves a delicate balance between the researcher, the practice environment, and the participants. Balancing these relationships can be achieved through practitioner curiosity – an active, imaginative process driven by our intentions and motivations to look further and deeper into not just what we do but the reasons and meanings for our actions. By employing practitioner curiosity, researchers attempt to move beyond taken-for-granted thinking, which otherwise informs our preconceptions and biases. This shift in thinking can be informative and inspiring but simultaneously difficult and sometimes uncomfortable.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity in qualitative research refers to the researcher's self-awareness and active engagement in the research process (D'Cruz et al., 2007). It involves reflecting on and acknowledging one's own biases, assumptions, values, and experiences that may influence the research process and findings. Reflexivity recognises that researchers are not neutral observers but are actively involved in shaping the research. Therefore, a reflexive approach to research helps researchers critically examine their role, positionality, and potential biases to understand better how these factors may impact the research design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Employing reflexive practices, researchers engage in continuous self-reflection to identify their own biases, beliefs, and assumptions that may affect the research process. This involves being aware of personal experiences, social identities, and cultural backgrounds that shape their perspectives and acknowledging their positionality concerning the research topic and participants (Dodgson, 2019).

Reflexivity is not a passive exercise. Researchers are required to enact it and *be* actively reflexive. Similarly, reflexivity should not be viewed as a single task but as an approach and

attitude to conducting research (Finlay, 2002). For Finlay and Gough, it is by using reflexivity that “subjectivity in research can be transformed from problem to opportunity” (2003: ix). However, this does not mean that reflexivity automatically provides the solution to the problem of subjectivity. It requires us to be open to alternative possibilities, remain curious about what might be, and explore opportunities to see things from alternative viewpoints instead of uncritically reciting what we always thought the answer would be. By actively engaging in reflexivity, researchers aim to minimise the potential adverse effects of bias and enhance the trustworthiness and validity of qualitative research. It enables a more critical and nuanced examination of the research topic, allowing for a deeper understanding of the complexity and context of the data (Engward & Goldspink, 2020).

One way in which researchers may practise reflexivity is through the use of a research journal or diary (Etherington, 2004). A journal allows a researcher to record notes about the research process, which helps to illuminate the decision-making process. This can then be used reflexively to reveal the impact of the researcher’s positionality. The presuppositional interview is another strategy to develop a researcher’s contextual self-awareness (Barrett-Rodger et al., 2023). Through dialogue between the researcher and an interviewer, the presuppositional interview aims to expose key elements of the researcher’s positionality, biases, and preconceptions which may have been previously unacknowledged. The presuppositional interview is a purposeful conversation where the interviewer asks the researcher questions about their experiences of the phenomena being studied, their preconceived notions and ideas, and fundamental questions that aim to uncover the researcher’s epistemological and ontological positions. The researcher then analyses the interview transcript to elicit extended reflexive insights that illuminate the researcher’s preconceptions and beliefs that could influence how the study is conducted. The presuppositional interview can be seen as a form of collaborative reflexivity drawing on the concept that “assumptions become most evident when viewed from the point of view of others who do not share them” (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023, p. 246).

In my study, I participated in a presuppositional interview and kept a research journal. These reflexive methods gave me a better understanding of my positionality within the research context and allowed me to acknowledge how my experiences could influence my study. However, I did not yet feel that my relationship with my participants had been fully explored. This was in part due to the difficulty I found in confronting my preconceptions of individuals. Whilst the presuppositional interview allowed me to describe my feelings towards a phenomenon, I was hesitant to reflect honestly on my experiences and impressions of individuals. I was concerned that some of my biases may have seemed harsh, and yet I knew that if I was to fully uncover factors which could influence my study, I needed to be open and honest. To confront my preconceptions of my participants, I began writing about each of them in a research journal. To begin with, there was little structure to my writing. This led to the development of a method to systematically unpack my preconceptions of my participants. This became what we now refer to as the penned illustrations.

Penned Illustrations in Principle

In essence, a penned illustration is when a researcher writes a fictional account of a known participant as a means for the researcher to reveal their assumptions of that participant. It is a fictional account as it is informed by the perception of the researcher rather than a factual account of the individual. The researcher begins by writing a penned illustration by answering a series of questions which draws out the researcher’s familiarity with perspectives on and expectations of their known participant(s). Each of these guiding questions is described in greater detail in this article. The crafted illustration is then read reflexively by the researcher to

illuminate biases, much in the same way as the transcript of a presuppositional interview may be analysed reflexively to reveal preconceptions (Barrett-Rodger et al., 2023). The result of the process are illustrations which develop imaginative curiosity and clarify the researcher's reflexive insights. In short, it is a method of reflexivity for practice-based researchers who know their participants and have formed opinions about them.

In choosing to use the term penned impression, we deliberately distinguish between this process and "pen portraits," which can also be used in qualitative research. Sheard and Marsh (2019) provide an example of how pen portraits can be used to describe research data in longitudinal studies. In this study, penned illustrations go beyond describing what is there and allow for emphasis and artistic interpretation from the author's perspective to elicit preconceptions. Therefore, this is a process of exaggeration to obtain the subjective interpreted view of the individual rather than an objective description of the participant.

The reason for exaggerating preconceptions is to make explicit, as much as possible, biases which may have been previously unnoticed or pushed aside. Preconceptions can often be uncomfortable inferences based on our previous experiences and stereotypes. Whilst it is laudable to move past stereotypical views, not to recognise them as part of our thinking is to ignore an aspect of our understanding that could seriously impact our research outcomes. Much the same as an artist would exaggerate the notable features of a person, writing an exaggerated account of a person highlights the critical aspects of the individual as perceived by the researcher. When you stretch something out, the subtleties become more apparent, leading to the idea that inflated written descriptions enable preconceived notions about participants to be brought into the foreground of our awareness.

Penned illustrations are similar to the narrative biography method in that researchers are encouraged to write freely about their background and experiences to acknowledge the impact that these could have on their research (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). However, penned illustrations specifically focus on the researcher's preconceived ideas about participants with whom they have previously formed relationships.

When designing penned illustrations, I wanted to provide a structure that would be both systematic and comprehensive. Therefore, I returned to Heidegger's concept of *fore-structures of understanding* (Rousse, 2021). Our fore-structures of understanding are products of our prejudices and presuppositions as informed by our encounters and experiences in the world in which we are thrown. We are always already in the totality of the world, so we cannot attempt to step outside of it. As researchers, we come to our research because we are part of that world, and it has meaning for us. We come to understand and interpret everything through our fore-structures of understanding, which Heidegger asserted could be explored through the structural moments of fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conception.

Fore-having refers to our practical familiarity with people, objects, and experiences (Heidegger, 1927/1962). When thinking about how we interact with participants, attention is usually placed on our experiences of them, the contexts in which we have encountered them, and how we have understood them to be. In other words, we work from our perspective of what happened. My experiences with my participants range from teaching them daily, telling them off, rewarding them, being on residential visits, seeing them with friends, meeting their parents and talking to other staff about them. All these experiences and more build my understanding and knowledge of who my participants are. Our fore-having continuously changes based on the memories we can recall at any given moment. Those more memorable ones may significantly influence my preconception of the participant or perhaps those most recently formed.

Fore-sight indicates our current perspectives (Heidegger, 1927/1962). From our experiences with people, we build and construct a picture of who they are now. I may think a pupil is clever, sensitive, caring, or bossy. My knowledge of their extra-curricular activities

points leads me to define them by specific characteristics: I may infer that a child who attends a football club is particularly sporty or athletic. All these opinions formed are likely to impact how I conduct the research. I may focus on a particular line of questioning or interpret the participant’s transcript through the lens of preconceptions.

Fore-conception is one’s anticipated sense of the future (Heidegger, 1927/1962). As researchers, we already have an anticipated sense of what we may find in our studies. My experiences with a participant and my understanding of who they are, led me to conclude what I expect them to say during the interview. My fore-conception is also altered because of the profession within which I work. Insider-researchers acquire “disciplinary knowledge through their training and the externally located standards they work towards. My anticipation is coloured by the norms of the education system within which I work. My training has taught me what will work when teaching children and what “good learning” looks like. Without fully clarifying these preconceived ideas, my interview questioning and data analysis could lead me to unconsciously interpreting my participants’ lived experiences through my own lenses of preconception.

For Heidegger, it is through these fore-structures that all understanding is formed (Crowther & Thomson, 2022). Heidegger asserts that these fore-structures occur in our everyday experiences simultaneously and in deep interconnectedness with one another (Heidegger, 1927/1962). Nevertheless, individually they account for the different elements that make up our fore-structures of understanding as a whole. Therefore, when designing a template for writing a word impression, we considered how each of the fore-structural moments could be used as lenses through which to expose a researcher’s biases and consider the impact this could have had on how the study is conducted, researcher and participant interactions, and the findings presented. Figure 1 illustrates the guide developed for conducting penned illustration for a participant, separated into two parts.

Part 1 asks prompt questions to guide the researcher in constructing a penned illustration for a participant. This section is broken down into each of the fore-structural moments. Once the penned illustration is constructed, Part 2 then focuses on a layer of reflexivity which guides the researcher in considering what their responses reveal about their preconceptions and what the implications may be for their study. Part 2 is not divided into fore-structural moments but is presented as a whole so that the interactions between the different parts may be observed in their entirety.

Figure 1
Penned Illustration Guide

Fore-structural Moment	Purpose	Part 1: Penned illustration	Part 2: Reflexivity
		Prompt Question(s)	Guiding Questions
Fore-having (Practical familiarity)	To understand how our experiences and interactions with an individual may have formed our preconceived ideas about them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you know them? • In what different contexts have you encountered them? • What is your earliest memory of them? • What is your most recent memory of them? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has informed your answers? • What could the implications of your answers be on your research? • How have these answers

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What have others told you about them? 	<p>changed over time, and what could the impact of this be?</p>
Fore-sight (Perspective)	To illuminate an exaggerated opinion about our individual to build self-awareness of our personal views, which may influence our interpretations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are they like? • How would you describe their personality? • What are their interactions with others? • What do they like to do/hobbies? • What are their encounters with the context of the study? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you summarise your fore-structures of understanding? • What is missing from your answers? • What other questions do your answers raise? • How do your answers relate to your positionality?
Fore-conception (Anticipated sense)	To focus our attention on what we expect to find from our research and why.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think will be their opinions/experiences of the context of the study? • What do you think they would like you to know? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your underlying assumptions? • What surprises you about your answers?

Penned Illustrations in Practice

I began by answering each question in turn as fully and honestly as possible. I became conscious that my descriptions sounded harsh because I used words that first came to mind. In polite conversation, I would carefully consider my words to avoid offending. However, if the purpose of the penned illustration was to reveal my underlying assumptions, I knew that an exaggerated version of my biases was important. Therefore, I continued to write as if my assertions were factual. I also tried to avoid the use of adverbs which implied possibility or phrases which suggested these were my interpretations. For example, “They look as if they enjoy mathematics,” was written, “They enjoy mathematics.” This helped to focus the writing on my assumptions rather than trying to write a factual account of the individual. As an experienced teacher, I have had much practice writing reports. When beginning to write the penned illustrations, I felt echoes of writing school reports. I became aware of how I perceived my role in the writing. In this instance, I was not a teacher writing reports, nor was I a researcher writing field notes. In this exercise, I was writing about individuals whom I had come to know through my practice as a teacher but whom I had come to understand through my preconceptions as an individual.

As I wrote, I began to imagine the participants as if they were characters in a book. I allowed the words to flow and made a concerted effort not to read back my descriptions and make changes. I was aware that I was capturing my impressions at a moment in time. I was producing not a factual account (a biography of an individual) or an entirely fictional character but a description of my impressions of a real-life individual. I also had to resist correcting my spelling and grammar. This was not a piece of academic writing or something that I would

necessarily present to others. It was more important to maintain the flow of the writing to reflexively analyse the text later rather than produce something fit for publication.

After constructing the first penned illustration, I found that I had written my comments into broadly four different sections: personality, academic ability, perception of mathematics, and experience of mathematics outdoors. While I was initially concerned that having strict categories could restrict my writing, I continued to write in these categories for subsequent illustrations to concentrate my narratives within my study's context. I found taking breaks between writing the penned illustrations very useful. When I wrote them one immediately after another, I found that I reused similar phrases and was in danger of falling into using words and phrases linked to rehearsed narratives. Whilst there were some commonalities between my perspectives of each participant, I needed to treat each one as unique and individual to explicate my presuppositions of each as fully as possible.

The text below is an extract from a penned illustration I produced at the beginning of my research on one of my participants. The participant's name has been changed, pronouns have been made gender-neutral, and some identifying details have been removed to maintain anonymity.

Personality: Tyler is kind and caring. They work hard and have good friends. Tyler enjoys school, but they would prefer to be at home. They are close to their family. Tyler can sometimes be the target of name-calling, although it appears more frequent because Tyler is often upset. They do not have thick skin and have been sheltered at home. Tyler enjoys chit-chat and socialising but also sticks to the rules and gets upset when in trouble or they think they have disappointed someone.

Academic ability: Tyler is very middle of the road, partially because of their lack of confidence, especially in mathematics. There are some gaps in their learning, and these hold Tyler back from making good progress. Tyler plods along, never pushing themselves but never letting themselves get too noticeably behind. Tyler enjoys the arts, drawing and creative ventures as opposed to logic subjects such as mathematics and science. They are not particularly interested in many subjects and find learning something that needs to be done rather than an enjoyable pursuit.

Perception of Mathematics: Tyler tolerates mathematics. They would not say that this is their favourite subject, and the challenge of mathematics is not something they enjoy. Tyler often does not want to ask for help, and this means that Tyler gets more frustrated about mathematics. Whilst not suffering from MA (mathematics anxiety), Tyler has negative connotations and attitudes towards mathematics but masks these to please others.

Experience of Outdoors: The outdoors brings creativity, and Tyler likes this. Although Tyler does not enjoy getting themselves muddy, they also do not thrive in the classroom environment and would prefer mathematics to be outside. They love the beauty of the outdoors and appreciate what it has to offer. The outdoors invited Tyler, and the fact that they are doing mathematics is secondary to this. They prefer mathematics outdoors.

Reading Reflexively

Having left each penned illustration for at least a week, I read each anew, coming to it with fresher eyes. I read each penned illustration reflexively using the reflexive questions in Part 2 of the guide (Figure 1). I made notes about my thoughts and highlighted phrases that I thought revealed something about my preconceived ideas of each participant. Reflexively reading my penned illustrations was difficult as they sounded judgemental and biased. However, this was precisely the objective. I found it surprisingly hard to face my assumptions and opinions of my participants, but I tried to do this honestly to be able to highlight my biases. I realised that I have many preconceptions about the participants, which come from my experiences of them and my experiences of other children whom I associate them with.

The penned illustration above highlighted that I saw Tyler as someone who tolerated mathematics rather than enjoyed the subject. When analysing the data from Tyler's transcript, I have asked myself if my assumption that Tyler does not enjoy mathematics has affected my interpretation of their experience. This constant review of my positionality and beliefs, I believe, has enabled me to see my data differently. It is not that I have been able to remove all biases from my interpretations. However, I have been able to identify where my preconceptions have overpowered the voices of the individual participants. For example, my preconception that Tyler found the outdoors beautiful had seeped into my initial analysis of their interview transcript. Returning reflexively to my analysis enabled me to question my interpretation and re-analyse the data with that in mind. In this example, I overemphasised Tyler's appreciation of the beauty of the outdoors due to my preconceived ideas of them as an individual. The reflexivity drawn from the penned illustration enabled me to actively question which experience (that of my participants or my own) was being given a platform in my research and to address this imbalance.

As well as illustrating my preconceived ideas about my participants, the penned illustration further highlighted my assumptions about their experiences of outdoor learning and my perceived benefits. For example, in Tyler's penned illustration, I claim that "the outdoors brings with it creativity." This exposes my belief that outdoor learning is a creative pedagogy. Therefore, when conducting my research, I need to maintain a reflexive attitude with the knowledge of my exposed preconceptions to consider whether the insights I gain from the study are because of biases or not. This reflexive approach to my study demonstrates transparency in how my data was analysed and helps establish trustworthiness within my research (Dibley et al., 2020).

Reflexivity is not a simple action that occurs once in a study and then is dealt with. As with many reflexive methods, simply illuminating biases at one point in time with a penned illustration is not sufficient (Finlay, 2002). Biases continue to develop and evolve. Therefore, researchers must remain curious throughout their studies and return to their understanding of their preconceptions and how they may influence their studies. This process does not take place automatically but requires planning and active engagement. Within my research, I planned and conducted a four-phase process to review and develop the penned illustration of each participant at critical points in the research:

- After recruitment (before the interview)
- Immediately following the interview
- Before data analysis
- After data analysis

I chose to conduct penned illustrations before the interview and before the data analysis to understand some of my assumptions going into these crucial stages of the study. By going

into the interview with an awareness of what I was expecting, I hoped to avoid steering the conversations, to be attentive to what I was expecting to hear and to be open to what I did not expect. Conducting penned illustrations following the interview and data analysis stages enabled me to reflect on the data I had collected and the insights I had gleaned to consider what impact my preconceptions may have had on these steps. By repeating this method, I have observed changes in my perception of my participants. I have also had the opportunity to view my data analysis through the lens of my preconceptions, balancing the insights of the insider-researcher with the potential for positionality biases and unwanted influences.

Conclusion

Reflexivity in research is an active, continuous, and conscious mindset throughout the life of a study and not confined to one area or moment in time. As Dibley et al. point out, “The reflexive hermeneutic researcher is constantly asking themselves: *What is it about me that helps or hinders the project, and what, if anything, do I need to do about it?*” (2020, p. 140). In this paper, we have demonstrated the use of penned illustrations as a way to be reflexive and enact reflexivity in practice-based research where participants may be known to the researcher. To extend and accentuate our everyday noticing, the process of transferring our inner world thinking to outside scrutiny using the written word helps us to check in with our curiosity. It encourages us to view the ordinary and accepted from different angles and perspectives. In constructing a penned illustration, the researcher is challenging themselves to become open to their sense-making and work through the layers of understanding that form and inform how we view ourselves and others in the research frame.

Whilst we have discussed and presented the use of penned illustration within the context of teaching, we hope this continues a more extensive conversation around reflexivity and positionality within practitioner-led research in many professions. As Kemmis et al. (2014) explain, practitioner-led research allows teachers to seek answers to questions that emerge from their professional experiences. The same could be claimed by other professions, such as nurses and social workers, who commonly seek to conduct research within their professional contexts. The positionality of a practice-based researcher provides opportunities to acquire meaningful insights and knowledge. To ensure that the participants' voices remain prominent, the research skill is to be aware of their own positive and negative assumptions and manage them reflexively to benefit the study. Ultimately, the obligation is on the researcher to be authentic, open, genuinely interested in the participants' experiences and dedicated to accurately representing their experience.

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