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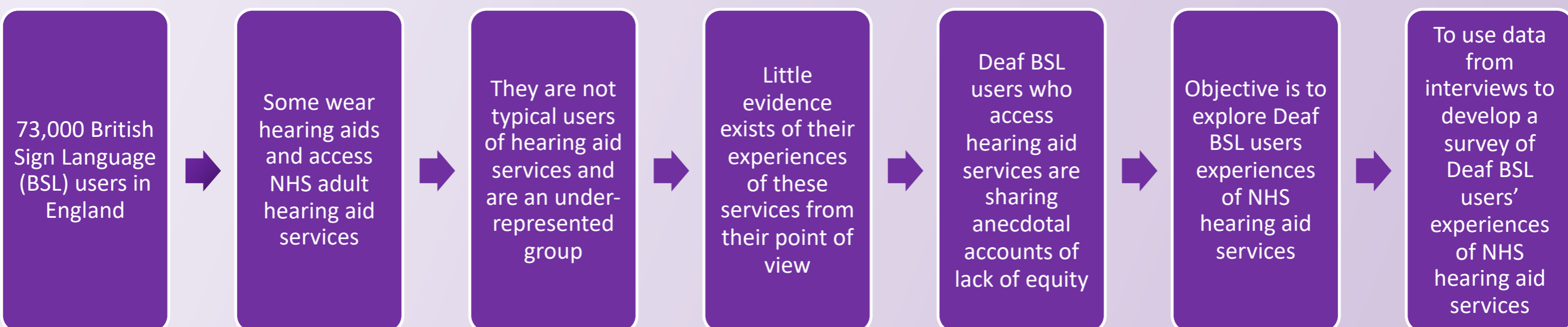
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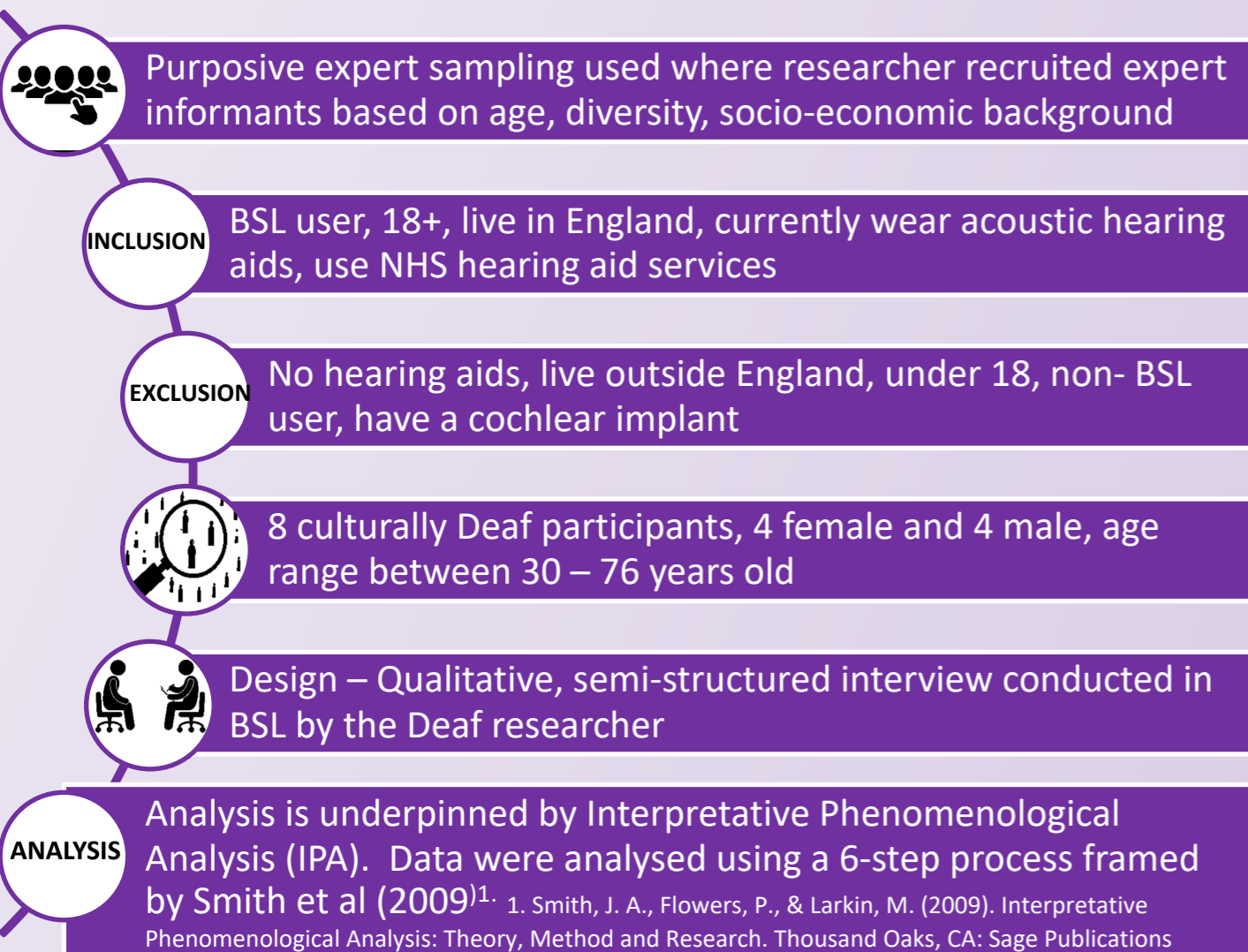
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INTRODUCTION



METHODS



3. Hearing aid - what for?

- Why reject hearing aids/why come back to them? - rejected due to peer pressure, stigma, not beneficial or in a signing environment. Returned - to hear children, helps tinnitus, improved technology.
- Why wear hearing aids? – to hear background noises, to feel safe, gives confidence, being in control and to assist with lipreading.
- Understanding hearing aids – most participants are not fully aware of their hearing aids potential because of lack of BSL resources.

4. Always the same

- Inequality of access – participants described feelings of disempowerment caused by lack of autonomy.
- Cultural competency – reports of communication barriers where staff cannot sign and audiologists displayed little Deaf awareness.
- Systemic discrimination – all clinics are hearing-centric where all systems are sound-based i.e. telephone, sound-based patient calling systems and staff communicate in speech.

RESULTS

The 6-step IPA analysis produced four main overarching themes, each with three subthemes.

1. Hearing/Deaf Literacy

- Identity – most participants viewed themselves as a culturally Deaf person who happens to wear hearing aids.
- Awareness and ownership of ‘hearing’ - discussion around what they can hear and use hearing aids for is not usual practice in hearing aid clinics and the Deaf community.
- Responsibility – insufficient knowledge on hearing aids led to lack of agency, self-advocacy or patient activation.

2. Who knows best

- Expertise by experience – participants reported their lived experiences of hearing aids are not respected by their clinics.
- Sees the ear not the person and vice versa - technology and audiograms are favoured to identify problems over communication.
- Making informed choices – 2 out of 8 participants reported they use interpreters in appointments but this did not guarantee that they were fully informed as probing questions are rarely asked.

TAKE HOME MESSAGES

- This is the first study to explore and elicit culturally Deaf signers experiences of hearing aids and audiology services in the UK.
- The word ‘hearing’ and ‘to hear’ needs further exploration and has implications on Deaf identity literature.
- Hearing aids are not used primarily for spoken language access by Deaf signers. This will offer improved understanding for audiologists on Deaf signers motivations for hearing aid use.
- Results show many failings of cultural competence practices. Adult hearing aid services need to review their cultural competency practices with Deaf signers.
- The findings may be applicable to other under-represented groups who are not typical users of NHS acoustic hearing aids.
- Manuscript is currently under review at International Journal of Audiology

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