ACADEMIC VENTRILOQUISM: TENSION BETWEEN THE INCLUSION, REPRESENTATION, AND ANONYMITY OF PARTICIPANTS WHEN PUBLISHING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

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Abstract

The balance between including participants in research, representing them in academic writing, and maintaining their anonymity, can be in constant flux. Greater representation may mean compromising participants' anonymity, whilst research that is more inclusive may lead to academic representations of data being challenged as inaccurate according to the participants whose data is presented. The situation for the academic in these scenarios becomes akin to walking a tightrope between advocating on behalf of the participants, and speaking as an authority on the analysis and interpretation of participants' data. To deconstruct these methodological and ethical issues, this chapter critically considers the genuine inclusion of research participants in published health and social sciences research, and argues how poor academic practices may lead to tokenism or distinct power imbalances where academic researchers' voices become elevated compared to the participants' voices. This is done by introducing the concept of 'academic ventriloquism', whereby researchers may 'throw' their voices. This is a term used in ventriloquism to explore how ventriloquists create the illusion their voice is coming elsewhere (the puppet). Noting how often readers are left unable to 'hear' participant's voices through published research, or where participants' voices compete for line-space, the three sometimes competing concepts of inclusion, representation, and anonymity are discussed. Despite advances in researching 'with' rather than conducting research 'on' participants, the writing-up of academic research remains primarily the responsibility of the researcher who must develop the ability to 'throw' his/her voice, so that participants appear to be heard. The chapter presents several ways in which this can be problematic and propose recommendations for facilitating the inclusion and accurate representation of participants in written academic research, to not only promote participant voices and make them audible, but also document them faithfully so they are a genuine reflection of the participant from whom they came.

Keywords

Anonymity; dissemination; inclusion; pseudo-anonymization; representation; research participants.

1. Introduction

Words mean more than what is set down on paper. It takes the human voice to infuse them with deeper meaning ~Maya Angelou (1928-2014)

Research is nothing, but for the data which participants so generously provide, often at no tangible benefit to them, and occasionally at great personal (psychological or emotional) cost. The notion that participants will willingly divulge their personal experiences despite being on the losing end of a costs-benefits analysis, is perpetuated in the health and social sciences alongside the concept of 'participatory catharsis' (see Bill, 1996). This is a phenomenon in research whereby participants leave a research setting feeling they have gained some – albeit unintentional – therapeutic benefit from processing and recounting their story to a trusted stranger (McClain & Amar, 2013), in a designated, non-judgmental 'safe space' (Silverio et al., 2020). Within the academy, it is widely accepted that to counteract this wilful plundering of experiential data, researchers must place emphasis on participants' voices and appropriately acknowledge the origin and source of said data, detailing its context and scope, whilst ensuring the participants themselves are provided with adequate anonymity so as not to be identified. Although there has been a long history of developing language to label these delicate acts of balance between inclusion, representation, and anonymity, the colloquial and commonly accepted language within academic texts has been to 'give' research participants voice (MacMillan, 1995). This in itself can be problematic, as it has been argued that in order to give participants a voice, one has to have taken it from somewhere else (Ashby, 2011). This renders the researcher all-powerful with the ability to elevate certain participants' voices, whilst silencing others at all stages of the research from data collection to analysis, interpretation, and write-up (Kristensen & Ravn, 2015). We acknowledge this scholarly debate and the methodological and ethical issues that accompany it, and we situate this chapter firmly within it. In doing so, we are primarily concerned about the *hearing* of those participant voices. We thus concentrate not on what we can take from those voices, but how researchers can elevate them by ensuring they offer appropriate platforms from which participants can narrate their own stories. This avoids confining participant voice solely to the phases of data collection (see Adams et al., 2020; Silverio, 2020).

With this in mind, we refer the reader back to the epigraph which opened this chapter from decorated poet, memoirist, and civil rights activist Maya Angelou. This statement highlights that human voice is necessary to infuse published words with meaning; and writing alone accounts for merely words on a page, devoid of substance, heart, soul, or desire. To ensure academic faithfulness to participant data, a series of methodological tools have been employed by qualitative researchers across the health and social sciences. Whilst not an exhaustive list, what follows are examples of how more genuine representations of participant data have been achieved. Although, as some have argued (see Mazzei, 2008), it is difficult to know what is a genuine or 'true' representation of voice, if one is uncertain of the origin of said voice, when voice has happened, or indeed, if one is unclear as to what does and what does not constitute voice. Nonetheless, and assuming voice is captured when researchers enter the data collection phase, some have been known to attempt the salvage of faithful representation of voice through the employment of critical reflective stances when collecting, analyzing, and interpreting participant data (Belfrage & Hauf, 2017). Such processes work to ensure the maintenance of an 'objective outsider', rather than 'subjective spectator' status by the researcher (Silverio, 2018a), thus allowing participant voices to be centralized in the research. Similarly, researchers have written about undertaking 'data-driven' or 'data-heavy' research practices (Glaser, 1978; Silverio et al., 2019), where the primary focus remains on the raw data and the final analytic product (i.e. themes or a theory or a linked discourse) are reminiscent of the verbatim narrative provided by the participants.

Further, analysis of 'double-voicing' (Baxter, 2014) or 'multivoicedness' (Aveling, Gillespie, & Cornish, 2016) has been popularized to disentangle participants' contradictory statements, whilst offering space and analytical resource to explore and unpack opposing and inconsistent discourse, thus unveiling a deeper meaning to areas of questioning which elicit 'narrative conflict'. Equally, a new frontier in qualitative research has focused on the analysis of silences (Glenn, 2004; Kawabata & Gastaldo, 2015), to understand which questions elicited a retraction of participation or discomfort in answering. Finally, and perhaps most conceptually simple, is 'bracketing' (Tufford & Newman, 2012), whereby researchers preconceived notions or *a priori* ideas about the data are actively set aside during the analytical processes to ensure the researcher's voice does not dominate those of the participants (Gearing, 2004). This process has also been referred to as 'silencing' one's own voice through iterative analyzes (and re-reading data) to ensure both inadvertent and advertent researcher-led claims are consciously excluded from the analysis (Silverio, 2018b).

This idea of being able to silence one voice in the participant-researcher relationship, whilst activating another is important to the concept of 'academic ventriloquism' we introduce in this chapter. We use this concept to critically consider the ways in which academic authors can 'throw' their voices, thus creating the illusion that participants' are being heard, when really the voice on display is that of the researcher interpreting the participant's voice. Ventriloquism – in its true sense – is an act of stagecraft in which a person creates the illusion that their voice is coming from elsewhere. The name itself comes from the Latin *'venter'* meaning 'belly' and *'loqui'* meaning 'speak', thus the literal translation is 'to speak from one's belly'. The act and art of ventriloquism requires the ability to 'throw' one's voice, as if to make it seem the voice is originating from elsewhere (usually a mannequin atop of the performer's knee), whilst artfully paying attention and listening to the speaking dummy whilst, when in fact they are the one speaking (Goldblatt, 2014). If we extend the ventriloquist scene to academia and academic research, the voice-source [participants' data] is provided to the ventriloquist [academic author] and features itself in the performance. We argue that examples of this voice-source include the participant's verbatim excerpts from interviews, focus groups, diaries, and other qualitative media. However, the script can be manipulated by the ventriloquist [academic author] who may reinterpret the data depending on the reaction of the audience [the academic community such as journals, funders, or peer reviewers]. Thus, between the time of recording and agreeing a script [data collection and transcription/data cleaning], the ventriloquist [researcher] may adapt and re-write [analyze and interpret] the script, to ensure maximum effect *for* and maximum reaction *from* the audience [the academic community]. In short, researchers have many opportunities to misdirect readers as to the origin of the data to make it seem as though the data they present has been quoted from the participants themselves, when in fact, authors may have engaged in artful, and occasionally ad-libbed, reinterpretations of the data. They do this by throwing their own voice, in order to make their voice and not the verbatim data, the final analytic result. Whilst this voice may be reminiscent of the verbatim data, it can rarely be considered a faithful representation.

Having introduced the concept of academic ventriloquism, this chapter is structured as follows. First, this concept of academic ventriloquism is applied to three key concepts of inclusion, representation, and anonymity, and consider how they relate to an academic authors ability to throw their voice. In doing so, the chapter discusses the need for the maintenance of participant anonymity and its contrast to the requirement to be able to identify the academic author and their voice. The chapter is concluded by proposing some recommendations for facilitating the inclusion of participants in the writing-up of academic research to promote and make their voice audible, whilst maintaining the balance between representative data and empirical analysis and interpretation.

2. Throwing the Voice: Tensions between Inclusion, Representation, and Anonymity

Data collected and used in qualitative research are, by their very nature, open to interpretation. They are the anecdotes, stories, musings, thoughts, feelings, perceptions, experiences, and emotions of individuals told to the researcher or uncovered through history, in the case of archival research. Humans are great storytellers, and we find endless ways to preserve the memory of events which occur or in which we participate over the lifecourse (Silverio, 2020; Thomas & Znaniecki, 1920/1996; Wainrib, 1992; Worth & Hardill, 2015). In doing so, we amass countless words which we bring together as narrative representations of the events, which can be embellished, obscured, forgotten, deliberately omitted, or (mis)interpreted. The task of the researcher is to make sense of these narratives in the context of that one person (participant) and across the context of the data from all persons who take part (the dataset). This act of collecting data from personal archival matter, or through purposeful conversations (see Burgess 1984; 1988) is the first and only time the researcher has to make a true representation of the narrative being shared, for there may not be another opportunity to check the recorded information for accuracy. It is also the first opportunity the academic researcher has to obfuscate details in their act of academic ventriloquism. Despite advances in research *with* rather than *on* participants through participatory research agendas and better collaborative working practices, as well as the advancement of more transparent and open academic research practices, the writing-up of research remains largely the responsibility of the academic researcher. There are a number of ways in which this can be problematic, owing to decisions made by the academic, mostly independent of the participants, and sometimes in the absence of any other academic colleagues (in the case of single-author manuscripts). This, ultimately affects the inclusion and representation, of participants, and undoubtedly effects the ability for participants' voices to be heard. What follows are more detailed assessments of the key concepts of inclusion, representation, and anonymity. Specifically, how the academic ventriloquist can manipulate each of these in order to deliver the final act is considered.

2.1 Inclusion

On a surface-level, inclusion may appear to be a simple and straightforward concept to achieve. However, in academic writing, inclusion goes beyond simply *presence* or *absence*, as a balance must be struck between personal data being kept anonymous and participants being written about as individuals within a dataset and not just as 'data'. Furthermore, academics must also deal with the inclusion of persons who hold an unequal status with them as a participant in research (Karnieli-Miller, Strier, & Pessach, 2009). Commonly the researcher holds a position of academic authority, whilst the participant holds the knowledge researchers so desire. The participant in research, therefore, may at once feel they are of inferior and superior status. Inferior, as they are participating in the research of a highly educated individual who works for an academic institution, which can, in itself, be intimidating, particularly when the aim of the research may be to investigate emotional or traumatic events. Yet, superior because, without them and their recounted experiences, there simply is no research.

It has been argued that for research to be truly inclusive, participants must be included at every stage of the research process – from study design; applying for funding and ethical approvals (where applicable and appropriate); to data collection, management, analysis, and interpretation; and finally to write-up, publication, and dissemination (see Wilkinson and Wilkinson, 2017). Whilst many initiatives have been developed to include participants, clusters of participant involvement, usually around study design and data collection have been noticed. This leads to uneven inclusion of participants and an over-reliance on participants who are confident orators, whilst less confident public speakers may be excluded. In the United Kingdom (UK), the National Institute for Health Research [NIHR] have long provided guidance on how best to initiate Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement [PPIE] in research through their INVOLVE resources (NIHR, 1996; 2019), which proffer guidance on how participants should be consulted on research and what remuneration is appropriate for such involvement. Further, they have recently launched their INCLUDE initiative (NIHR, 2020). This aims for applied (health) research in the UK to better engage participants in research, especially those who are under-represented or under-served in society, such as members of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic groups; those with limited-to-no English-language ability; people with various disabilities; and those from low socio-economic backgrounds, or with high social complexity. They state good quality inclusion can be achieved by having the community of interest embedded as part of the research infrastructure, who can be engaged at various checkpoints along the course of the research. Participants who engage in this way have to be properly recompensed for their time and contributions (NIHR, 2019), for which researchers' budgets or resource allocation may be ill-equipped (Oliver, Kothari, & Mays, 2019). Researchers may have to work hard to sustain such high levels of engagement (see Adams et al., 2020), and/or work with relevant gatekeepers who can safeguard both participant and researcher interests and resources (Emmel et al., 2007).

The most obvious way participants are included within published outputs is through verbatim quotations taken from interview or focus group transcripts, or other sources of data. However, participants' perspectives of these quotations have rarely been sought (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006). Whilst some participants may be disappointed at how few of their words a researcher has chosen to use, others have been shocked at how strongly they have featured within published work: *"I thought it would be tiny little one phrase that we said, in a huge big pile of papers"* (Pinter & Zandian, 2015, p. 235). To counter these issues, some qualitative researchers engage participants in the selection of quotations and interpretation of their meaning. This process has many guises. Some authors have included participants in decisions about what content is included within an article through interview transcript approval (Mero-Jaffe, 2011; Wilkinson, 2015), whereas others have sought approval of analytic meaning or empirical interpretation through member-checking (Goldblatt, Karnieli-Miller, & Neumann, 2011); that is, having participants approve final analytical results, discussions, and conclusions.

Approving transcripts with participants is considered good practice in terms of ethics in qualitative research; however, some have questioned its usefulness (Thomas, 2017). For instance, it also promotes the opportunity for participants to redact great swathes of data after having time to reflect upon what they have said, which may limit its utility. Member-checking has quickly fallen out of favor for various reasons tied in with ethics and maintenance of empiricism in the social sciences, with ethics being most often raised as an issue (Chase, 2017; Guillemin & Heggen, 2009; Hewitt, 2007). To offer the participant's own transcript back to them for approval is one thing, however, to allow participants who, for the majority of studies, will be untrained in the discipline or the methodological approaches, leaves empirical, analytical, interpretation open to lay-critique. For instance, requests may be submitted by participants for research conclusions to be changed on the back of participants' discomfort with what has been empirically reached (MacMillan, 1995). More recently, training for participant-researchers has been experimented with in order to ensure participants' inclusion in analysis and write-up meets the requisite standards of empiricism, ethics, and rigor, as are expected from the academic researchers who are leading the project (see Kara, 2017; Kellett et al., 2004; Newburn et al., 2020; Probst, 2016).

Merro-Jaffe (2011) notes the transfer of transcripts to participants is intended to empower participants by allowing them control of what is utilized within the analysis. However, sharing all the data and analysis (regardless of whether it has been anonymized) with participants before the manuscript has been drafted, creates the opportunity for participants to be 'outed', if the population of interest were known to one another, whereas, the researcher may have carefully selected less identifiable data to include in the draft manuscript. Further, Wilkinson and Wilkinson (2017) state that when participants are checking the researcher's interpretation of their voices, attention should not only be paid to addressing concerns of *"Is that what I said?"* (Merro-Jaffe, 2011, p. 231), but also *how* things are said. These include notation of accent, dialect, enunciation, and speech characteristics, such as grunts, false sentence starts or stammers, pauses, bursts of laughter, bouts of crying, repetitions, gestures, and reference to body language. These notations can all offer important context, which may be important for certain qualitative methodologies (see Silverio et al., 2019).

Here, conflicts arise between a researcher's desire to present narratives as were originally stated to preserve their academic and empirical integrity, versus how participants might want their narratives to be presented after time and space for reflection on the account they gave. Where participants may wish to embellish or embolden some parts of their narrative *post hoc*, or even edit or expurgate things they have said which they believe may compromise them, others may want to completely erase their participation from record and, therefore, expunge themselves from the dataset. Inclusion of participants in all aspects of research, therefore, allows for the first act of academic ventriloquism to be played out. Researchers will have to work quickly to diffuse any ill-feeling participants may have when seeing the empirical analysis and interpretation for the first time. Likewise, it is the first occasion where academic researchers can throw their voice to interpret participants' narratives in a way which will be acceptable to the academic audiences they are compelled to please. Inclusion can, therefore, be tokenistic to ensure there is a record of inclusion so that a brief sentence can be included in a methods section of an article which 'ticks a box' on the peer reviewer's checklist when, in essence, the academic ventriloquist may obfuscate the true level of participant inclusion to make it appear more than it actually was. If inclusion is problematic, it is then only correct to turn to representation, which goes beyond the involvement of participants in the research, to the faithfulness to the original words and meaning.

2.2 Representation

The concept of representation may be – as suggested above – a little abstract in its meaning, and difficult to conceptualize when working empirically. The idea behind representation is such that participants are not only included in the research, but that research findings and final analytic results of such empirical exercises are a faithful portrayal of the participants from which data were derived. Despite its importance, representation of participants in published work has received relatively limited scholarly attention (Wilkinson & Wilkinson, 2017).

Representation is a complicated issue in health and social science research. This is because the researcher reflects a vision of the reality of a participant who has been subject to distortion through the analytic and interpretive phases of research (Foster, 2007; 2009). The interpretation of the participant's voice may also suffer more practical distortions, such a poor audio recording, issues with handwriting, meaning being wrongly translated or having no direct equivalent for explanations between languages. It is perhaps unsurprising then, that alongside discussions of representation in academic research exist discussions of the antithesis: (mis)representation (Moosa, 2013). This crisis of representation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) calls into question the accepted qualitative wisdom concerning truth, method, and representation. For instance, Moosa (2013), reflecting on her educational qualitative research in a small community, felt her ability to accurately represent her participants was impacted by time constraints to complete her thesis. Time in qualitative research is in itself a whole issue which could constitute a debate of its own (see Silverio, Hall, & Sandall, 2020), but suffice to say, time is a major pressure working against perfectionism of all forms in qualitative research, including accurate representation of participants.

Contemporary acts of representation have often involved representation through authorship. This has become a key emerging debate for academics considering the inclusion of research participants as authors. Whilst some authors have included the names of participants as authors in their texts, for instance Kellett et al. (2004), where Ruth Forrest, Naomi Dent, and Simon Ward (all aged 10) are named as co-authors, and Tomm's (1992) article, which names three of this therapy clients Cynthia, Andrew, and Vanessa as co-authors; this is far from the norm in academic research and publishing. Benwell et al. (2020) hoped to include 'Volunteers at KCC Live Community Radio Station' in the list of authors for their recent publication, yet this was not included in the final print due to the online manuscript submission portal requiring input of author first and last names and affiliations. However, collaborative groups are more welcomed in health sciences where it is not uncommon for long lists of authors to be followed by, or abbreviated to, a study consortium name, although this is not without its problems (see Thelwall, 2020). Indeed, the disciplines which straddle both health and social sciences (e.g. Public Health, Psychology, Psychiatry etc.), and work in a more cross-disciplinary way, appear to be ahead of the curve when it comes to participant, public, and patient representation on academic articles, with recent examples of meta-representation being published. That is, academics and participants co-authoring guidance on how best to represent participants in research (see Fernandez Turienzo et al., forthcoming; Rose & Kalathil, 2019). This could be, at least in part, to the World's first – and to date, *only* – Professor of User-Led Research (Prof. Diana Rose, herself a service user and academic), being appointed at the renowned interdisciplinary Institute of Psychiatry (now known as the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience, King's College London). Arguably, listing participants as authors is an area of tension, particularly regarding participant's responsibilities for the integrity of article content. Recent advances have seen guidance published on what constitutes authorship versus what would require acknowledgement. For example, the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE, 1997) make the distinction between those who should be named as authors and those who should be named in the acknowledgements clear. They state that all authors should meet criteria for substantial contribution to study design, analysis and interpretation of data, drafting the article, and approving the final manuscript, with collaborators not meeting all three criteria only being considered for acknowledgement.

Furthermore, new thinking has aimed to ensure transparency of contribution, notably with the uptake by many biomedical journals of the 'Contributor Role Taxonomy' (CRediT; Allen, O'Connell, & Kiermer, 2019), which discusses contributorship comprising fourteen different aspects, including conceptualization, funding acquisition, formal analysis, and project administration, as well as drafting and editing the manuscript. This has led to the following, commonly permissible rules: First author is unanimously accepted as being the person who led the research project and drafted the first iteration of the manuscript. The corresponding author is usually this same (first) author, or in the case of this person being a junior researcher with a fixed-term contract (and, therefore, likely to move institutions regularly or soon after the project has completed), is usually assigned to the most senior author on the paper. Where disciplines differ is on this idea of 'senior' authorship. For the health sciences, the last author position is coveted for its association with 'senior' author status (usually reserved for head of a research group, laboratory, department, or in the case of a cross-institution or cross-departmental collaboration, the person who supervised the project and those working on it). In the social sciences, no such attribution of 'senior' authorship exists, and the next most important place on a paper authorship line-up is second author, with order of authorship usually aligned with contribution, from most to least. We must, therefore, be judicious with who is included as an author on manuscripts, to avoid gratuitous authorship. One such example is where Physicist Jack H. Hetherington, having been advised by a colleague that his paper would be rejected from *Physical Review Letters* for being written in first person plural, despite being single-authored, added a second author: F. D. C. Willard or Felis Domesticus Chester Willard – his Siamese cat, to avoid re-writing the manuscript (see Hetherington & Willard, 1975). Thus, whilst researchers must ensure that authorship has not been fabricated as so to imply participants were represented at all stages of the research, nor should authorship be promised or 'gifted' as a way of maintaining engagement, smoothing relationships, or rewarding participants who take part in research (Street et al. 2010).

Herein, we argue representing participants in academic writing requires more thought and consideration. This is particularly so when considering Mauthner and Doucet's (1988) argument that the voices and perspectives of research participants which can become vulnerable during the data analysis stage. Participant voices can often be at risk of being lost or subsumed within the (often fixed and inflexible) worldview a researcher has developed, or the theoretical framework, philosophical stances, or methodological categories they draw upon throughout their research endeavors (Annells, 1996). This has previously been discussed elsewhere, in terms of the difficult but necessary part of silencing one's own voice during data analysis in order to hear the voices which are not the participants' voices (see Silverio, 2018b). Interpreting and reporting data, where participant voices are not represented or visible can raise serious ethical considerations. The question, then, arises about what constitutes authentic representation (Foster, 2009). For example, Robinson (2017) uses an auto-ethnographic approach through poetry to represent the voice of himself: a gifted, black male with dyslexia. This auto-ethnographic approach, Robinson (2017) argues, not only epitomizes his voice, but also enables him to become conscious of identity development. Interestingly, we may argue, that as an auto-ethnographic piece, the author has complete control over the representation of his own voice, which arguably could be shaped, curated, and re-presented in its most desirable form, through processes of reflexivity, iterative analysis, reflective practice, and the constant writing and editing processes associated with auto-ethnographic writing. Our participants are not afforded this same control. Academic researchers dominate the interpretation and dissemination stages of research (Pickering & Kara, 2017). We confront decisions which have the power to re-assert domination over the groups we study, thus providing the opportunity for the researcher to act as the academic ventriloquist and present the voice they have curated - further distancing the results of the research from the participants from whom they came. The academic ventriloquist will do this by ruling on how best to appropriately represent the participants and maintain proper respect, even if the findings do not portray participants in a positive way. Moreover, academics may also be troubled with the questions of whether they are obligated to cast their participants in a positive light (Swauger, 2011). Though, researchers must not succumb to paralysis when attempting to represent their participants in research (Currier, 2011), but write a representation based on ethics, empirical and methodical analyzes, and rigor. Additionally, where authentic representations may be too exposing for participants engaged in research, it has long been recommended for qualitative researchers to engage in 'memo-writing', a practice of note-taking through data collection and analysis stages and/or diarizing their thoughts and feelings in relation to their participants and the data throughout the study. Nowadays, it is increasingly more common to see more personal reflections and representations of participants and their data published as edited monographs (see Kruger, 2020; Tomlin, 2017; Viviani, 2016). This provides the academic ventriloquist the opportunity to write a manuscript based on the accurate representation of participant data, but also to document a more interoceptive account of their perception of the data and the participants who took part. On reading such a publication, audiences may find there is almost no representation of the participant data, but rather what appears to read like the personal annotations, affectations, and notes given almost exclusively, if not entirely, by the academic ventriloquist themselves.

2.3 Anonymity

Participants often engage in research on the understanding they will not be identifiable when the results are published, which allows for a situation where their experiences can be shared without fear of repercussion of exposure. Ensuring participants' anonymity, therefore, is an important part of ethical research practice (Grinyer, 2009), yet remains a practical challenge for academic researchers (Saunders, Kitzinger & Kitzinger, 2015). Whilst it is widely accepted revealing names of participants would compromise anonymity (Trell, Hoven & Huigen, 2014), this comes with the assumption that all participants wish to be anonymized in the first place. Certain authors (e.g. Pymer, 2011; Wiles et al. 2012) have acknowledged participants sometimes wish to be named, in order for participation to be acknowledged and for the ties between the participant, their experiences, and the research to be cemented. For these participants, there is satisfaction and pride to be gained from the identification, and apparent fame (see Wilkinson and Wilkinson, 2017), associated with being named in written work. Here, tensions between respect, voice, and protection of identity come into play (Wiles et al. 2012). This is something Owen (2018) reflects in his paper titled *"Fred, I'm not going to force you to have a pseudonym",* where Owen was challenged by the ethical dilemma of participants not wanting to be anonymized in their co-performance event which concluded the research. The question, here is not only about anonymity, but also agency. Research practices have come a long way from the paternalistic styles of the mid-twentieth century. However, some aspects of research strip away participant agency, in return for concrete research ethics, rendering the idea of anonymous participants positive, but at the expense of participants will or want when it comes to being identifiable in research output. This is something Lahman et al. (2015) discuss as a delicate balance between confidentiality and anonymity and recognition for the participant engaging in the research. In practice, what this means in qualitative research, is that researchers must ensure the source of the data is not revealed (anonymity), the content of the data collection exchange is protected (confidentiality), but that the participants contribution is documented using a pseudonym, which should be chosen by or agreed with the participants themselves (recognition).

Research with participants – especially qualitative research – is, therefore, all about negotiation. The negotiation over participation; the negotiation over where and when the data collection will happen; negotiation over how much data the participant will provide, through carefully crafted and timed questions; and negotiation over whether or not the participant will be identifiable in the final disseminated results and publications. Many researchers will allocate a participant a pseudonym, and there have been moves to encourage pseudo-anonymization to move away from the practice of numbering participants which can be dehumanizing or even demeaning, for instance simply reducing participants to a numerical identifier. This, is not always well received by readers, or, in fact, journals and peer reviewers, who often endorse pseudo-anonymization (see Chatfield, 2018) as a way to engage the readers in data which appears more human when it is attributed to someone, albeit anonymized.

The question of anonymization is complex and further complicated by the balance between good research ethics, and the desires of participants. The practice of researchers naming participants respectfully in research projects has garnered attention more recently, with Allen and Wiles (2016) finding rules and customs surrounding naming participants relate to issues of power and voice, meaning researcher-led naming may not be the way forward for good research practice. Meanwhile, Edwards (2020) argues that (pseudo)naming practice has reflected a trajectory towards an intimate rather than neutral research relationship, with the use of personal names able to convey a sense of closeness to the particular participant by researchers. This is, however, not without its issues. Wilkinson and Wilkinson (2017) reflect on research where participants were dismayed and even distressed about the choice of name the author had allocated them, feeling it was a mismatch with their identity (for instance, their assigned named being old-fashioned). One way to attempt to remedy the loss of ownership over a participant's words and ideas and words, whilst retaining anonymity, is to allow participants to choose their own pseudonyms. This is an approach certain researchers have taken, mostly in research with children (Moorefield-Lang, 2010) and young people (Wilkinson, 2015), but also in research with older childless people (Allen & Wiles, 2016). The issue here is that participant-chosen pseudonyms tend to be reminiscent of something close to the participant themselves. For example, in Allen and Wiles' (2016) exploration of how to choose pseudonyms, the participants suggested names ranging from their mother's name, to their own or their partner's middle name, with one participant refusing to offer a pseudonym, insisting their name was common enough not to be identifiable. The praxis of pseudo-anonymization as led by participants themselves, then, is flawed, as anonymity is not fully preserved.

The problem here arises where ethical practices meet participant opinion, and occasionally, despite researchers' concerted efforts to protect the identity of their participants, the participants themselves find the anonymity an injustice. For the academic ventriloquist, these confrontations offer both an opportunity and a threat. The opportunity arises from the ability to anonymize participants and,, therefore obscure the origin of the data. Anonymous participants, identified only by numbers or pseudonyms chosen by the academic ventriloquist means that even participants may doubt whether selected quotations come from them. The smokescreen that academic ventriloquists can create provides the perfect opportunity to misdirect readers, by throwing their own voice behind pseudonyms. However, participants not wishing to be pseudo-anonymized or fully anonymized, pose a threat to the academic ventriloquist, as their ability to obscure and obfuscate the origin of the data is taken from them. Participants who wish to be identified prevent any opportunity for the academic ventriloquist to deliver anything but the participants' own voice, and will undoubtedly challenge any version of the voice they do not recognize as their own.

3. Conclusion and Future Directions

Inclusion, representation, and anonymity are fundamental concepts in research, which academics needs to understand, practice, and be able to demonstrate in their work. As research practices become increasingly fast-paced and the time allocated to studies - especially those which are qualitative in nature - becomes increasingly compressed (Silverio, Hall, & Sandall, 2020), we must ensure that participants' identities are protected by good research ethics, but participants are accurately and faithfully reflected in our outputs. We can achieve this through engagement with participant groups and ensuring they are included at all stages of research, whilst offering opportunities for representation, where possible and appropriate. The *'No Known Benefits'* doctrine is no longer permissible in qualitative research which, by nature, is time consuming for the participant as well as the researcher. There are other ways in which benefits of participating in qualitative research can outweigh risks to participants (see Opsal et al., 2016 for more on this debate). For instance, by having appropriate inclusion and accurate representation at all stages of the research, whilst ensuring that anonymity is negotiated and agreed upfront in a 'contract' between the participant and the researcher, prior to the commencement of data collection. With the increasing intimacy of qualitative research spaces (Edwards, 2020), and with researchers evermore occupying spaces which fall in-between the objective outside researcher sphere and the subjective inside participant domain (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Rose, 2019; Silverio, 2018a), it is important to rein in the practices to ensure we avoid opportunity for the academic ventriloquist to not only exist, but to act.

In this chapter, we have coined and introduced the concept of the academic ventriloquist and academic ventriloquism as a dangerous research practice. We explain this concept as a way in which authors in much published academic research can opt to *throw* their voices, creating the illusion that their voice is coming from participants, when in fact it is coming from elsewhere (for instance the researcher themselves, and also influenced by peer reviewers, journal requirements, funding bodies and so on). Although work has been done to create a more inclusive space for research participants, for instance, through participatory research agendas and guidance and recommendations on representation, academic researchers maintain authority and power when analyzing data, interpreting meaning, and writing-up. Thus, the opportunity for the academic ventriloquist to obscure the origin or meaning of participants' data is still very much possible. We write this as three primarily qualitative researchers ourselves, and not to criticize all published qualitative work which has come before, but to highlight the poor research practices which can occur when researchers are not held to account for their inclusionary practices or representativeness throughout their studies. This chapter has highlighted three key areas requiring attention by academic researchers when *doing* and writing-up qualitative research: inclusion, representation, and anonymity. As demonstrated throughout this chapter, these areas are not inseparable, but are overlapping, whilst somewhat in conflict with one another. Inclusion may lead to redaction of data, which in turn may make findings less representative, whilst representation may lead to compromising anonymity, and anonymity may reduce the ability to faithfully include and accurately represent participants in research. A fine balance is required of all three concepts, but when struck these fundamental research practices are a good base from which to fend off the academic ventriloquist tendencies, which may be found in us all.

The chapter is closed by offering recommendations for promoting and making audible participants' voices in text, whilst staving off the academic ventriloquist tendency:

1. Engage with, and include members of the population you wish to study in all aspects of your research design, by working with them on a PPIE group to shape your research, and remunerating their time and/or travel accordingly.
2. Provide opportunities for participant co-research and co-authorship, where appropriate.
3. Set contracts with participants on levels of anonymization and pseudonyms, where appropriate and possible.
4. Keep field notes during data collection and make memos during analysis to ensure contextual matter is recorded, which may help you make more informed decisions over representation of data.
5. Exercise reflectivity over the extent to which your voice is dominant when writing-up research, and where possible turn to established research practices (e.g. bracketing) to exclude it.

Implementing these recommendations should seek not only to raise ethical standards in qualitative research, but should do so in ways which are impactful and meaningful to participants.

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