SUPPLEMENTARY FILE – INFORMATION ON DATA ANAYLSIS AND GROUNDED THEORY

Data analysis

This section is divided into two parts. First, I explain the key steps of grounded theory, drawing on Sbaraini et al.’s (2011: 3) “Fundamental components of a grounded theory study”. For the purposes of this study, I have added two phases – pre-interview preparation and informal discussions. Second, I explain how the steps were applied using grounded theory. Many of these steps were repeated throughout the entire research process (Glaser and Strauss 1967: 43). Table 13 on the following page outlines the steps of grounded theory used in this study.

Table 13 – Grounded theory process and application

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| Process | Application |
| Memo writing | Memos are “informal analytic notes” (Charmaz 2006: 72) used to capture ideas and analysis as the research progresses. Memo-writing is one of the most important parts of grounded theory (Morse et al. 2008: 12). |
| Constant comparison | Constant comparison occurs in all stages – within an individual’s transcript and across transcripts – and is an integral part of grounded theory. A key aim of grounded theory is to be able to note the variations and see how and why people may explain the same process differently (Charmaz 2006; Bryant and Charmaz 2007: 6). |
| **INTERVIEWS** |  |
| Informal discussions | Informal discussions are not typically part of the grounded theory process, however they are integral to analysis and can help to articulate initial ideas to others. |
| Pre-interview preparation | The interview guide should reflect the key informant’s specialised knowledge and also be informed by previous interviews. |
| Post-interview  reflections | Field memos are used for immediate reflexivity on the interview. This could include reflections about anything ‘new’, emerging codes or notes to improve data collection process. |
| **CODING** | Constructivist grounded theory uses two types of coding – line-by-line and focused. “Codes are short analytic and active” (Bryant and Charmaz 2007: 6) and are used to describe what is happening in the data[[1]](#footnote-1). |
| Line-by-line coding (initial coding) | Line-by-line coding is used to “break open” the data (Corbin and Strauss 2008: 59). Coding every line is meant to help remove the researcher’s preconceptions and stay ‘true’ to what the key informants said (Charmaz 2006: 136). |
| Focused coding | Focused coding is used to identify the codes generated from line-by-line coding that seemed frequent and/or significant either to the key informant or the researcher. |
| **CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT**  Diagramming  (or mapping) | Diagramming is used to see how focused codes are connected. Diagrams or maps can take any shape. Diagrams can also help identify which areas do not ‘fit’ and where more clarity is needed. This information can inform future interviews. |
| Theoretical saturation | “Categories are ‘saturated’ when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of these core theoretical categories” (Charmaz 2006: 113). It is the point when data collection ceases. |
| Generate a theory | The aim of grounded theory is to produce a theory at the end of analysis that explains the process being studied (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 24). Connections between conceptual categories are made and these links are the basis for generating a theory about the process. A theory should be relevant to the process studied, explain any problems and variations in the process and be modifiable if new data was collected. |

## Memos

No memos were deleted – each one was kept as a record of my thoughts and analytic journey. To help with this, electronic memos were dated, labelled (e.g. date and title) and saved as a PDF. To increase reflexivity[[2]](#footnote-2), a separate notebook was kept to document my analysis through memos and diagramming that could be taken along during fieldwork. Memos varied in length with some being a few lines – a ‘thought bubble’ – to a more sophisticated lengthy description of an emerging conceptual category.

## Constant comparison

Overall this project is a comparison between Australia and Ontario, so I used this process at each analytic stage (e.g. initial data, between codes, between concepts and between categories) (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Charmaz 2006: 54). Constant comparison forced me as a researcher to look for patterns and question why certain participants described similar phenomenon differently. Eisenhardt (1989: 541) notes that looking for differences between similar cases can lead to a “more sophisticated understanding” by breaking out of a “simplistic frame”.

Any variations that emerged were crosschecked in subsequent interviews across different types of key informants and between Australian and Ontarian key informants. This process was particularly important to identify how designing disability income support varied between Australia and Ontario. It is also a key aim of comparative case study research. As such, similarities and differences were summarised in each of the results chapters.

## Informal discussions

Prior to beginning data collection, I had informal discussions with people familiar with the disability income support systems in Australia and Ontario to gain background knowledge and suggestions for potential key informants. Some of these people became key informants.

## Pre-interview

As key informants were purposefully selected because of their specific experience in disability income support design or practice, it was important that I drew on their specialised knowledge. I researched each informant so I could respectfully interview them, indicating I had taken time to learn about their career. This also assisted with the flow of conversation and demonstrated a genuine interest and knowledge of the field, thus increasing credibility of the researcher.

## Post-interview

As previously mentioned in the procedure section, due to financial and logistical reasons, some interviews were conducted in ‘sets’ (about eight to 12 interviews per set) over shorter periods (one to four weeks). Field notes – written descriptions immediately after the interview – were extremely important to the process, especially when transcribing[[3]](#footnote-3) between interviews was not possible. Field notes and memos informed subsequent interviews.

Once an interview was transcribed, I would listen to it while reading the transcript. This combination provided me with the tone and expressions used in the interview (e.g. when the key informant put emphasis on words or laughed) and added “richness to the analysis” (Morse et al. 2008: 54). It also jogged my memory regarding specific sections of the interview. I wrote another memo after listening to each interview.

## Coding

Line-by-line coding

The first six transcripts were coded line-by-line before writing a memo. In these memos, I noted what was going on, what changed, what stayed the same, what seemed important to each informant and what seemed significant (Charmaz 2006: 51). After each new ‘set’ of interviews, two transcripts were also coded line-by-line. This helped identify any new codes that may not have emerged during the initial interviews.

Focused codes

Focused coding began after the initial six interviews were coded line-by-line. Focused codes included topics repeated by the informants and topics that seemed significant. As such, a topic only mentioned once could be considered a focused code to be explored in subsequence interviews. Focused codes were eventually used to generate the results chapters.

## Conceptual development

Diagramming

I used various types of diagrams and flow charts to see how the focused codes were connected. For example, the concept of a ‘gate’ – an entry to disability income support – appeared in most of my diagrams even early in the interview process. However the concept of ‘gatekeepers’ – those who operate the gate – evolved as my analysis progressed. I used this process throughout all of the grounded theory steps. The visual representation of the codes helped me to articulate my thoughts and plan the results chapters. It also helped identify which areas still did not ‘fit’ and where more clarity was needed. I used this information to inform subsequent interviews.

1. It should be noted that grounded theory uses codes not themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data”, but also situate it in relation to other qualitative methods such as grounded theory. Some of the differences they note are: while grounded theorists also seek out patterns, the aim is to generate a theory grounded in the data whereas thematic analysis is not meant to generate a theory; thematic analysis is also not situated within any particular theoretical framework as opposed to grounded theory (Braun and Clarke 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. According to Charmaz (2006: 188-89) reflexivity is “the researcher’s scrutiny of his or her research experience, decisions and interpretations…” and acknowledges the role of the researcher in the analytic process. The purpose is to increase the trustworthiness of qualitative research by making the researcher’s bias transparent to the reader (Lincoln et al. 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Interviews done in ‘sets’ were outsourced for transcription. Outsourcing these interviews provided an opportunity to get the transcript and begin analysis when there was little time between interviews. I transcribed the interviews that were conducted outside of these ‘sets’. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)