



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS



# timescapes

An ESRC Qualitative Longitudinal Study





# Epistemology and ethics in data sharing and analysis: a critical overview

Joanna Bornat

Panel Session: 'As well as the Subject: Additional Dimensions in Development Research Ethics

EADI-DSA General Conference 19-22 September 2011 University of York

## Secondary Analysis for Timescapes

The plan for the dataset created from the Timescapes projects and their affiliates is that it will live on as an accessible and re-useable resource, available to other researchers over the years, growing and developing in line with the programme's original aims. Secondary analysis is central to Timescapes' work and is a core part of each project.

(from Timescapes Blueprint)

## What do we mean by secondary analysis?

‘sharing our material’ (Thompson, 2000)

‘the ‘re-use’ of archived data’ (Hammersley, 2010)

‘the (re)using of data produced on a previous occasion to glean new social scientific and/or methodological understandings’ (Irwin & Winterton, 2010)

‘Unlike the sociologist, the historian will not be daunted by the concept of re-use of material that is unfamiliar to them. Historians have had to deal with the challenges of assessing provenance and veracity for many hundreds of years – take the Dead Sea Scrolls, Testaments and many other critical texts.’

(Corti, 2006).

## Why engage in the re-use of 'old' data?

- assess the credibility of new research and/or the generalisability of small studies by looking at established data (see Hammersley 1997)
- supplement one's own primary data, e.g. as exploratory analyses prior to new data collection (e.g. Hinds et al. 1997)
- provide rich descriptive information, e.g. to provide an historical perspective (e.g. Bishop 2007, Bornat 2005, Gillies & Edwards 2005)
- reveal new methodological insights by reflecting on previously conducted research (e.g. Mauthner et al 1998, Savage 2005; Bornat 2010)
- generate new findings by analysing 'old' data from a 'new' research context and/or lens (e.g. Gladstone et al 2007, Holland & Thomson 2009; Bornat 2010; Walkerdine and Lucey 1989)
- gain further insight on hard to reach populations or sensitive topics without further intrusion into vulnerable populations (e.g. Fielding & Fielding 2000, Gladstone et al 2007)

(Irwin & Winterton, 2010)

## Debates in re-use

New data or new knowledge?

Knowability of context

New questions and new interpretations

Ethical issues

## New data or new knowledge?

I suggest that the data in fact are not 'out there' at all, that the data are here and now, being constructed in the process of a new research project.  
(Moore, 2007)

...the data must in some ways constrain what inferences we make and the conclusions we reach, rather than being freely constructed in and through our inferences. And this implies that they must, in some sense, exist prior to and independently of the research process.  
(Hammersley, 2010)

## Knowability of context

- Researcher 'cultural habitus' (Hammersley, 1997)
- Reflexivity as data (Mauthner et al, 1998; Henderson et al, 2006)
- Researcher reputation (Evans & Thane, 2006); Bornat et al, 2009)
- Preserving context (Bishop, 2006; Bornat, 2010)

## New questions, new evidence and new interpretations

- New Questions: choice in parenting - comparing two Timescapes data sets in (Bornat et al, forthcoming)
- New evidence: Smoking habits - Elliot (2001) using data from *Families, Social Mobility and Ageing: a multigenerational approach*. Data deposited at UK Data Archive
- New interpretations and old data: setting datasets alongside one another - South Asian geriatricians project (Bornat et al, 2009). Data deposited at the BL
- Interpretation in a 'moral hierarchy' - re-using interviews from The Oral History of Prostitution (Rickard et al, 2011). Data deposited at the BL.

## Ethical issues

Archival procedures - participant protection (Mauthner et al, 1998; Parry & Mauthner, 2004; Bishop, 2005)

- researcher protection
- bureaucratic practice

Consent in context - controlling the future (Bornat, 2005)

Original researcher's reputation - changing language, changing practice (Evans & Thane, 2006; Bornat et al, 2009)

-

## Conclusion

‘I can’t really remember now what I recorded in my oral history. I’d just come over onto the straight side if you like. On having my anonymity protected, reading this and seeing what some people have done with the stuff (oral histories), it didn’t make me think “Have I protected myself enough?” I can’t remember what I done. If anyone does go in there (to the archive) and work out who I am, one they’d be in as much trouble as me, and two, I don’t hide it. Sometimes it’s useful to use. Now I don’t think it bothers me one way or the other. I haven’t thought about it all these years. I can’t say that it does give me a nice feeling or anything that people have listened to my tapes’. (‘Nikita’ in Rickard et al, 2011).