In-depth analysis: I-poems activity using extract from qualitative interview

I-poems are part of a specific multi-stage method for analysing interviews developed by Carol Gilligan, which is called the 'Listening Guide'. The I-poem part of the Guide is concerned with enabling researchers to identify continuities and changes in how a research participant speaks, thinks and feels about themselves over the course of an interview or several interviews. It seeks to enable researchers to stay as close as possible to the participants' voicing of themselves before overlaying this with research categories and concepts.

The I-poem reading accesses the stream of consciousness that is carried by the first person references that run through the interview, rather than being contained by the full structure of sentences. The method pays detailed attention to the use of the personal pronoun 'I', to identify the different 'voices' or subjectivities from which the participant speaks.

We are using an extract from [XXX] interview that features [her/him] talking about [xxx], so [her/his] sense/s of self will come through in [xxx] relationship with [xxx].

The creation of an I-poem involves three main stages.

Stage 1

Read through the interview transcript and highlighting each use of the first person 'I' and associated verb or seemingly important accompanying text in [xxx] talk ([xxx]:). Do not analyse the interviewer's words ([xxx]:).

The run of words associated with the 'I' statement that you highlight is quite an intuitive process. You are making a judgment about what is important to understand your participant's sense of self. But resist the temptation to include lots of contextual wording around the I-phase, keep it sparse. The aim is for the research participant's sense of 'I', of self, to stand out.

Stage 2

Use the cut and paste function to lift the highlighted I-phrases out of [xxx] transcript and paste them into a new document in the exact same sequence that they occur originally in the interview transcript.

Place each I-phase on a separate line, like the lines of a poem. You can then break the lines up into stanzas based on breaks in the topics and 'voices' (see below).

Stage 3

Identify the different types of 'voices' in which [xxx] speaks. Look at the I-phrases and see how [xxx] is speaking about [her/himself], what [s/he] is conveying when [s/he] uses 'I'.

Give names to the different voices that characterise each of them (e.g. confident voice, unsure voice, admiring voice …)

REFERENCES:

- Gilligan, C. (2015) 'Introduction: the Listening Guide method of psychological enquiry', *Qualitative Psychology* 2(1): 69-77
- Gilligan, C. and Eddy, J. (2017) 'Listening as a path to psychological discovery: an introduction to the Listening Guide', *Perspectives on Medical Education* 6(2): 76-81