Explanatory memo

According with the assumptions of the hermeneutic research approach, the textual analysis underwent a recursive path, with the aim of capturing beliefs and constructs that are made manifest or suggested by the interviewee's speech. In this terms, the meaning is central, and the aim is to try to understand the content and complexity of those meanings rather than measure their frequency. This involves the investigator engaging in an interpretative relationship with the transcript. While one is attempting to capture and do justice to the meanings of the respondents to learn about their mental and social world, those meanings are not transparently available – they must be obtained through a sustained engagement with the text and a process of interpretation.

Below I explain the steps that led to the processing of data analysis.

The transcript is read a number of times, the right margin was used to note what is interesting or significant about what the interviewee said. In the first phase of the analysis, the recursive process was in reading and rereading the transcript carefully several times to gain as much familiarity as possible with the person's account of their lived experience at that given time. With each reading, in fact, new insights and conceptual aspects dense with meaning emerged. Some parts of the interview in fact are richer than others and therefore deserve more comments. Some comments are attempts to summarize or paraphrase, others are associations or connections that come to mind, and still others may be preliminary interpretations. In some cases, the use of vocabulary used by participants was also attended to. Next, similarities and differences, echoes, amplifications, and contradictions in what a person is saying were noted. This process is continued for the entirety of the first transcript.

Then it was back to the beginning of the transcript to give titles to the emerging themes. Here the initial notes were transformed into concise sentences that aim to capture the essential quality of what was found in the text. Themes move the response to a slightly higher level of abstraction and may invoke more psychological terminology. At the same time, an attempt was made to give participants a voice in the data analysis as well by sometimes repurposing some words used by participants that were particularly evocative of their lived experience. The purpose is is finding expressions which are high level enough to allow theoretical connections within and across cases but which are still grounded in the particularity of the specific thing said.

This transformation of initial notes into themes was then done throughout the text.

In reading the whole text if similar themes emerged, the same theme title is therefore repeated.

In the next step, the emerging themes were listed on a sheet of paper, and connections between them were sought. The next phase involves systematizing the themes in a more analytical or theoretical order, to make sense of the connections between the emerging themes and clustering them. Some of the themes clustered together, and others were defined as superordinate concepts.

The recursive process is also present at this stage with a close correspondence between cluster and text.

The next step was to produce a table of the themes, ordered in a consistent manner. The table lists the themes which go with each superordinate theme. During this process, some themes were dropped: those that did not fit well with the emerging structure nor were very rich in evidence within the transcript.

The first transcription guided the analysis of the subsequent