TEMPORAL ETHICS AND THE RE-USE OF QUALITATIVE DATA

Dr Anna Tarrant and Dr Kahryn Hughes

UKRIO Research Integrity webinar
Wednesday 11th November 2020

atarrant@lincoln.ac.uk k.a.hughes@leeds.ac.uk

This session

◦ We consider the value and implications of a temporal ethical sensibility towards qualitative data, its generation, re-use and preservation

◦ Situate our observations in context of increased infrastructures for preserving and re-using qualitative data

◦ Consider what is special about qualitative data

◦ A bit about us and the Timescapes Archive

◦ Attend to *proactive* and *reactive* ethical research strategies

◦ Advocate a shift in position from data *ownership* to data *stewardship*

◦ Forward an agenda for data justice

A bit about us

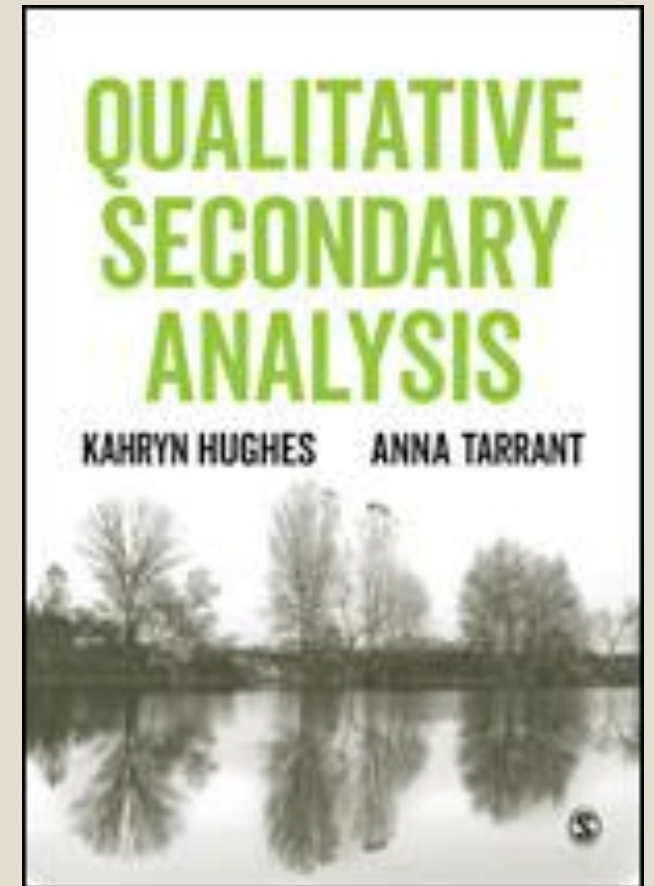Associate Professor in Sociology/
UKRI Future Leaders Fellow

University of Lincoln

Experts in qualitative research methods and field leaders in Qualitative
Secondary Analysis

Associate Professor in Sociology/
Director of the Timescapes Archive

University of Leeds

QUALITATIVE
SECONDARY
ANALYSIS

KAHRYN HUGHES   ANNA TARRANT

The rise of qualitative data archives

◦ The re-use of qualitative data has been fuelled over the past two decades by a number of changes:

  ◦ The **growth in data infrastructures (UK and internationally)**:
    ◦ e.g., UK Data Service (UKDS); The Mass Observation Archive; the Northern Ireland Qualitative Archive; the Timescapes Archive

  ◦ **New methods** – e.g., Timescapes, Sarah Irwin; Libby Bishop, Bren Neale; Big Qual (Ros Edwards, and colleagues); QSA (Kahryn Hughes and Anna Tarrant)

  ◦ **European Funding Councils**: reusing valuable resources that were expensive to produce

  ◦ '**Knowing capitalism**' (Mike Savage and Roger Burrows, 2007; 2009; 2014)

  ◦ **Neoliberalism**: (Ros Edwards and Janet Holland), new scientific methods

What is special about qualitative data?

Qualitative data are special because of their qualities

- They're expensive, difficult and time consuming to generate,

- They're creative and can be text based and visual,

- They're often small scale in terms of sample size,

- They're often deeply personal for both the participant and the researcher

What do we mean by qualitative data?
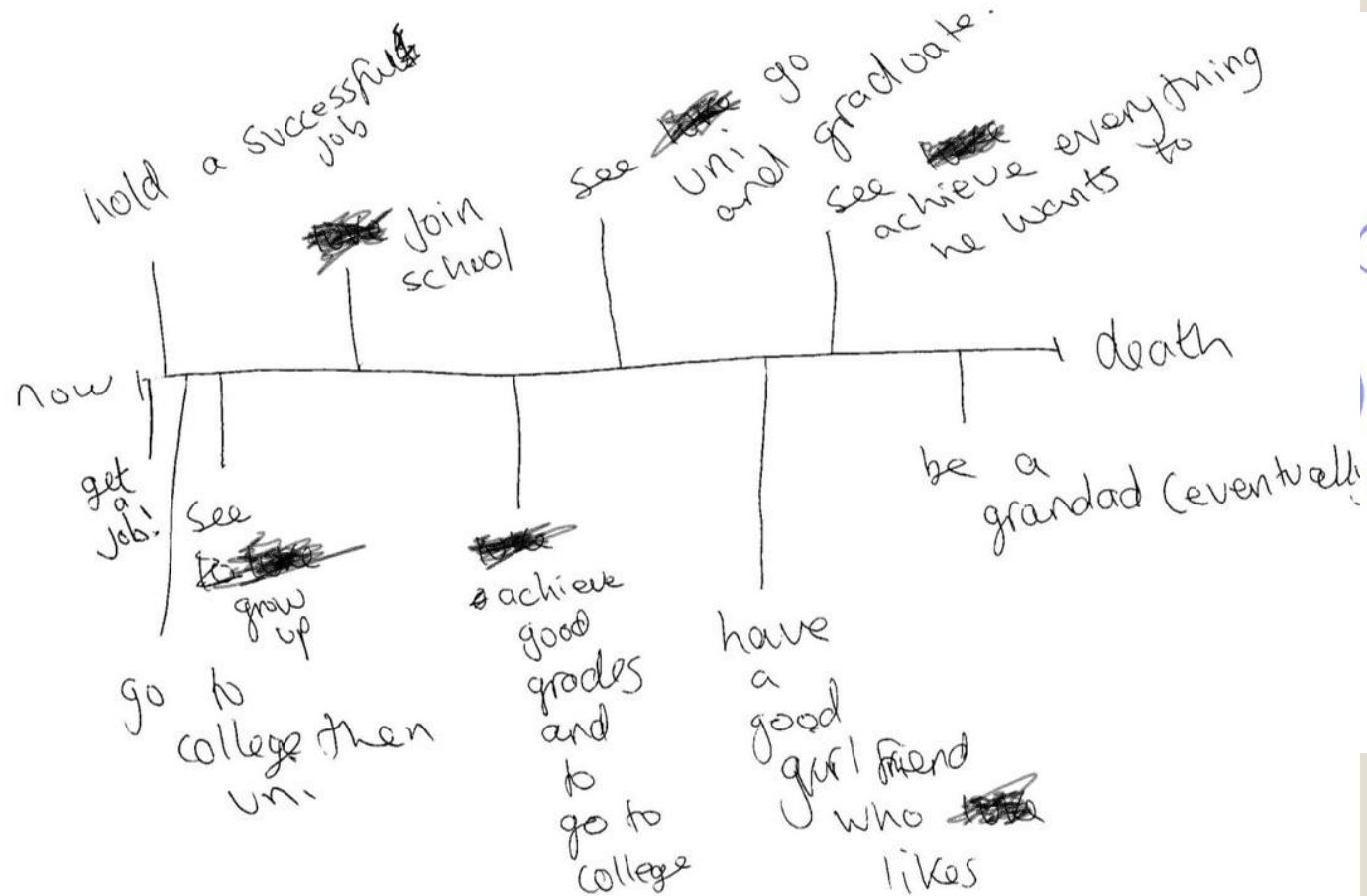
Additional ethics for qualitative data re-use

- **Consent**: how can it be informed if you don't know the uses to which it's being used?

- **Anonymisation**: how can you anonymise data and still keep its meaning?

- **Confidentiality**: how can data be kept confidential when the intention is to reuse it?

- **Representation**: how can you represent people you haven't met?

@TimescapeA

The Timescapes Archive

◦ Regulate who deposits data, who uses the data

◦ Legally binding contracts of reuse

◦ *Bona fide* researchers only and control what and when they access data:

  ◦ Use time-embargo

  ◦ access controls to different 'layers' of data – from open access to completely restricted;

  ◦ Special permissions

◦ These together mean that data users are very visible, both to the archive to the data generators

Data protectionism beyond legislation

Data protectionism characterises the context of qualitative data re-use in the field

◦ Historical ethical concerns such as those noted: data privacy, linkage, confidentiality and anonymity,

◦ Additionally:
  ◦ Fears people will be mis-represented,
  ◦ Fears data will be exploited for unethical purposes,
  ◦ Fear that researchers will be made vulnerable in some way or another because the personal bits of their data won't be treated sensitively enough
  ◦ Fear that other researchers may publish from data before the data originators

◦ Informed by our work with the Timescapes Archive, we take a more critical stance on a data protectionist position

A temporal ethical sensibility: building 'time' into data reuse

- What can we achieve if we foreground a temporal ethical sensibility, rather than a risk ethics?

- What do we achieve if we move away from a focus on data generators and actually think about the lifetimes of data?

Proactive and reactive ethics

◦ We move beyond the question of the 'special character' of data

◦ As in primary fieldwork our ethics on the reuse of data needs to be *proactive* and *reactive*

◦ Reactive ethics also part of longer term processes and relationships

◦ Qualitative archives:
  ◦ Archiving qual data allows the same approach throughout data lifetimes
  ◦ Constantly innovating in the ethics of archiving through ethical cases
  ◦ Taking a temporal approach allows us to change in ways which suit new circumstances

Example of proactive ethics

- With qualitative data, there are shifts towards ensuring participants are able to give enduring consents to the archiving of data generated with them,

- In the Following Young Fathers Further study we developed archiving information and consent forms

- Here we suggest shared copyright of all data with participants (see also Neale, forthcoming; Haaker, personal communication)

- All personal details are also stored but in the 'dark archive', until the death of the participant

From data ownership to stewardship

◦ **Data stewards model** (Bishop and Neale, 2012) a way forward as part of this ethical sensibility

◦ This moves us away from focusing on researchers as data 'owners'

◦ **Data Stewards** include all those people looking after the data at different points, but they're not all doing the same thing all the time with those data.

◦ *So we can also think about* **data stakeholders** - people with different interests in data (curators, re-users, generators, a combination or all of these), at different points in the lifetimes of those data

Data rights to data justice?

◦ We conclude that you cannot take a solely protectionist stance towards qualitative data, but this is not an 'either/or' question

◦ It is not always possible to be proactive with ethics – what does this mean for data?

◦ Data rights (as proactive ethics)

◦ Data justice (as more reactive) – we make decisions as they emerge

◦ Still attend to key ethical priorities to contextualise the data for re-users, and prohibit unethical reuse

◦ The legacy and stewardship models allow for 'data sustainability', ensuring the preservation of data and participation by people who are too often marginalised and absent from the socio-historical record (e.g. unlikely to be part of large-scale panel surveys)

Our questions to you

- Our expertise is predominantly focused on qualitative research data, its preservation and ethics.

- We are keen to understand the broader applicability of what we are doing and constructing arguments for

What perspectives are you approaching questions of data integrity from?

Which of our ideas have you found interesting and why?

Further reading

○ Bishop, L. (2009) 'Ethical sharing and reuse of qualitative data', Australian Journal of Social Issues, 44(3): 255–72.

○ Dencik, L., Jansen, F. and Metcalfe, P. (2018) A Conceptual Framework for Approaching Social Justice in an Age of Datafication, Working Paper, DATAJUSTICE Project. Available at: https://datajusticeproject.net/2018/08/30/a-conceptual-framework-for-approaching-social-justice-in-an-age-of-datafication/ (accessed 23 May 2019).

○ Grinyer, A. (2009) 'The ethics of the secondary analysis and further use of qualitative data', Social Research Update, 56. Available at: http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU56.pdf (accessed 23 May 2019).

○ Neale B. and Bishop, L. (2012) 'The Timescapes Archive: A stakeholder approach to archiving qualitative longitudinal data', Qualitative Research, 12: 53–65.

○ Neale, B. (forthcoming) Qualitative Longitudinal Research, Sage: London.

○ Tarrant, A. and Hughes, K. (2020) Developing a temporal ethical sensibility for sharing research data: a case for data re-use and qualitative secondary analysis, https://www.dcc.ac.uk/blog/developing-temporal-ethical-sensibility-preserving-and-curating-research-data