

## **The Role of the Researcher in the Qualitative Research Process. A Potential Barrier to Archiving Qualitative Data**

*Anne Sofia Fink*

**Key words:**  
qualitative  
methods,  
qualitative re-  
search, work  
process, data,  
data archiving

**Abstract:** The Danish Data Archives (the DDA) is as other data archives about to take up the challenge of archiving and disseminating qualitative research material in addition to quantitative material. But while the characteristics of quantitative research strategies and tactics correspond very well with the practice of archiving, this is not the case when one considers archiving of qualitative research materials.

This text will highlight the specific problems in relation to archiving and dissemination of qualitative data materials. It will be argued that a lot of these problems are due to the researcher's substantial role in the research process as he/she is personally involved in every step taken.

### **Table of Contents**

- [1. Introduction](#)
  - [1.1 Another approach to social research](#)
  - [1.2 Archiving of empirical social research](#)
- [2. The Qualitative Research Process](#)
  - [2.1 Thematising](#)
  - [2.2 Designing](#)
  - [2.3 Interviewing](#)
  - [2.4 Transcribing](#)
  - [2.5 Analysing](#)
  - [2.6 Verifying](#)
  - [2.7 Reporting](#)
- [3. The Qualitative Research Process as a Barrier to Archiving](#)
  - [3.1 Techniques for data collection](#)
  - [3.2 Character of data](#)
  - [3.3 Data processing and presentation](#)
- [4. The Role of the Archive](#)
  - [4.1 Integrity of respondents](#)
  - [4.2 Proper documentation of data](#)
  - [4.3 Respecting the researcher's ownership](#)
- [5. Final Comments and Future Plans](#)
  - [5.1 How do qualitative researchers view their method and data material?](#)
  - [5.2 How to archive qualitative research projects in practice?](#)
  - [5.3 How to improve practice of archiving qualitative data continuously?](#)

## [References](#)

### [Author](#)

### [Citation](#)

## 1. Introduction

Empirical scientific research within the social science tradition is often seen in favour of using objective, quantitative measurement, since social research intends to duplicate the way of carrying out research within the natural science tradition. Favouring of such quantitative research techniques is founded in the positivistic paradigm (WALLERSTEIN et al.1998). According to this paradigm social reality is to be understood as an objective entity, and it is the job of the scientist to uncover this entity bit by bit—to go out and find the truth. ALVESSON and SKÖLDBERG define this kind of research in the following manner: "From what appears or is presented as data, facts, the unequivocal imprints of 'reality', it is possible to acquire a reasonably adequate basis for empirically grounded conclusions and, as a next step, for generalizations and theory-building." (ALVESSON & SKÖLDBERG 2000, p.1) [1]

In this way data is seen as existing independently and indifferently. Data about some phenomena is unconnected to the researcher, who is collecting them—they were there before he came and they will be there to be collected by some other researcher afterwards. [2]

According to this approach statistical methods are seen as the obvious techniques to analyse data concerning social phenomena (WALLERSTEIN et al. 1998). [3]

### 1.1 Another approach to social research

However, the quantitative approach has been criticised of neglecting important aspects of human lives (McCRACKEN 1988) which the positivistic paradigm does not encompass. [4]

For one thing, meaning structures characterising our social reality, which do not have duplicates in Nature cannot be considered in an appropriate way when using quantitative techniques. Another thing is that one can question the prerequisite of social reality studied as "objective truth", since in fact what we believe to be "the truth" seems to have changed over time. Furthermore, there is the question of the scientist's ability to exhibit objectivity when collecting data, since the specific ideas and beliefs predominant in the society to which the scientist belongs, will affect or even determine "the kind of truth" he discovers. [5]

Then, to consider the existence of deep—often hidden—meaning structures, to encompass the idea of truth in society and to accept the fact that scientists too are exponents of dominating beliefs in society, another paradigmatic understanding is demanded. This paradigm is described using words as post-

positivistic, phenomenological, post-modern, etc.<sup>1</sup> Within this paradigm, the entity to be studied is the life world of human being as it is experienced individually. To study life worlds instead of an objective reality also suggests another method of research with an interpretative approach—*qualitative research method*.<sup>2</sup> [6]

The researcher using qualitative method will argue that another human being (e.g. himself) is the only instrument that is sufficiently complex to comprehend and learn about human existence (LAVE & KVALE 1995). The implication is that social research will benefit from being performed as field research (BURGESS 1984) based on interaction between the researcher and the individuals studied. [7]

The significance of qualitative research is unified by the researcher's fundamental research question—he asks *why?* In comparison, the researcher carrying out quantitative research will ask *how many?*, *how widespread?*, *how old?*, etc. The research technique which the qualitative researcher uses is then to isolate and define phenomena/categories during the process of research in order to comprehend and learn, whereas the quantitative researcher's ambition is to determine the relationship between phenomena/categories already isolated and defined prior to the research. [8]

Considering the two approaches' different research objectives and different ways of stating the fundamental research questions, it becomes visible how the methods can supplement but not substitute each other (PEDERSEN 1999; McCRACKEN 1988). An example:

Why are women more sceptical of the EU than men?

- the researcher wished to capture the complexity of the answer to this question

How many women are sceptical of the EU compared to the number of sceptical men?

- the researcher performs an exact measurement to answer this question [9]

## 1.2 Archiving of empirical social research

It was especially during the 1960s and 1970s that the quantitative approach to research was in favour among social researchers (McCRACKEN 1988). The exact period where many archives were established—e.g. the Danish Data Archives was founded in 1973. In fact, the entire practice of archiving data seems to have matured in line with the logic and techniques of quantitative research method. [10]

As many other data archives the DDA has so far exclusively focused on data from researchers collecting data using quantitative research techniques. Viewed in this perspective, our practice has overlooked research strategies within social

1 These words are not at all synonymous but they all refer to critique of the positivistic paradigm and thereby calling attention to the use of alternative research methods.

2 The distinction made between quantitative and qualitative methods according to their belonging to a positivistic, respectively an interpretative based tradition is not original e.g. qualitative techniques can be used according to positivistic principles (DENZIN & LINCOLN 1994).

science not constituted of numerical measurements. The outcome is that vast amounts of Danish research data has been neglected. Furthermore, the use of qualitative methods has been diffusing during the last years (JENSEN 1991; KVALE 1996). Data archives all over the world have become aware of this fact and have taken initiatives to compensate for this development—most known is properly ESRC Qualitative Data Resource Centre, [Qualidata](#), in the UK. [11]

## 2. The Qualitative Research Process

Below is a description of the research process when using qualitative method. It should be derivable from this description how the role of qualitative researcher differs from the role of the quantitative researcher. Inspired by KVALE (1996) I have chosen to split the research process into seven stages: *thematizing*, *designing*, *interviewing*, *transcribing*, *analysing*, *verifying* and *reporting*. This split is not made to imply that researchers ought to work in this orderly progressing way—in fact this is probably impossible. [12]

Some of the stages will be only briefly described whereas other stages will be explained in greater details. Besides KVALE (1996), the text is based on McCracken (1988) and STRAUSS and CORBIN (1990)—all well known for their work on the use of qualitative method within social science. [13]

### 2.1 Thematizing

Thematizing is to answer the question of *what* is going to be studied, *why* this is going to be studied, and *how* this is going to be studied. The answers to these questions will become the background for carrying on with fieldwork, analysis and reporting. [14]

Performing qualitative personal or group interviews is one answer to the question of how to collect data. Other techniques for data collection is participant observation, text analysis, discourse analysis and other techniques applicable from anthropological and ethnographic research (BURGESS 1984, SANDAY 1979). Here I will relate to interviews as technique for data collection, because it is our belief at the DDA that this is the most widespread technique. KVALE (1996) provides the following definition for the qualitative research interview: "An interview whose purpose is to obtain description of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena." (KVALE 1996, p.5) [15]

One explanation of why interviewing as research technique dominates is given by KVALE (1996). The argumentation is very simple, since conversation is the common technique we all use to learn about phenomena in our world this technique could obviously be used for research purposes, too. [16]

## 2.2 Designing

The design stage constitutes the step where the methodological procedure is planned and prepared. What is the time schedule and how do the different steps interrelate? When the chosen technique is interviews, designing the research project will be to determine which kind of interviews to use—personal, collective (focus group), expert, etc.—and how many interviews to perform. [17]

The individuals, who will act as respondents, are chosen according to criteria derived from the research objective. Such criteria could be based on demographic variables, but they might as well be based on "subtle" criteria such as life style characteristics or presence in a specific context. Sometimes the researcher will aim for similarity among respondents and sometimes for dissimilarity. One example of a technique used to select respondents is the so-called *snowball sampling technique*. Instead of deciding *ahead of time* who is going to be interviewed, the researcher selects respondents gradually by asking the first respondent to suggest who to interview next, and then asking the second respondent to pick the third and so forth. [18]

Since what is collected is in-depth information, it is believed that a researcher will need only a limited number of respondents. In fact, a very large number of respondents can be expected to hinder the researcher's ability to get "in-depth" and miss the opportunity of getting an understanding of each respondent. The exact number of respondents will depend on the subject investigated. KVALE (1996) tells the qualitative researcher to interview "as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know" (p.101). [19]

## 2.3 Interviewing

Interviews are structured according to an interview guide made by the researcher, which outlines themes to be covered during the interview. The interview guide is typically without specification of how to formulate exact questions, and questions will be open-ended to encourage the respondents to give long elaborated answers. [20]

Interviews are usually recorded on tape or video. When videotaping, visual aspects of the interview situation are, of course, captured as well. Some authors argue that these recordings contain a richer representation of the interview situation than tape (e.g. KVALE 1996), and it is expected that the use of video will increase in the future. [21]

Before, during and after the interview some researchers will take field notes as a supplement to recordings. The importance of these notes as data material will vary among researchers. The researcher will often write these notes by hand and some will later type and store them as text files, while others will use them in the handwritten form. [22]

Generally speaking it is important to point out that an interview is *recalled* too—the respondent's bodily expressions, the interaction between interviewer and respondent, the atmosphere during the interview, etc. Even if recalling is a very insecure way of collecting data, recalling has advantages in relation to the goal of getting "non-verbal" information as well (KVALE 1996). [23]

To use the research interview as technique means that the researcher or an interviewer picked by the researcher meets the respondents personally. This raises questions concerning the ethical responsibility and calls attention to how the use of qualitative method differs from quantitative research. I will comment further on this in the following section. [24]

## 2.4 Transcribing

The next step of the research process is transcription of recordings—often done by assisting personnel. Different kinds of instructions will be given to assistants according to the researcher's preferences. Such standards for transcription can be conceptualised as a continuum—from a transcript incorporating (almost) every sound or silence recorded (breaks, sighs, stammer, etc.) to a transcript restricted to sentences of relevance to specific research questions. [25]

One can often be inclined to look at these transcripts as an exact representation of the interview, but

"[t]ranscripts are not copies or representations of some original reality, they are interpretative constructions that are useful tools for given purposes. Transcripts are decontextualised conversations, they are abstractions, as topographical maps are abstractions from the original landscape from which they are derived" (KVALE 1996, p.165). [26]

Therefore, transcripts are not to be seen as data similar to survey data in a quantitative research project, since an interpretation of data in the form of word and sentences recorded is made by the researcher/assistants while transcribing. [27]

It is worth mentioning that often the interviewer does not recognise the value of the interview transcript immediately, but only after he or she has done some additional interpretive work. Specific comments in the transcript will probably trigger a multi-faceted recollection of the interview situation—e.g. the respondent seeming remarkably enthusiastic when talking about a specific subject. If a hired interviewer carries out the interviewing, this possibility is, of course, eliminated.<sup>3</sup> [28]

## 2.5 Analysing

The word *coding* is often used to refer to the first part of the analysis that concerns the naming and categorising of phenomena through close examination of data (STRAUSS & CORBIN 1990). Coding of data might be done using one of

<sup>3</sup> This is part of the explanation why it is much recommended in literature (e.g. STRAUSS & CORBIN 1990) that researchers perform the interviewing themselves.

the computer-based analysis program packages (e.g. NUD\*IST or Atlas.ti). However, whether one chooses to use a computer program or not, it is the researcher who defines and names the categories of data. [29]

Upon coding data the researcher gets to the part of the analysis process where the codes must come together in one overall analysis. The analysis is to be viewed as the movement from the particular to the general (McCRACKEN 1988), since the objective is to comprehend the overall "narrative". The result of the analysis should be that codes connect to each other in what can be conceptualised as a web of meanings. It is the researcher who defines the strings that constitute this web (STRAUSS & CORBIN 1990) and thereby defines the "meaning structure's" logic and coherence. [30]

Both by coding and analysing data the researcher uses his personal knowledge and experiences as tools to make sense of the material (McCRACKEN 1988). Therefore, some of these tools are the researcher's unique impressions, which might remain intangible and undocumented (STRAUSS & CORBIN 1990, McCRACKEN 1988). [31]

## **2.6 Verifying**

Verification of the data analysis concerns the generalisability, the reliability, and the validity of findings. Generalizability means that findings can be generalized, reliability refers to the consistency of findings/results, whereas validity questions if the study in fact investigates what was intended. [32]

Although it is KVALE's argument (1996) that verification is relevant throughout the process, verification seems inevitable before reporting findings. However, tests of generalizability, reliability or validity will be performed intuitively by the researcher at all stages of the research process, although there hardly ever seems to be any explicit evidence of verification taking place. [33]

## **2.7 Reporting**

It goes without saying that reporting covers the part of the research process where the researcher writes a report to present his findings. As KVALE points out this report is not to be seen solely as a representation of data "seasoned with" the researcher's comments and interpretations: "The interview report is itself a social construction in which the author's choice of writing style and literary devices provide a specific view on the subjects' lived world." (KVALE 1996, p.253) [34]

Again the researcher's influence is significant (ALVESSON & SKÖLDBERG 2000). It is the researcher who will be the one to judge how a specific respondent should be given voice or how understanding the context will be related to a respondent's remarks. The amount of context presented in relation to specific respondents or situations will also be the researcher's choice. Countless other examples could be given. [35]

### **3. The Qualitative Research Process as a Barrier to Archiving**

To compare the general picture outlined above, the qualitative researcher must be expected to feel very personally involved in every step of the research process, because every consideration and decision will have to be based on entirely personal grounds. A role I believe that seen from the researchers' perspective is experienced as very complex to handle. Below I will argue that this role complexity can be related to three different themes: *the techniques for data collection, the character of data as well as the way data is processed and presented*. [36]

#### **3.1 Techniques for data collection**

When KVALE (1996) describes an interview inquiry as a "moral enterprise" this has to do with one aspect of the researcher's role. Whether it is the researcher or an assistant who is doing the interviewing, forming relationships with respondents seems to be rather inevitable. While interviewing, the interviewer uses his personal empathy to make the respondents feel more at ease and therefore more willing to tell "their story". The result is that the researcher most often will experience a (close) relationship with the respondents and probably feel obliged to protect data from "outsiders" as e.g. other researchers. They might arrive at conclusions, which in the eyes of the researcher are disloyal or unfair to the respondents. The researcher's point could be that without the exact version of data as the one he has, analysis of data will be faulty or wrong. [37]

Another aspect is anonymity. The respondents in the qualitative study will not be anonymous to the researcher as they will be in the quantitative study. It must be expected that this lack of anonymity in the relationship between respondents and researcher strengthen the researchers' loyalty towards respondents. [38]

Therefore due to the technique of data collection, the qualitative researcher will probably feel more obliged to protect his data since data to him is in the shape of individuals of his acquaintance than the quantitative researcher will. [39]

#### **3.2 Character of data**

Upon the description of the qualitative research process it can be argued that qualitative data is closely connected to the researcher and this adds another aspect to the researcher's role. Firstly data is collected during interaction between respondent and researcher, which points to dependence between data and researcher. Secondly the researcher collects a large amount of data from a limited number of respondents. This data material consists at a minimum of interviews, field notes and "recollection". The researcher will have fewer respondents than the quantitative researcher. This means that the researcher is dependent on a few respondents revealing a lot of personal information in order to get around the research question and in the end to be able to answer it. Since there are fewer respondents, the researcher's interpretation of comments made

by each respondent will also have greater influence on the conclusion of a research project. This also adds to the responsibility put upon the researcher. [40]

Another aspect of data is that parts of the data material obviously does not have an existence independent of the researcher, since some is stored within the memory of the researcher or as field notes without meaning to others. [41]

Thirdly a transcription of an interview is never an exact copy of the conversation, which took place. No matter how thoroughly the transcript is done, "translation" has to be done with unavoidable inaccuracies, mistakes and interpretations (KVALE 1994). When analysing an interview transcript the researcher might feel that he is the only one who is able to use data with the proper caution. [42]

### **3.3 Data processing and presentation**

The part of the qualitative data material which has a physical existence, e.g. recordings, transcripts and notes, is data as words/conversation—a kind of data that intuitively is regarded as much more complex to analyse than numerical data. The result of both coding and analysis depends exclusively upon the researcher's interpretation of meanings hidden in data. This too adds to the fact that the qualitative researcher will cling to his data material since he feels at risk if he allows other researchers access to the data. Needless to say, qualitative interpretation encompasses no possibility of reference to exact means of interpretation as quantitative interpretation does. By allowing other researchers access to data the risk is not only that they interpret the material differently—and by doing this question the quality of the primary analysis—but also that this might conflict with the researcher's loyalty towards respondents. [43]

The researcher is accountable for reporting data without using any statistical means for presenting or legitimating findings. The quality of the findings/results of a particular research project will be based on the researcher's ability to present valid argumentation for findings/results to readers, while giving a fair presentation of data. [44]

To summarise, there are many different aspects of qualitative techniques, character of data and processing and presentation of data, that the qualitative researcher must comply with as part of his role. On these grounds it must be expected that the researcher will be inclined to cling to his data and resist archiving. [45]

## **4. The Role of the Archive**

Until recently, only quantitative data were admitted into the Danish Data Archives. This practice is unquestioned by qualitative researchers, who seems inclined to regard their data as very personal belongings. However, as stated in the beginning of the paper, the Danish Data Archives wants to widen the kind of data material it archives and initiatives are taken to obtain qualitative data, too. It should be stated that this initiative must be regarded in relation to similar

initiatives taken by data archives and universities around the world. For instance Qualidata was founded back in 1994. However, the prerequisite for DDA obtaining qualitative materials requires the approval from the Danish research community. [46]

At the moment qualitative data is typically stored in the researcher's computer. However, seen from the perspective of a data archivist this storage medium has obvious limitations. Firstly, data risks obsolescence due to change in software products and program versions. This means that even the researcher who has the data will risk his future access to his own data. Secondly, access to data is limited to the researcher who has collected the data, although a data material is often of great interest to other researchers. Thirdly, as society we need to document scientific research whether it is quantitative or qualitative. [47]

The possible resistance to archiving has been related to three aspects as described above. A prerequisite for obtaining qualitative data is that the archive is capable of complying with demands from researchers—this will define the role of the archive. [48]

The challenge for the archive must then be to convince researchers that by archiving their material they are not at risk. In other words, archiving of qualitative data will not make them less suited for acting the role as responsible qualitative researcher. In the following part it is presented what the archive is able to offer as well as what the archive should be able to offer. [49]

#### **4.1 Integrity of respondents**

To ensure researchers that the integrity of the respondents is respected by the archive, the researcher will be requested to:

- Erase or change all names in transcripts and other material
- Erase information pointing directly to an individual [50]

An interview transcript or field note will sometimes contain names of the respondent or individuals mentioned by the respondent as well as information that points at one specific individual. In order to respect the anonymity of the respondents it is therefore necessary to erase or sometimes change information. [51]

However, it will have to be pointed out to the researchers that substantial changes in research material will diminish the material's applicability as data source. [52]

#### **4.2 Proper documentation of data**

A prerequisite for storing qualitative data is, as it is for quantitative data, that data is documented. Proper metadata documentation is the basis for archiving, since documentation is the basis for "making sense" of data—especially considering re-

use of data by other researchers, documentation has immediate relevance. The archive must offer that donor is met with extensive documentation demands such as description of information research tactics—criteria used for choosing respondents, copy of interview guide and other material used as "back up", etc. [53]

The preparation of standards for documentation of qualitative research materials will not only be a very challenging job do-but also a very important job. It is our wish to apply the principles of the Data Documentation Initiative (the DDI) to archiving of qualitative data, since it is our ambition to provide a "universally supported metadata standard for the social science community" (The Norwegian Social Science Data Service 1999, p.1). The decision to apply the DDI standard to the documentation of qualitative data must be regarded in relation to the decision of other data archives to use the DDI. The Finnish data archive (Finnish Social Science Data Service-FSD: <http://www.fsd.uta.fi>) has already taken a great step forward in applying the DDI ([KUULA 2000](#)). [54]

From an overall perspective the documentation (standards) should be based on getting extensive answers to the following questions:

- Why was the research project done?
- How was the research project done? [55]

At the moment we still have to work out the specification for answering these questions sufficiently. But the questions are to be viewed as cornerstones for the removal of barriers to archiving qualitative data. In the DDA we expect to learn a lot from the experience already gained, e.g. Qualidata ([CORTI 2000](#)), FSD ([KUULA 2000](#)) and Universität Bremen ([KLUGE & OPITZ 2000](#)). [56]

#### **4.3 Respecting the researcher's ownership**

Until now we have concentrated on obtaining and documenting data, but the archive's aim is also to disseminate data for use as secondary source of information by researchers.

- I. Donor determines the extent of the period before data becomes available.
- II. Donor is in full control of who receives the material.
- III. Donor is informed whenever material is distributed. [57]

Ad I: Timing before availability

When a researcher hands in material he will be asked to provide a date when his data can be made available for distribution. Some researchers will, of course, not allow access to data at all. A lot of researchers would probably prefer a period where data access is relatively restricted. One reason for this need for restrictions might be due to the researcher's wish to keep information to himself as long as he is using it as basis for research. Integrity of respondents/personal sensitive information might cause a need for a period of restricted access too. [58]

## Ad II: Control of who is given material

The dissemination of quantitative data materials has so far been regulated by six access categories.

Category 1: "No access restrictions at all"

Category 2: "No restrictions when used for scientific/statistical purposes"

Category 3: "No restrictions, but a consultation of donor before use is recommended"

Category 4: "No restriction for use, but any publication requires a written permission from donor"

Category 5: "Any access requires a written permission from donor"

Category 6: "Any access requires a special agreement with donor, usually no access at all" [59]

When a donor hands in a data material, he is obliged to tell what kind of restriction should be applied. Category 1 stands for free access for reuse for anybody and the other five categories are different variations of access restrictions. Corresponding categories could be used for qualitative materials. In relation to timing before availability one would expect a researcher to use the more restrictive categories at first and then—after some time—be ready to place less restriction on re-use of the material. [60]

## Ad III: Distribution of material

Whenever a data set is distributed for secondary analysis the primary researcher/donor of the material is informed even when he has allowed free access to the material. This routine will be adopted from the current practice of the archive. Donor is told by whom the material is requested and the purpose of the request. [61]

I will have to add that since we at the DDA expect to obtain data as transcripts of interviews. One argument for this procedure is that transcripts are still the commonly used basis for researchers' coding and analysis and therefore it seems straightforward to make this the storage entity. Another obvious argument for storing transcripts instead of recordings is that a transcript as storage entity has similarity with the present storage entity for quantitative data material (both text files). This will make it easier to incorporate this new practice into the routines of the archive. However, alternative storage entities must be considered continuously as practice changes among researchers. [62]

## 5. Final Comments and Future Plans

The general opinion might be that data sets consisting of numbers in rows and columns are better suited for archiving than qualitative data materials. Though part of the explanation behind this opinion could be that this is what we are accustomed to—our long tradition of interpretation of numbers in social science. Since the development of data archives cannot be separated from the dominance of quantitative research during the sixties and seventies, data archives are now facing a challenging job in transforming to incorporate another kind of data. [63]

As it has been shown the significant role of the researcher in the qualitative research process seems to unify the barriers the archive will meet. Some procedures used for archiving quantitative material can be adopted, but others will have to be developed in order to meet demands within the research community. With the purpose of getting answers to our questions concerning the handling of qualitative data at the DDA, we have decided to turn to experts of the field: The researchers themselves. We wish to answer the questions listed below. [64]

### 5.1 How do qualitative researchers view their method and data material?

*Technique: Personal interviews with researchers*

During the spring/summer of 2000 we conducted personal interviews with a number of Danish researchers, who are using qualitative techniques—predominantly researchers who carry out personal or group interviews. Firstly, the interviews provided us with knowledge of what it means to perform qualitative research in practice, the purpose being to uncover which barriers appear to be the most essential ones. Secondly, we have gathered information that provides input for the specification of the DDA's documentation standard for qualitative data materials. Interviewing *before* the DDA actually begins to locate and receive qualitative data sets will hopefully give the archive the advantage of being well prepared for such a job. [65]

### 5.2 How to archive qualitative research projects in practice?

*Technique: "Case study"*

In order to get knowledge of the way the archive in practice obtains and archives data material, we will use one material as a "case study". The purpose of the study is to gather concrete and specific information about steps to be followed when actually archiving qualitative data at the DDA. [66]

### 5.3 How to improve practice of archiving qualitative data continuously?

*Technique: Steering committee*

For the time being we are recruiting members for a steering committee led by researchers carrying out qualitative research. The purpose of the committee is to

perform continuous assessments of project initiatives at the DDA, both before and after they are taken. By doing this we hope to create competencies concerning archiving *qualitative* data in order to catch up with competencies concerning *quantitative* materials as fast as possible. [67]

Still a lot of challenging opportunities remain. For instance, there is promotion of the idea of archiving among members of the qualitative research community in order to encourage them to consider future archiving when they begin their research project. [68]

To sum up, without ignoring or underestimating the difficulties in handling qualitative data, barriers to archiving will have to be overcome in order to let data archives embrace all aspects of contemporary research within social science. We will expect that co-operation between archives sharing an interest in qualitative data will be very fruitful in many ways. [69]

## References

- Alvesson, Mats & Sköldbberg, Kaj (2000). *Reflexive Methodology—New Vistas for Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.
- Burgess, Robert G. (1984). *In the Field—An Introduction to Field Research*. London: Routledge.
- Corti, Louise (2000). Progress and Problems of Preserving and Providing Access to Qualitative Data for Social Research—The International Picture of an Emerging Culture [58 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* [On-line Journal], 1(3), Art. 2. Available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/3-00/3-00corti-e.htm>.
- Denzin, Norman K. & Lincoln, Yvonna S. (1994). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Jensen, Mogens Kjaer (1991). *Kvalitative metoder i anvendt samfundsforskning*, Rapport 91-1, København, Socialforskningsinstituttet.
- Kluge, Susann & Opitz, Diane (2000, December). Computer-aided Archiving of Qualitative Data with the Database System "QBiQ" [36 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* [On-line Journal], 1(3), Art. 11. Available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/3-00/3-00klugeopitz-e.htm>.
- Kuula, Arja (2000, December). Making Qualitative Data Fit the "Data Documentation Initiative" or Vice Versa? [28 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* [On-line Journal], 1(3), Art. 19. Available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/3-00/3-00kuula-e.htm>.
- Kvale, Steinar (1996). *InterViews—An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Lave, Jean & Kvale, Steinar (1995). What is anthropological research? An interview with Jean Lave by Steinar Kvale. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 8(3), 219-228.
- McCracken, D. Grants (1988). *The Long Interview* (Qualitative Research Methods, Vol. 13). Newbury Park: Sage.
- Pedersen, Søren Hviid (1999). *Qualitative and Quantitative research strategies: towards a possible convergence*. Conference paper at the IASSIST (International Association for Social Science Information Service and Technology) Conference 17-21 May 1999.
- Strauss, Anselm & Corbin, Juliet (1990). *Basics of Qualitative Research*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel; Juma, Calestous; Keller, Evelyn Fox; Kocka, Jürgen; Lecourt, Dominique; Mudimbe, v.y.; Kenan, William R.; Mushakoji, Kinhide; Prigogine, Ilya; Taylor, Peter J. & Trouillot, Michel-Rolph (1998). *Luk samfundsvideenskaberne op!. Report from "The Gulbenkian Commission of the Restructuring of the Social Sciences"*. Copenhagen: Roskilde Universitetsforlag.

## Author

*Anne Sofie FINK*

As data archivist in the Danish Data Archives I am responsible for the archive's initiative concerning qualitative data. I gained my experience with qualitative method while working at an analysis institute and therefore is mostly practical. It is this practical experience that has inspired my contribution. Concerning my findings in the interview inquiry I have performed, an English summary is available.

Contact:

Anne Sofie Fink

E-mail: [asf@dda.dk](mailto:asf@dda.dk)

## Citation

Fink, Anne Sofie (2000). The Role of the Researcher in the Qualitative Research Process. A Potential Barrier to Archiving Qualitative Data [69 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 1(3), Art. 4, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs000344>.