

Reusing qualitative data

"A unique opportunity to study the raw materials of the recent or more distant past"

Reuse guide

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Since the mid-1990s we have witnessed a growing body of knowledge and practical guidance on reusing qualitative data, sparked in the UK by the funding of Qualidata by the ESRC. We provide some insight into the ethical, methodological and epistemological issues, offer practical ways to get started, and showcase scholars' and teachers' creative use of secondary data.

Resources on reusing qualitative data

- Our [short guide](#) on reusing qualitative data
- UK Data Service [teaching resources](#) relating to reusing qualitative data
- [Timescapes Secondary Analysis Project](#)

Reuse articles

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There is a growing body of literature on the reuse of qualitative data, addressing ethical, methodological and epistemological issues. Here we cite a selection of articles that cover a range of perspectives and provide links to case studies of reuse of data.

Themed collections of articles

The following published special issues are recommended, listed in chronological order:

Edwards, R. (ed.) (2012) [Perspectives on working with archived textual and visual material in social research](#), *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* (Special Issue), 15(4) doi:10.1080/13645579.2012.688308

Valles, M., Corti, L. and Tamboukou, M. (eds.) (2011) 'Qualitative Archives and Biographical Research Methods', *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 12(3), <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/issue/view/38>

Barbour, S., and Eley, S. (eds.) (2007) 'Refereed special section: reusing qualitative data', [Sociological Research Online](#) 12(3).

Corti, L. (2006) 'Editorial', *Methodological Innovations Online* [Special Issue: Defining context for qualitative data], 1(2), pp.1-9. doi: 10.4256/mio.2006.0007 Retrieved 10 July 2018 from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.4256/mio.2006.0007>

Corti, L., Witzel, A. and Bishop, L. (eds.) (2005) 'Secondary analysis of qualitative data', [Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research](#) , 6(1).

Thompson, P. and Corti, L. (eds.) (2004) 'Celebrating classic sociology: pioneers of contemporary British qualitative research', *International Journal of Social Research*

Methodology, Theory and Practice, 7(1). This contains an edited collection of papers given at the 2001 conference organised by Qualidata - Celebrating Classic Sociology: Pioneers of Contemporary British Qualitative Research.

Corti, L., Kluge, S., Mruck, K., and Opitz, D. (eds.) (2000) 'Text . Archive . Re-analysis', [Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research](#), 1(3).

The papers provide retrospective accounts of some of the most innovative and ground-breaking qualitative research carried out since the 1950s. They offer insight into the dynamics, politics and realities of social research.

Many of the research datasets under discussion in these papers are archived at the UK Data Service and the University of Essex's National Social Policy and Social Change Archive.

Selected articles on the re-use of qualitative data

Adkins, L. (2002) *Revisions: gender and sexuality in late modernity*, Buckingham: Open University Press.

Andrews, M. (2008) 'Never the last word: narrative research and secondary analysis' in C. Squire, M. Tamboukou and M. Andrews (eds.) *Doing Narrative Research*, London: Sage.

Armstrong, D. et al. (1997) 'The place of inter-rater reliability in qualitative research: an empirical study', *Sociology*, 31(3), pp. 597-606.

Bell, C. (2004) 'Doing sociological research: the genre of "owning up"', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 7(1), pp. 29-33.

Bergman, M. and Eberle, T. S. (2005) 'Qualitative inquiry: research, archiving, reuse', [Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research](#) [Online journal], 6(2).

Bishop, L. and Kuula-Luumi, A. (2017) 'Revisiting Qualitative Data Reuse: A Decade On', *SAGE Open*. doi: 10.1177/2158244016685136 Retrieved 03 July 2018 from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2158244016685136>

Bishop, L. (2012) 'Using Archived Qualitative Data for Teaching: Practical and Ethical Considerations', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 15(4).

Bishop, L. and Neale, B. (2011) 'Sharing Qualitative and Quantitative Longitudinal Data in the UK: Archiving Strategies and Development', *IASSIST Quarterly* 34(3-4) and 35(1-2) pp.23-29.

Bishop, L. (2009) '[Ethical Sharing and Re-Use of Qualitative Data](#)', *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 44(3).

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- Brown, G. (2004) 'Qualidata and the preservation of meaning: researching mental health', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 7(1), pp. 73-80.
- Carusi, A. (2009) 'From data archive to ethical labyrinth', *Qualitative Research*, 9(3), pp. 285-298.
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- Cole, K., Wathan, J., and Corti, L. (2008) 'The provision of access to quantitative data for secondary analysis' in N. Fielding, R. Lee and G. Blank (eds.) *Sage handbook of online research methods*, London: Sage Publications.
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Teaching secondary analysis

Share

Secondary analysis of qualitative data is rapidly becoming a standard skill for research methods. This is demonstrated by the growing frequency of highly ranked journals publishing articles using the approach and in the support demonstrated by funders in promoting a dedicated initiative for secondary analysis.

However, in qualitative research methods training the approach is not taught routinely. For example, in sociology, economics and history, the emphasis is still placed on primary data analysis skills rather than on techniques of reusing data, or of integrating primary and secondary data.

We have piloted, designed and successfully run courses on how to do secondary analysis aimed at researchers and also aimed at teachers who want to incorporate ideas in to their classes.

Using our data resources in teaching in the social sciences adds interest and relevance to methodological courses, and can free up precious time in the methods curriculum to focus on the vital skills that sit either side of the data collection process: formulating research questions and analysing data.

Browse our [teaching resources](#) and [training](#) courses.