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Reusing qualitative archived materials in creative research and innovative teaching

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The reuse of archived qualitative research data is becoming increasingly prevalent in the social sciences. Recent changes such as journal publishers' requirements to expose data, the open data movement, research funders' policies supporting data sharing, and researchers seeing benefits of sharing all manner of resources through social media, have encouraged qualitative secondary analysis. This article will use two case studies to illustrate the creative ways in which data can be reused in research and then demonstrate how data has been reused in innovative research-led teaching.

Reusing qualitative archived data

The UK Data Service is dedicated to providing access to an extensive range of high quality economic and social data. Our archived data can be, and have been, reused in a number of different ways. They can be used to describe the attributes, attitudes and behaviour of individuals, societies, groups or organisations at the time of the original project. They can be used to provide a comparison over time or between social groups or regions etc. Re-analysis can ask new questions of the data and make different interpretations from the original researcher. Re-analysis approaches the data in ways that were not originally addressed, such as using data for investigating different themes or topics of study. Data can be reused for the purposes of research design and methodological advancement which involves designing a new study, developing a methodology or research tool by studying sampling methods, data collection and fieldwork strategies and topic guides. Finally data can be used for learning and teaching. Real life data collections can provide rich case material for learning and teaching in both research methods and substantive areas across a range of social science disciplines. Presented below are some of the ways in which our data have been reused.

Reusing the Last Refuge Collection

In the late 1950s, Peter Townsend conducted a major investigation of long-stay institutional care for old people in Britain. He employed a range of qualitative methods in this study including in-depth interviews with 67 local

authority chief welfare officers and with serving staff and residents of 173 institutions. He took photographs, made field notes and drew sketches about the condition of the buildings, the facilities and of the residents and staff. He conducted a short qualitative survey and also asked a number of staff and residents to complete daily diaries about life in the homes. In 2005, Julia Johnson, Sheena Rolph and Randall Smith carried out a review of Townsend's research material, subsequent findings and recommendations. They conducted a tracing study to find out and document what happened to the institutions visited by Townsend. They found that of the original 173 institutions, 25 still existed as registered care homes and these were investigated further. This follow-up study broadly replicated Townsend's method allowing the researchers to analyse and comment on the continuity and change which occurred in residential care provision over time.

Reusing the School Leavers Study

In 2009, Dawn Lyon and Graham Crow accessed Ray Pahl's archived collections, which comprised several sub-projects including the *School Leavers Study, 1978*. In this study Pahl asked teachers at a comprehensive school on the Isle of Sheppey to set an essay task to groups of students aged 15 and 16 years old, ten days before they were due to leave school. The students were asked to imagine that they were nearing the end of their life and to write a retrospective account of what happened to them over their lifetimes.

The resulting 141 handwritten essays highlighted the different features of life and work on the Isle of Sheppey in the 1970s, and were reflective of the chronic economic challenges on the island at the time. However, Lyon and Crow found that very little preliminary analysis or follow up research had been done with the essays. Pahl had written a short article 'Living without a job: how school leavers see the future' published in *New Society* in 1978 (2 November: 259-62), but little else. He acknowledged in the article that in fact his analysis did not do full justice to the essay material. Lyon and Crow recognised the potential for reanalysis and realised that these data presented an exciting research opportunity as part of their *Living and Working on Sheppey project* <http://www.livingandworkingonsheppey.co.uk/>

They digitised the 1978 collection of essays and repeated the exercise with students of the same age, in schools on Sheppey, in 2010. Although the original student instruction was not recorded, they were able to consult Pahl about what he asked students and repeated this instruction. Lyon and Crow collected a further 110 essays (55 boys and 55 girls). They then coded

and compared the data across time. Together, these two sets of essays gave a rich insight into the aspirations of Sheppey's young people and young people generally. The essays shed light on the young people's views on a range of topics including health, education, career, family and leisure.

The longitudinal element of the research meant that they were able to compare how attitudes had changed over time. For example, in 1978, Sheppey's young people often envisaged mundane and grounded jobs with a gradual and perhaps more realistic career progression. They also considered that there would be periods of unemployment in their futures. In Essay 27 one boy said that "It was hard finding a job, I failed a few chances, but eventually got what I wanted locally, a craft apprenticeship", and in Essay 42 another boy said "I was on the dole for six months after leaving school, until I got a job in a garage". The young people seemed to rein in their aspirations if they felt they were too grandiose, for example in Essay 56 a boy said "When we found a house it was a semi-detached in Sittingbourne. I wanted to live in Italy but that was asking for too much" and in Essay 104 a girl said "I longed for something exciting and challenging. But yet again I had to settle for second best. I began working in a large clothes factory".

These accounts can be compared to the essays written in 2010 where the young people wrote about having extremely well-paid, instantaneous jobs. They envisaged a plurality of choice in terms of their careers but also had a sense of uncertainty. There was also evidence of a strong influence from celebrity culture. In Essay 30, for example, the young male wrote "I was 20 now living the dream I had a (sic) amazing band...I had toured the world 3 times sold 4 million records" and in Essay 61 the young girl said "In my future I want to become either: a dance teacher, hairdresser, or a Professional Show Jumper/horse rider. If I do become a dancer my dream would be to dance for Beyoncé or someone really famous".

Creative innovative teaching materials from archived data

Introducing students to data from interesting current or classic social sciences research projects can really bring the learning experience to life. Using data in learning and teaching enables students to critically engage with their literature sources by evaluating the strengths and limitations of particular collections and their methodologies. Moreover, students are able to follow a piece of academic research all the way through the data life cycle, from conception, to publication, to archiving. The UK Data Service supports learners and teachers, and as such has developed a range of open-access, free, online teaching resources.

Resource 1: Exploring Diverse Interview Types showcases seven distinct qualitative interviewing types: structured, unstructured, semi-structured, feminist, psycho-social, oral history and life story interviews. The resource also includes activities based on real life examples taken from the collections.

Resource 2: Exploring Non-Interview Methods offers descriptions and examples of other types of qualitative methods including focus groups, diaries, online research methods and visual methods.

Resource 3: Re-using Qualitative Data: The Last Refuge incorporates a selection of the ground-breaking qualitative material taken from Peter Townsend's 1950s Last Refuge study. The resource includes activities which can be used in the classroom or as self-paced learning activities, enabling students to think critically about a real life research project.

Resource 4: Teach with Pioneers is a range of worksheets accompanying *The Pioneers of Qualitative Research* resource, which is a collection of in-depth life-story interviews with 34 pioneers of British social research. The worksheets help focus teaching on selected themes: women and social research, poverty and inequality in the UK, community studies, pioneering research methods and reusing archived data.

Resource 5: Using Psychosocial Approaches is a teaching resource which showcases two archived collections which have used a psychosocial method: Hollway and Jefferson's *Gender Difference, Anxiety and the Fear of Crime* and Hollway's *Becoming a Mother*. The aim of the resource is to familiarise both instructors and students with psychosocial methods and show how other researchers have used these approaches empirically and theoretically in their research projects. The resource contains extracts from the user guides, interviews and contextual notes from each of these studies, as well as a series of activities.

6. *Teaching sociology with archived data*: In 2010 ESDS Qualidata collaborated with the Department of Sociology at Essex University to create a teaching resource which was funded by Essex's Teaching and Learning Innovation Fund (TALIF). We designed as a course assignment for undergraduates in Crime and Social Control which enabled students to explore, access and assess archived collections. The project resulted in a final portfolio of resources which includes two model assignments, a generic template, a marking template for tutors, a tutor's guide and a range of thematic guides. The assignment has since been implemented by courses in

Health and Social Policy and Youth Studies. We have also had interest from courses in visual methods and media studies.

Conclusion

Archived data can be used in imaginative research and creative teaching. By engaging with real life research collections, reusers can discover out how data was originally conceived, collected and analysed and use this to inform their own research ideas. It can lead to new insights about old data, illuminate interesting methodological techniques, and ultimately generate new and innovative research ideas.

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