

# Using archived qualitative data in teaching and learning


*Dr Jo Haynes*

*School for Sociology, Politics and International  
Studies (SPAIS)*

## focus

- Exploring issues in use of archived qualitative data
- Drawing on teaching case study
- Haynes, J. and Jones, D. (2012) 'A tale of two analyses: using archived qualitative data' *Sociological Research Online* 17 (2).

## Using data archives in teaching

- MSc Advanced Qualitative Research   
focus on data analysis
- Wide (ability) range of students
- Comparable learning to quants approaches
- Assignment: 4000 word analysis of sample of data from archived qualitative project

# Debates about use of archived qualitative data

- Main debate
  - Context/reflexivity
  - Status of data
  - Ethical issues
- Links to other debates/ideas
  - Idea of archive as creative act/process

## Changing conception of ‘the archive/archiving’

*“..product to process, from structure to function, from archives to archiving, from the record to the recording context, from the ‘natural’ residue or passive by-product of administrative activity to the consciously constructed and actively mediated ‘archivalisation’ of social memory.”*

(Cook 2001: 4)

# Debates about use of archived qualitative data

- Main debate
  - Context and reflexivity
  - Status of data
  - Ethical issues
- Links to other debates/ideas
  - Idea of archive as creative act/process
  - ‘Democratisation’ of social relations and ‘new’ media

## Democratisation of social research?

*“..as archives open up to more materials being deposited, as previous marginalised and new forms of materials are included, as more people access those materials and as more discussion is generated about the history of the present with the potential to uproot the authority of the past and the nature of our rapidly changing social world”.*

(Crow and Edwards 2012: 261)

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## Case study

- Haynes, J. and Jones, D. (2012) 'A tale of two analyses: using archived qualitative data' *Sociological Research Online* 17 (2).
  1. Demelza Jones (2009) "'Not our sort": The reproduction of class distinctions amongst British migrants in Spain'
  2. Oliver, C. and O'Reilly, K. (2010) 'A Bourdieusian Analysis of Class and Migration: Habitus and the Individualizing Process' *Sociology* 44 (1): 49- 66.
- Independent uses of same data that produce similar claims using same analytical framing – culturalist class (i.e. a Bourdieusian framing)



## argument

- Other kinds of critical distance can also facilitate credible data use
- Question whether future use of data is as limited as some claim
- Contextual familiarity need not be privileged over other aspects of qualitative praxis

## Demelza Jones (2009)

- Culturalist class framework based on analysis of 17 interviews (from O'Reilly's research NOT Oliver's)
  - explored the reproduction of class differences & how British migrants “engage with the cultural conception of class in constructing themselves in opposition not just to tourists, but to other expatriate Britons”.

## Oliver and O'Reilly (2010)

- Framed by Bourdieu's ideas about class
- “to understand how and why cultural and economic aspects of class prevailed, despite express desires by individuals to leave class concerns behind and to reposition structurally in social space” (p. 50)

## Comparison of analyses - difference

- Economistic indicators
  - stand alone significance of (Oliver & O'Reilly)
  - linked to what is moral/aesthetic (Jones)

## Comparison of analyses - similarities

- Disdain for Brits (Jones); avoid interaction with other British migrants (Oliver & O'Reilly)
- Integration
- Reinvention

# Reflections on the use of archived qualitative data

- Context
- Reflexivity and the status of data

## Context

- Difficulty in analysing data removed from its original context (Mauthner et al)
- A ‘matter of degree’ ? (Hammersley 2010) - reliability of contextual information as variable

## Brits abroad..???





## Context

- Difficulty in analysing data removed from its original context (Mauthner et al)
- A 'matter of degree' ? (Hammersley 2010) - reliability of contextual information as variable
- *All* research is potentially shaped by partial or inaccurate contextual information

## Reflexivity

- Mauthner et al (1998)
  - Data is co-produced by the researcher and the researched
  - Datasets cannot elude the conditions of their production
  - Reuse of data raises serious epistemological issues

## Status of data

1. If data cannot elude context of production – data is fixed in the past - ‘re-use’ of data only useful for investigating the past (Mauthner et al)
2. Regardless of use - all data is recontextualised (Moore 2007)

## Status of data

- Data (Hammersley 2010)
  - Is constructed
  - As 'given' i.e. restricts the inferences we can make and conclusions drawn
- Distinctions in data as 'labelling phases ...of a single process' (Ibid: 4.)

## Concluding thoughts..

- ..hopeful *and* critical about use of archived qualitative data
- ..broader contextualisation of anxiety about its routine/inexpert use