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**Using verbatim quotations in
reporting qualitative social
research: researchers' views**

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Introduction

This paper presents findings from one component of an ESRC funded research study of the theory, practice and impact of using verbatim quotations from research participants in reporting qualitative social research for policy. The study was conducted by the authors during 2003-05. This is the third in a series of six papers, each of which presents findings from the various components of the overall study. The first two papers are available already (Corden and Sainsbury, 2005b, 2005c) and the three remaining will be forthcoming later this year.

There are five parts to the paper. Part 1 explains the background to the overall study and the approach taken. This sets the context for the research component reported here. The final section of Part 1 explains the methods used in this component. Parts 2-4 present the main findings.

1. Background and research methods

Including verbatim quotations from research participants has become effectively standard practice in much qualitative social research, and some research funders now expect final reports to include direct quotations. Support for this approach is being strengthened in the development of formal methods for critical appraisal and evaluation of policy-related qualitative studies, with the aim of grounding policy and practice in best evidence. Evaluative tools and frameworks which have emerged in the last decade for use in quality assessment of reports of qualitative research have been reviewed by Spencer *et al.* (2003). They looked at both empirically and philosophically based frameworks, emerging from within a range of disciplines. One important quality criterion for which there was broad consensus was how evidence and conclusions are derived, and verbatim quotations were identified as having a key role here. Authors of some of the frameworks developed within the health and social welfare sector spell out how inclusion of excerpts from transcripts help to clarify links between data, interpretation and conclusions, discussed variously within concepts such as validity, reliability, credibility and auditability (see for example, Beck, 1993; Greenhalgh and Taylor, 1997; Spencer *et al.*, 2003; Long and Godfrey, 2004).

Such evaluative tools and frameworks are fairly recent additions to the research literature. When the authors planned their overall exploratory study of the use of verbatim quotations, they found that a conceptual and theoretical basis for inclusion of verbatim quotations within social researchers' written texts was not well developed.

Explanations of the process of selection of quotations were rare, either within methodological texts or the research reports themselves. There were few examples

of investigation of the impact on readers of verbatim quotations, and little was known about how research participants felt about the way their spoken words were used. The authors set out to re-examine the approach to using verbatim quotations, with ESRC funding for an exploratory study.

1.1 The overall study

The aims of the overall study were to investigate the inclusion of respondents' verbatim quotations within written reports of applied research findings, from the perspectives of researchers, research users and people taking part in the research.

Specific objectives were:

- to review conceptual and theoretical arguments for using verbatim quotations in presenting findings
- to explore current practice and beliefs among social researchers
- to explore expectations and preferences of users of research
- to investigate views of those who speak the words presented
- to test, among a range of readers, accessibility, acceptability and impact of different ways of including verbatim quotations in research accounts
- to contribute to knowledge and understanding of qualitative methodology, especially in relation to analysis and presentation of findings
- to inform practice and teaching of qualitative social research
- to inform policy makers and other users of qualitative social research.

The study had a four stage design:

1. Review of the conceptual and theoretical bases for including direct quotations in presentation of findings.
2. Desk-based analysis of selected recent social research texts, to explore styles of reporting.
3. In-depth interviews with researchers and research users.
4. Empirical work to test the impact of quotations in a report of an evaluative study on people who took part in that study and people who read the report.

Findings from the empirical study are already available (Corden and Sainsbury, 2005a, 2005b and 2005c). This paper presents findings from the third component described above, in-depth interviews with researchers. We go on to describe the approach adopted.

1.2 Seeking views and experiences of researchers

The aim in this component of the study was to conduct depth interviews with a small group of experienced qualitative social researchers, whose publications were likely to have been influential in policy, practice or teaching. In building the study group, we drew on the desk-based analysis of selected recent social research texts, described above as the second stage of the overall study. This will be described in full in a forthcoming working paper, but some explanation of this earlier stage is necessary here in order to understand how we selected researchers for interview.

In the desk-based analysis of recent research texts we were looking to see whether it was possible to construct typologies of styles of using verbatim quotations. We wished to look at a number of texts published since 1990 reporting qualitative research across different areas of social policy, for example social care, health, education, social work, employment, family policy, housing and criminal justice. We wrote to various 'experts' in these different policy areas and asked them to suggest around ten publications by different authors or groups of authors. The 'experts' were identified as such, through our own academic and policy networks. All those approached were currently or had been senior academics in their particular disciplines in British universities, and also had current or previous experience as senior practitioners or policy makers in those professions or policy streams in which they had been engaged academically. We judged them to be 'experts' because they were likely to have detailed and up to date knowledge of the academic discourse and recent research in their own areas, and recent developments and focus of interest in policy and practice in those areas.

We wrote to them, explaining that we were approaching them as a person with a general overview of research in their area. We asked, specifically, that they spent some time thinking across significant research in their particular area published since 1990 which reported findings from qualitative interviews or group discussions, either as the only method of enquiry, or one of the methods used. Such publications, we suggested, were likely to be books, chapters, reports or articles in journals. We explained that by 'significant' research we meant research that they personally believed made an important contribution to knowledge, policy or practice, either at the time or subsequently, and which is cited (or expected to be cited) in relevant literature.

We asked that they tried to include in their list of suggestions some research funded by government and some by non-governmental organisations and, if possible, some publications by authors not working primarily within an academic setting. We recognised that some of the publications on such a list were likely to be their own or those of close colleagues, but asked that only one such item was included. We asked people not to take anything else into account in making their selection, and

particularly asked them not to take into account their own views about whether or how verbatim quotations had appeared.

We asked people to approach this as a quick and easy task, not trying to identify the 'most significant' publications, but rather ten items which they thought had had some impact, with no implication that publications omitted from their list had any less impact or were less important than those included.

All those asked for help in this way responded, or recommended another person they thought more appropriate. We received from them lists of up to ten publications in areas including social policy, social security, education, criminal justice, nursing and midwifery, primary health care, family policy, social work, social care, housing and homelessness.

The publications listed were examined carefully, with particular focus on the use of verbatim quotations. Our analysis of this component of the research will be reported in full in a working paper (Corden and Sainsbury, 2006 forthcoming). From this analysis, we went on to select ten authors and invited them to take part in a depth interview about their approach to using quotations.

In selecting authors for interview we took into account a number of criteria. We aimed to include at least one author from each of the various fields of social research, and to achieve a group in which there was experience of writing for a range of different kinds of readers and research users (central and local government, practitioners, policy makers, organisations representing the needs of particular groups, and students). The original hope was that the study group might include authors who represented different typologies of use of quotations. However, as explained in the forthcoming working paper, typologies of use of quotations did not emerge clearly from the desk-based analysis. There was often little explanation in the research texts themselves of how authors had selected the verbatim quotations, decided the format for presentation of spoken words, or edited transcripts. Although typology of use of quotations was not therefore a criterion for selection, the study group was built to include some authors who:

- used indented block quotations
- used short phrases of spoken words embedded in their own sentences
- put together for comparison a number of quotations from different respondents
- presented spoken words in italics; in bold font; in 'box' format
- used different styles of attributions
- appeared to seek different balances between verbatim quotations and narrative text.

Letters of explanation and invitation were sent (Appendix A) and everybody approached agreed to take part in a research interview. Most of the appointments took place during the first half of 2004, when the researchers met people at their

places of work. In preparation for the discussion it was suggested that people might like to think across a number of their publications since 1990, and have to hand some examples for discussion during the interview.

Interviews generally took between one hour and an hour and a half, and were tape-recorded with permission. The researchers used a topic guide (Appendix B) to explore:

- how the researcher/author learned to write up findings from qualitative research
- what influenced the way in which they use verbatim quotations from respondents in publications
- what influenced the appearance of quotations in their publications (indented type, quotation marks, italics, transcription conventions)
- whether their approach has changed during their career.

1.3 Analysis

The first stage of analysis was careful reading of the transcripts of the interviews. The data were analysed systematically and transparently, building on the Framework method for data display, originally developed by the National Centre for Social Research (Ritchie *et al.*, 2003). A thematic framework was developed for classification and summary of the data, with headings and classifications that reflected the original matters of enquiry, and any new themes emerging from a reading of the transcripts. Data were extracted manually from the transcripts and summarised onto a series of four charts. The researchers used this data reduction and display to explore the accounts of all the respondents within the common thematic framework, with in-case and between-case analysis. Analysis involved search for understanding of different ways in which the researchers approached the inclusion (or not) of verbatim quotations in publications from their qualitative research.

The following parts of the paper present the main findings from the analysis. The occasional words and phrases in italics were spoken by those interviewed, and are used because they enable better understanding than would the authors' paraphrasing.

2. Participants' backgrounds and approach to research and writing

This part of the paper explores the backgrounds of the researchers who took part, and their areas of expertise and interest. There were links here with their personal approach to research and writing.

2.1 Backgrounds and academic disciplines

Researchers in this study group had started their careers from a wide range of backgrounds and academic disciplines, including psychology, sociology, maths, languages, history, biology and nursing. The group included people who had moved directly into research or related activities after completing degrees or doctorates, as well as people who had several years practical experience in other professions before developing their interest in qualitative social research. At the time of the interviews all were currently at mid-career stages or in the latter half of working lives, and were either associated with a university or had considerable professional experience. As a group, they had conducted research for a wide range of funding bodies, including central government, local authorities, the main UK social research funding trusts (for example ESRC, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Nuffield), voluntary organisations, advertising groups, business and commerce.

Several of those taking part had initially been trained in quantitative techniques and had experience in the design, conduct and analysis of large-scale face to face and telephone survey work. Some of those with quantitative expertise said that their recent research involved both quantitative and qualitative techniques, according to which approach was more appropriate to the topic under study. Others felt they had developed particular expertise in qualitative methods. This had happened sometimes to fit the skill needs in the organisations in which people worked; and sometimes because the areas of enquiry which had greatest interest for them or attracted funding were best suited by qualitative approaches. Several in the group enjoyed aspects of qualitative work such as being in direct touch with a range of people and organisational structures, and felt their particular skills were in communication and understanding meaning at the personal level.

It was not unusual for researchers who undertook contracted applied social research (for example, for government departments or health-related organisations) to say that they did not align themselves to any particular tradition or discipline, and that much of the work they had undertaken might be considered rather atheoretical. They generally did not see this as a disadvantage. They perceived strengths in what they described as a pragmatic approach, being ready to use different approaches and ways of looking at things, according to what they were required to understand in each new research project. Some of those interviewed had begun their research careers and training when the intellectual and theoretical underpinning of applied qualitative social research was in early stages. There were relatively few 'text books' for guidance, and people learned themselves what could be done, or joined with colleagues to develop techniques which worked for them. Some such people said that they explored theoretical qualitative issues later in their careers, but others felt that they had done rather little reading about the theory of social research.

Those in this study group who did see their own work as grounded within a particular school or tradition of knowledge were doing research which sought to inform professional practice in areas such as nursing and education. They saw their research approaches as developed within traditions of sociological and cultural studies, and ethnography, and some had undertaken grounded theory studies. The group included women researchers who said their research was influenced by feminist epistemological and methodological critique. The study group also included a person committed to a participatory research approach, in which research was one of a range of associated elements including educational, campaigning and political activities. This perspective involved commitment to user-controlled research, with the purpose of bringing about personal and political change as well as increasing knowledge.

2.2 Qualitative methods used

Most people in this group of researchers had considerable experience of conducting in-depth personal interviews and semi-structured telephone interviews, and moderating or taking part in group discussions, or more recently developed interactions such as citizen committees or juries. Some had additional experience of observational methods and documentary analysis, narrative study, or projective techniques such as working with pictures drawn by respondents as conceptualisations of services or circumstances.

Research interviews and group discussions described by the researchers included interactions with professionals (teachers, doctors, nurses and health practitioners, civil servants, senior managers, service providers and politicians) and interactions with people on the receiving end of policy initiatives (service and programme users, patients, young people at school, local residents). Everybody conducted their own interviews or group discussions using English language. There was limited experience within this group of researchers of dealing with data from interviews conducted in other languages.¹

The researchers interviewed preferred wherever possible to use a tape-recorder to record spoken interactions in interviews and group discussions. They said it was rare for people taking part in their research to say they preferred not to have a tape recorder, but in some field situations such as offices or school playgrounds it was not practical to use a tape recorder. Some researchers had made occasional judgements

¹ Issues of interpretation and translation of interviews conducted in languages other than English demand a specific focus in relation to presentation of verbatim quotations. This is a complex area, beyond the parameters of this exploratory study. In further research, it would be useful to conduct interviews with researcher/authors with a range of experience in reporting findings based on interviews which had involved interpretation and translation.

that using a tape recorder was inappropriate, for example in talking with some people with severe mental illnesses. When it was not possible to make a tape recording, researchers generally took notes, and some tried to spend time immediately after the interview, dictating onto a tape the details they remembered.

2.3 Analytical approaches

For most people in the group, the first stage in extracting qualitative data for analysis from the tape-recordings was transcription.

2.3.1 Transcription

People who transcribed their own interviews said that this usually only happened when they were dealing with a small number of interviews or selected extracts only. Some advantages were perceived in doing their own transcription work, including gaining greater familiarity with the data and deeper insight. Indeed, some people would have liked to do more transcription themselves but were constrained by time. Researchers with budgets for transcription generally used professional agencies; some paid graduate students with knowledge of the research topic. Occasionally, researchers relied on their own secretarial or administrative staff to fit some transcription work into their daily routines.

Practice varied considerably in terms of agreeing conventions with transcribers. Some negotiated themselves the lay-out and conventions required, including researchers who wanted the kind of detailed transcriptions appropriate for conversation or narrative analysis. Others were sometimes less directly involved, and accepted the conventions generally used by transcription agencies who were dealt with on a day to day basis by administrative staff in their research departments.

Quality of professional transcription was thought to be variable. Those researchers most confident in the consistency and rigour of the transcribed material were people who dealt personally with transcribers or their supervisors, and those whose research units had introduced forms of quality control monitoring. Researchers who regularly sent out tapes for transcription often built up relationships with particular professional agencies, or particular individuals, whom they trusted to be reliable. Students had proved reliable in transcribing interviews, but worked relatively slowly and had limited availability.

Mistakes found by researchers who checked transcriptions while listening to tape-recordings often involved names, and technical terms or acronyms not familiar to the transcriber. Occasionally researchers found more serious mistakes, such as gaps or hearing words wrongly. In addition to filling gaps or correcting misheard words, checking transcripts against tape-recordings provided opportunities to annotate the text (for example, to show emphasis) or to alter punctuation to better reflect meaning.

Those who rarely checked transcripts against recordings were either confident in the transcribers' quality of work, or said they did not have time to do this.

2.3.2 *Data extraction and analysis*

In this study group, researchers who approached analysis without transcribing tape recordings generally used manual techniques based on note taking and summary while listening to the recordings. Their manual techniques usually included some process of verbatim recording of selected spoken words. People who worked in this way did not have systematic criteria for deciding which spoken words to extract verbatim. They explained that they selected quotations about central issues, or when what was said seemed important or interesting. In a group of qualitative researchers who worked together mainly in this way new staff learned how to do this by working within the team and through supervision.

People extracting data from transcripts reported using a number of different techniques, depending partly on the kind of analysis required but also on the way in which the researcher had learned how to do qualitative analysis. Most people had experimented at some stage, using simple techniques to mark up transcripts with coloured pens, or sorting data by '*cutting and pasting*'. Some had been influenced by senior colleagues and any training they had had, while some had themselves broken new ground in developing analytical techniques. Among those who used forms of thematic grids or charts, the 'Framework' technique developed at the National Centre for Social Research (Ritchie *et al.*, 2003) had sometimes been influential. Some had found it more helpful to use large cards for displaying data, rather than charts or grids, but described similar processes of coding, sorting and collating data for interrogation. The group included researchers who drew mapping pictures of emerging issues, and had found these helpful in understanding links and relationships between issues. All such approaches included procedures for saving some verbatim spoken words from the transcripts, which could be cross referenced to the thematic displays or the maps.

Some of those interviewed frequently or regularly favoured using software packages, in particular, packages developed from a grounded theory approach. Advantages perceived included speed of working, and being able to demonstrate how findings had emerged (sometimes called the audit trail). Others in the group who had spent time investigating and trying software packages saw some advantages in terms of basic data management and labelling, but had usually not found packages which they felt added to the quality of the analysis which they could themselves achieve. Some had found software packages insufficiently flexible for the kind of analysis they wanted to do, once they went beyond relatively descriptive work. Among those who generally did not use software packages were people who felt that younger colleagues, setting out to develop their own analytic approach and with more time to experiment and explore software packages, had greater potential to build up the experience and expertise necessary to achieve high quality analysis in using such packages.

This account of the different approaches to analysis among the researchers interviewed has been fairly succinct. The main focus of interest and discussion was the way the researchers wrote up findings, and their use of verbatim quotations in reports and publications. These issues are closely linked with analytical approaches, however. In the next section, which explains how the researchers approached the writing task, there is frequent mention of the links between writing and analysis.

2.4 Writing up the findings

As explained, the researchers in this study group were experienced people in senior positions. Most had many publications based on qualitative research and most had been involved in teaching, training or supervising qualitative analysis and presentation. People had developed ways of writing about research findings which seemed to work well, according to the purpose of the work, the kind of analysis undertaken and the intended readership. Some of those who took part very much enjoyed writing and said that writing was an essential part of their analysis. It could be a challenge to try to represent the wealth of their material in a coherent way, and craft a report which was faithful to the original material but allowed their own stylistic contribution. Some of those with most experience of writing up findings said their techniques had developed through trial and error, and by seeing what others did. Methods textbooks had started to pay significant attention to writing only fairly recently, but people who sought out the latest text books felt that recent contributions about techniques and styles of writing were interesting and useful.

People who felt less confident about their own writing or still found this a hard part of the research process said that report writing became easier with practice, and there was much to learn from reading reports written by other researchers. However, there were dangers in following existing models of presentation; writing could become formulaic or too deeply set into styles representative of a particular research unit or adapted to preferences of particular funding bodies. Some felt that conventions adopted in much scientific writing sometimes did not fit the nature of qualitative material or the purpose of the report. For example, reporting in the past tense did not always capture the immediacy and reality of the topic and its importance.

Some research funders were said to make specific requests in respect of the length of a report; the way methods were described; the position and length of summary sections; page format and, indeed, use of verbatim quotations or documentary evidence. One person felt that such style guides were both tiresome and restrictive, and acted to constrain writing up a full and rich analysis.

Some researchers felt they had more opportunities to use the most appropriate writing style when the output was for a journal or book, rather than the research report for the funder. But this was not always the case. Some academic and practice

journals, or the professional associations controlling their publication currently have strict requirements about length, format and style of presentation of qualitative research. There could be precise instructions about incorporation of any verbatim quotations from research participants.

The researchers' purpose in presenting verbatim quotations, and the way in which they selected participants' spoken words for inclusion in their texts is the focus of the next part of the paper.

3. Purpose and process in using verbatim quotations

The authors knew that all the researchers interviewed in this component of the study had used verbatim quotations in at least some of their published research findings. This was one of the criteria for their recruitment.

It was often not easy for people to tease out and describe the process by which they selected spoken words and blended these with their own narrative text in written outputs from their research. There was general agreement that the way in which they did this depended on underlying reasons for using the quotations, and people were generally clear about their general purpose(s) in using them.

3.1 Purpose in presenting spoken words

People in this study group explained their purpose in including verbatim quotations within the following main constructs: as the matter of enquiry; as evidence; as explanation; as illustration; to deepen understanding; to give participants a voice, and to enhance readability. We go on to look at each of these in turn.

3.1.1 Presenting discourse as the matter of enquiry

In conversation and narrative analysis the spoken words and discourse are themselves the matter of enquiry. Reporting findings usually depends on textual representation of excerpts from transcripts of the conversation or narrative account alongside the researcher's own interpretation and commentary on those excerpts. Showing the interviewer's words is often as important as the respondent's because for researchers working within the narrative tradition, the interview is a process of joint production of meaning. Typically, a fairly long excerpt from the transcript (sometimes full pages) is offered to the reader, and the researcher's narrative then attempts to unpick the meaning, within the theme of the research.

3.1.2 Presenting quotations as evidence

Researchers who believed that presenting quotations helped to provide evidence for their interpretations compared this use of data with the way tables of statistical data

might appear in reports based on quantitative findings. They suggested that readers who saw some of the original data could make their own judgements about the fairness and accuracy of the analysis. Showing how the researcher's findings had emerged established the 'audit trail' described previously, and could help to strengthen credibility. Alongside such beliefs often went a feeling that qualitative researchers had to work hard at justifying their findings, so that their work did not appear unscientific or subjective. Those who felt like this also had training in quantitative research and had worked within disciplines in which qualitative methods were relatively late in gaining recognition. One problem in relying on direct quotations to provide evidence was that the number and length of the selected quotations was likely to be constrained by space available for publishing, especially in a journal article.

There was a contrary view, however, among those who emphasised that quotations, as such, were not evidence. People who felt like this argued that in most series of interviews or discussion groups a researcher would be able to find at least one quotation to support any point they might wish to make. The real evidence, they felt, lay in the conceptualisation and thematic analysis of all the data, the linkages made and interpretations in relation to other factors. This might or might not require presentation of direct quotations.

3.1.3 Presenting spoken words for explanation

Researchers interviewed who used quotations to explain how something happened thought this was particularly useful when it was important for readers to understand complex processes by which people made sense of their lives. Understanding why people had particular views or perspectives, or behaved in the way they did, was sometimes made easier for readers by showing the ways in which individual people constructed what was happening to them and the linkages they made for themselves. In particular, it could be helpful for research users to see for themselves how some people positioned themselves within societal processes, and some of their underlying assumptions, ambivalence and uncertainties. What people actually said and their choice of words was sometimes especially useful in illuminating what went on in intimate relationships.

3.1.4 Using quotations as illustration

There were mixed views among researchers interviewed on the usefulness of presenting quotations for illustration of themes emerging from the analysis. Some said that this was one way they did use spoken words.

Others felt that while it could sometimes be useful to show how something affected a person's life by using their own words (for explanation, as previously explained), they particularly avoided using quotations to illustrate themes emerging from the researcher's own interpretation. They felt that such quotations did not add anything and there were problems in selection, with risk in over-emphasis or skewing the

reader's perspective. For example, readers might give more weight to themes illustrated with a quotation or believe that points made in the text but not illustrated by quotations were less important.

There was some criticism of published research reports which appeared to present particularly dramatic or colourful quotations to illustrate some emerging issues.

3.1.5 Using quotations to deepen understanding

Verbatim quotations could, it was believed, offer readers greater depth of understanding. People's spoken words sometimes showed the strength of their views or the depth of feelings or, on the other hand, their passivity and lack of engagement in ways that the researcher's own narrative could not. While the researcher might describe findings using terms such as anger, regret, disbelief, relief, surprise, appreciation, hope or lack of interest when describing findings, the actual words spoken were sometimes a better representation of the depth of feeling.

3.1.6 Using spoken words to enable voice

Commitment to giving research participants a voice was a priority for the researcher working within a participatory paradigm, in which one aim was to empower people to develop, conduct and disseminate their own research. Indeed, this person challenged the use of the very term 'quotation' because of the implied assumption of the extent to which power and choice lay with the researcher.

Other researchers who did not specifically identify themselves as working within a participatory research approach also said they used direct quotations from research participants in order to enable them to speak for themselves. Presenting verbatim quotations, they felt, provided opportunities for people to give their own views about policy or practices which affected them directly, and to express their feelings or beliefs in the way they themselves perceived these. Giving people a voice by using their spoken words was also a way of demonstrating the value of what they said.

There was some belief that people's own spoken words sometimes made more impact than the researcher's narrative in conveying life experiences to readers. This was sometimes seen as another way of empowering research participants. For some researchers this belief was reinforced by response to their articles from readers, and their experiences at conferences when they had observed the impact of verbatim quotations presented as overheads during presentations. The point was made that the potential power of people's voices, used in this way, laid considerable responsibility on the researcher in relation to decisions made about using verbatim quotations.

Some research funders were said to be enthusiastic about use of quotations in order to give research participants a voice. Some voluntary sector organisations, for example, were keen both to empower the people they represented by inclusion of

their spoken words, and to achieve maximum impact of the reports by including direct quotations.

3.1.7 Using quotations to enhance readability

Some people saw a useful role for direct quotations in making a report or article easier to read, by providing some colour, vividness and sometimes humour. The quotations thus had a useful function as an aid to communication, especially where the subject of enquiry might seem apparently uninteresting to readers other than specialists. Just breaking up long passages of text by inserting some spoken words could, it was believed, sometimes help to keep the reader focused. However, those who used quotations to enhance readability were aware that a fine balance was required to maintain scientific objectivity. There could be a danger in moving too far towards a journalistic approach by over-use of quotations to create easy reading.

As explained in the introduction to this section, while those interviewed felt fairly clear about their overall purpose in using quotations it was sometimes less easy to explain how they set out to achieve this, in terms of decisions about which and how much material to include, and the balance between verbatim quotations and narrative text. The authors' own experience is that this is one aspect of reporting qualitative research that junior researchers find hard to learn how to do. We encouraged the researchers interviewed to talk in as much detail as possible about how they wove together their narrative text and the verbatim quotations.

3.2 Weaving text and quotations

In talking about the way they chose verbatim quotations, it was sometimes easier for people to refer directly to particular publications or reports, and describe the approach taken there, rather than talk generally about practices they adopted.

As described in the previous section, for people reporting narrative or biographical research, the words and discourse are themselves the matter of enquiry. The analysis largely depends on the transcript extracts presented to the reader, typically on a case by case basis. It is not unusual, in a book reporting this kind of research, to include extracts extending to several pages. Decisions sometimes have to be made about how far to break up long sections of transcript into chunks, for separate discussion. Doing this enables a reader to remember more of the conversation without turning back, but takes away some of the continuity of flow which may be a disadvantage in explaining interpretation of meaning. Looking back, one researcher described different strategies in presenting analysis of a seven page transcript extract. In one publication, the entire extract was followed by analysis and interpretation; in another article, separate pieces of the transcript extract were discussed in turn. In retrospect, the researcher felt that the latter approach had worked better. This approach did take away some of the continuity of the manuscript

but it was probably easier for the reader to follow the interpretation without turning back.

Where quotations were used for purposes other than as the matter for enquiry, choices about which spoken words to include and how to blend these with the researcher's narrative sometimes partly depended on the way data had been extracted and displayed. For researchers whose data extraction and display has depended on summary of transcript material, options for using direct quotations when reporting findings depend on the kind of cross referencing to transcripts that has been undertaken, or how much transcript data has been displayed verbatim in thematic charts or grids. Researchers whose technique of data display depends more on sorting and collating actual transcript extracts may have quicker and easier access to verbatim material. Where there is no transcript (through researcher choice or technical failure) researchers must make decisions at a very early stage in analysis as to whether and how to deal with any direct quotations they may want to use in writing up.

Using quotations as a way of laying out evidence or justifying interpretations and findings could lead to lengthy reports. Some people said that as they gained experience and confidence in their analytical skills they found themselves using quotations in this way less often, especially when there was pressure from funders or publishers for more succinct reports.

People who used quotations to explain to readers how research participants made links between issues, or why they had particular beliefs, also found that such quotations were often quite long. It was sometimes important to set alongside words spoken by a different person to explain how a contrasting perspective could arise. The extent to which this could be done was often constrained by the length of the overall report, and people who used quotations in this way said they had to be very selective.

Some researchers who used quotations for purposes of illustration of the analytical points made said they might also use quotations to represent the balance of feeling in the overall group or research participants. For example, if most participants had similar strong views on an issue, there might be three separate quotations from different people, presented in series, and then after explanatory text, a single quotation which illustrated the minority view. This approach took up space, however, so in choosing which quotations to use in this way, those which were expressed more succinctly might be selected. Others explained why they presented several quotations from different people to illustrate one point made by the researcher in terms of wanting to be inclusive rather than exclusive. When many people had a similar experience or point of view, but with a slightly different nuance, the words of each were valid and important.

Taking an inclusive approach also seemed important to researchers who used quotations for illustration. Some felt confident that reports they had written based on experiences of study groups of, say 25-30 people, had included some spoken words from everybody who took part. Making systematic checks of this kind also helped them avoid over-use of the words of participants who were particularly articulate or had a lot to say on many topics.

There was some agreement that giving as many participants as possible a chance of having a say directly usually meant searching for the shorter quotations which would take up less space.

There was a general wariness of using quotations which described particularly dramatic circumstances or extreme situations. However, there was not the same general avoidance of using quotations which included colourful language. Researchers who used quotations to bring vividness and immediacy to reports, or to explain the strength of people's feelings, felt that eloquent or forceful views expressed in colourful language added meaning or portrayed depth of feeling which they could not achieve in their own prose.

As we might expect, those interviewed who saw their qualitative work grounded within a particular school or tradition of research, or adopted a particular philosophical approach to research, made strong links between these and their selection and use of verbatim spoken words. Those who said they adopted a more pragmatic approach to their social research were more likely to say that they used quotations for a number of different reasons and in different ways. As with their writing generally, the researchers' approaches to inclusion of verbatim quotations from research participants was influenced by experiences of reading other authors' work; guidance and suggestions from colleagues or past supervisors; practices prevailing in research groups in which people worked; response of research funders and users; expectations of publishers, and comments from reviewers.

People with a long career in qualitative research reflected on the way their use of quotations had changed. Some who felt they had moved away from initial anxieties that qualitative research was somehow weaker than quantitative approaches and required defence and justification thought that they probably now used fewer verbatim quotations. With greater confidence and experience, it no longer seemed necessary to provide so much supporting material for their interpretations. However, another senior and experienced researcher thought there were more quotations in their more recent work. This was partly because technological developments meant that it was now much easier and quicker to store, retrieve, sort and represent transcript material.

Some people observed that reading other research reports or supervising junior staff or students had been steady influences on the development of their own approach.

There was a general feeling that there were plenty of examples of published qualitative research of poor quality, for example some work seemed little more than strings of interview extracts given apparent authority by sophisticated presentational format. Some of the researchers interviewed had themselves contributed to methodological texts or 'good practice' guides for writing up qualitative research. These were relatively recent initiatives, and others who had searched textbooks during the early 1990s for guidance in writing and use of quotations had been surprised by how little they found.

The person who worked within a participatory paradigm had a particular perspective on inclusion of spoken words. We have already described how this person challenged the very term 'quotation'. Similarly, there was rejection of the concept of 'selecting' which words to include in a report, with the connotations of researcher power and control. For this person, the way that people's own words appeared in a report would ideally be determined by the people who wanted to take part, who had their own agendas and ideas about the output. For this researcher, their own role might then be one of enabling and supporting people to achieve their aim and make their own voices heard. If the output was a written report, it was likely that more of this would be in the form of people's own words than in the form of researcher interpretation and analysis.

Researchers who include spoken words in a research report have to make decisions about their appearance on the page, and whether to make any editorial adjustments to transcript material. The next part of the paper addresses these points.

4. Presentation: editing, format and attribution

Inclusion of verbatim quotations in a research report goes beyond just deciding which words to use. Decisions must be taken about whether and how transcript material will be edited; what the quotations will look like on the page and how the spoken words will be attributed. Researchers interviewed talked about their views and practices here.

4.1 Editing

In Part 2 we described the approach taken by researchers interviewed to collection of data from interviews and group discussions, typically by tape-recording and transcription. Agreeing transcription conventions involves some decisions about the representation of spoken words as text. The transcripts returned to researchers for analysis generally already contain a number of constructions, such as use of punctuation and capital letters, and devices to communicate how the transcriber heard the spoken words, for example using a series of dots to indicate a pause.

We asked the researchers whether they then did further editing of transcript material themselves if they used this in reports.

Everybody agreed that this was an important issue. There was general commitment, once transcribing conventions had been agreed with (or accepted from) those who dealt with the tape-recordings, to presenting transcript material with as little editing as possible in order to mirror the words as spoken. Otherwise, it was hard to claim that the quotations provided either evidence, explanation or illustration, or enabled people's own voices to be heard. For researchers who took an analytical approach in which the absolute content of speech, and the length and type of verbal hesitations are critical, it was particularly important to do as little editing as possible. For example, researchers who conducted narrative and biographical analysis expected to use the 'ums' and 'ers' and interruptions for their interpretation and discussion of the emotional content of what was being said.

Among researchers working in other traditions of applied social research, the general commitment to relatively little editing was often balanced against issues of readability, issues of confidentiality and ethical practice. There were sometimes also pragmatic influences. As a result, researchers' practices varied considerably, as follows.

To enhance readability, some researchers expected to do some re-punctuation. It was also common practice to take out the 'ums' and 'ers', phrases such as 'I mean' and 'you know', and the word repetitions which pepper most people's speech.

One argument for doing this was that reading such words would be tedious and put readers off, and thus made it less likely that the quotations would be read. There were pragmatic reasons, in keeping down word length for journal articles and book chapters. Some researchers also perceived ethical issues. One person said it seemed patronising to reproduce the hesitations and false starts in normal speech, which told the reader nothing except that the speaker was taking some time to think or needed to practise what they wanted to say. Another felt even more strongly that reproducing the hesitations in some people's speech did them a disservice, because of negative judgments which readers might make about the speakers. Researchers who did what they called a '*light tidying-up*' said they would leave in verbal hesitations which were important for the analysis, however, and would make what they called '*subjective decisions*' here. They recognised the difference between this approach in applied social research and the approach taken in discourse and narrative analysis where the content of the verbal interaction was the material for analysis.

Another form of editing by the researchers was replacing some names or other identifying material with a general or explanatory term within square brackets, for purposes of confidentiality. Some people said they avoided over-use of this technique, however, because it was tedious and broke the flow for the reader.

Researchers who felt like this might choose not to use transcript excerpts which included names rather than have to insert square brackets.

Harder decisions were those concerning spoken words that might seem very different in comparison either with the author's prose or the way other respondents spoke (or both). Examples here were regional dialects, speech patterns among ethnic minority groups, or speech affected by impairments or health conditions. There was general commitment to being as inclusive as possible. However, there could be a fine balance between not excluding some people's words and not doing people a disservice. Making visible a particular way of speaking could establish 'difference' which was not relevant for the report, give people a level of anonymity different from that of other respondents, or cast them in a possibly negative light. Some readers, it was felt, might focus more on the way something had been said than on the meaning. Some researchers said they had been influenced here by receiving, or being told about by colleagues, negative reactions from research participants shown draft material. These participants did not like the way their regional dialect had been portrayed, or were embarrassed by feeling that they seemed inarticulate when their speech was set against the author's prose. Some researchers said they had been criticised by publishers and reviewers who thought that regional dialects might be stigmatising, or found particular swear words offensive.

Those least likely to edit out transcribers' phonetic representations (yeah, wanna, nowt) were people who had not had direct personal experience of negative response to their reports from participants. They agreed that without some editing there was danger that some people's voices would not be taken seriously, or might raise negative images, but still felt strongly that altering language changed some of the context and nuances in the information presented. It was argued that if research participants would not recognise words as their own, this would be wrong, even though it was unlikely that they would actually see the report.

Asked how they would deal with transcript material from people whose speech was significantly affected by impairment, for example pronounced stammer, or slurring associated with stroke or effect of medication, most researchers said they would make decisions to fit individual circumstances. Some research participants might want to be asked how they would like the researcher to deal with this, and would already be aware of potential impacts of the way they spoke.

4.2 Format

Looking across the general range of publications from qualitative research we find a range of different ways of setting out verbatim quotations on the page. Some authors use indentation techniques or embed phrases and sentences within their own prose; some put the quotations into boxes or margins. Similarly, we find a range of

approaches to type size, font, use of italics and use of quotation marks; and variable use of series of dots (three or four; within sentences and at the end of quotations, and at different relative frequency). We asked the researchers interviewed how much control they had over these aspects of publication, and which approaches they favoured.

Everybody said that what was important was that there was clear distinction for the reader between the author's narrative and the verbatim quotations. Using italicised type and indenting the quotations were popular ways of doing this, and considered to be traditional and readily recognised by readers. Most researchers wanted and expected to be able to control the appearance of the quotations to this extent, although one person made no decisions of their own about this, and accepted the publisher's decisions. People working within applied research centres said they often wrote reports within a general '*house style*' in which quotations traditionally appeared as italicised indentations, and were happy with this convention. Some researchers also referred here to the publishing guidelines of their professional associations which recommended ways of setting out text.

People who generally used blocked indentations for sentences or longer passages spoken by participants had also sometimes set shorter spoken phrases or sentences within their own narrative paragraphs, typically setting these within double quotation marks to make clear distinction. Whether they did this depended on how they were using the quotations. However, care was needed here. For example, it was important that readers were not led to assume that the author shared the views of the speaker.

Researchers who wrote within publishing conventions of narrative or biographical research, where spoken words may extend to long passages or several pages, also emphasised the importance of distinguishing spoken words from author's commentary. The tradition here was to have speakers' names within a left hand margin of the page, and to use ordinary type face and size for the spoken words which followed.

Some researchers reported increasingly strong influences from publishers keen to make the appearance of publications and reports attractive to readers. Some publishers favoured stylistic techniques such as coloured fonts, shaded boxes or divided pages for presenting spoken words. Researchers whose work had been published in this way thought, in retrospect, some such approaches seemed more successful than others. They perceived some danger in using techniques which might divert attention, lead to inappropriately selective reading, or put readers off by making pages look too dense.

The interviewers asked researchers specifically how readers should interpret the series of dots which appeared within the verbatim quotations within their own publications. Some researchers said that a series of three dots would indicate that

the speaker had paused, and if they had mulled over something for a particularly long time, this might be indicated to the reader by a longer series of dots. But others felt that dots should not be used to indicate pauses, and themselves used a series of dots to indicate that they had edited the transcript by taking out words or phrases. (The technical term for this device is an ellipsis.) Phrases taken out and replaced by dots were likely to be the kinds of repetitions and false starts referred to in the previous section. A series of dots at the end of the indented quotation meant, for some researchers, that the speaker had gone on talking about this specific topic. In general, however, people doubted that they were always systematic about their use of series of dots, and when they looked at some of their previous publications during the research interview, sometimes could not remember what dots meant in particular quotations.

4.3 Attributions

There were a number of inter-related influences on the way in which quotations were attributed to speakers, including the purpose of the research, the topic area, the purpose in using the quotation, readability of the report and ensuring anonymity. These influences came together in different ways in each publication or report.

People who were used to undertaking policy-related research to evaluate services or programmes, or find out more about the circumstances and experiences of particular groups of people, were used to attributing quotations using analytical categories and descriptors relevant to the topic. For example, indented quotations might be followed by square brackets containing a label such as *'parent'*, *'carer'*, *'landlord'*, *'customer'* or *'GP'*. Some researchers were finding that research funders were asking for increasingly detailed labels of this kind, for example specifying age, gender, and descriptors of employment and financial situation of the speaker at the end of each quotation. Such an approach could become tedious to read, however, and some researchers wondered how readers used this kind of information. Some felt that having a number of descriptors in the attribution left too much of the interpretation to the reader, who was left to decide which components were relevant to the point being made. Attaching a number of descriptors to people's words could also make it harder to ensure anonymity, and care was needed. In research conducted in identified locations, an attribution by gender and a fairly general job title, when combined with the speech pattern or view expressed in the quotation, might identify the speaker to readers.

In some reports, it was considered more appropriate to deal with context and analytical categories within the author's narrative, so that the specific attribution could be more general, for example gender and age group. Researchers who sometimes felt uncomfortable about giving labels to people favoured these more general attributions. It was not always possible to avoid fairly specific categorical labels,

however. It was acknowledged that some research participants might not recognise themselves among those so labelled, and that some might not like the label attached to their words.

In research in which it was not important to attribute each quotation to people according to analytical categories, or where all contextual material was dealt with in the narrative, researchers might opt to use a name, or a number in attributing a quotation. Numbers were sometimes combined with gender, for example M12 or W22. Using names or numbers could be helpful during analysis, because they helped to keep pictures of participants in the mind of the analyst. They could also be helpful in reporting findings by maintaining continuity, or reminding readers that a person had featured already in the account. Names or numbers also demonstrated to readers how quotations were distributed across the whole study group, and could be a powerful constraint on the researcher's over-use of the words of a few particularly articulate people.

Names used were usually pseudonyms chosen by the researcher, and some described complex systems for selecting fictitious names. Issues which arose included whether pseudonyms should reflect ethnicity, generational age or social class, and different researchers had reached opposite conclusions here. One option for selection of a pseudonym was asking participants to choose one themselves, but a person who had tried this ran into problems when some people chose names of real people, including their friends. Some people taking part in research were said to prefer their real name to be used. This did not always seem a simple solution, however, because researchers felt that some people who said at the time that they did not mind being identifiable or, indeed, would like this, might change their mind later and regret that their circumstances and views had been made public.

The researcher committed to working within a participatory approach explained that it was inappropriate for the researcher to decide the kinds of attributions that accompanied people's words. There was a range of preferences and ideas among participants and how words were attributed in written outputs thus depended on decisions taken by those who took part.

This part of the paper has already raised a number of ethical issues identified by the researchers in relation to use of spoken words. The next part explores further researchers' perceptions of their responsibilities to research participants in relation to use of their spoken words.

5. Responsibilities to speakers

We asked the researchers how far they thought people taking part in their research understood how their spoken words might be used, and what responsibilities they felt towards them. For most of those interviewed, the main opportunities to explain to participants how spoken words might be used and to seek their consent came at the stage of recruitment and then again at fieldwork interviews. This is explored in the first section. The second section reports researchers' experiences of showing draft chapters or reports to the research participants.

In the final section, we conclude our findings with the researchers' reflections on their use of verbatim quotations.

5.1 Participants' understanding of use of spoken words

There was variation in the amount of and kind of discussion researchers expected to have at the beginning of interviews about what would happen to tape recordings. Researchers with considerable experience of interviewing professional people, experts or representatives of organisations were aware of the potential for their identification in written output. One person said such participants were given fairly detailed explanation of the way in which their spoken words might appear, and remembered one research study in which participants were shown draft material to see how their own words had been chosen.

Such explicit discussions were less likely when participants were members of the general public or service users, however. A common practice was that if use of spoken words was mentioned during recruitment and seeking consent the emphasis was likely to be a more general assurance of anonymity in the report rather than detailed discussion about how spoken words might be chosen for display. There was an assumption that people were often not very interested in how what they said might eventually appear, as long as they remained anonymous and the research would be useful. There was limited time for explanation at the beginning of an interview, and how verbatim words might appear did not seem central enough to warrant the time that would be necessary for proper explanation to people unfamiliar with a research report. Another view was that the more explanatory detail offered when seeking consent, the more nervous some people became, and the less they heard. A typical approach to explaining to members of the public how tape recordings of interviews would be used was to say that the report would present everybody's viewpoint, that their own words might be used to show how people felt or what happened to them, but that it would not be possible to identify them.

There was some unease around this topic however. Many people who take part in social research, the researchers believed, like the idea that what they say to the

researcher may have some part in bringing about change but have a limited idea of what a report might look like or how it might be used. Respondents' readiness to talk about personal and difficult circumstances and their apparent trust in the researcher's integrity meant considerable responsibility for the researcher to help them understand what they were engaged in, but this was hard to do and there was limited time. When researchers did expect to spend quite a lot of time initially talking about the kind of report which would be written and what would happen to it, this was usually when the interview explored especially sensitive issues.

Researchers in this study had varied experiences of asking participants to sign consent forms. Practice often depended on requirements of funders or ethics committees. Experience of using informed consent forms is the subject of a separate research project funded by ESRC (Wiles *et al.*, 2006) and this was not pursued in depth. What we did ask in this study was whether there was any experience of using a consent form which specifically mentioned use of verbatim quotations. None of the researchers interviewed could remember using such a form. However, there was a strong feeling that consent forms will increasingly be required within social research. In an environment in which more attention is being paid to copyright issues, and in which research reports and articles are becoming much more generally accessible, some researchers expected a new focus of attention on the use of interview material.

As to how far those interviewed really understood how what they said in interviews and discussions might be used by the researcher, it was suggested that professional people generally had a better overall understanding than the general public. It was thought likely that no matter how detailed were the interviewer's explanations, some members of the public had little sense of what a research report would look like, or how researchers might write up their findings for journals.

5.2 Showing draft material or reports to participants

One way of checking whether participants are happy with a research report or journal article might be to show them a draft copy. Researchers in this study group felt it could sometimes be useful to take back draft material to validate findings. Most of their experience in doing this had been with service providers, for example to check accuracy of descriptive data, complex rules or procedures, or to check whether organisations or senior professional people wished to comment on the content of the report. The process sometimes proved useful in filling in significant gaps or suggesting a reinterpretation. Only one person could remember the use of verbatim quotations being discussed during this type of consultation. In this case, some health professionals shown verbatim quotations to be used recognised their own words, but nobody raised any objections or made suggestions about the way they wanted to be represented.

A common view among the researchers interviewed in this study was that in much contracted policy-related social research timetable and budget constraints mean they are unable to return to service users or members of the public to show them transcripts of the research interviews or a draft report. Although this might be desirable on ethical grounds or to check validity of findings, the costs and logistics of trying to do so made it unusual. In a few situations in which it had been possible to take back draft material, researchers said participants had sometimes recognised themselves in the text and in the verbatim quotations, and some people who had taken part in group discussions recognised each other. There were generally positive responses and sometimes amusement or surprise, but not everybody liked the picture of themselves they saw when they read their own words.

There was some experience of receiving comments from participants on final reports or publications. Some researchers said that research funders now expect reports or summaries to be made available to people who took part in the research, but it was relatively unusual for researchers to be contacted by research participants who had read a summary and wanted to make comments. Again, some researchers remembered a few situations in which participants from user groups or the general public had been shown final reports including quotations, and their views sought. Some service users involved had responded positively but, again, there were occasional disappointments in the way people perceived themselves.

The researchers interviewed did have some reservations about returning draft material and final reports or summaries to respondents. A number of people said this could raise *'tricky issues'*. Some people, it was suggested, might not want to be reminded about what they had said about their relationships or private circumstances. People moved on in their lives, and might not like now what they said in an interview. Researchers also had no control over who read material sent through the post. There might be negative impacts in some families, for example if participants had given views or information not known by partners. Researchers who felt like this said that sending out research summaries should not be dealt with routinely as a simple administrative matter at the end of each project. Decisions made should take into account factors such as the topics discussed, participants' circumstances and the time that had elapsed.

The views of the person committed to a participatory research paradigm have not been included thus far in this chapter, because of the underlying difference in attitude to the concept of 'informed consent' and rejection of the notion of control of the report by the researcher. In a more participatory approach, people taking part shape the research and decide themselves how to do things. As an example, a recent local project was described in which the research output included a short written report; posters displayed in community settings; leaflets delivered to all households, and newspaper items. Some of this material included photographs of contributors, alongside their spoken or written words. Those who had contributed had some

control in these processes. Anybody who had taken part in a tape-recorded interview was offered a copy of the tape-recording or the transcript, and had the chance to change their contribution or withdraw altogether at any stage. It was important for people to see the context in which what they had said would be used and how they were represented. Experience was that people liked this approach; not all wanted to exercise control but they liked having the opportunity.

5.3 Researchers' final reflections

At the end of the research interview, we asked people to reflect on their use of verbatim quotations and how satisfied they felt with their approach.

Most researchers could point to one or more particular research reports using verbatim quotations which they felt most satisfied with. They spoke of achieving a good balance between their narrative and the spoken words, and they were satisfied with the way in which they had used the quotations. In retrospect, some of the reports people felt least satisfied with were those, they suggested, in which verbatim quotations had perhaps been over-used, or used as a substitute for fuller analysis, sometimes in the face of time constraints. Some recognised their over-use of quotations for purposes of illustration in an early stage of their research career.

People who had long careers in qualitative research said that, inevitably, their approach to using quotations had changed over the years. This was related to increasing confidence, skills and understanding. They were also influenced by experience of seeing how research users responded to verbatim quotations, and the meaning they took from reports. This did not mean, however, that they had responded immediately to funders' requests and preferences in relation to quotations. Different funders could themselves be at different stages in understanding the value of quotations, and researchers sometimes had a guiding role here.

Developments in technology had provided some new opportunities for using quotations in writing, in that words could be printed and moved around more easily and quickly. People who were involved in training junior researchers said this made them aware of the danger of responding to technique, rather than focusing on the underlying purpose of using the spoken words.

Finally, there was agreement that there have been important developments in understanding about the impact on readers of the way in which people are represented in reports and publications, and increasing awareness of writers' responsibilities here. This kind of understanding, researchers suggested, was likely to have influenced the way they now wrote.

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Appendix A

Letter of explanation and invitation

E-mail: pac2@york.ac.uk

2003

Dear

Using verbatim quotations in reporting qualitative social research

I am writing to invite you to take part in the research study which I am undertaking with Roy Sainsbury. As you may know, we have an ESRC grant in the current Research Methods programme for a project entitled 'Verbatim quotations in applied social research: theory, practice and impact'. I enclose a flier which summarises our aims and approach, and relevant extracts from the research proposal.

The work is going well, and we are now in the third phase – talking to authors of recent social research texts which report qualitative research which has included interviews and/or group discussions. We are approaching you because when we asked a group of experts in different areas of social policy to suggest significant research which has made an important contribution to knowledge, policy or practice since 1990, some of your publications were included in their suggestions.

In the work we have done already in this project we have found numerous different ways in which authors use quotations. At this stage in the project we seek to understand what lies behind this and we have no views as to whether one way of doing things is any better than another way.

I do hope you will agree to take part in an informal discussion and that we can arrange a convenient time and place. What I would like to explore with you includes:

- how you learned to write up findings from qualitative research
- whether your approach has changed during your career, and why
- what influences the way in which you use verbatim quotations from respondents
- what influences the appearance of the quotations in your publications (indents, quotation marks, italics, transcription conventions etc).

Continued/...

.../2

In preparation for the discussion you might like to think across a number of your publications since 1990 (books, reports, chapters or pamphlets). It would be helpful if you had a couple to hand for us to look at together.

The discussion will be confidential, and we shall not identify people taking part in this stage of the work. If you are able to help us you will have early access to results of our study, and we will tell you as soon as working papers and reports are available.

We do hope you will agree to take part, and can suggest a suitable time for us to meet, for up to one hour.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Anne Corden

Appendix B

Topic Guide

Verbatim Quotations

Topic Guide for Interviews with Researchers

Objectives: to explore how qualitative researchers use verbatim quotations from participants, in reporting their findings.

Introduction:

Remind about aims of research and approach adopted

Explain why chosen

Explain topics to be covered

Check time available, need for breaks

Explain confidentiality of discussion.

Seek permission to use tape recorder.

Personal background and experience in qualitative social research

Background/education

Social research discipline or tradition

Career in social research: practice and teaching; main areas of interest

Qualitative/quantitative approaches

Current post/responsibilities: amount of social research undertaken

Approach to using verbatim quotations

Thinking about your reports from qualitative studies:

How do you capture respondents' words?

Are transcriptions made: who by/what conventions used?

What analytical techniques have you used?

How enjoyable is the writing task?

What has influenced the way in which you present verbatim quotations in your reports?

What is your purpose in presenting respondents' actual words?

How do you choose which quotations to present?

Do you use quotations in different ways for different audiences?

How do you read quotations in other author's reports?

Has your approach to using quotations changed? how? what influenced change?

Influences on the appearance of the verbatim quotations in your publications

Look together at 2/3 of respondent's publications since 1990, and explore:

Choice; tradition; journal requirements; funders' requirements

Balance between author's text and respondents' words

Length of quotations; format; appearance

Use of quotation marks, type size, font and italics, series of dots

How much editing has been done? to what purpose?

Approach to swearing, colourful language

Approach to attributions

Issues of interest

To conclude, we would like to explore with you some of the issues which interest us at the moment.

Do respondents understand how verbatim speech will be used?

How is consent obtained to presentation of respondents' words in publications?

Have you ever shown respondents the publications which include their verbatim quotations?

What do you do when respondents' spoken words, when transcribed, look different in some way (dialect; speech/hearing impairments; English as second language; repeated swearing)?

Have you used quotations from interviews involving an interpreter?

In retrospect, which of your publications from qualitative research are you most/least satisfied with, including your approach to quotations?