



Qualitative Research Methods in the Social Sciences
Innovation, Integration and Impact

Qualitative Researcher

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Exciting Times in Qualitative Research

Amanda Coffey and *Qualitative Researcher*

Welcome to the first issue of *Qualitative Researcher*, which we hope will quickly establish itself as an inclusive and interdisciplinary forum for methodological dissemination, debate and discussion. *Qualitative Researcher* is part of a suite of activities currently being undertaken under the auspices of 'Qualiti', the Cardiff Node of the UK Economic and Social Research Council's National Research Methods Centre (NCRM). Qualiti – *Qualitative Research Methods in the Social Sciences: Innovation, Integration and Impact* – aims to contribute to the advancement of methodological understanding, innovation and practice in qualitative research, and has a commitment to the strategic development of research capacity building in relation to qualitative methods and methodologies across the social sciences. Qualiti is particularly concerned with ensuring that methodological development and innovation reflect the social contexts within which research production is located, and that both academic and non-academic research communities foster a critical engagement with qualitative approaches to social scientific inquiry. Our programme of work includes a number of substantive research projects, alongside a range of training, networking and capacity building activities. Our research projects are each designed to engage with the development of innovative research practice, as well as with the role of qualitative research in contributing to policy, practice and knowledge production. Our research capacity building programme includes seminars and workshops; training events and commissioned inquiries; as well as placement and mentoring schemes.

In this first issue of *Qualitative Researcher* we are pleased to include a range of articles that together reflect the spirit and tone of the publication. First and foremost we hope *Qualitative Researcher* will provide a useful space for the sharing of good and innovative research practice, as well as for the promotion of methodological dialogue and debate. It will also provide a forum for keeping the social science community informed of initiatives and developments designed to promote research capacity building, particularly in relation to qualitative research. In this issue we are pleased to include a thought-provoking piece from Martyn Hammersley, reflecting on qualitative research in relation to the evidence-based policy-making and practice movement. We also welcome the article from Anne Corden and Roy Sainsbury, reporting on their ESRC Research Methods Programme project on the use of verbatim quotations in social research; again reflecting on the ways in which qualitative research and data are used as evidence. We are also delighted to include the account by Andrew Noyes on developing a video diary research tool, as an example of innovative research practice. We also hope that readers will find the reports of two very different initiatives of considerable interest. Louise Corti describes some of the latest steps being taken to critically engage with issues of qualitative data sharing and archiving, while Harry Torrance announces the founding of the International Association of Qualitative Inquiry and foreshadows the next of meeting of the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry in May 2006.

Amanda Coffey is director of Qualiti



Close encounters of a political kind: the threat from the evidence-based policymaking and practice movement

Martyn Hammersley

In recent years there have been increasing calls for social science to operate as the source of evidence for policymaking and practice. Indeed, this has come to be widely regarded as its main function, not just by Government and funders but also by some social scientists themselves. At one level this is hardly new, as Bauman has pointed out, many intellectuals, including social scientists, have long wanted, if not to be legislators themselves, at least to shape policy and practice in significant ways (Bauman 1987). And the idea of policy science, or of researchers acting as policy advisors, has a long history. So what is novel about the idea that social science should serve evidence-based policymaking and practice?

The origins of the evidence-based practice movement lie in medicine. One source was in attempts by the medical profession to control the influence of drug companies over its members: to provide some means of determining what was true and false in claims made for particular remedies (Marks 1997). Another source was attempts by some of that profession to make clinical practice more scientific: to check more rigorously the effectiveness and side effects of all medical treatments, not just those involving drugs (Daly 2005). Central to this was the randomised controlled trial and the systematic review. More recently, in Britain, these concerns took on greater force with demands for 'transparent' accountability procedures within the public sector, along with the fact that increasing numbers of patients are no longer willing to be passive recipients, they have become more sceptical and distrustful, even to the point of taking legal action where treatment does not succeed. In much the same way, outside the field of health, the rise of managerialism and client pressure has provided particularly fertile ground for the evidence-based practice movement, notably in education and social work, but also in other areas of social policy.ⁱ And explicit statements of commitment on the part of politicians to ensuring that policies are evidence-based have probably opened up more scope for research to be heard by policymakers, and for research to be used in justifying, and also criticising, particular policies.

Some of these changes may well be desirable, and several would be hard to resist or reverse. However, there is a risk of researchers being caught up in the euphoria that surrounds advocacy of evidence-based policy and practice. There are problems on both sides of the relationship. As regards policymaking and practice, there is a serious danger that the role of local knowledge, professional expertise and skill will be underplayed, and perhaps even undermined. In the field of education, for example, the aim seems to have been to set up structures – guidelines, targets, league tables, monitoring and inspection systems – that will ensure continually improving standards. The assumption is that education can be delivered more effectively if teachers adopt what is validated by research as good practice; with the result that any failure to meet targets, or to perform as well as 'competitors', is taken to indicate failure that must be remedied. The regulatory framework is designed to mimic the market ideal, on the doubtful assumption that this already operates beneficially in the private sector. Yet, professional work, in education as elsewhere, necessarily relies on judgment (rather than on following some set of rules); and judgments can be wrong however expertly and carefully they are made. While this may be disconcerting to policymakers, since it means that policy outcomes lie beyond their control, it is a fact. Moreover, constructing an ever-tighter regulatory framework will often worsen performance, by undermining professionals' capacity to engage in expert judgment. So, managerialist policymaking (which operates not only at national level but also lower down within public sector organisations as well) is, to a considerable extent, based on a false image of the practices to which it is designed to apply, and may well destroy what it seeks to improve.ⁱⁱ

In being drawn in as the means, or at least as the rationale, for this kind of policymaking, and in being compliant with it, social science is in danger of becoming complicit in this process of de-professionalisation. Research is being used by policymakers as a means of trying to control occupational practitioners in the public sector, and this is being done on the basis of a positivistic conception of the relationship between science and practical knowledge, whereby the former can re-

place the latter and thereby improve performance. In fact, even when a more nuanced position is adopted, emphasising the continuing role of local knowledge and professional judgment, there remains the question of exactly how research knowledge should be weighed against other kinds of evidence in a manner that does not simply discredit the latter or rubbish the former. And, in effect, the pressure currently is towards de-legitimising the knowledge, and therefore the intellectual authority, of practitioners.ⁱⁱⁱ

However, the damage from this kind of policymaking is not just to the forms of professional practice that are being regulated and controlled but also to research itself. There are several aspects to this. First, the character of the research that we do cannot but be shaped by the availability of funds for doing particular kinds of work. In many fields, and once again education provides an example, there has been a major swing towards what can broadly be termed policy-related work. I am not suggesting that this research has all simply taken over the guiding assumptions of policymakers, much of it has not. But there has been a significant shift away from, if not a complete abandonment of, the older idea that social science research should contribute to the development of disciplinary knowledge.^{iv} The general valorising of interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary research, for example by the ESRC, is one sign of this: it is the obverse of the emphasis on policy-relatedness. Increasing stress is being placed on the external value of research, on its 'impact'. This is a slippery slope, I suggest, potentially leading to a position where social science will operate entirely under the control of government, commercial sponsors, or interest groups of various kinds, all emphasising their commitment to evidence-based policymaking and practice. Indeed, in recent years, there have been moves towards the legislation by government and quasi-governmental agencies of research priorities and even of methods; a process that is taking place not just here in the UK but also in the United States.^v Qualitative researchers have particular reason to fear the effects of these developments. The model of inquiry built into evidence-based medicine is quantitative

and experimentalist; just as was that built into the policy evaluation movement when it emerged in the 1960s. And, while there is much discussion about how qualitative research can contribute, for example how its findings can be incorporated into systematic reviews, there is little scope for taking account of its distinctive characteristics. The recent Cabinet Office-funded report providing guidelines for assessing qualitative studies is symptomatic (Spencer et al 2003). The very fact that it was funded indicates a desire on the part of some in Government to create more of a role for qualitative research. However, despite the best efforts of those involved, the product is likely to be used by policymakers and funders as a checklist, if it is not dismissed as too complex. Qualitative research tends to suffer by comparison with quantitative work because there is a myth that the latter has clear-cut guidelines which are available for use by policymakers (Was it a randomised controlled trial?, How big was the sample?, Was there a control group?, etc). To serve evidence-based policymaking we probably need to invent a similar myth for qualitative work. But is that desirable? The fundamental question is whether it is possible to provide a set of guidelines that can enable someone who knows little or nothing about research to assess the quality of research proposals and reports? In other words, are not such guidelines only of use to those who already have considerable knowledge, such that the rules can be selectively interpreted and applied as appropriate for the context?

We need to ask what the consequences of a closer relationship with policymakers and practitioners are for research. How we evaluate those consequences will, of course, depend upon what we believe the proper functions of social science to be, and there is a wide range of views about this. For some, having an impact on policy and practice (in particular directions) is of prime importance: without this, they see no justification for social research, or at least for public funding of it. Of course, exactly what this view implies will vary considerably according to who is taken to be the key audience or constituency and/or what sort of progress is the goal. Alternatively, there are those who view their task as disrupting or destabilising current policymaking and forms of practice, or at least the forms of social scientific knowledge on which these rely or to which they appeal. There are also still many social scientists who believe that the primary aim should be to build up knowledge

about social processes and institutions, knowledge which although value-relevant is not designed specifically to promote or oppose particular forms of policy or practice. One could argue that we need to recognise different types of research, corresponding to these various functions. To a large extent this is the position of Michael Burawoy in his recent presidential address to the American Sociological Association, in which discipline-focused work, policy research, critical approaches, and 'public sociology' (the social scientist as public intellectual) are all assigned a place – though the last is given greatest emphasis (Burawoy 2005).^{vi}

The notion of a 'public social science', in which social scientists draw on their work to address current issues in public debates, might seem more appealing to many qualitative researchers than being required to serve evidence-based policymaking and practice. Advocates of the latter often seem to conceive of research as a purely technical enterprise that can determine 'what works', whereas champions of public sociology portray it as necessarily politically engaged or at least value-laden. Yet there are important similarities here: a 'public social science', like research serving evidence-based policymaking and practice, is likely to tempt researchers into claiming more for their work than is reasonable – into pretending that it can indeed identify social problems, show which policies are and are not 'socially just', indicate what kind of social change is required, and so on. Yet these things are necessarily beyond its reach – to deny this amounts to a version of scientism, an over-extension of the authority of social research. Furthermore, while we may not wish to trumpet from the rooftops the severe difficulties we face in coming to reliable, or at least widely agreed, conclusions about even relatively straightforward factual matters, we must not forget or ignore these serious problems in our desire to make social science count or seem worthwhile. A close relationship between researchers and policymakers, professional practitioners, or interest groups of various kinds, will not only increase the danger of bias, it will also encourage self-deception about what social research can produce.

The current priority, in my view, is to forge and promote more realistic expectations about our work; though whether this can be successful, and how costly it will be in the present climate, remains to be seen. At the very least, we should not allow the close encounters promised by the notion of evidence-based policymaking, or even 'public social science', to seduce us into illusions about ourselves and our work.

ⁱ On the nature of managerialism, see Pollitt 1990.

ⁱⁱ For a detailed exploration of why this is the case in education, though the argument applies more generally, see Dunne 1993.

ⁱⁱⁱ For some of the arguments about the relationship between research and evidence-based policymaking or practice, see: Hammersley 2002 and 2005; Thomas and Pring 2004; Trinder 2000.

^{iv} And it has attracted criticism for this reason, see Johnson 2004.

^v See Hammersley 2002:ch1. For discussions of the implications for qualitative research of developments in the United States, see the various articles in *Qualitative Inquiry* Volume 10, 2004.

^{vi} An intense debate has developed about Burawoy's proposals, including a 'save sociology' website (Deflem 2004). See also *British Journal of Sociology*, 56,3, 2005.

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Verbatim quotations: whose views count

Anne Corden and Roy Sainsbury

Introduction

Across most of the main fields of applied social research, including social policy, education, health studies, nursing and criminology, written outputs from work based on interviews and group discussions are likely to include so-called 'verbatim quotations'. Blending researchers' narrative text with representations of words spoken directly by those who took part in the research has become effectively standard practice in much reporting of applied qualitative research. This is reinforced by preferences of some research funders for reports that include quotations, and by recent frameworks and tools for assessing quality of research evidence (see Spencer *et al.*, 2003) that promote inclusion of verbatim quotations as enhancing quality in various ways.

Somewhat surprisingly, given such widespread practice among researchers, well-developed conceptual bases for using verbatim quotations have been late in emerging in the methods textbooks. It is now clear that researchers are probably using quotations for a wide variety of purposes. Readers are often not helped, however, to interpret the significance of the spoken words presented in a report or article, nor told how quotations are transcribed, selected and edited. There are few examples of investigation of the impact of quotations on readers, and rarely it seems that attention has been paid to the views of those who spoke about the way in which their words were made public.

The authors have been exploring these issues in a study of the theory, practice and impact of using verbatim quotations

in reporting applied social research, with funding from the ESRC in the Research Methods Programme. The research design has included a literature review, desk-based analysis of research reports,

articles and books, and interviews with researchers and research users.

This article describes the fourth component of the research design, a small study in which we investigated the views of *participants* on the way we presented their spoken words in the research report, and the views of *users* of the report. This small scale, exploratory and innovative project has, we believe, raised challenging issues in balancing interests of writer, readers, and research participants.

How the study was conducted

As the basis for investigating views about verbatim quotations we carried out a small-scale study of a local service that supports people trying volunteering as a way of moving towards paid work. We set out to seek the views and experiences of a small group of users of the service, and report findings to the manager and staff of the service to inform development.

Thirteen people took part in tape-recorded semi-structured interviews, which were transcribed, and analysed. Draft chapters of findings included verbatim quotations from all participants, blended with the authors' narrative and displayed as indented, italicised text, attributed by gender and age group of speaker. An example, taken from the project report (Corden and Sainsbury, 2005a, p.9) is presented below.

Illustrative example of presentation of verbatim quotation in original research report

I wanted something involved. If I was going to use it towards getting work I wanted to be able to say 'well, I've done this volunteering, and this is what I've done, and it involved this, that and the other'. Not 'I've done this volunteering and handed out cups of tea'. (Man, in 30s)

These draft chapters were sent back to participants. Eleven took part in a second interview, exploring their views on the report and the way their own words were used. The authors showed people alternative versions of the same chapters, one version without any quotations and one version with the quotations displayed in shaded boxes. People's suggestions about the presentation of their spoken words were incorporated in a revised final report that was delivered to the service manager. The report was also sent to two other senior officials from government departments who would use the findings. (The topic, volunteering as a route from benefit to paid work, is of key interest in welfare-to-work policy.) The manager and research users then met in a group, with the authors, and discussed the impact of the verbatim quotations, and their views on the alternative versions.

Selected findings

There was rich and interesting information from each stage of this study. The initial evaluative study of the volunteering service was welcomed by the manager and staff of the service. Findings were used in developing the service, securing further funding and improving communication with other organisations in the local area. Our view is that this evaluation was enhanced by returning draft chapters of findings to those who took part. The second series of interviews provided additional and useful information about experiences of the service, which was incorporated in the final report.

The views of the service users about the way we used and presented their spoken words (Corden and Sainsbury, 2005b) provide a challenging perspective for researchers who write about other people's lives, especially their dislike of being portrayed in ways they perceive as negative. The views of research users

(Corden and Sainsbury, 2005c) contribute an additional perspective about the way that people read reports, and some of the expectations and assumptions made about verbatim words presented. Here, we present selected findings, bringing views of speakers and users alongside, for comparison.

Impact – how people perceived the quotations

A clear message that emerged from the people who had taken part in the study was that they liked having quotations from their interviews in the report. For them, quotations made the report easier to read, and helped to make it interesting. Having people's real words in the report provided evidence that the researchers were presenting the views of those who took part (and not just making them up).

When research users compared versions with and without quotations they also found the quotations made reading easier. This was true of the person who said that usual practice in day-to-day work would be to skip the quotations in such reports. This person was surprised to find that pages of unbroken analytical narrative in the alternative version without quotations seemed heavy and burdensome to read, despite the perceived advantage of being much shorter. Some research users said that the inclusion of quotations enabled readers to draw their own conclusions from the data.

So both speakers and readers thought that the quotations enhanced readability. They were also seen by some as evidence that contributed to the credibility of the report or served to some extent as data that could be interpreted by the reader.

These findings were of great interest to us, however, as these were not our intentions or purposes in presenting quotations. Researchers make choices about how and why they use quotations informed by different aims or disciplines. We set out to select and use quotations in two ways: first, to show the kinds of terms and concepts used by people and how these link together, and secondly, to indicate strength and depth of feeling, confusion, or hesitation.

Hence, we did not use quotations with a view to giving people a 'voice', although this was one of the outcomes perceived by speakers. The way in which quotations gave people a chance to have their say was often identified among service users, and seeing their own words in the

report made people feel that they, and their views, were valued.

There was some evidence from the research users that our intentions in selecting and using quotations had been achieved to some extent. Some users felt the quotations helped them get closer in touch with service users' experiences, and understand the strength of some feelings. But some users perceived an illustrative purpose in the quotations, and some association with representativeness of view, in a quantitative sense. Again, this was not our purpose, and had led to some misinterpretation.

Representation of speech as text – to edit or not to edit

The question of how spoken words are represented in print generated some strong responses from both speakers and research users, which raises issues for researchers about transcribing conventions, and editing. There was a general view that a fine balance exists between representing words as spoken and avoiding risk of creating negative effects, such as making the report hard to read or casting the speaker in a negative light.

Discussion between the research users showed that some forms of non-standard grammar or speech patterns, when represented as text, could produce different images in the minds of different readers, and possibly lead to questioning the validity and importance of what was said. This was exactly what some of the speakers feared, and some had consequently asked for changes to punctuation or grammar in their own spoken words. However, other speakers argued that any editing would devalue diversity. Both speakers and research users agreed that people's language must be treated with respect, but views in both groups were polarised as to what this should mean in practice.

Anonymity – maintaining confidentiality

Anonymity was very important to the service users interviewed. They were clear that they did not want staff delivering the service to know what they had said, and some did not want any possibility they might be identified by employers or colleagues who might read the report. In the report we produced, we took what we thought was considerable care to protect anonymity, in description of the recruitment and characteristics of the study group, in the narrative text, in the links between text and quotations, and in the form of attributions used. We were pleased that those who took part in

the research and saw the report perceived themselves as anonymous.

However, the service manager said that some members of staff thought they probably did recognise some clients whose words were used, from the ways individual people talked about their experiences and views. This was an important lesson for us about the power of textual representation of spoken words.

Attributions – who said what

The style of attribution of quotation used in the evaluative report was to show gender and age range of the speaker, in brackets at the end of the spoken words. This was generally acceptable to those who had taken part in the interviews. The research users would have liked the attributions to include more contextual information about speakers to help their understanding of the material presented. However, some of the speakers had strong views that descriptive categories other than gender and age (for example, descriptions of health conditions or benefit entitlement) might lead to negative constructions among readers. Neither speakers nor research users favoured an alternative approach suggested, using pseudonyms for attribution of spoken words. Speakers said that this was equivalent to presenting false information, and suggested that any pseudonym chosen by themselves or the researchers was likely to be somebody else's real name, with risk of false identification. Research users suggested that names were distracting and raised connotations in readers' minds that might lead to misinterpretation or create negative stereotypes.

Discussion – whose views count?

We recognise that we conducted only a small study with a particular group of people. Findings might have been different if, for example, we had based our study on people in jobs, or people more used to having their views listened to. Nevertheless, we think that some of the issues raised in this study have a wider relevance.

The purposes of the research and the methodological approach determine, to some extent, the way in which verbatim quotations are used in writing up research. However, a number of choices remain to the researcher in selecting, editing and presenting the spoken words. How these choices are made will require researchers to address the possibly competing views of research subjects and the

intended audience or audiences for the research.

We think that this small exploratory study has raised important and interesting issues for debate and further investigation among researchers and research users. In applied social research, presenting verbatim quotations in written output means that researchers face a difficult task in balancing responsibilities to research participants, providing useful information for research sponsors, and maintaining academic rigour and quality in their work. The easy answer to the question 'whose views count?' is of course 'everyone'. The difficult part is translating that into practice.

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Qualitative archiving and data sharing: extending the reach and impact of qualitative data

Louise Corti

Introduction

Archived qualitative data are a rich and unique, yet too often unexploited, source of research material. They offer information that can be reanalysed, reworked, and compared with contemporary data. In time, too, archived research materials can prove to be a significant part of our cultural heritage and become resources for historical as well as contemporary research.

But while there is a well-established tradition in social science of reanalysing quantitative data, there is not yet a well developed paradigm, nor a pervasive research culture for secondary qualitative data analysis. The lack of discussion in the current literature on the benefits and limitations of such approaches is evident. But debate has begun and it is still early days.

This paper provides an overview of some of the perceived barriers to re-use and highlights some of the positive pragmatic measures that are being taken to enable both sharing and re-use of qualitative data.

A brief history

Research data archiving has been around for some years. The data archiving movement began in the 1960s within a number of key social science departments in the United States who stored original data of survey interviews. The movement spread across Europe and in

1967 a UK data archive (UKDA) was established by the UK Social Science Research Council (SSRC). But the emphasis was strictly quantitative. The SSRC's successor, the ESRC introduced a formalised Datasets Policy in 1996 that contracted all award holders to submit data for possible accession to the UK Data Archive. The word 'data'; was typically, and perhaps conveniently, taken by researchers to refer purely to numeric data.

Pressure from a small insistent minority fought for qualitative data to be explicitly embedded into the ESRC portfolio of data resources. The Qualidata Centre set up in 1994 in the Sociology department at Essex complemented the Data Archive with a joint mission to actively acquire, curate, disseminate and promote the raw data from social science research. From 2003, Qualidata became an integral part of a larger joined up one-stop shop for data sharing, archiving and dissemination, under the ESRC/JISC supported Economic and Social Data Service (ESDS).

Over the past ten years ESDS Qualidata has contributed to the elucidation of some of the key perceived barriers to re-using data - through extensive contact with 2000 or more qualitative researchers and through the experiences of handling many disparate data collections. These arguments have been rehearsed in a number of publications by Qualidata

staff (e.g. Corti and Thompson, 2004; Corti, L., Witzel, A. and Bishop, L. 2005; Bishop 2005; Corti 2000).

While ESDS Qualidata has conquered some of the 'mainstream' methods for archiving and sharing qualitative data, it has made significant efforts to spark more general academic debate. However, there is still a significant under-use of archived qualitative data when compared with survey data. Moreover, there is a noticeable imbalance in attitudes towards sharing and re-using data across disciplines and types of methodological approaches.

The key research issues facing re-use of qualitative data

There are some insistent voices who suggest there is a widespread reluctance to deposit data with a research archive. While this was partially true some ten years ago, today we see a new generation of qualitative researchers who are more inclined to either embrace or gracefully accept the ESRC's Datasets Policy and its efforts to promote the value of sharing data (ESRC 2005). At the UK Data Archive, where some 150 qualitative datasets are catalogued, user figures have soared, particularly for confronting archived data materials in research methods teaching.

Nevertheless, there are still barriers. The six key main perceived barriers that I

identify here can be summarised as follows:

- The practice of secondary analysis of qualitative data is not yet a common place research activity. The literature is not forthcoming on methodological guidance on how to approach the revisiting of data. Corti and Thompson (2004) provide the first inclusive and state-of-the-art chapter on the topic invited for a high profile methods reader by Seale et al. Progress is also hindered by preconceptions and sometimes less than innovative approaches to qualitative research. A cultural shift is required and we believe that this has been progressively happening since 1994.

- Problems of the implicit nature of qualitative data collection and analysis, of context and reflexivity, which are sometimes proclaimed to be indefinable. What are needed here then are **practical strategies**. Indeed, for research conducted in teams, data and fieldwork experiences are commonly shared, and for Principal Investigators who remain one step away from the field, it is imperative that they rely on their research staff on the ground to capture, document and communicate the nuances of the research process. It is vital to **capture better and more systematically the context** and the interrelationships among data and between data and other academic products, like analyses and write ups.

- Lack of time to get fully acquainted with research materials created by someone else. Social historians have been more forthcoming in revisiting data sources because of their willingness to embrace the slow and rigorous but commonly accepted practice of document analysis and the need to evaluate methodically the very sources they are revisiting. However it can be terribly time-consuming to locate suitable data sources, and to locate, for example, paper materials that may reside in traditional archival locations with limited access. New ways and tools that **more efficiently expose the content and context** of digital data sources need to be developed, in order to reduce such researcher burden.

- Constraints of informed consent. Informed consent is an ethical and legal requirement of the research process. It must be thought through at the time of research proposal planning and writing

and be tailored towards the specific research questions and the sample. Often consent is not addressed until late in the research process by many researchers, and verbal consent alone is typically not sufficient for longer-term sharing and for effective use of research findings by the original researcher. Failure to realise the need to gain informed consent means that research efforts and the opportunities for archiving and secondary analysis are jeopardised from the start. But researchers require more guidance on this area to better understand the nature and implications of consent and confidentiality. Additionally, pragmatic strategies are also required to aid the commonly accepted practice of **anonymisation or pseudonymisation**. Bishop provides a succinct reply to some of the recent scepticism of the possibilities of re-use (Bishop 2005)

- Insecurity about exposure of one's research practice, Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) or threat of misinterpretation. This may be relevant in some specific cases (e.g. an anthropologist's life work), but for the sake of data quality or auditing as Hammersley describes it (Hammersley 1997), exposure of data and methods is no bad thing. Capturing evidence, or specific reasons, as to why data cannot be shared is valuable.

- Finally, lack of a wide range of publicly available catalogued research data. While in the UK, the Economic and Social Data Service (ESDS) has done much to facilitate common resource discovery points of access through the use of standards at the study description level, ways to delve deeper into the qualitative data resource have not been as forthcoming as they have for survey data. The NESSTAR system is a good example of how data can be browsed online through the use of detailed data description down to the survey question (variable) level (Nesstar 2005). As the pool of rich and diverse shareable data expands, the greater the need also for interoperable and standardised description that will allow searching and location of key data across distributed sources. The **means** of enabling this information stock and flow to reach fruition needs to be investigated and common community methods agreed.

Prerequisites for making data shareable
There are two major issues that appear to be at the heart of making data fully shareable. The first is producing rich and full documentation about the data

and the research processes used to conceptualise, collect, manage, process and analyse data. Full documentation enables effective resource discovery (i.e., catalogues) of distributed data sources and enables more informed re-use. The second challenge for sharing data is that of exposing data in the most flexible way possible so as to enable multiple methods of accessibility and innovative uses, for example, combine and link: activities that are the very core of some of the initial considerations of social scientists.

Both challenges require that:

- data are collected to a high standard
- research methods and practices (including the consent process) are fully documented
- the context of the data collection and analysis is captured
- the richness of the structure and features of data and are made available (use of mark-up)
- the interrelationships between data and analyses (intra-project) are made available (issues of representation)
- data are represented in intuitive, appealing and sensitive ways that satisfy the ethical and legal requirements to which they are bound.

Enabling these requirements entails practical as well as conceptual challenges. And fundamentally, the underlying need is for the formulation, adoption and community subscription to commonly agreed methods, standards, and ontologies for data description and exposure. Previous work in this area has been spearheaded by ESDS Qualidata and the UK Data Archive in social science archival documentation and data processing for qualitative data (Corti, 2002).

Creatively exploring the barriers and looking forward

ESDS has found that data creation workshops have been very useful in helping unpack some of the specific issues and problems arising in the course of projects that are considering data sharing. The MRC have also taken up an interest in data sharing of primary data from population and clinical trials data, with qualitative data firmly on the agenda. (Corti and Wright 2003). More recently the NERC have also implemented a formalised data management policy for a joint Council programme on Rural Economy and Land Use (RELU) that specifically includes all the qualita-

tive data from the Programme. Context and consent are the two words that crop up most frequently in the debates.

For those of use who have waiting for funding opportunities to enable us to properly confront the consent, context and technical issues, 2003 – 2004 saw a bumper harvest of such prospects. In the past it has been unusual for ESRC to fund research and development or consider dedicated methodological initiatives. But, over the past three years we have seen a much welcomed move towards dedicated funding for methods. These strands of money have enabled some innovative investigations to be undertaken, particularly for qualitative data. Five main pots of ESRC funding appeared on the scene, thanks to a number of champions to the cause of methods and data analysis: E-social science; the Research Methods Programme; the National Centre for Social Research; the Qualitative Longitudinal Study and the QUADS scheme.

Innovation: The QUADS scheme



QUADS is the ESRC Qualitative Archiving and Data Sharing Scheme, running from April 2005 until October 2006. The aim of the scheme is to develop and promote innovative methodological approaches to the archiving, sharing, re-use and secondary analysis of qualitative research and data. A range of new models for increasing access to qualitative data resources, and for extending the reach and impact of qualitative studies will be explored. The scheme also aims to disseminate good practice in qualitative data sharing and research archiving. This is part of the ESRC's initiative to increase the UK resource of highly skilled researchers, and to fully exploit the distinctive potential offered by qualitative research and data.

The QUADS is smaller in terms of cost and scale, but is dedicated to the mission of learning more about sharing, representation and re-use of qualitative data, in all of its disparate shape and forms. Five small exploratory projects have been funded together with a Co-ordination Role. The Co-ordination

team based at ESDS Qualidata have been charged with the task of providing a pivotal role in fostering communication and understanding between the five demonstrator projects. Communication of the Scheme's innovative efforts to the broader spectrum of qualitative researchers is much needed. But equally it is must be appreciated that there exist various communities of practice with different data needs and methodological approaches to sharing and secondary analysis of qualitative research and data. Fruitful collaboration is required which can be achieved through guided discourse to inform and help guide the progress of QUADS demonstrators, and to encourage the broader acceptance and take up of data sharing and re-use.

Key areas for QUADS projects

Four key areas of needs and commonality identified across all the QUADS projects point to: defining and capturing data context, audio-visual archiving; consent, confidentiality and IPR; and web and metadata standards.

The debate on capturing context has been around for some time now on the qualitative data archiving scene. QUADS aims to devise and recommend a minimum set of contextual constructs that would be necessary to document a collection of qualitative data to enable informed secondary use. Regarding audio-visual data, they are being handled by many of the projects and the scheme is providing an opportunity to share expertise on presenting and re-using such sources. On the hot topic of consent, confidentiality and copyright, while ESDS Qualidata maintain up-to-date detailed information many the QUADS projects do have specific consent and copyright issues, and it will be invaluable to see how these are confronted by the different projects during the demonstrator period. They will afford unique case studies that can be used in the future.

QUADS Coordination will hold an end of scheme hands-on demonstrators workshop, where projects will be able to talk about their investigations and developments and demonstrate any working QUADS products to an open invitation audience. Furthermore, QUADS Coordination through its web site will mount papers, tools and training materials arising during the course of the projects in an easy-to-navigate manner. A session at the NCRM Summer School is currently being planned. QUADS is an exciting pilot initiative that is exploring experimental methods. The team is therefore very happy to hear from anyone who is

already working in this area or who would like to contribute to these exciting projects.

But what about these standards?

In order to approach primary data now and in the future in years, we need that data to be accurately, richly and contextually described. And in turn, representation of original data, methods and analytic interpretation and their interweaving requires agreed and exemplary standards and procedures. Fielding's scoping study that examined issues for the role of qualitative data in e-social science (Fielding 2003) aptly confirmed that that 'it is timely to anticipate emerging innovations in qualitative methods, including new data forms, sources, possibilities for research archiving and data mining and the potential for increased participation and access'.

Representation can be viewed across a spectrum starting from the simple publishing of anonymised digital qualitative data sources or banks (which are typically not present) through to the ability to link qualitative data to other distributed data sources (e.g. audio-visual or geo-coded data sources) and to creative and exciting ways of visualizing data. However, it is important to take a step back and see what is currently exposed. The researcher will find very little qualitative data even exposed to the web in any meaningful way. While there are archives of qualitative data to be found across the world, the majority are not even in digital format and "digitizing" these collections is often seen as merely providing an online catalogue of digitised metadata. The issue of how to make these data resources accessible to users has hitherto been a central concern for ESDS Qualidata who have continually been seeking ways to meet users' requirements.

Standards of relevance are those for: building sustainable web sites; harmonious data descriptions to enable rich resource discovery (metadata); and marking-up data content. ESDS Qualidata recognised the need for standards and tools back in 2000 – tools that allow data to be published to the Web and support online interrogation of data via standard

Web browsers. In 2000, Qualidata undertook pioneering work in this area through developing the Qualidata Online system and a methodology for sharing data (Corti and Barker, 2002).



The need to keep pace with the development numeric data browsing systems that are now quite far advanced, is important not only for the UK Data Archive but also for other groups who wish to publish and share qualitative data.

Community efforts

QUADS Co-ordination is very aware that there are an increasing number of projects in the world that are looking at sharing qualitative data, typically via the web, and particularly in the wake of the e-science rush. But they are not linked up in any formal way. QUADS Coordination will be building an interactive map will be built to show the location of such initiatives and the key contacts. Additionally training and advice is being given on best practice in metadata creation and web standards for qualitative data. It is hoped that many of the e-science and methods research groups will be amenable to agreeing on some basic sets of standards.

For more details about ESDS Qualidata see www.esds.ac.uk/qualidata and QUADS see: <http://quads.esds.ac.uk> or contact Louise Corti, UK Data Archive, University of Essex, corti@esds.ac.uk

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ESDS <http://www.esds.ac.uk>

ESDS Qualidata <http://www.esds.ac.uk/qualidata>

ESDS Qualidata Online <http://www.esds.ac.uk/qualidata/online/>

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Louise Corti is currently Associate Director at the UK Data Archive, where amongst other roles, she leads the ESDS Qualidata section. Her current research interests involve enhancing access to and re-using qualitative data and the application and use of social science data in teaching and learning.

Developing a video diary research tool

Andrew Noyes

For a long time visual research methods have been the poor relation in social science research (Prosser, 1998). However, there is now increasing interest in using video technology in research, more particularly in education research; the Trends in International Maths and Science Study (TIMSS) video survey being one good example. In many of these studies video recordings of classroom interactions are used to enhance an exist-

ing methodology, viz observation. The possibilities for participant observation are expanded by the opportunity to record and replay learning contexts. As a result, analyses can be more extensive and complex; they can make use of video-capable qualitative data analysis software; they allow for collaborative analyses by many 'observers' and this can even occur on the internet.

Video diaries are a significantly different

application of the technology (Noyes, 2004). They do not attempt to improve traditional observation techniques by increasing the possibility for more realistic and apparently reliable quantitative and qualitative data analyses. Due to their usage in reality television, video diaries are a cultural phenomenon, what Baudrillard might term 'simulacra of simulacra'.

In view of this, my initial diary research favoured now outdated VHS recording rather than the digital medium. That way I could have a large camera set up in a dedicated 'diary room', which helped to create this simulation. The children with whom I was working immediately associated this with 'Big Brother' (at least their 10 year old conceptualisation of it), which was only true in part as there was no Big Brother looking or speaking into the diary room. Nevertheless the entries generated some unpredictable results and it is this that made the technique so worthwhile in my research with upper primary school children.

The video diaries method was developed in an attempt to reduce the researcher-researched power differential inherent in interview situations with these children. Although initially an experiment, the potential of this technique as a research tool has led to ongoing research with beginning teachers. This TTA funded project aims to see whether teacher educators, and students themselves, can better understand some of the complex processes of becoming a teacher through compiling digital video diaries.

The theoretical framework within which the original video diary research was conducted was Bourdieu's theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1977). I was interested to know how the socially constituted *habitus* of these children was related to the various *fields* of in which they acted, and how this then impacted upon their learning across the transition from primary to secondary school (Noyes, 2005). My data collection was predominantly in schools and this left me unable to examine the out-of-school lives of the children. The video diaries offered new and sometimes surprising views into these children's lives, which I was then able to explore further through traditional qualitative research methodology.

Bloustein (1998) used video diaries with teenage girls in Australia and a number of important effects are paralleled in the two studies. One of these relates to the diverse ways in which children assumed, and then developed, their relationship to the camera, and how this framed their diary accounts. For some the camera was like a best friend or confidant whereas for others it was a very public window to a watching world. What was less clear was how the researcher was

included in this complex of imagined, simulated and/or actual relationships. A second parallel in the two studies is the way in which improvised entries generate spontaneous and pre-reflective insights into life contexts. Often the children in my research began their diary entries with a short, pre-prepared speech. This covered the things they wanted and/or thought they ought to say and then, often after an awkward pause, they would offer intriguing insights into their current life experience. Many of these elements of the diaries were very valuable as they talked here about aspects of their day to day lives that I had no way of knowing and so to which I had no means of access.

So at one level the audio data is interesting by itself as the simulation produces discourse that probably would not be available to the researcher in other ways. How the data from this simulation context should be interpreted is a far from straightforward question. My studies have included a certain amount of data triangulation with other interviews and observational field work. Perhaps more importantly I watched each of the lengthy videos with the children with either one of us being allowed to pause it at any point to question or add explanation/interpretations. On many occasions this opened avenues for discussion that were very rich. Many of their concerns were more about image, style and mannerism than about their speech content.

Although the visual aspect of this technique was not used extensively in the study it has become apparent through the presentation of the diary research at academic conferences that this dimension of the material is very valuable. Again, it is different in some ways from the visual data that arises from traditional recordings of classroom contexts. In video diaries children initially adopt something akin to a television personality which reflects how they want to be seen on film. In the same way that they might position themselves for photographs these children adopt postures, mannerisms and language that communicate to the viewer something about status, self-belief, and so on. Far from being naturalistic, such simulation reflects something of the child's *habitus* and is related to their social position and thereby relates to their school progress.

What was interesting in conference sessions was the ease with which many colleagues could guess at the social origins of the various children with a large degree of accuracy, even from the first ten seconds of film. Much of this was about body language, mannerisms and the style and content of speech. This raises the complex issue of ethics in this kind of research. These need to be examined carefully for the context of digital video data and perhaps more particularly for this dairying work. Permissions were sought and obtained in accordance with accepted ethical guidelines for educational research yet there are still grey areas that need consideration, especially as the amount of video data in circulation expands in the coming years.

So, in summary, the video diary approach allows researchers to hand over some of the responsibility for data collection to research participants. This need not necessarily be in a static diary room that is naturally associated with particular, popular cultural practices, although this simulation does have certain attractions. Researchers might offer some prompts to help structure entries but it is the improvised and individually initiated content that makes this approach unusual and appealing. This relatively new method in social science research would benefit from further theorisation (see Watling, 2001, for video diary use in a different context). In addition, the further development of ethical guidelines pertinent to such visual research methodologies is needed. That said, the video diary method offers researchers a different means of exploring social experience and that engages participants enthusiastically in the research process.

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Andy Noyes works at the University of Nottingham's School of Education. His research interests include the sociology of education, mathematics education, teacher education, student perspectives and visual research methods. He leads the secondary PGCE and MA Learning and Teaching programmes.

Founding of the International Association of Qualitative Inquiry

Harry Torrance

The *International Association of Qualitative Inquiry* was founded on 7 May 2005, at the closing 'town hall meeting' of the very successful *First International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry*, held at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, 5-7 May 2005. 867 participants from 51 countries attended the First International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, organised by Norman Denzin, and Professor Denzin was elected as Founding Director of the new Association.

The overall purpose of the Congress and the new International Association is to develop further international discussion of qualitative research issues and strengthen the impact of qualitative research in relation to policy and practice across a wide range of domains and disciplines. In particular, Norman Denzin, in his opening address, called on qualitative inquiry to support social justice issues and to oppose "attempts by funding agencies to regulate scientific inquiry by defining what is 'good science'". These regulatory activities raise fundamental philosophical, epistemological, political and pedagogical issues for scholarship and freedom of speech in the academy".

The Congress brought together a very wide range of participants from around the world, from leading scholars to research students, who clearly felt the need to respond to such a clarion call. The move towards evidence-based policy making is very strong internationally, certainly in the English-speaking research world, but also more generally. This move brings opportunities for funding and influence, but also brings the threat of conformity and regulation, with social science being increasingly expected to serve policy rather than inform it. These concerns were very much to the fore in the presentations and

discussions at the Congress.

A particularly interesting and indicative plenary session involved Elizabeth St. Pierre of the University of Georgia (USA) in debate with Michael Feuer of the National Academy of Science (USA). Feuer reviewed the political background to, and perceived need for, a recent National Research Council publication 'Scientific Research in Education' (<http://books.nap.edu/catalog/10236.html>). The book attempts to review and establish the methodological basis on which evidence from educational research can be deemed well-founded. It parallels many similar debates in the UK over the last 10 years. Feuer argued the case for the presentation of 'hard evidence' to policymakers, or at least the best evidence available, and this inevitably involved making judgements about research quality. St Pierre agreed that quality was important but argued that the NRC report narrowed the definition of science to that of a naive and outdated positivism which in turn would harm the quality of educational research rather than improve it. She argued that 'science' should be defined in terms of an attitude of curiosity and cautious scepticism, rather than a narrow methodological imperative which seeks to produce certainty, something which can never be attained in human affairs.

A fair sprinkling of UK presenters were dotted about the programme, most from education, health care studies, psychology, sociology and/or social policy backgrounds. Phil Hodgkinson (Leeds), Ian Stronach, and Harry Torrance (both MMU) spoke in another of the invited and featured plenaries, organised by Patti Lather (Ohio), on 'Monsters of Evidence: Qualitative Research and the Globalisation of Audit Culture'. Rose Wiles and col-

leagues from the ESRC NCRM at Southampton spoke in a session reviewing the work of ethics committees or 'Institutional Review Boards' as they are known in the USA. Debate in both sessions revolved around the increasing auditing and management of research, the regulatory impositions of ethics committees and the inappropriate importation of medical models into social science. All papers are on the web at: <http://www.c4qi.org/qi2005/index.html>

At the closing 'town hall meeting' to establish the new International Association of Qualitative Inquiry Harry Torrance agreed to act as UK contact for the association in the first instance – hence this report. The next Congress will take place 4-7 May 2006 at Urbana-Champaign; the call for papers and registration is available at: <http://www.qi2006.org>

Harry Torrance is Professor of Education and Director of the Education and Social Research Institute, Manchester Metropolitan University. He is formerly Professor of Education at the University of Sussex. His research interests include student assessment and programme evaluation, research methodology and knowledge production.

News and Forthcoming Events

Qualiti seminar series: Spring 2006 **Seminar 1: Combining social research methods, data and analysis**

School of Human Sciences, University of Surrey

Wednesday 22nd February 2006

Seminar aims to provide opportunities for participants to share current practice of methodological combination/integration, and to consider the research capacity implications of doing so.

Seminar 2: Using qualitative research to inform policy and practice

Office for National Statistics, Newport, Wales

Tuesday 4th April 2006

Seminar draws together policy makers, practitioners and academics, and provides an opportunity to consider the ways in which qualitative research is positioned within calls for evidenced-based policy and practice.

Seminar 3: Qualitative research in new ethical times

Cardiff University

Thursday 4th May

Seminar will consider qualitative research in relation to ethical dimensions of contemporary research governance and in the context of methodological innovation

Further details of all events can be found at: <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/qualiti/events.html>

Qualiti Placement Scheme 2005-6

Scheme offers opportunities for postgraduate, postdoctoral and early career researchers to visit Cardiff School of Social Sciences and take up one of a variety of placements. Travel and accommodation fully funded by Qualiti. Further details available at: <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/qualiti/placement.html>

Qualiti Mentoring Scheme

Scheme provides significant, focussed and long-term (where required) support and guidance to UK social science researchers in the use of advanced qualitative research methods. The scheme offers postgraduates, postdoctoral and early career researchers and more established researchers, access to a range of

expertise. Further details available at: <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/qualiti/mentoring.html>

National Centre for Research Methods course on Policy Evaluation in the Social Sciences

University of Southampton

20th December 2005

Further details at: <http://www.ncrm.ac.uk>

The NCRM Methods for Research Synthesis node is running workshops on systematic research synthesis in London and Leeds. Further details at: <http://ncrm.ac.uk>

NCRM-Government Social Research Seminar Series

Development change in social science research

Brian Francis
Kirkland House, Whitehall, London
3.00pm 19th January 2006

Verbatim quotations in reporting applied social research

– Anne Corden
Kirkland House, Whitehall, London
11.00am 16th March 2006

Developing methodological strategies to recruit socially excluded individuals and groups: appropriate ways of intervening in messy social world

– Nick Emmel
Kirkland House, Whitehall, London
3.00pm 18th May 2006

Recent Development in the handling of missing data

– Mike Kenward
Kirkland House, Whitehall, London
11.00am 8th June 2006

Details for all GSRS events at: <http://www.ncrm.ac.uk/events/gsrseminars-programme.php>

Research Methods Festival

St Catherine's College, Oxford
17th – 20th July 2006

The Festival aims to engage social scientists across a wide range of disciplines and at different points in their research careers. We are aiming to stimulate interest, raise issues, highlight opportunities and showcase new developments. Further details at: <http://www.ccsr.ac.uk/methods/festival/>

Qualitative Researcher **ISSN 1748-7315**

Qualitative Researcher provides an interdisciplinary forum for social scientists to share their research and discuss questions arising from the application, innovation and dissemination of qualitative research. *Qualitative Researcher* invites contributions in the form of opinion pieces and polemics that stimulate debate; brief articles presenting current empirical research projects; and reports of instances of methodological innovation. Submissions should be between 1500 and 2000 words and as a reflection of *Qualitative Researcher's* pragmatic and inclusive orientation endnotes and references should be kept to a minimum.

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