

# Sharing and re-using qualitative data in Ireland

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# Topics

- Introduction to the Irish Qualitative Data Archive ([www.iqda.ie](http://www.iqda.ie))
- Some key findings from consultation exercise within Irish research community
  - Perceived advantages and obstacles to archiving
  - Ethical and epistemological concerns
- How IQDA addresses practical challenges and ethical concerns
- Methodological perspectives on re-using qualitative data
- Where to find more information

# The Irish Qualitative Data Archive: An Introduction

- Established in 2008 as part of the Irish Social Science Platform under PRTL14
  - Response to identified weakness in research infrastructures for humanities and social sciences in Ireland (HEA/Forfás 2007)
- Member of consortium that will develop the Digital Repository of Ireland, funded under PRTL15
- Our remit:
  - To be the central access point for all qualitative social science data generated in Ireland
  - Promote best practice in data management

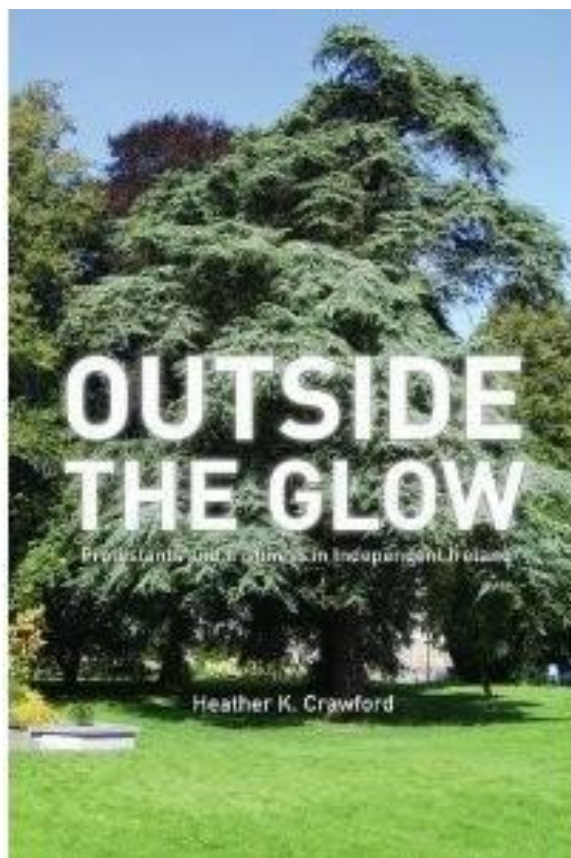
# Qualitative data



*Living in Lucan*  
My name is \_\_\_\_\_ I'm 12 year old  
I live in a place called \_\_\_\_\_  
It's a quite nice place except for the  
construction going on. We go shopping in the  
village, superquinn & Liffey Valley. I've been  
living in Lucan 3 1/4 year & I think it's a  
very nice place to live. There are a lot of people  
we know who have moved to Lucan. The school  
I go to is small because it is temporary  
we are getting a 2 story building next year  
but I'll be in secondary school some of  
my friend are going to that school & some  
are all ready there. Lucan is far better  
that where I lived before, but the builders  
have got to stop digging up the whole  
of Dublin.

- What kinds of data do we archive?
  - Interviews (audio, video, transcripts)
  - Focus groups
  - Diaries and documents
  - Field notes
  - Photographs

# Key Datasets



- Qualitative longitudinal (3)
- Oral history (3)
- Community studies (3)
- Photo archives (2)

# The RACcER Project

- ‘Re-Use and Archiving of Complex Community Evaluation Research’
- Co-funded by IRCHSS and Tallaght West CDI (2010)
- Investigators: Jane Gray, Aileen O’Carroll (IQDA) and Tara Murphy (TWCDI)
- Key Objectives
  - Document practical and ethical concerns and challenges faced by researchers in relation to archiving
    - Interviews with 30 ‘stakeholder’ respondents
  - Development of archiving strategy for secondary data arising from CDI evaluation
  - Establishment and dissemination of best-practice guidelines for qualitative social science data in Ireland (launched January 2011)

# Perceived advantages of archiving

“[The] exercise of archiving...could have a very valuable contribution to make in relation to the management and the use of qualitative data in a way that moves beyond a single project. So replication and all of those kinds of scientific methods issues, which qualitative researchers are often accused of not being prepared to take account of, you could actually get some quite interesting methodological leads, I think anyway, out of the carefully constructed archive.”

“So I think information sharing, springboards to revisit places, projects, people who have been archived, and just the whole serendipity I think.... And I think with archiving, if the resource is there and if people surf it, who knows where it might lead, how it might actually set off little thought experiments or ideas for how people might take something further or go off and do something else or whatever.”

- Researchers
  - Comparative and longitudinal research uses
  - Historical value
  - Potential for improving the status of qualitative research
- Data commissioners and funders
  - Expanding the evidence base
  - Linking data to practice
  - Providing baseline information for future projects



# Challenges to sharing and re-use

- R1 That's not very appealing as a researcher doing all the hard work.
- R2 Getting the access, building up relationships, all that kind of thing. For somebody else to come along then.
- R1 Who has got the time, when you're out collecting the data, they're doing what you want to be doing with it but you don't have the time.
- R3 – While you're out collecting the data... [I]s the added value worth the pain, the time in anonymising?

"[T]he worry...is that it becomes too cumbersome to use and that would really concern me, it would then become this obscure archive which is there but we don't really know who can use it. And people get very angsty about stuff that doesn't seem to be freely available or open and then it is just a bloody white elephant because money has been put aside to do this but it is not something that is transparent. So that is the other side."

- Researchers
  - Additional costs associated with anonymisation
  - Ownership issues
- Data commissioners and funders
  - Accessibility
- Both groups
  - Concerns surrounding sustainability and re-use



# Addressing practical challenges

- Ownership
  - Depositor retains ownership
  - Promoting data citation
- Anonymisation
  - Promote building in archiving as best practice in data management
  - Encourage funders to allow archiving costs
  - IQDA provides advice, best practice protocols and automated anonymisation tool
- Accessibility
  - Exploring enhanced delivery in DRI project
- Promoting re-use
  - Demonstrator research project ('Family Rhythms' – funded by Irish Research Council)
  - Workshops on secondary analysis



[Family dressed for the weather](#) for V6491

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# Concerns about participant consent

“If we were to put on our consent forms or our information sheets that data generated from interviews will be available, anonymised, as part of an archive, we’re screwed. That’s basically it. Sorry for using such unparliamentary language, we would not get responses, not in a country like ours.”

- Researchers may believe that
  - Participants would not give consent to archive
  - Promises to treat data with extreme care necessary to secure consent for research
- This can result in
  - Failure to seek consent to archive
  - Promises to destroy data
- Bishop 2009

# Can consent really be informed?

- Is it possible to be explicit about all possible uses and outcomes of archived research?

“The other point that I would raise here is that say you could logic it out so to speak, could you actually be happy that you would have informed consent from somebody? That they actually fully understand what it means to have this available and what the implications are. Because, to a degree, you don’t actually know what the implications are.”

# Addressing concerns about consent and data protection

- Many concerns based in lack of information about how data archives protect confidentiality
- Evidence that researchers overestimate participant fears about archiving
  - Kuula 2010
- Often not possible to be explicit to respondents about all procedures, research questions and outcomes in primary research
  - Requirement to be explicit may be addressed by providing examples of how similar materials have been reused (Bishop 2009)

# Data protection system at IQDA



- Consent
- Anonymisation to remove personal or sensitive information
- Rights management framework
  - Depositor and end-user licenses and legal agreements
- Access control and user restrictions

# Concerns about harm to participants

- Qualitative researchers often argue that they have distinctive moral obligations to their respondents
  - But not necessarily true of all qualitative research (or only qualitative research)
  - Participants may not perceive relationship in same way
- Bishop (2009) argues that this is an epistemological rather than ethical question
  - Should some standpoints be more privileged than others?

“ I suppose I am mostly concerned about the individual who has taken part, that is what I am concerned about. Say for example .....we were talking to drug users, they are such a vulnerable population of people and you could pick up what they are saying and use it in a way that is so harmful to that group that it is very dangerous. And it takes a long time to actually use that information correctly. I would say so myself, I am only learning how to do this and it is always a concern and I would think it would nearly hinder how you write. But it slows you up because you really have to be careful because the implications of how people read things with very vulnerable people, it can be dangerous.”

# Addressing ethical concerns

- Critics of qualitative data archiving have focused on threats to discharging their ethical responsibilities to respondents
- Supporters of archiving (Bishop 2009) have argued that:
  - Researchers also have ethical obligations to the wider scholarly community and to the public
  - Many concerns surrounding protection of respondents can be addressed by good data management and protection systems
  - Respondents may not have the same fears or understanding of their relationships with researchers
  - Some dilemmas thought to be ethical are in fact about epistemology and method



# Concerns about misrepresentation

“And I would feel that qualitative data probably is a little bit like that all the time because it is time sensitive and context sensitive in a way that is even more blurred than the quantitative data. And that is the whole issue of course, isn't it, about qualitative and quantitative, I mean there is something about here and here and here under different headings which doesn't exist to the same extent in qualitative data even where you try to frame it, in my view.”

“And if they're going to check my work I might as well write what they want to hear.”

- Concern that archived data may be used to reach different conclusions from primary researcher
- Argument that qualitative research distinctive because of the importance of 'being there' for understanding the data (Mauthner et al. 1998)
  - Privileged relationship between researcher and respondent
  - Tacit familiarity with context

# Addressing epistemological arguments

- Co-construction of data and interpretation (Moore 2007)
  - No fundamental distinction between primary and secondary contextualization
- Both primary and secondary analysis move between data and evidence (Hammersley 2010; Irwin and Winterton 2012)
  - Primary researchers have privileged perspective on the *data* but not necessarily on the *arguments* that can be generated from the data
  - Context itself needs to be conceptualized and analysed if qualitative research is to move beyond description
  - ‘Being there’ not the ‘final arbiter’ of the adequacy of explanation
- All data de-contextualized through processes of standardisation (Savage 2011)
  - Archived qualitative sources less so than quantitative
  - Potential to use skills of the historian to ‘read against the grain’

# Access data at IQDA



- Go to [www.iqda.ie](http://www.iqda.ie)
- Download the [IQDA Data Access Request Form and Agreement on Conditions of Use](#)
- Read and complete the IQDA Data Access Request Form. Be sure to indicate the dataset(s) to which access is requested
- Read and complete the IQDA Agreement on Conditions of Use
- Return both completed forms to the IQDA
- Once your application is approved, the data will be delivered electronically in encrypted format

# Learn more!



Invitation to a workshop funded by IRCHSS as part of the *Family Rhythms* project at IQDA

## RE-USING QUALITATIVE DATA

WORKSHOP at NUI Maynooth FRIDAY 22ND JUNE 2012

**THE WORKSHOP AIMS** to give delegates a critical understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with re-using archived qualitative data, and to provide practical guidance and solutions.

**TOPICS** will include:

- Ethical and epistemological issues
- Context and comparison in secondary analysis
- Working across datasets

This full day event offers participants a combination of presentations, breakout groups and an open panel discussion.

Participants will learn about re-using qualitative data from a number of projects including **GROWING UP IN IRELAND** and **TIMESCAPES**.

**KEY SPEAKERS** include:

Professor Bren Neale, Professor of Life Course and Family Research, University of Leeds and Director, ESRC Timescapes

Professor Seán Ó Riain, Department of Sociology, NUI Maynooth

Dr Libby Bishop, UK Data Archive/ESRC Timescapes

Dr Sarah Irwin, University of Leeds/ESRC Timescapes

The afternoon breakout groups and panel discussions include encounters between original creators and end users of archived data.



Who should attend: Postgraduate students, academics, researchers, staff from statutory and voluntary bodies and all those interested in re-using qualitative data.

Please register your interest by Friday 8th of June 2012  
Email: [ruth.geraghty@nuim.ie](mailto:ruth.geraghty@nuim.ie)  
Telephone: 01 708 61 71

There is no fee to attend this event. A limited number of bursaries are available for postgraduate students to attend.

More information: [www.iqda.ie](http://www.iqda.ie)

- Presentations by leading international experts
  - Timescapes project and archive
  - UK Data Archive
- Encounters between data creators and re-users
  - Growing Up in Ireland
  - Life Histories and Social Change

# Useful references

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- Moore, Niamh. 2007. '(Re)Using qualitative data?' *Sociological Research Online* 12, 3. <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/12/3/1.html>
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