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The idea of bracketing in phenomenology—that researchers can identify and then set aside their own assumptions to better understand participants' lived experiences—is valuable, but I don't think it's fully possible. Even when researchers make a conscious effort to suspend personal viewpoints, it's nearly impossible to remove all influence because our interpretations are always shaped by experience and perspective (Mertens, 2020, p. 17).

In some ways, bracketing feels similar to positivism's goal of keeping the researcher detached to avoid influencing results. The key difference, however, is that phenomenology doesn't claim full objectivity is attainable. Instead, it encourages researchers to acknowledge and reflect on their biases to ensure participants' experiences remain central to the study (Mertens, 2020, p. 21).

I believe researchers can minimize their biases—but never fully eliminate them. Using reflexive journaling, peer debriefing, and triangulation can help maintain transparency while balancing personal insight and analytical rigor (Mertens, 2020, p. 27). I appreciate this balance because, while I believe strongly in data and observable evidence, I also recognize that personal beliefs and lived experiences bring valuable depth to research when handled thoughtfully.

In my selected article, *Family Members' Involvement in the Initial Individual Education Program (IEP) Meeting and the IEP Process: Perceptions and Reactions* by Hammond, Ingalls, and Trussell (2008), the authors explored family participation in IEP meetings through qualitative methods. They bracketed themselves reasonably well by describing their professional roles and using participant quotes to represent perspectives authentically. However, as educators, their experiences likely shaped the interpretation of themes, which is natural in qualitative work. Rather than being a flaw, this reflexive awareness strengthens the credibility of their findings by showing how their positions informed—not dictated—the analysis.

This study connects closely to my own work and experiences with IEPs, both professionally and personally, as I've seen firsthand how family engagement can shape outcomes for students. The researchers' transparency about their perspectives mirrors how I approach my own professional reflections: valuing evidence and data while acknowledging the influence of human experience.

References:

Hammond, H., Ingalls, L., & Trussell, R. P. (2008). *Family members' involvement in the initial Individual Education Program (IEP) meeting and the IEP process: Perceptions and reactions*. *The Journal of the International Association of Special Education*, 9(1), 11–20. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/6466/ad9fb6fbae3e01d52869ef966d5f016134e1.pdf>

Mertens, D. M. (2020). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.