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The Archive in Question

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The Archive in Question¹

Abstract

The archive has become central across a range of disciplines and domains. Perhaps paradoxically for some, this very foregrounding of the archive has been facilitated by its very destabilization, which has opened it up to new possibilities and the production of new knowledge. The authority and foundations of the archive have been called into question. In fact arguably it is the friction between and within disciplines, subdisciplines and interdisciplines which has been so productive, and hence most revealing of the archive's potential. However different disciplines and professional and popular domains (and their overlaps) have produced different anxieties, and possibilities. This paper then attends to the different disciplines which have reflected on (and created) the archive, and to the tensions and frictions between. Specifically the paper turns to one of the more recent entrants into the field of the archive - sociology - which has received little attention in the literature on the archive. However in the context of the unravelling archive the entry of sociology into the debate is curious. Some of the sociological anxieties around the archive – the importance of context, anxieties around ethical issues including informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, and concerns about representativeness, validity and generalisability, would appear to threaten to *reestablish* the archive. Through reflecting on these issues, the paper aims to explore the pitfalls and potentials of 'the sociologisation of the archive'.

Introduction: The Archive in Question

Recent developments have called conventional understandings of the archive as an organised depository of knowledge administered by gatekeeper-archivists into question. A key contributor to transformation here has been technological innovation, and particularly digitisation, which has for instance opened up the archive to the enthusiast wanting to post their photos, memories and documents on the internet on community history sites.² In a more informal manner, many people share their thoughts, photos and documents through social networking sites. Technological developments and 'customer demand' from the growing number of family historians are also transforming traditional archives. Digitisation of documents calls into question the need for (family) historians and other researchers to visit archives; although, at the same time, archives such as The National Archives in Britain have limited opening hours to historians, and other researchers and family historians due to the pressures of the current financial crisis.³ Archivists are concerned whether or not to allow researchers and members of the public to add information about documents to their catalogue and what status such metadata should have. Thus digitisation, and the related tension between an uneven archival commitment to public engagement, and a public insistent on engaging, have contributed to putting the democratisation of the archive on the agenda in a substantive manner.

However, the questioning of the archive extends beyond the concerns of archivists about the future of the archive in the digital age (see also Bishop 2008a). Since the mid-1980s, historians have challenged the position of the archive as the unquestioned source of knowledge and truth about the past. Historical anthropologist Laura Ann Stoler is part of an "archival turn" within history which has resulted in 'a rethinking of the materiality and imaginary of collections and what kinds of truth-claims lie in documentation' (Stoler 2002a: 93). In engaging with the 'archive as subject' rather than as a mere 'source' (Stoler 2002a: 93) Stoler is opening up new avenues of analysing the past. Not only by examining the silences within the documentary record to write the history of subaltern subjects, Stoler and other historians argue for seeing the archive as the constitutive process of imperial/liberal state power and reading the imperial archive along its archival grain to understand colonial politics. By shifting attention to 'fact production', the archive can be seen as an epistemological experiment by state power to contain the reality of (colonial) governance (Stoler 2002a; 2002b; 2009). Other historians such as Patrick Joyce have made similar claims for the archive as a crucial technology of the liberal state (Joyce 1999; 2003).

As Stoler has noted of the archival turn '[t]he archive has been elevated to new theoretical status, with enough cachet to warrant distinct billing, worthy of scrutiny of its own' (Stoler 2002a: 92) and the archive has moved from marginal concern to the centre of the discipline of history. However, contesting archival authority is not entirely new. The archival document as font of truth has been challenged prior to digitisation, not least by those using the once novel technology of the tape recorder to create oral histories, which not only supplemented official, documentary history, but came to be understood as offering their own historical truths (Portelli 1991; Perks and Thomson 1998). In particular those recording the stories of workers, women, and other marginalised groups, those who have been 'hidden from history' (Rowbotham 1973), have long challenged the authority of archives which exclude certain voices in the production of particular versions of *history*. Feminists and others have long created their own archives and 'herstories' (for example The Lesbian Herstory Archives in New York; see Nestle 1979; 1990; and also Smith 1995). What is perhaps new is that challenges to the archive have come more to the 'centre' of the discipline of history. Antoinette Burton has identified the key role which the

acceptance of oral history (as well as the internet) has played in the renaissance of a transformed archive, pointing out that '[t]he respectability which oral history has gradually gained in the past twenty five years, together with the emergent phenomenon of the 'Internet-as-archive', have helped to prize open canonical notions of what counts as an archive and what role the provenance of historical artefacts of all kinds should play in History as a disciplinary project" (Burton 2005: 3).

This interest in the archive can be found in many places, many different domains, and so is pervasive and powerful. The foregrounding of the archive occurs at the same time as the stability of the archive has been called into question. Arguably the friction between and within disciplines, subdisciplines and interdisciplines has been key here, both destabilizing the conventional archive and at the same time revealing the archive's potential. Thus destabilization has opened up new possibilities for the production of knowledge. Examples here include oral history, colonial historiography, historical anthropology, literary history, cultural studies, performance studies. As anthropology has grappled with its colonial origins and implications in the colonial order, so too has history. Some of this interest can be traced to the influence of the work of Foucault and Derrida (Foucault 1972; Derrida 1996) across a range of disciplines; and perhaps also de Certeau, even if less acknowledged (de Certeau 1984; 1988; see also Highmore 2006). More generally the rethinking of the archive can be related to what have been described as various turns, which manifest differently in different disciplines: the cultural turn, the narrative turn, the biographic turn, the historiographic turn, the material turn, the anti-foundational turn, the death of the author and so on. History is no longer the only discipline to have a stake in these discussions.

Thus in entitling this paper 'the archive in question' we not only intend to gesture to the current destabilization of the archive, that the archive is now in question – its foundational and authoritative status is, for many now thoroughly undermined, but especially for the discipline of history. But also we ask – *which* archive is in question? This is because the archive is not the same for different disciplines – the historical archive is not the same as the sociological archive, is not the same as the anthropological archive, the archive of performance and so on. The concerns, anxieties, fevers, joys, even the dust are not the same. Absences, exclusions, ethics, practices, methods, research strategies, access, disciplinary status, truth claims, facts, generalisability, validity, all manifest differently – or sometimes not at all – across the disciplines. The process of archiving has raised profound methodological issues across a range of disciplines, not only history.

These different and diverse disciplinary approaches to the archive notwithstanding, a particular departure point for this paper is the emergence of a debate, mainly in sociology, though to some extent more broadly across the social sciences in the UK, around what has been termed 'the reuse of qualitative data'. This debate has emerged in particular in response to changes in the funding process of the main social science funding body in the UK, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The ESRC now makes two particular requirements of those applying for funding. The first requirement is that applicants check whether analogous data already exists which could be used in the proposed project. The second is that that grant recipients agree to archive and make available to others data generated in the course of their project. These interventions have led to sociologists debating the possibilities of 're-using qualitative research'. In fact, we want to argue that there are also deep intellectual issues involved in this growing interest in the archive from sociology. Whereas during the second half of the 20th century we can trace a clear demarcation between past-centred humanities disciplines, and present-oriented social science ones, we can increasingly recognise that the social sciences

themselves have been historical agents. Their traces, or relics, deposited in archives can now be read in a way which muddies any clear boundaries between history and social science (see the discussion in Savage 2010). However, although such reuse of qualitative data implicitly assumes the process of archiving data and the existence or creation of an archive, the language of 'the archive' is not one that many sociologists have taken up, or have much recourse to, even as they discuss issues about the storage of and access to 'data'. Rather the debate to date has tended to reiterate common sociological framings of qualitative research, in which primacy is assumed to attach to the fieldwork encounter. Key concerns have therefore included the loss of 'context', from oral interview to textual transcript, as well as the loss of the ethnographic and performative moment of the interview and all that cannot be contained in a transcript, and cannot be archived. Ethical concerns include the feasibility of meaningfully acquiring informed consent for as yet unknown future use of data, and the challenges of maintaining anonymity and confidentiality in the archive. There have been other questions raised about the reuse of archived qualitative data around representativeness, sampling, validity and generalisability. Though we explore these matters further throughout the paper, what we want to highlight here is the extent to which these concerns testify to a deeply interesting anxiety of sociologists towards the archive. We seek to emphasise instead the possibilities opened up by the very destabilization of the archive. We resist the framing of some sociological interventions which would appear to threaten to *reestablish* the archive through efforts to fix what counts as context, and knowledge, and who has access to creating knowledge. Thus a central concern of this paper will be an exploration of the potential and possible pitfalls of, what one participant in a series of workshops we organised termed, 'the sociologisation of the archive'.⁴

All three of the authors of this paper have been involved in this debate about reuse in various ways, through publications which have attempted to rethink the debate about the 'reuse' of qualitative data, in developing strategies for reusing qualitative data, in visiting and using archives, and in particular through our involvement in the series of workshops on 'Archiving and Reusing Qualitative Data: Theory, Methods and Ethics Across Disciplines', and funded by the National Centre for Research Methods (www.ncrm.ac.uk) in the UK (see endnote 1). Even though for us, the principle of reuse is not a problem *per se*, perhaps because we all share a historical – as well as a sociological – imagination, and even though we might find some of anxieties about reuse to be exaggerated, we are nonetheless intrigued by this manifestation of a specifically sociological 'archive fever', and what the sociological questions which have been posed of the archive might offer the existing debate on the archive, and *vice versa*, with a view to extending our previous interventions on reuse (see especially papers in Barbour and Eley 2007).

(Re)using Qualitative Data

As mentioned already, discussions about reuse in sociology are commonly traced to institutional changes. In 1994 the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) contributed funding to set up QUALIDATA, the Qualitative Data Archival Resource Centre, at the University of Essex.⁵ In 1996 the ESRC made changes to its Datasets Policy, which has since specified, firstly, that those applying for funding should ensure that similar data which could be used for the research project does not already exist, and secondly that those in receipt of funding should offer their data to QUALIDATA (since 2003 ESDS Qualidata) for archiving on completion of their project. Thus these two events, the setting up of Qualidata and the changes to the ESRC's datasets policies are often referenced as the departure point for debates about reuse in the UK.

Terminology: 'Reusing Qualitative Data'

Although the setting up of Qualidata as an *archive*, as well as an archiving support and advice centre, has been central to the emerging debate on the reuse of qualitative data, the terminology, and the trajectory, of the debate are interesting. To extend earlier reflections on the nomenclature of this debate (see Moore 2007), it is noteworthy that despite the extensive focus on the archive elsewhere, discussions in the social sciences have tended to reference the archive only in passing. Thus despite Qualidata's status as an archive, the archive remains a rather ghostly presence in the literature. The terminology is important and is implicated in how concerns are played out: sociological concerns have been framed around 'the reuse of qualitative data', rather than around *the archive* per se. One of the aims of this paper is to begin to bring the debate about the reuse of qualitative data into conversation with discussions about the archive.

Context and Reflexivity

Sociological objections to the possibilities of the reuse of qualitative data have concentrated in particular around questions about context and reflexivity, both principles at the heart of much interpretative sociology. Researchers have been concerned about the limits of using data without full access to the original conditions of the creation of the data; the irreproducibility of the original interview, the face-to-face encounter with an interviewee; the insufficiency of a transcript against the ethnographic moment of the interview; and the impossibility of ever adequately archiving the context of data. Efforts by those at Qualidata and others involved in archiving to develop protocols for the kinds of metadata to be included alongside transcripts have been found inadequate. Understanding the interview as a co-construction of the researcher and the interviewee, and understanding the interpretation of the interview as dependent on the researcher's reflexive engagement with the process, such perspectives find the notion of archiving and reusing transcripts, even with further documentation from the research process, as at best limited and at worst, an almost impossible project. Paradoxically, the insistence on the importance of reflexivity, on the mediated process of knowledge construction, can collapse into the inference that only the 'original' researcher who carried out the interview has access to the true meaning of the encounter and even its traces in the transcript. Thus even reflexive and interpretive sociologists are not immune to the fantasy of the complete archive, and absolute access to the truth and this forms part of the resistance to the creation of a sociological archive, that it can never be complete, that it will always be a site of loss and failure, that it can never be the reproduction of a face-to-face interview. Bearing in mind the discussion of the trend towards the destabilization of the archive more generally, what then becomes clearer is that this resistance to the reuse of qualitative data involves arguments which appear to restabilize the archive, and the production of knowledge based on archival research.

Further grounds for resistance to archiving include concerns about adequately addressing the ethical issues raised by depositing transcripts of interviews in archives (informed consent; anonymity and confidentiality) and about the role of funding bodies and the related question of the 'value' and 'value for money' of archiving qualitative data.

Historians and the Instability of the Archive

Some of the concerns which have emerged in the sociological debate around 'reusing qualitative data', are echoed in the growing engagement of historians with archives not

only as a repository of documents, but also increasingly as an object of study as they confront the archive's incompleteness and instability.

It has been common for historians to treat evidence from documents and to some extent artefacts deposited in organised repositories (e.g. archives or libraries) as taken-for-granted building blocks for developing their narratives of the past. Like many of the social scientists concerned about archiving their research, historians were generally not – indeed, given that they study the some time distant past, they could not conceivably have been – involved in collecting, cataloguing and preserving the documents and artefacts they draw on in their work. Therefore, their study of the past is to some extent circumscribed by what someone, often a male administrator in government, religious bodies or businesses, generated, deemed worth preserving as part of the institutional knowledge and memory of the institutions they worked for. Not all documents and artefacts find their way into the archive or a library and survive.

While most historians accept that the archive will always be an incomplete window on the past, challenged by those often marginalised from 'History', they have become increasingly inventive in using archival material and unorthodox sources to write about such lives. In researching the recent past, historians are making increasing use of the studies written by social scientists from the late nineteenth century onwards including their archived research material (see for example Todd 2008). However, historians would generally not rely exclusively on interviews generated by one such study, but would draw on as many different documents or sources as feasible to explore the past and contextualise a particular source in its period and historical context. Therefore, historians would be interested to understand for example the interviews compiled as part of a large social science project as a particular articulation of society or life at a certain time in the past. As a consequence, historians would note the contextual information compiled by social researchers, but would maintain that such evidence or traces of past can be understood only as part of a wider picture in which it matters as much why certain questions were asked, the way questions answered, or related to events and developments at family, community, local, national and international level. This poses the question of whether there are insufficient traces to allow historians to retrace the past lives of individuals. In her contribution to the first workshop on 'The Ontology of the Archive', Carolyn Steedman reflected on the considerable criticism she received from other social historians for writing about the relationship of masters and domestic servants based on essentially one source, the diary of a master (Steedman 2007).

Even though historians are increasingly using unconventional sources or are reading existing sources in innovative ways, the archive remains crucial to historians given the requirement to document their statements about the past with copious references to documents and artefact in organised depositories. At the first workshop, Steven Pierce highlighted the difficulty in referring to documents he had surreptitiously accessed during research in Nigeria (Pierce 2008). The documents in question were stored in the cupboard of the office of a local official, rather than formally archived. Therefore, the challenge became how to refer to these documents. In recent years, international historians have faced a similar unexpected problem when some previously open and accessible documents were withdrawn from the American National Archives following the 9/11 attacks. For historians, the problem was that of how to refer to documents which they had previously seen, but which were now no longer available to other researchers. In trying to overcome this problem some historians posted digital images of the documents online. Indeed, the revelation that White House email system failed to archive the emails by staff during the lead-up to the decision to invade Iraq demonstrates, if such proof were needed,

that even governmental archives, as all depositories of information and artefacts, are incomplete and instable.

However, this finding raises a number of questions relevant to the re-use of qualitative data debate. Faced with the challenge of archiving their research data, some discussions among social scientists reflect an assumption that unless the entire research process can be documented we should not engage in reuse. At the same time there seems to be a further assumption that ethically data must be anonymised and not traceable to a particular informant, and therefore by its very nature incomplete if deposited, raising questions about how much contextual information should be included as it increases the traceability. Nevertheless, the work of historians suggests that even incomplete documentation will provide an invaluable source for future researchers in ways we cannot predict or anticipate. Apart from more explicitly political concerns, there has been little attention to limits to storing all the information in organised depositories due to limitations of space and costs, notwithstanding the 'digital age'.

For some, the internet increasingly approximates the Foucauldian notion of the archive as the collection of all potential statements, constantly being transformed and recast (Foucault 1972: 126-131). While often seen as an extremely versatile depository of documents, facts and information, the internet constantly changes and transforms the information posted. While some suggest that the internet will never become "more than a place to begin and end the research journey" (Sentilles 2005: 155), and that the internet cannot replace the laborious process of research whether in the field collecting information, interviewing subjects or visiting archives or organised depositories of documents and artefacts, for others a thorough appreciation of the impact of the internet, digitisation projects and web 2.0 technologies necessitate a rethinking of the archive, making it a subject of social and historical inquiry.

Anthropology: Field as Archive and Archive as Field?

The encounter between history and anthropology has been particularly productive for rethinking the archive. In the section which follows we trace a number of distinct contributions which have emerged out of this meeting of disciplines and methodological practices, as approaches to 'the field' and to 'the archive' have cross-fertilized each other, and even merged for anthropologists researching in the colonial archive, which has been their 'field'.

Historical Anthropology and the Colonial Archive

The archive has been '[o]ne of the most pervasive social and cultural technologies of modernity' (Highmore 2006: 84) and as such has been central in imagining and defining an 'other' – savage, colonial subject, against whom the West can measure its civilisation. Those who have explored the colonial archive where perhaps issues of power (and powerlessness) have been all too blatant have been amongst the first to challenge the archive. Historical anthropologists, through their encounters with the colonial archive, have played a key role in rethinking the archive. Both Ann Laura Stoler (Stoler 2002a; 2002b; 2009) and Nicholas Dirks (Dirks 2002) have been central figures here.

Stoler has recently distinguished between the common and recognised practice of 'reading against the grain' and the new possibilities opened up by 'reading along the grain of the archive'. Stoler characterises the common critical approach to the colonial archive as an

effort to read colonial archives ‘against the grain’ of imperial history, empire builders, and the priority and perceptions of those who wrote them’, thinking history from the bottom up, the human agency of the subordinate against the imperial structures of those in power (Stoler 2009: 46-47). This kind of approach has resulted in careful attention to what counts as knowledge and who has had the power to record their versions of history in colonial ethnography. Whilst the distinction from reading ‘along the grain’ may appear overstated, nonetheless Stoler’s attention to the organisational powers of the archive is instructive:

[e]thnography in and of the colonial archives attends to processes of production, relations of power in which archives are created, sequestered, and rearranged. ... Here I treat archives not as repositories of state power but as unquiet movements in a field of force, as restless alignments and readjustments of people and the beliefs to which they were tethered, as species in which the senses and the affective course through the seeming abstractions of political rationalities. (Stoler 2009: 32-33)

This attention to reading along the grain of the archive has also contributed to the move towards producing ethnographies of the archive.

Ethnographies of the Archive

The encounters between anthropology, history and the archive have also produced other effects which have contributed both to the destabilization of the archive and to its move to object of study in its own right. Not only have historical anthropologists turned to the colonial archive as a site of the manifestation and exercise of colonialism, but they have brought an ethnographic perspective to bear, not only on the texts in the archive, but on the archive itself. Nicholas Dirks suggested the need for an ‘ethnography of the archive’ (Dirks 2002), having earlier called for a biography of the archive (Dirks 1993). As Dirks reflected:

But while anthropologists have subjected their arrival stories [in the field] to historical and critical scrutiny, the historian’s arrival story is largely untold, shielded by the fact that while the archive has often seemed mystical, it has never appeared exotic. Travelers’ tales and adventurers’ yarns have never rendered the archive a major source of narrative, and yet the monumentality of the archive is enshrined in a set of assumptions about truth that are fundamental both to the discipline of history and to the national foundations of history. While these assumptions about truth and history have been critiqued in relation to historical writing (and the use of sources), they have rarely been examined in relation to the sources themselves, except inside the very historical footnotes that summon the greatest respect for the archive as a repository of ultimate value. ... The time has come to historicize the archive. (Dirks 2002: 48)

Dirks’ suggestion that the time was ripe for stories of the archive following anthropologists’ stories of the field has been taken up explicitly in Antoinette Burton’s collection *Archive Stories*. Burton’s (2005) collection brings this kind of sensibility to bear on archives, and her *Archive Stories* appears as a version of John Van Maanen’s *Tales of the Field* (Van Maanen 1988) for historians: ‘Archive Stories aspires to illustrate the possibilities of an ethnographic approach to those traces which remain legible to us as history’ (Burton 2005: 20; see also Kirsch and Rohan 2008). Burton hopes that ‘[i]n pursuing this ethnographic

re-orientation, we move resolutely if experimentally beyond naïve positivism and utopian deconstruction, beyond secrecy and revelation, toward a robust, imaginative and interpretively responsible method of critical engagement with the past' (Burton 2005: 21). Here we might note that it is salutary that Burton turns to ethnography for her archive stories, rather than for instance to a reflexive sociology, notwithstanding ethnography's engagement with, including at times complicity with, the colonial archive.

Though the explicit encounter between history and anthropology, or the archive and the field, is recent, there is nonetheless now a growing body of work exploring the 'ethnography of the archive'. Burton has stressed that the continuing 'necessity of talking about the backstage of archives – how they are constructed, policed, experienced, and manipulated – stems equally from our sense that even the most sophisticated work on archives has not gone far enough in addressing lingering presumptions about, and attachments to, the claims to objectivity with which archives have historically been synonymous' (Burton 2005: 7). In making this point Burton is stressing that an ethnographic approach involves both the practice of writing stories of archival encounters, and that it is also an approach to the archive. This captures Ann Laura Stoler's account of the epistemological importance of the ethnographic encounter with the archive, that 'archives can no longer be treated simply as "sites of storage and conservation" and their use has to become more "ethnographic" less "extractive" (Stoler 2002a: 90).

Archiving Ethnography

However yet another twist on the encounter between history and anthropology reverses the ethnographic approach to the archive, and understands ethnographies, and the production of ethnographies, as a process of history-making in the present. George Marcus, in his paper 'The Once and Future Ethnographic Archive', points to the possibility of understanding anthropology's ethnographies as themselves constituting an archive: the idea that 'anthropology's century-long accumulation of ethnographic scholarship constitutes an archive' – here in both literal and metaphoric senses (Marcus 1998: 49). Marcus echoes a common claim for anthropology, that 'the production of ethnography, at the minimum, and at its most valuable, is the present making of documents for history' (Marcus 1998: 50). Marcus provides a compelling account of an innovative anthropological initiative, the Human Relations Area Files (HRAF; see <http://www.yale.edu/hraf/>), begun in 1937 as a cross-cultural survey of cultures, to enable the possibility of systematic, comparative social science. The HRAF collected (and continues to collect) ethnographies as books, monographs and papers and assembles them as a massive cultural archive. While holding the full-text ethnographies, each paragraph of text is also coded to enable searching across a range of categories. Marcus notes how, in this process, the ethnographic texts were in effect treated as primary rather than secondary texts: 'Nothing could be more revealing of the heterogeneity of ethnographic texts than when they were literally cut up and reassembled by the HRAF archivists preparing them to be used as if they were primary sources' (Marcus 1998: 52) and that only in the framework of such a project could the cumulation of published ethnography be considered literally an archive of primary material (Marcus 1998: 52-53).

Marcus makes a number of further pertinent observations on the HRAF which are relevant when thinking about the reuse of qualitative data. For instance, referencing canonical studies in anthropology, Marcus notes that the work of Malinowski or Evans-Pritchard stands both as a professional archive of the construction of a canon and the emergence of a discipline; and as accounts, among other accounts, of the Trobriand Islanders, or Nuer, respectively. Thus there is an important distinction between historians who may be used to using an archive but less so to creating one; and social scientists of the present such as

anthropologists and sociologists, who not only are involved in the creation of the archive, but who inevitably and unavoidably leave traces of themselves in the archive. And as Marcus implies those who get to leave their traces, are often those who both constructed and are constructed as the professional canon. Marcus also echoes one of the anxieties about the sociological archive – that the researcher will be found out when their data is re-examined: ‘Most important has been the trend of the restudy of classic works in connection with new fieldwork among the same peoples, for example, as in the case of Annette Weiner’s reconsideration of Trobriand exchange (1976) and Sharon Hutchinson’s placing of the Nuer into colonial and postcolonial history (1995)’ (Marcus 1998: 54). Marcus asks whether these studies are more or less canonical after being restudied, pondering ‘then what are these uses of this reconstituted, more complex and unwieldy sense of the archive’.

However Marcus does not address anthropologists’ own feelings about the archiving of their materials. In the UK context, David Zeitlyn notes

Anthropologists have problematic relationships to archives. On the one hand, they use archived material voraciously by applauding Pat Barker’s innovative use of W.H.R Rivers’ unexpurgated field notes in her novels, and using Malinowski’s diaries for teaching. On the other hand, things become rather different when the question of archiving their own material arises. The possibility of granting others access, no matter how circumscribed or how far postponed in the future, seems to cause more or less acute feelings of discomfort and unease. (Zeitlyn 2000)

As an indication of the extent to which the field of the archive has been and continue to be in constant flux, Pat Caplan noted that her interest in the ethical issues raised by archiving ethnography postdated the 2003 collection she edited on *The Ethics of Anthropology* (Caplan 2008), but which did not involve consideration of the ethical implications of archiving.

‘Post-fieldwork Fieldwork’

A further strand of the anthropological encounter with the archive which is useful for those thinking through the reuse of qualitative data can be found in the work of anthropologists who have written of ‘fieldwork after fieldwork’. Though not strictly speaking about a formal archive, this anthropological literature generally involves anthropologists looking back and reflecting on their own personal ‘archive’ of fieldwork and ethnography, and importantly here reflecting on their changing understanding of the fieldwork over time. In this way some anthropologists have taken their ethnographic approach to the archive/field further, not just historicising the archive, but historicising the process of fieldwork, interpretation and the production of knowledge. Thus while we might be reminded that while history’s usual focus is on the temporal and specifically on the past, or perhaps the past known in the present, anthropology’s concerns have been more usually understood spatially, the focus is the ‘field’. However an encounter between history and anthropology leaves us more attentive to the temporal dimensions of anthropology, not only that fieldwork is carried out in time, and that the writing up is usually carried out *later*, not only ‘at home’, ‘away from the field’, but also in a different temporal moment, *after* fieldwork.

Anthropologists, despite the privileging of space, with their often long temporal engagements with their fieldwork, have been well positioned to realise their changing understandings of fieldwork over time (McLeod and Thomson 2009). A number of anthropologists have written of this. Renato Rosaldo’s is perhaps the classic account, describing his initial failure to grasp a ‘headhunters rage’, the rage of the older Ilongot men of northern Luzon, Philippines, when engulfed in grief following bereavement, grief so

intense they used to literally go 'head-hunting' and kill another, unknown, person. For Rosaldo this rage was difficult to comprehend, that is until his wife, also an anthropologist, was killed in an accident, and his grasp of grief and rage was profoundly transformed (Rosaldo 1989). Anthony Cohen has written of what he has termed 'post-fieldwork fieldwork', on the continuous changes 'in the field; in the discipline; in the author himself; and in his views of the discipline, the field and his earlier analyses of the data' (Cohen 1992: 339). Specifically he asks the question of 'how ethnography can be written up more provisionally, allowing for the future occurrence of such changes, while still preserving the authority of the text' (Cohen 1992: 339).

These questions are certainly of interest to those engaged in the reuse of qualitative data, and have recently been taken up in Molly Andrews' account of her return to her earlier research, oral histories of political activists. Andrews writes of how what she saw in her interviews was profoundly transformed following her own experience of becoming a mother, and how she became more attentive to those aspects of her transcripts where parenthood and families were foregrounded. Importantly Andrews also reminds us of the need to avoid taking such readings as progress narratives, negating any previous readings for the 'truth' of the more recent analysis: '[r]evisiting one's own data is not so much a journey back in that time, as much as exploration of that moment from the perspective of the present, with all of the knowledge and experience that one has accumulated in the intervening time since the original data analysis. But the original study remains important; it represents the self of the interviewer and interviewee as they were perceived to be at that moment' (Andrews 2008: 89). Similarly, a further example of revisiting data, is Catherine Kohler Riessman, like Andrews another narrative researcher, has returned to previous data paying attention to the passage of time and shifting interpretations of the intervening years (Riessman 2002; 2004). McLeod and Thomson also return to previous research, but Thomson's account of her return to transcripts, and importantly, memories of a focus group, is mediated by her account of sharing this data with others and of the value of others' responses to the data. Thus McLeod and Thomson also point to the limits of individual analysis and to the value of collective research (McLeod and Thomson 2009). Interviews carried out by Broom et al with qualitative researchers shows that the ideal of the solitary researcher with a unique relationship with interviewees remains common (Broom, Cheshire et al 2009).

Thus these accounts of revisiting data over time, and of sharing data with others, offer important counters to those still upholding the inviolability of the researcher-researched relationship in this way, through pointing to the mutability of meaning and interpretation over time.

Oral History and the Archive

Oral history is perhaps one of the more obvious locations to which to turn to think through the question of reusing qualitative data. Thus oral history is relevant not just to the extent that it has been implicated in the destabilisation of the historical archive. Oral history offers some important methodological and epistemological insights into thinking through the reuse of qualitative data (Bornat 2005; Moore 2007). Oral historians, in contrast to historians and sociologists, have been committed to archiving interviews and making them available to others. Perched between sociological interview and historical data gathering, oral history appears a hybrid genre, with particular features which are useful for thinking about the reuse of qualitative data. Oral history commonly involves a face-to-face interview, which could be understood as analogous to a sociological interview. However

oral histories are generally understood as being produced to be archived and reused, thus standing in distinct contrast to the curiously disposable qualitative interview. The comparison with the oral history interview reveals the extent to which, perhaps related to the notion of the researchers' exclusive access to meaning and interpretation, are notions of ownership of data in the social sciences (Broom, Cheshire et al 2009), against oral history's commitment to making interviews available freely to others as part of an historical project.

However while oral history may seem a logical place to which to turn for insight on the reuse of qualitative data, as Joanna Bornat has pointed out, oral historians may not be so interested in the topic! Bornat speculates that this may be because for oral historians the notion that interviews would be archived and reused is taken for granted (Bornat 2008). Indeed she goes so far as to suggest that for oral historians the question of reusing qualitative data may need to be 'made strange to historians, to be presented from a new angle, if its potential for exposing methodological issues as well as new insights from data are to be appreciated.'

The notion that rather than the social sciences learning from oral history, but rather the opposite, was also made by Michael Frisch, president (2009-2010) of the Oral History Association (US) at one of our workshops. Frisch turned on its head the notion that oral history may offer insights for sociologists and suggested that perhaps the social sciences might come to the rescue of oral history. While in the field of oral history there has been much concentration on methods and processes, on how to produce interviews, on questions, on the equipment to use, on release forms, there has been much less emphasis on interpretation than in the social sciences. Much earlier Joan Sangster had also suggested that oral historians may have something to learn from sociologists, specifically their attention to ethical issues (Sangster 1994), a point reiterated by Joanna Bornat (Bornat 2005). Frisch also noted that while the impulse for much oral history has been broadly left-wing – the labour movement, women's movement etc – that nonetheless the desire to preserve certain stories could remain quite conservative. For Frisch the digital age has thoroughly challenged oral history, offering possibilities for multiple and more fluid stories. Additionally Frisch suggests that the digital age now means that in many cases there will now be no document, or even audio cassette, only digital forms and digital 'copies', and that the advent of digital possibilities may remove the need for transcripts and allow for searching of audio and visual materials, without having to transcribe an entire interview.

Thus Frisch's account of 'a post-documentary sensibility' offered an account of some of the ways in which technological developments are challenging our understanding of oral history, and the qualitative interview. Frisch's contributions provided a reminder that the dilemmas of audio versus paper transcript may be passing, given the common existence now of data only in digital form. He also pointed to the implications for archivists, suggesting the need for a shift from archive management towards more content management – where archivists may be required to produce more descriptive and narrative accounts of what is in the text.

Ann Cvetkovich, one of our speakers from overseas, provided a different perspective on oral history work, in her book, *Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Cvetkovich 2003). Cvetkovich set out to describe the ephemeral archives of lesbian public cultures, thus her 'archive of feelings' destabilizes the archive more than most. Her book is an exploration of 'cultural texts as repositories of feelings and emotions, which are encoded not just in the texts themselves, but in the practices that surround their production and reception' (Cvetkovich 2003: 7). Intriguingly as part of her project, as well

as trawling popular culture for her archive of a lesbian public sphere, Cvetkovich also initiated an oral history project, recording oral histories of (mainly lesbian) AIDS activists in her attempt to construct, record and document histories of loss. Cvetkovich identifies herself as a cultural critic more used to using archives than interviewing, which makes her account of carrying out oral history interviews with lesbian AIDS activists very powerful – and a useful counterpoint to the social scientist who might be a practiced interviewer, but may never have entered an archive, much less know what to do once there. Cvetkovich's shift from imagining this archive into being and her account of her own practice of oral history versus more conventional archival research is instructive. She was acutely aware of the distinctiveness of her project:

My project can't really be appreciated without some sense of how unusual, and hence experimental, my interviews as a research method has been. At the risk of reinventing the wheels of oral history, ethnography and even social science research, I have approached an unfamiliar methodology from the vantage point of a cultural critic accustomed to working with an already existing archive rather than creating one. In fact I came to oral history with a certain amount of resistance given that my theoretical background had taught me to be suspicious of what Joan Scott calls "the experience of experience". (Cvetkovich 2003: 165)

Interestingly in (re)presenting the interviews, Cvetkovich resorted to presenting long extracts of the interviews, almost without comment, as if letting the voices speak for themselves, clearly not a usual approach of a cultural critic to a text, and certainly not one schooled in Joan Scott's account of experience as 'always already an interpretation and in need of an interpretation', as if her skills as textual commentator could not be applied to texts produced in the face-to-face encounter of the interview.

It is also worth noting, and is only apparent from the appendix, that Cvetkovich planned to contribute the oral histories to an archive, to deposit the recordings with the Lesbian Herstory Archives in New York. But she does not write further of the meanings of contributing to an archive, which despite her position as cultural researcher, was surely as unusual as actually carrying out the interviews. Perhaps in the context of documenting lesbian cultures, this does not seem to need further comment.

Performances Studies and the Archiving of Performance

While history, oral history and anthropology have thus been incredibly useful for thinking about reuse, they are perhaps not quite sufficient. Notwithstanding arguments that archived transcripts, fieldnotes, research proposal, reports and research questions, are not the ethnographic encounter itself, but rather its traces, and need to be treated as such, rather than as inadequate substitutes for the 'original research', nonetheless it is the case that the confrontation with an archived interview transcript is likely to remind us of the absence of the original and the impossibility of its retrieval. Thus given the status of the qualitative interview in sociology, one of the concerns about reuse remains the impossibility of archiving the ethnographic moment of the interview. History's concern with the archive, even destabilised, is less focussed on this. Frisch gestured to this when he pointed to the orality of interviews and the anxiety of loss with the transcript.

As already noted, the anxiety about loss of context is a key issue in the debate over reuse of qualitative data. While performance studies may seem an unlikely site for insight into

this anxiety, its origins 'between theatre and anthropology' (Schechner 1985) suggest why it may be a productive location. As an ethnography of theatre, performance studies begins to be suggestive as a way of thinking about the performance, and performativity, of an interview, and how it may be archived, and the affect and effects of the aftermath of the interview/performance, and how the traces of the interview may be apprehended. Furthermore, as the nomenclature of performance studies, rather than (say) theatre studies, might indicate, performance studies has many origin stories, and its remit is broad, even if too broad for some. Thus performance studies might include, but not be restricted to the study of formal theatre. The influence of anthropology has brought an interest in ritual and in non-Western performance. While performance and theatre might suggest a special domain, separate to that of everyday life, many of those involved in the emergence of performance studies have had a profound interest in the (inter)dependence of theatre on everyday life (Read 1993).

In her contribution to the first workshop, Helen Freshwater explored several issues arising from these insights from performance studies (Freshwater 2008). Firstly, Freshwater discussed the idea of the archiving of performance, such as theatre and the 'remains' of performances, by provocatively turning to the Lord Chamberlain's archive of theatre censorship, as a site for tracing the remains of plays which were never performed. Secondly, her paper opened up a whole field of possibilities for thinking about one of the key concerns of sociologists around reuse, that of 'not being there' when the 'original' interview was carried out, and of how to deal with the absences and lack of 'context' which are then understood to surround a transcript (see also Freshwater 2003).

If we understand the interview as performative, Freshwater's paper points to the field of theatre studies as offering insights for working through anxieties about the possibilities of archiving this 'performance'. This is also true for performance art. In his paper at the concluding conference, Arjen Mulder recounted the efforts of himself and colleagues to think about their accidental archive of videos of performance art from the V2_Institute for the Unstable Media (<http://www.v2.nl/>), and the question of how to bring the archive alive again, how to 'restage' the performance, and its traces, both archival in the more conventional sense of dusty videos, *as well as* the affective dimensions of performance art which were always intended to be ephemeral. This paper gestured to the body itself as an archive in need of restaging.

Peggy Phelan's work and particularly her account of 'The Ontology of Performance: Representation without Reproduction' begins to offer an articulation of these issues, and some lifelines to those sociologists concerned about what is termed the loss of context, and unease about the 'unarchivability' of the performance. As Phelan insists:

Performance's only life is in the present. Performances cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology. Performance's being, like the ontology of subjectivity proposed here, becomes itself through disappearance. (Phelan 1993: 146)

While this account of the transience of the performance and the impossibility of recording it, might appear to offer succour to those sociologists who would like to refuse the archive, Phelan offers no easy get out insisting also that 'it does no good, however, to simply refuse to write about the performance because of this inescapable transformation' (Phelan

1993: 148). In the case of the qualitative interview, the aftermath is the analysis and eventually its archiving. However, the analysis of qualitative interview necessarily relies on a record (transcript, memory) of the interaction between researcher and informant. This is particularly true in the cases where the interviews have been conducted by a team of researchers. Therefore, similar problems about irreproducibility of the context of the interview exist within the context of the established and well regulated practice of using qualitative interviews within collaborative projects in the social sciences. It is telling that the debate over 'reuse' has emerged in response to the challenge of archiving research material rather than about existing research methodology. 'Reuse' is not entirely 'new', if it is almost akin to a host of other practices, nevertheless it is also not entirely the same as these. For example, many researchers retain qualitative research material beyond the end of a particular project suggesting that they can imagine 'reusing' the material themselves. Nevertheless, the ephemeral nature of the interview as a performance presents a challenge both to the researcher 'reusing' the qualitative data and those conducting qualitative interviews. This observation leads us back to the archive as the site where the subject of this anxiety – the researcher planning to 'reuse' qualitative data – may encounter transcripts, contextual information and researchers' notes.

A Sociological History of the Archive

In the context of these anthropological engagements with the archive, sociological interventions in the field of archiving are also useful to trace, and as we shall see, not least, because unlike anthropologists, much sociological intervention here has not actually explicitly referenced or engaged with the archive. Interestingly, and like with anthropology, some of initial engagements with the archive have come from the perspective of sociological history. To begin we point to interventions from Osborne and Featherstone, two key social theorists. In 1999 Thomas Osborne perceptively suggested a role for sociology in rethinking the archive:

One might imagine, indeed, a sociological history of such places of storage, deposition, testimony and administration; a history that would also be a history of the relevant agents of the archive. It would be a history of at least two kinds of people – archivists and historians – who tend to inhabit such dry, dark, forbidding places. (Osborne 1999: 52)

Yet tellingly it is not sociology *per se* that could produce an account of the archive but rather a hybrid figure, *sociological history*. Relatedly, Osborne understands the archive as a place for historians and archivists, but apparently not sociologists proper. Osborne continued:

Such agents of the archive should not necessarily be seen in the terms of liberal historiography; that is, as conscientious, unassuming agents of culture as opposed to power. [...] Our historical sociology of the archive would do better to see things more in the technological terms of the sociology of power. For those who work in the historical disciplines, the archive is akin to the laboratory of the natural scientist. Perhaps the archive is even akin to what Bruno Latour would call a *centre of calculation* (Latour, 1988: 72–5); except that what goes on there is less likely to be calculation as such than a certain art of deposition, preservation and – for both the archivist and the historian, if more so the latter – interpretation. A *centre of interpretation*, then; that is what the archive is. (Osborne 1999: 52; italics in original)

Here Osborne's argument is interesting, not so much for his focus on power, but rather because of his curiously legislative account of the archive ('a centre of interpretation, then; that is what the archive is') and, significantly, the people who might be concerned with the archive – that is the archivist and the historian – who have differentiated roles – deposition and preservation the role of the archivist, we might infer; and interpretation the job of the historian. Despite the transformations brought through digital technologies, Osborne still sees roles only for the historian and the archivist, but not crucially, for the producers of archival material be they governments, businesses, individuals or indeed, sociologists under the imprimatur of a funding council as agents in his model. And the sociologist, or sociological historian, seems to remain outside of the archive, looking in, observing, or interpreting, or interpreting the historian's interpretations. Similarly, and equally curiously, Michael Featherstone's interrogation of the archive and its uncertain future, in his question 'who will archive cultures in the future – the state, or the corporations, or the public?' (Featherstone 2000: 167), suggests that the sociologist or academic does not quite belong to any of these categories, and appears to leave out the possibility of a role for the academic, historian, anthropologist, sociologist etc, in archiving culture. Yet Osborne and Featherstone seem to leave the archive quite intact as a repository.

Osborne and Featherstone pay careful attention to the archive and everyday life, particularly taking up the possibilities, and challenges, that the internet opens up for archiving, which as we have noted, concerns many, and animates many of the discussions and anxieties around the archive (and there is now no doubt a raft of sociological research on the various manifestations of digitisation in contemporary life). Yet neither specifically addresses the more direct challenges (or even opportunities) that the archive might pose for sociologists (Osborne 1999; Featherstone 2000; 2006).

These reflections are due, we contend, to the dominance of a particular sociological orientation towards the present and future, which is uncertain about how to handle the dirt and detritus of the past. The expansion of the post war social sciences was linked to the rise of interview and survey methods which insisted on their capacity to ask new and original questions linked to the specific concerns of the knowing social scientist. John Goldthorpe (1991) famously insisted on separating the concerns of social scientists who were able to collect original data to test their arguments, and historians who have to make to do with whatever relics of the past remain, which are often imperfect from a social science point of view. This perspective defines the archive as a kind of residual store, of marginal interest to the practicing, future oriented social scientist.

Yet, there was always a problem with this account, which was that since this future oriented social science insisted on the ability to abstract data from context, so that it could be storied, circulated and re-analysed, then it was vital that it was archived. ESDS Qualidata was formed in 1994 as an archive of qualitative sociological data, significantly initiated as an attempt to 'rescue' some of the founding studies of the discipline of sociology, before they were thrown away. This act of archiving was important therefore as a means of defining a tradition and canon. But it was not apparently important for the sociologist to end up in the archive, amidst its mess, not just studying/interpreting the archive in general, or creating the archive, as a means of defining a teleological discipline. The distinction here might be understood as that between a historical sociology and a history of sociology. The fact that two such prominent and thoughtful writers as Osborne and Featherstone overlook ESDS Qualidata and the implication of sociologists and archives, perhaps says less about any limitations of their work, and more about the marginal status of the archive and 'reuse' in sociology. Thus more generic sociological engagements with archiving and specifically digitisation perhaps, seem to remain quite

distinct from the more specific concerns of some sociologists about the archiving of sociology itself. And it is to these discussions that we turn next.

And in this way we are posing the question of what it would mean to reformulate our interest in 'reuse' around 'the sociologisation of the archive'.

From (Re)using Qualitative Data to the 'Sociologisation of the Archive'?

Following these reflections on how the archive has been taken up across a range of domains, we want to return to the matter of the reuse of qualitative data. More specifically we want to move from more general discussion of methodological, conceptual and ethical debates about reuse, to two recent examples of reuse. Firstly Tanya Evans and Pat Thane's reuse of Dennis Marsden's interviews with lone mothers now archived at Qualidata (Evans and Thane 2006) and then work by one of the authors on changing class identities, drawing on data in the Mass Observation Archive (Savage 2007). Both, we suggest, demonstrate the benefits of looking to archived data for understanding social change in the 20th century. We summarise what these two case studies involve, as well as offering further reflections on these in the light of our discussions on the archive thus far. It is worth noting in advance that both (re)studies involve considerable attention to the methodological choices and research process of the academics who gathered the data which was reused.

Evans and Thane (2006) Secondary Analysis of Dennis Marsden's *Mothers Alone*

Tanya Evans and Pat Thane, both self-identified historians, set out to research attitudes to and experiences of lone motherhood through the 20th century, through re-examining data from 116 interviews carried out by Dennis Marsden in the mid 1960s, and held at Qualidata (Evans and Thane 2006). While Evans and Thane's central concern was unmarried motherhood, they were very quickly drawn in to thinking methodologically about how Marsden carried out the research. The authors note a number of ways in which they understand Marsden's work to depart from current good practice in social research, including that he did not record interviews but rather made notes from memory on the interviews, and made recordings of these notes. They also note that he did not get written consent for the interviews, although he does appear to have acquired verbal consent. Reasons for this decision include women's anxieties that he would report them for benefit fraud. Evans and Thane note their particular surprise at some of Marsden's personal comments on the women he was interviewing, and in particular his comments where he was 'disparaging about their appearance, their homes, their language'. They continue '[S]ometimes the descriptions provide useful context, about the women and about Marsden's own attitudes and those of the time, but sometimes they are of a kind that would now be thought unacceptable'. Evans and Thane were able to have some correspondence with Dennis Marsden before he died, where he acknowledged limitations in his approach to consent and to his attention to gender, though they say he was less accepting of any suggestion that he would have been seen as middle class by interviewees or that 'gender dynamics really affected the interviews'.

Yet just as Evans and Thane worry about Marsden's methods and assumptions, so we too are concerned with their teleological framing, in which past practices are evaluated in terms of their conformity to present practices. It is certainly interesting to note how quickly written informed consent has come to seem axiomatic; how the implications of particular ways of taking up feminist interventions around research methodology have become mainstream, that we can take for granted the notion that being white, male and possibly

seen, if not quite identifying as, middle-class would impact significantly on the process of the interviews.

Thus while the historical contingency of Marsden's methods is easier to view from the present moment, it may be more difficult to develop the same perspective on one's own contemporary work. Furthermore it seems possible to speculate that contemporary researchers might still make disparaging remarks about interviewees, though these comments may or may not get written down, depending on the researchers' awareness. For instance one could imagine a researcher using a reflexive masculinity to appear to be knowing, while nonetheless perpetuating very old forms of sexism. So although Evans and Thane's account of reuse of data is interesting for understanding single motherhood, and so may encourage others, their critique of Marsden's methods and observations, may equally feed into anxiety about reuse.

While Evans and Thane's research offers a challenge to accounts which suggest the newness of single motherhood from the 1970s onwards, demonstrating the potential of reusing qualitative data, their use of Marsden's research notes may at the same time deter others from archiving their data – and exposing their researcher selves to scrutiny. Their (re)use of fieldnotes might precisely confirm researchers' anxieties about being archived. The authors' account of Marsden's apparent gender, class, race, -blindness, could be understood as every researcher's nightmare, with the assumption that such revelations would thoroughly tarnish one's reputation and one's research; although it is not clear that this has been the situation in Marsden's case.

These concerns about the use of fieldnotes serve to remind us that such challenges are unlikely to commonly face the historian in the archive – this is the sociologist's archive fever, the fear of being found out in the archive. Thus sociological anxieties around the archive are often more about the possibility that reuse will undo the authority and validity of the 'original' research – and the original researcher. Sociologists cannot take the archive for granted in a way that maybe historians have once been able to. This is because sociologists are confronted with the challenge of making and contributing to the archive, and indeed of being archived themselves, of finding themselves in the archive, and worse, of being found (out) in the archive. That it is not the archive that will be destabilised, but an academic career, years in the making, might be hastily undone.

We turn now to our second example of reuse, research carried out by one of the authors, Savage, using the Mass Observation Archive at the University of Sussex. Again we note how an engagement with secondary analysis can quickly draw the researcher into an engagement with methods. We might note that Mass-Observation is an interesting archive in that it was rescued from almost complete neglect from the 1950s to the 1970s to become one of the most widely used sources for analyses of social and cultural change in Britain since 1937. It is striking that whereas it is predominantly historians who use the archival material from the first phase of Mass-Observation (from 1937 to 1955), it is predominantly sociologists who examine the more recent archival material which has been deposited since 1981 when the Mass-Observation resumed its practice of sending out Directives. Thus Savage's interest in comparing archival sources from both the old and new parts of the archive is particularly interesting in muddying the divide between history and social science.

Savage (2007) 'Changing Social Class Identities in Post-War Britain: Perspectives from Mass Observation'

We refer here particularly to the paper 'Changing Social Class Identities in Post-War Britain: Perspectives from Mass Observation' (Savage 2007), but also to earlier papers such as 'Revisiting Classic Studies' (Savage 2005) which draws on research at the Qualidata archive, as well as his forthcoming book (Savage 2010). As Evans and Thane reuse data to examine claims about the newness of single motherhood, this paper reuses data to examine the idea common to much contemporary social theory, that class identities have waned in importance over recent decades. Like Evans and Thane, Savage turns to the archive to investigate this claim using primary historical data. The research reuses qualitative data collected by Mass-Observation which asks about the social class identities of correspondents of its directives in two different points in time, 1948 and 1990. In his analysis Savage demonstrates that although there were no major shifts in the numbers of correspondents calling themselves working class or middle class, or emphasising their ambivalent class identities, there were major changes in the form that class was narrated. In the earlier period middle class Mass-Observers were ambivalent about talking about class, because it seemed vulgar. By 1990, middle class Mass-Observers were much more able and confident in talking about class, which they did not see as the ascribed product of their birth and upbringing. Whereas Mass-Observers of the 1940s saw class as something they had no control over, and which defined them by their birth and upbringing, those in 1990s preferred to talk about their mobility between classes. Thus, in contrast to survey data which suggests relative stability in class identities over time – according to Savage qualitative data suggests changes less in the class 'labels' people use (middle and working class, most notably) but more in the forms through which class is articulated.

Here the notions of form and context are suggestive (see also Stoler 2002b on 'the content in the form' in the archive). Though in this instance Savage applies form and content to the data and its contextual information, we might stretch the notion of form to encompass an analysis of the form of the archive itself. Savage refuses the notion that Mass-Observation is simply a repository of data, and reads its changing form as itself an object of historical and sociological interest.

We would like to step back and compare the approaches of both papers to reuse for methodological purposes. In particular, reading these side by side, we are struck by how the paper which (re)uses the Mass Observation data expends considerable energy providing an account of the *archive*, and its specificities. In the other, comparable attention is focused on the *researcher*, and his fieldnotes. The point here really is how in using data from Mass Observation the role of the researcher, and perhaps even who the researcher is, is in part obscured by the archive. Or rather, and particularly in the case of MO, the archive, or archivist, plays a key role in structuring the data which accrues in the archive. Dorothy Sheridan, who has been involved with the MOA since the early 1970s and is now Director of the contemporary Mass Observation Project, even made the provocative point at one of the workshops, that we might consider the archivist as the first user of the data, and the researcher as always a second user, a point that is particularly clear when thinking about Mass Observation as an archive. With the MOA, some directives are commissioned by researchers, and some are generated from within the archive, by the archivist, any distinction between archivist and researcher, primary and secondary user, primary and secondary data, between use and reuse even, is increasingly undermined.

This point is important because it links to the arguments of Savage and Burrows (2007) about the reconfiguration of social research in the digital age. During the early and middle decades of the 20th century, social research was largely done by volunteers (such as Mass-Observers) and the distinction between researcher and researched was opaque. During the last decades of 20th century, a striking professionalisation of the social research process took place as social scientists insisted that their privileged tools (notably the survey and the interview), allied to their capacity for the theoretical framing of research questions, gave them analytical privileges. Today, with the proliferation of digital devices for routinely collecting and storing information, crowd-sourcing methods allow volunteers once again to have a heightened role in the research process. The archive is part of the technical infrastructure for social research.

However in the paper drawing on Marsden's research, the archive is more obscured, the researcher foregrounded (perhaps not least because of the exigencies of space, it is a more condensed piece than that by Savage). Nonetheless, we might suggest that the very idiosyncratic nature of MO productively compels an explanation of the archive, whereas Qualidata, with its concern to be a standardised national repository of social science data, risks either remaining unmarked – or contrarily overdetermined by its implication in ESRC disciplinary regimes, in both senses of the term 'discipline'.

While there are many accounts of Mass Observation (see for example Hubble 2006), the story of Qualidata has not been so explicated, and perhaps would benefit from this. For the moment we just have the provocative contradictions of Qualidata as child of Paul Thompson's altruistic urge to share *The Edwardians*, or Qualidata as offspring of the ESRC, and neo-liberal moves in Higher Education, towards value for money, audit and bureaucratisation, and Qualidata as rescuer of data of pioneering sociologists, or creator and canoniser of the founding fathers of a discipline. Paul Thompson, oral historian in the Department of Sociology at the University of Essex, was a key driver behind the setting up of Qualidata. Thompson was responsible for the major iconic study *The Edwardians*, and was keen that the amazing data collected be made available to others. He has recounted how:

[t]he experience of this project was the origin of the idea for creating a national archive for fieldwork data, which led to the setting up of Qualidata in 1994. It was equally the seedbed for my own subsequent belief in the crucial potential of secondary analysis in qualitative research (Thompson 2000). We very quickly realized that our interview material could be valuable for far more people than ourselves, and we were able to use a store cupboard in the Department of Sociology [at the University of Essex] for it. We created the Oral History Archive there.' (Thompson 2004: 83-84)

The apparent easy dovetailing of an altruistic urge to share data with a neoliberal agenda in the management of HE would benefit from some further teasing out and a more thorough genealogy of Qualidata would arguably be useful in understanding the data that is there, and how it comes to be there.

However Qualidata and Mass Observation are no longer the only key resources for social scientists or even historians. More recent discussions about the role and position of the archive have shaped and been shaped by a number of other emerging and already existing archives. The Inventing Adulthoods project (<http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/inventingadulthoods/>) has produced an archive of data from a

qualitative longitudinal study over ten years of the lives of young people from 1996-2006 in England and Northern Ireland (See Henderson, Holland et al 2007; Thomson 2009). A number of members of the Inventing Adulthoods team were also involved in producing a feasibility study on qualitative longitudinal research for the ESRC (Holland, Thomson et al 2004), which emphasised the importance of archiving and sharing such data. This report formed the basis for the ESRC funding stream which has led to the Timescapes project (see also Mason 2007). The Timescapes project, directed by Bren Neale at the University of Leeds and co-directed by Janet Holland at London South Bank University (www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk), is the first major qualitative longitudinal study to be funded in the UK by the ESRC, with seven different projects exploring changing family and other personal relationships over time (see also Adam, Hockey et al 2008; Shirani and Weller 2010). Importantly Timescapes has a specific remit to archive the data gathered, a project being developed by Libby Bishop with Ben Ryan. A further emerging archive is the Lifespan Collection at Royal Holloway University of London (<http://lifespancollection.org.uk/>), led by Toni Bifulco, working with Graham Smith, Ananay Aguilar and Leonie Hannan, amongst others. This is an ambitious plan to try and archive and make available for reuse an enormous collection of data from research funded by the Medical Research Council, and initially led by George Brown, over a ten year period spanning the 1980s and 1990s, on depression in families. The material covers three generations of families living in North London, and includes interviews with over 500 family members. All of these collections merit their own stories, though we note two things here: the involvement of oral historians in both Timescapes and the Lifespan Collection (Joanna Bornat and Graham Smith respectively), and the importance of qualitative longitudinal research to all of these projects, both of these points highlighting the importance of a sensitivity to temporality in relation to archiving projects.

At the same time, these reflections about the archive would not be complete without offering some further reflections on the recent use or reuse of archival material by historians and sociologists.

Sampling, Validity and ‘Juicy Quote Syndrome’

At one of the events held as part of this series, Mike Savage made further methodological reflections on the process of working in the Mass Observation Archive (Savage 2008). Bringing explicitly sociological questions to the archive, Savage reflected on a number of inter-related issues of key concern to sociologists, namely, sampling and validity. He pointed out that, given the scale of some archived qualitative datasets, a key challenge is how to choose which accounts to examine and which not. Interestingly his attention, and that of others, such as Michael Frisch, is drawn, not to the *lack* of the archive which seems to leave sociologists anxious, but to the very opposite, to the sheer scale of data available for reuse once one opens up to the possibility. And Mass Observation is a case in point. There may be up to 500 responses to directives in the current MOP; each response might be several thousand words in length, raising the question of how then to ‘sample’. One strategy is to try and read all the available data so that the researcher can present themselves as an expert on all of it, although with a large data set this might require the recoding of the data. However it is not always possible, or even desirable, to read all the available data. Given that qualitative data rarely starts out with a claim to being a representative sample, there is little virtue in reading all the data in an archive or collection. However the issue of sampling can also be understood as related to whether one intends to focus more on content or on form. An interest in content might require the reading of extensive swathes of data, however if the research is concerned with the kinds of

discourses or narratives that are deployed, then 'theoretical' or 'purposive' samples would work.

Despite concern about the apparent lack of 'context' of archived qualitative data, arguably such data tends to carry much more contextual information than the quantitative surveys to which archived qualitative has been compared. It is worth bearing in mind that many surveys were initially intended as one-off enquiries and not intended for reuse, and that the practice of secondary analysis of quantitative data, though now well established, does not have an overly long history (Arber and Dale 1980). Furthermore, the intention was to strip quantitative data of its context, in order to make it reusable within that paradigm of research. However it is precisely the messiness of MO that makes it now a very valuable resource for researchers, historians and other social commentators.

What, then, is the value of working with more 'messy' data sources? Consider, for example, the case of Mass-Observation, set up in 1937 by the anthropologist, Tom Harrisson, the surrealist poet, Charles Madge, and the photographer Humphrey Jennings, to elicit the accounts of large numbers of observers about a range of everyday issues. The mass observers wrote diaries, compiled long letters in response to 'directives', and became involved in collective ethnographic projects (see for example Garfield 2005; Hubble 2007). Although being widely used during the Second World War to gauge civilian morale, during the later 1940s survey researchers (notably Abrams 1951) poured scorn on Mass-Observation. It had a hopelessly un-representative sample (since its writers were predominantly drawn from the literate members of the 'chattering classes'), used idiosyncratic methods, and had no quality control over its data. By contrast, the national sample survey, increasingly being deployed by Government, was held up as offering a much more rigorous and systematic account of social indicators and public opinion. Probably so. But today, 60 years later, the proliferation of data held at the Mass-Observation Archive at the University of Sussex is the subject of huge interest by historians who are able to exploit its contextual detail to provide rich, personalised, and evocative accounts of social change in the middle years of the 20th century as they were articulated by the Mass-Observers themselves (e.g. Addison 1975 on civilian morale in the Second World War; Summerfield 1998 on gender relations; Kynaston 2007 on the culture of post war austerity Britain). Precisely because much extraneous material is included in these sources, it is possible for later researchers to find material of value in them. By contrast, we usually have only the cell counts generated in response to the structured questions asked by market research surveys, and these offer little scope for extensive re-analysis. The process of stripping out and making comparable limits the potential of later researchers to use the data in imaginative ways.

At the same time, while eschewing the necessity for, or even meaningfulness of, total reading of the data, Savage also warned against the dangers of 'juicy quotes syndrome', perhaps the latest fever to stalk the archive. It was perhaps this, much more than the matters of sampling and validity, which produced the ambiguous expression 'the sociologisation of the archive' from Ann Cvetkovich at one of the workshops. (That said, 'juicy quote syndrome' is arguably as much a problem when working with one's own interview materials as when working with the archival artefacts of others' research.) 'Juicy quote syndrome' could be understood alongside Stoler's, and others', concerns about the 'mining' of the archive, of an 'extractive' approach to the archive. Stoler's unease about an extractive approach to the archive is that this might remain within the logic of the archive, and ignore the ways in which the archive itself orders the material within its realm, and the possibilities of knowledge production (see Highmore 2006: 86-87). Stoler's suggested shift from 'reading against the grain' to 'reading along the grain', from 'archive-as-source' to

'archive-as-subject' echoes suggested shifts from 'content to form' (Savage 2005), and attention to the messiness of MO (Savage 2010) and Moore's attention to recontextualisation (Moore 2007).

Furthermore, though cultural theorists such as Cvetkovich may not use terms such as theoretical and purposive sampling, arguably they engage in some version of this when choosing fragments to write about. Jane Gallop has even developed a fully articulated version of 'anecdotal theory' (Gallop 2002), which might provide one response to any anxieties about 'juicy quote syndrome'. Lisa Baraitser also subjects anecdotes to a process of systemic reflection, which scrutinises in some considerable detail that which might otherwise be rendered marginal (Baraitser 2009). Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* would provide another engagement with the question of fragments and historicity (Benjamin 1999)

Conclusion: Reusing Qualitative Data or Generating and Using Archives?

A key concern is that archived data has lost its context, or that even if some contextual information is provided, that this will not quite be enough, that in any case the transcript of an interview, with no matter how much metadata attached, will never have all its context, that a transcript is not an interview, and of course, indeed, it never can be. It is something else, perhaps an artefact of the research process. Elsewhere it has been argued that the data has been recontextualised in a new project (Moore 2007). It is not that data does not have context, that it has lost a context, but the context is not stable, that in the process of being reused the context changes and shifts. Thus we might understand not just the new research project as part of the context, but also the *archive* as the context for the transcript as research artefact.

Much might be gained for instance by a thorough reading and comparison of the Mass Observation, Qualidata, and Timescapes archives, along *and* against their grains – Stoler after all may have overstated the distinctions. A focus on the archive, on Qualidata, Mass Observation and the emerging Timescapes and Lifespan Archives, precisely as *archives*, and drawing on the resources of those more used to archival research might help to address some concerns about lack of context, if we come to understand and appreciate the archive as context. At the same time, while we might begin to understand the archive as itself the context for the interview transcript or other documents and materials to be found there, we also need to remind ourselves of the instability of the archive. As Geiger is only too aware of, the movement of documents into and out of the archive, as the political regime changes, or even through by the making available of government documents after the thirty-year rule.

But we cannot determine the future uses of the archive. We cannot know how it will be used. Or perhaps more pointedly, if indeed it will ever be used. For some this is a question of value, of economic value: is the expensive work of archiving qualitative data *worth it* given the actual low level of reuse; or do we imagine/hope that reuse as a practice will become more common over time and so be worth it in the future? Or if we fail to archive our data, does it suggest that we think that contemporary sociological work is of no future value, is disposable?

So it is important to find processes not to close off the archive in/to the future; and to acknowledge that we cannot know what contextual information will be useful, and that

researchers in the future may have access to contextual information of which we are currently unaware. The historicity of some moments is not determined in advance, but precisely open to the future. Some examples of this research include: Patti Lather's interviews with women with AIDS, planned and carried out just before antiretroviral drugs were first released (in the US anyway), changing the experience of AIDS for many (Lather and Smithies 1997) or speculative research, for instance, research planned and carried out by the Morgan Centre at the University of Manchester on Gay and Lesbian 'Marriage', exploring the meanings and significance of legitimating same-sex relationships and which began just as the legislation on civil partnership (the Civil Partnership Act 2004) was introduced more quickly than was anticipated in the UK) (see <http://www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/morgancentre/research/gay-lesbian-marriage/index.html>). For sociologists and other social scientists, to begin to fully comprehend the implications of the archive, lines of communication with other disciplines and professional practices need to be sustained; reuse of qualitative data is not entirely new, it is not necessary to start from scratch. The use of terms such as sampling, theoretical and purposive, 'juicy quote syndrome', form and content, context, reading against and along the grain as just some of the approaches to the archive, suggest the possibilities of productive cross-fertilisation, and that encounters within and between disciplines over the archive, might not be one way traffic, other disciplines too might benefit from the 'sociologisation of the archive'.

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Notes

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² For one particularly innovative and award-winning site, see *My Brighton and Hove* at <http://www.mybrightonandhove.org.uk/>. The *My Brighton and Hove* website was discussed by Jack Latimer in his account of community archives at the workshop on 'The Epistemology of the Archive' See also

³ Even before the current financial crisis, the American National Archives significantly reduced its opening hours to researchers in an attempt to cut costs.

⁴ The question of whether we are seeing a 'sociologisation of the archive' came from Ann Cvetkovich during the two workshops 'Methods and Archives' and 'The Epistemology of the Archive', University of Sussex, 10-11 November 2008; see <http://www.cresc.ac.uk/events/archived/archiveseries/index.html>.

⁵ See <http://www.esds.ac.uk/qualidata/about/introduction.asp>.