



Social Work Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (SWIPA) research network

Network information and news bulletin – No. 1 Spring 2024

Introduction to SWIPA research network

Welcome to the first SWIPA research network bulletin. Please feel free to share with your networks and encourage anyone interested who has not already signed up to our mailing list to do so.



The SWIPA research network is a community of practice open to anyone interested in furthering use and knowledge of IPA for social work research. SWIPA aims:

- To provide a forum to exchange knowledge about IPA and social work.
- To provide a network for researchers of IPA and to explore opportunities for developing collaborative research proposals related to social work.
- To raise awareness and knowledge of emerging ideas and resources about IPA and social work.
- To organise conferences and seminars to exchange knowledge about IPA and social work.

The network officially launched in March 2024 at The British Library in London alongside the launch of a new text on the subject: *Social Work Using Interpretative Analysis: A Methodological Approach for Practice and Research* by Professor Sarah Vicary and Dr Gillian Ferguson.

Full details about the network can be found on the dedicated web space <https://wels.open.ac.uk/research/networks/swipa-social-work-ipa-research-network>. Anyone interested in the network can join the mailing list by contacting swiparesearch@open.ac.uk.



 *There is usually a practice-related imperative in the focus of social work research and ethical drivers for undertaking a project* 

(Vicary and Ferguson, 2024)

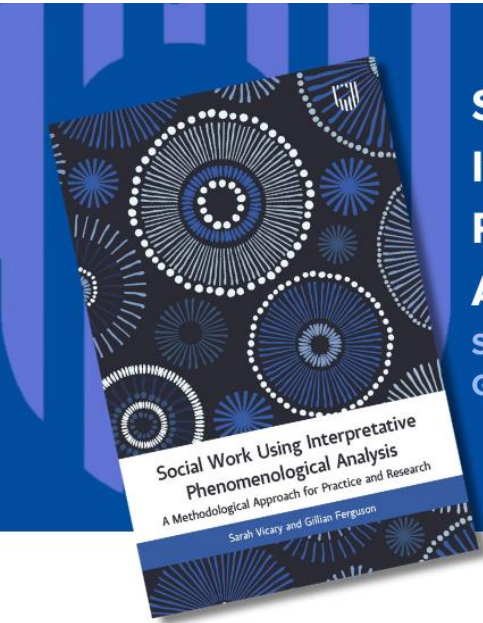
Dr Ferguson talks about IPA and the new network at the launch event (Photo by Kathryn Baker).

Social Work Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: A Methodological Approach for Practice and Research


[Social Work Using Interpretative Analysis: A Methodological Approach for Practice and Research](#) by Professor Sarah Vicary and Dr Gillian Ferguson was published in February 2024 by Open University Press/McGraw Hill.

This first of its kind book provides a theoretical and practical exploration of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) for Social Work. Accessibly written for those considering IPA from different perspectives, including social work students, social work practitioners, doctoral students, and research supervisors the book will guide all readers through its application in this field.

The book provides a theoretical and practical exploration of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) for Social Work research. The book explores the specific fit of IPA with social work as a professional practice drawing together values, skills and knowledge for eliciting, responding to and representing accounts of lived experience. The book also considers the opportunities that IPA offers for the future of producing professional social work knowledge.



Social Work Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
Sarah Vicary and Gillian Ferguson





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McGraw - Hill

Firmly grounded in the authors' own research experience, this accessible text successfully explores the developing relationship between IPA and social work, locating IPA firmly in the broader landscape of social work research. It will be an extremely helpful companion to social work researchers at all stages of the research process from design through to dissemination, as well as being of real value to those supervising IPA projects.

Dr Martin Kettle Glasgow Caledonian University, UK

Since publication, the new text has been welcomed with positive messages across social media and with a timely review published in [Qualitative Social Work Journal](#).

 The authors discuss how IPA is a good fit for the social work researcher who wants to uncover the lived experience. They highlight how IPA aligns within social work professional ethics and standards and thus provides the researcher with good defence for an IPA study. This book is a much-welcomed addition to the world of IPA, and it is a quick and fun read. I only wish I had this book when starting my PhD. 

Ellen Paladini-Stone, Kingston University, UK.
Book review *Qualitative Social Work*



Book and network launch

The book was officially launched at The British Library in London on the 8th March 2024. The launch event was attended by colleagues from academia and practice with everyone welcomed by Dr Wendy McNally, Associate Head of School for Research, Scholarship and Knowledge Exchange, School of Health, Wellbeing and Social Care at The Open University.

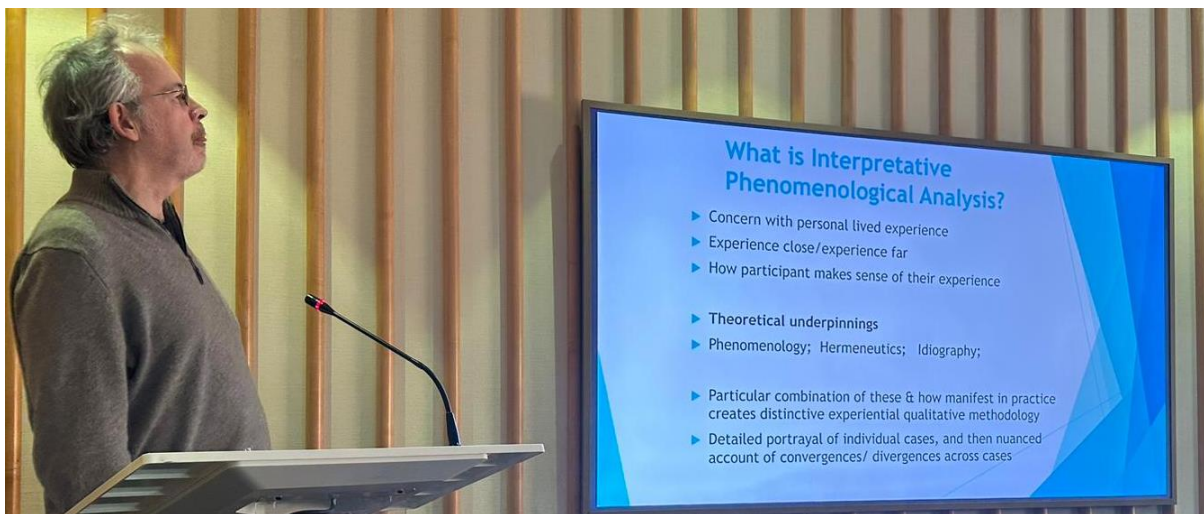
Professor Sarah Vicary outlined the scope of the book and highlighted the shared vision that she shares with Gillian for the text. Gillian outlined the aims of the research network and Dr Lisa Morriss outlined the importance of the book in her view as editor of *Qualitative Social Work* journal. Dr Jane Shears, Head of Professional Development and Education, British Association of Social Workers (BASW) also welcomed the book and the new network for social work.



Professor Vicary outlines the book and its content at the launch event
(Photo by Kevin Stone)

Professor Jonathan A. Smith, well known as the founder of IPA methodology attended the event, speaking passionately about doing effective IPA, the origins and future directions. Jonathan was delighted to attend the event and expressed his support, noting how *'engaging and readable'* the book was. Jonathan acknowledged the expertise of the book authors in their field and welcomed the detail about how to do IPA within the text.

Launching the SWIPA network, the event also highlighted forthcoming activities and events, welcoming those who had already signed up. Attendees of the launch, many who had travelled from across the UK, were engaged in debate about the potential of IPA, the challenges involved and shared their enthusiasm for making a difference in social work through effective research.



Professor Smith welcomes the book and returns to the origins of the methodology
(Photo by Kevin Stone)

Network members survey

Since launching SWIPA has attracted a great range of people who have joined our mailing list. We will be contacting everyone who has joined the mailing list to invite them to participate in a short survey that will profile the network membership, their interests and any current or previous IPA social work research.

Publications

In this section of the SWIPA research network bulletin we will highlight any recent publications relating to the methodology and profession. Please let us know if you have any publications of any type that you think would be relevant to network members by emailing swiparesearch@open.ac.uk with details. We will include these in the next bulletin.

IPA, social work education and continuing professional learning – A new SWIPA resource

A new resource will soon be published by Dr Gillian Ferguson and Professor Sarah Vicary for the SWIPA research network with the following aims:

- to discuss IPA in the UK social work education and continuing learning context
- to explore the alignment of IPA with standards in education and training
- to confirm IPA as an excellent source of research that informs social work practice
- to explore the potential of IPA as active enquiry for social workers across their career

In this resource IPA is considered in the context of social work education and continuing professional learning and development. Connections between the underpinning philosophy and core skills of IPA and this contextual landscape are discussed. Central themes in social work standards for education and practice are explored, the position of research in these and how core aspects of IPA align are also reviewed. Conceptions of learning are also examined to reflect on what is valued and promoted in social work across the career. Although using the UK landscape as an example, the discussion will be relevant to readers from other countries.

Anyone interested in receiving the resource should contact swiparesearch@open.ac.uk.



SWIPA network events: Inaugural symposium

Our inaugural symposium will be held **online on Friday 11th October 2024**. More information and a link to book the event will be available in June 2024, and circulated through the mailing list and social media. This event will be free to attend, however attendees will be required to book and numbers will be limited.

Call for abstracts: abstracts of no more than 250 words should outline how your presentation or poster is related to the symposium themes: ***Making a difference in social work through IPA***; or ***Creating new knowledge for social work through IPA***.

We welcome abstracts relating to current or previous research projects that link with these themes. Abstracts should be submitted by 30th May 2024 to swiparesearch@open.ac.uk along with full details of presenters.

SWIPA network events: Summer SWIPA workshops

To celebrate the launch of the network, Professor Vicary and Dr Ferguson will be offering two free, focused workshops on social work and IPA research in 2024. These will provide a participative space to explore the holistic model for social work IPA (Vicary and Ferguson, 2024), support planning and review of active research projects. Spaces are limited on these workshops and will be prioritised according to the above aims.

Summer 2024 Edinburgh workshop: Designing, doing and reviewing IPA social work research in person The Open University in Scotland: **Thursday 20th June 2024**

Summer 2024 Milton Keynes workshop: Designing, doing and reviewing IPA social work research in person The Open University England, Milton Keynes Campus: **Monday 8th July 2024**

People interested should complete the [online application form](#) **by no later than 4pm on 30th May 2024** and applicants will be notified if they have been offered a place as soon as possible after this date.



Forthcoming presentations

Please let us know if you are involved in any forthcoming presentations or events relating to social work and IPA if you would like us to share this with the network members by emailing swiparesearch@open.ac.uk with details.

28th June 2024 [Authentic Care in Health and Social Care, and Education Conference](#), University of Greenwich Professor Vicary and Dr Ferguson will present on *Introducing a holistic model for Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in social work practice and research.*



Current projects

A core aim of the SWIPA research network is to share information. In each SWIPA bulletin we will feature current Social Work IPA research projects. Please let us know if you would like your project to be included by emailing swiparesearch@open.ac.uk with an outline of the project and your details.

[SWIPA – Social Work and IPA research network | Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies \(open.ac.uk\)](#)

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