CRISIS WHAT CRISIS: CAN QUALITATIVE DATA ARCHIVING ENHANCE TRANSPARENCY?

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Reflecting on my experiences of depositing (or not) qualitative research data: practical tensions and challenges

These are debated in sociological literature: ‘sociologisation of the archive’ (Geiger et al 2010)

Archiving (on balance) a good thing, BUT it cannot and should not be done in response to addressing the transparency crisis this could undermine trust, reinforce naïve empiricism and potentially undermine the intellectual foundations of qualitative research.
Open data a common resource and public good
Publicly funding and costs less that generating new data
Avoid over researching
Duty to participants – given their time
Secondary analysis – historical sources (e.g. Johnson et al revisiting *The Last Refuge* (Townsend))
Credibility and accountability
Reproducibility, reliability and replication –
BUT resistance ... Unsettling social science ..
... resistance or at least ambivalence ...

- Mauthner, N. S., Parry, O., & Backett-Milburn, K. (1998) The data are out there, or are they? Implications for archiving and revisiting qualitative data. Sociology, 32(4), 733-745.

- 6 focus groups (37 researchers)
- Range of perspectives that not only reflect the dilemmas of archiving but also ‘go to the heart of what it means to ‘do’ qualitative research and how this could undermine, or be undermined, by new imperatives for data disposition and sharing’ (1176)
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH AS ‘ART’ AND ‘RELATIONSHIP’ (BROOM ET AL 2009)

- Reflexivity: uniqueness of the observation, face to face interaction relationship is critical tool for analysis
- Research diary: personal thoughts, emotional responses, memories, worries, detail record of events as they unfold e.g. response of interviewee when you meet them
- Research in practice: ‘messy’ (cf Law), uncertain, serendipitous, lines of investigation abandoned
- Research documentation: sanitized and ‘cleaned’ for wider readers (Hammersley 1997)

? Is this just professional posturing, defensiveness?
- Hypothetical
Aim: how day-to-day experiences and perspectives of doctors were influenced by cultural, political, socio-economic shifts in their working environment.

Questions e.g.: What do doctors make of the changes in health care? Do contemporary developments affect how their work? How they feel about themselves? What are their clinical identities?

Findings: detailed insights into how clinicians were reviewing their chosen careers in light of radical shifts in UK healthcare.

Deposit and use: teaching medical students at Cardiff
## Re-use of Data

| Project no. | Project title                                      | Project abstract                                                                 | User ID       | User count | User type | User discip               | Download date |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| 35131      | Designing Sociological research                   | I am looking at the data to assist in my assessment for our research module. I need to lock | 128818       | United King Undergrad Sociology | 15/02/10     |
| 35780      | Tel                                                | Use for tel testing which UKDA is involved with. For testing display of multimedia systems | 132093       | United King Staff at inst Library or E | 17/11/09     |
| 35780      | Tel                                                | Use for tel testing which UKDA is involved with. For testing display of multimedia systems | 132093       | United King Staff at inst Library or E | 10/12/09     |
| 36422      | To estimate prevalence on IPV across NE eng       | I am currently engaged in two projects for Government Office North East (contact name for details) | 88537        | United King Staff at inst Sociology | 06/05/09     |
| 39808      | Doctor comparisons Germany                         | Using data to prepare bid for funding to compare hospital doctors in UK and Germany in the context of the project. | 148354       | United King Staff at inst Sociology | 06/06/09     |
| 39808      | Doctor comparisons Germany                         | Using data to prepare bid for funding to compare hospital doctors in UK and Germany in the context of the project. | 148354       | United King Staff at inst Sociology | 09/06/09     |
| 40668      | Internet use amongst different groups             | This study aims to assess how different groups use Internet technologies and how it affects | 150927       | United King Postgradua Business or | 08/09/09     |
|            |                                                    |                                                                                   |               | Business or |                           |               |
| 41583      | Teaching qualitative analysis                      | I want to use a number of transcripts as a teaching tool to demonstrate approaches to qualitative research. | 154231       | Ireland Staff at inst Sociology   | 10/09/09     |
| 43523      | Teaching MRres course                              | Students will be required to work with two of the transcripts. This will form an exercise in qualitative research. | 169015       | United King Staff at inst Psychology | 15/12/09     |
| 44664      | Research on teens' body modifications             | I am collecting data on teens' body modifications and body images in UK in order to compare | 164852       | United King Staff at inst Sociology | 18/02/10     |
| 44755      | Why don't people use drugs?                       | If this data is suitable, I will use it for my post-graduate dissertation. I will be doing second | 165389       | United King Postgradua Community | 05/05/10     |
| 45055      | Studying qualitative data analysis                 | Data will be used for postgraduate qualitative data analysis using nvivo software and codes. | 153655       | United King Postgradua Sociology | 03/03/10     |
| 45221      | PNVets project privacy content analysis           | Collecting qualitative interviews in different areas to perform a content analysis to see what | 169668       | United King Postgradua Sociology | 03/03/10     |
| 45338      | Background Information                            | The qualitative interview transcripts will be used for background information in a project. | 167335       | United King Postgradua Psychology | 05/03/10     |
| 45460      | Comparative study of patient experience           | I am a postgraduate student and this data is being accessed in order to practice qualitative research. | 167597       | United King Postgradua Sociology | 10/03/10     |
| 47208      | Teaching                                          | I use this resource in a MA module. I teach on qualitative analysis in School of Sociology Un | 160474       | Ireland Staff at inst Sociology | 10/06/10     |
| 48445      | Testing thematic guides                            | Goldsmiths course 'MDM'. This is a test in order to proceed with the course requirements. | 174702       | Germany Undergrad Sociology | 05/10/10     |
| 49004      | MDM RESEARCH                                      | Material for a course called Making Data Matter - in which we are comparing qualitative and quantitative methods. | 157579       | United King Undergrad Sociology | 07/10/10     |
| 49004      | MDM RESEARCH                                      | Material for a course called Making Data Matter - in which we are comparing qualitative and quantitative methods. | 157579       | United King Undergrad Sociology | 04/11/11     |
| 49006      | Research project                                  | The data will be used for a undergraduate research project in the final year of the option. | 176401       | United King Undergrad Sociology | 13/10/10     |
| 49800      | MSc Health Studies teaching aid                   | MSc Health Studies teaching aid. I intend to use one or two interview transcripts from the course to support my | 125300       | United King Staff at inst Sociology | 31/10/10     |
| 52312      | The role and function of the rural nurse in A      | I want to use this web material because our teacher recommend us to do so. she asked us | 187588       | United King Postgradua Nursing | 26/03/11     |
| 54443      | Testing thematic guides                            | I am testing the collections I have chosen for the thematic guides. This is for the development of | 128310       | United King Staff at inst Sociology | 18/10/12     |
| 54446      | Testing thematic guides - health                   | I am testing the collections held in the qualdata thematic guides to see how easy they are to understand. | 128310       | United King Staff at inst Sociology | 23/05/11     |
| 54446      | Testing thematic guides - health                   | I am testing the collections held in the qualdata thematic guides to see how easy they are to understand. | 128310       | United King Staff at inst Sociology | 20/10/11     |
| 54667      | Education ( mine )                                 | I am undertaking a professional doctorate and need this data for my statistical analysis. | 192739       | United King Postgradua Nursing | 12/07/11     |
| 59495      | Teaching research methods                         | I would like to use this data in my teaching at a summer school in qualitative research methods. | 193577       | United King Staff at inst Education | 18/06/11     |
| 55407      | Personal exploration                              | I am interested in getting to know more about secondary analysis, therefore | 194485       | Hungary Staff at inst Politics and | 19/07/11     |
| 57690      | Module assignment                                 | I am the graduate teaching assistant for module HS305, which uses this article for an assignment. | 135587       | United King Postgradua Sociology | 18/10/11     |
| 57627      | Teaching medical sociology                       | I am going to use this data to help students in a learning environment to develop a useful skill. | 198727       | United King Staff at inst Sociology | 18/11/11     |
| 57689      | Undergraduate assignment                          | I would like to access the data collections held by Qualidata for the purposes of my own research. | 199090       | United King Undergrad Other Studies | 20/10/11     |
| 57689      | Undergraduate assignment                          | I would like to access the data collections held by Qualidata for the purposes of my own research. | 199090       | United King Undergrad Other Studies | 04/11/11     |
| 57892      | Undergraduate assignment                          | I would like to access the data collections held by Qualidata for the purposes of my own research. | 199090       | United King Undergrad Other Studies | 08/11/11     |
| 57790      | Undergraduate Assignment                          | I would like to access the data collections held by Qualidata for the purposes of my own research. | 199088       | United King Undergrad Other Studies | 20/10/11     |
WHAT KEEPS ME AWAKE?

- NHS & R&D ethical approvals

- Informed consent – participant information sheets about the study, informed consent forms etc
  - Perfunctory – dismissive approach to completion

- Confidentiality - anonymisation – guidance available yet what if I let something slip through? How much context to leave in?
  - Unique stories of e.g. women doctors describing experiences of sexism and discrimination to a women interviewer (not many women surgeons in the England!)
‘Interviews, [...] are the intellectual property of the interviewer and interviewee, create complex issues around allowing wider access to data. Data are thus an *emotional contract of trust*’ (Broom et al 2009: 1166 *my emphasis*)
Data generated co-produced, co-constructed, embedded in and by contexts and the conditions of production are inextricably interlinked with process of analysis and interpretation (reflexivity)

- Relationship – unique private space, confessional, vulnerability, trust ... ?
- Recall Oakley, Finch – interviewing women – power relations – interviewer discloses aspects of own life
- ‘Data’ where it is bound up with moral exchanges can lead the researcher to feel responsible and depositing data online for public scrutiny and can be uncomfortable
Undiagnosed illness – sharing private thoughts
“never told anyone even my close family” frustrations
with partners, significant others. Gifts at the end of
interview – appreciative listening

Drug users in recovery – ESRC waiver on depositing
these data but who/how do we adjudicate on a
hierarchy of vulnerability?
A SOCIOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF RECOVERING HEROIN USERS
ESRC: RES-062-23-1016

- 'The Everyday Lives of Recovering Heroin Users', Royal Society of Arts in London and inspired workshops for service users and service providers in Kent to encourage talk about their own everyday experiences of recovery. 'What's your story?' - recovery stories (using words, poetry, pictures etc) to be displayed at a series of venues.

Nettleton, S., Neale, J. and Pickering, L (2011)."I don't think there's much of a rational mind in a drug addict when they are in the thick of it": towards an embodied analysis of recovering heroin users Sociology of Health & Illness 33 (3) 341–355, 2011
Resource!! Cost, time – who?

Names, location, unique events – but how much detail and context.

And it costs! (but an easy way to shave budget when submitting applications) – 1000s of pages of transcripts and even more challenging field notes
Anonymising the interview transcripts a challenge but the field notes... of e.g. meetings DRM, DTM, site visits...

Study of architects working care homes struggling to know what to leave in and leave out –

Design and access statements, planning applications in the public domain – so difficult to anonymise. Mugs!!
Public Library of Science (PLOS) authors make data available via links to official archives (see Tsai et al 2016)

BUT **pragmatic** implications for publishing *during* a research project when data not yet “cleaned” for sharing

Brings us back to epistemological and political questions: reinforces “reproducibility” that readers can check the validity of the analysis

1. Statement from authors to editors on consent for public access
2. Adherence to minimum (USA)standards de-identification
3. Authors should use publish data from multiple informants
4. Permit coding queries to be shared
5. Encourage anonymisation of field notes
6. Encourage authors to document social audits and stakeholder dissemination
7. Encourage manuscript reviewer with expertise in qualitative research to comment on anonymisation
8. Establish petitioning process for non disclosure
TROUBLING EPISTEMOLOGIES: ACCOUNTABILITY AND AUDIT

- Archived data can’t ‘validate’ findings – but ‘likely validity of arguments presented by the data’, assess ‘plausibility’ there are ‘no set of empirical givens which can establish the validity of a claim beyond all possible doubt’ (Hammersley 1997: 133).

- Status of data - multiple interpretations

- Epistemological foundationalism – ‘rests on the idea there is a strict ontological distinction between an external objective material world and an internal subjective human’ world’ (Mauthner & Parry 2009: 294)
Archiving data - cannot and should not be done in response to addressing the transparency crisis

- Reinforces misconceptions of qualitative research
- Hegemony epistemological foundationalism
- Sanitization of research process
- Undermines trust in expert systems – and professionalism
Making the invisible visible – through openness – audit, accountability, quality assurance, checking, assessing, verification an Enlightenment project

That more knowledge could cause problems, that light could prove another tyranny ..., were not thoughts the philosophers of the Enlightenment were prepared to entertain (Tsoukas 1997: 839)

We have an obligation to funders, study participants, the discipline to archive and deposit data.

Qualitative research flexible and ‘messy’ (Law 2004)) so the processes of archiving needs to be rigorous and yet sufficiently nuanced to allow for this.

Depositing data needs to be resourced!!

Re-use is not the same as reproducibility and replicability - and transparency and speak to contrasting political agendas.

CONCLUSION