

Presentation at the 2013 International Congress on Qualitative Inquiry

Davidson, J. (2013). Swimming in a Sea of Data:
Qualitative Research in these Digital Times.
Paper presentation at the International Congress
on Qualitative Inquiry, May 2013, University of
Illinois, Champaign, Illinois.

Swimming in a Sea of Data: Qualitative Research in these Digital Times

Judith Davidson, Ph.D.
Graduate School of Education
UMass Lowell

What is Big Data...and what does it have to do with qualitative researchers?

Big data^{[1][2]} is a collection of data sets so large and complex that it becomes difficult to process using on-hand database management tools or traditional data processing applications. The challenges include capture, curation, storage,^[3] search, sharing, transfer, analysis,^[4] and visualization. (Wikipedia; 5/14/13).

5 ?'s

- How did I come to encounter Big Data?
- What did I extract from these encounters?
- How did I find the impulses of Big Data at work in my own qualitative research?
- How do my reflections compare to a Big Data specialist?
- What are my “take aways” as a qualitative researcher?

Friends Helping Friends

Silvana diGregorio: She who points the way!



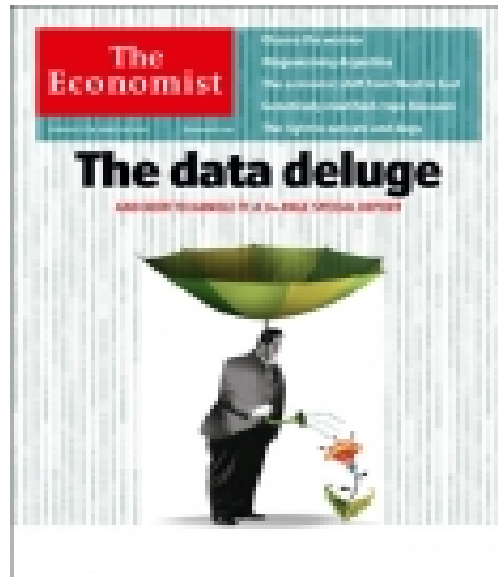
Sir Tim Berners-Lee: The future is about data.



Encounters with New Ideas

The Economist: 2/25/2010

Big Data becomes a known term in my universe.



Kevin Kelly: Wired Magazine and Ted Talks—The Internet: Fast and Furious

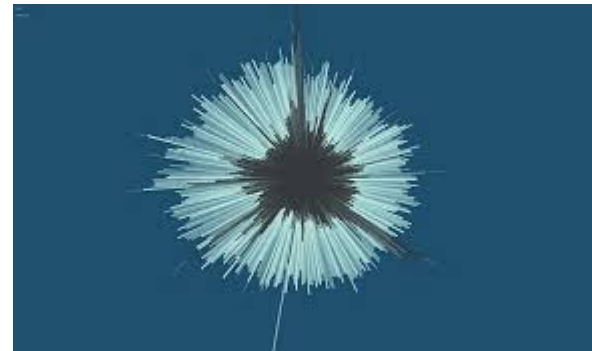


IBM Cambridge Talks

**Nathan Eagle: Mobile Phones
and Data**



**Jer Thorp: The Aesthetics of
Data in formation**



I began to worry that I was not alone in the universe!

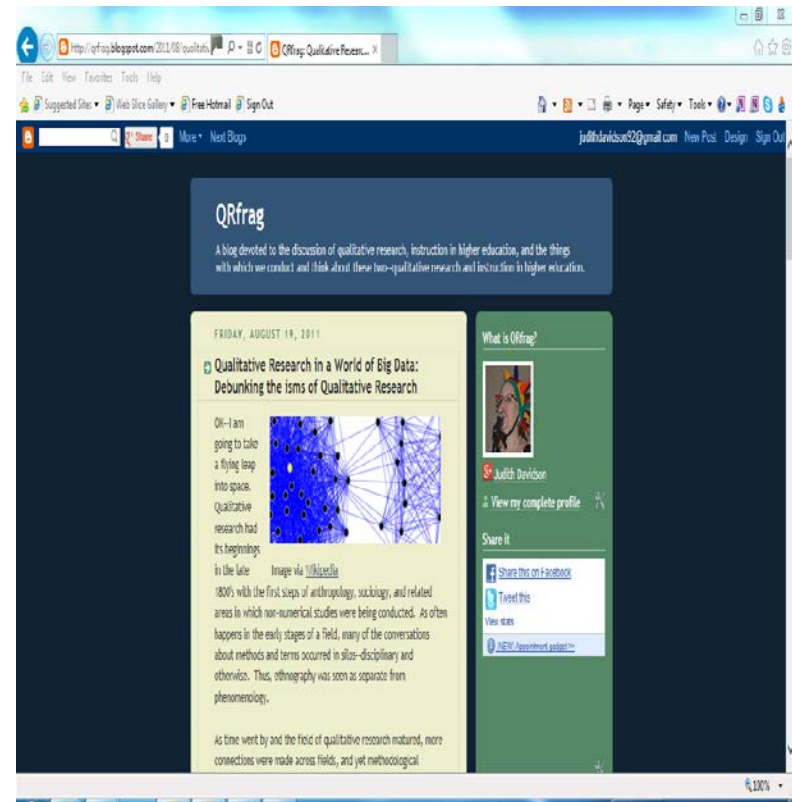
Blogging about my concerns at
Qrfrag.blogspot.com

6/13/11: The Future of Qualitative Research.

10/14/11: The Qual/Quant Dilemma

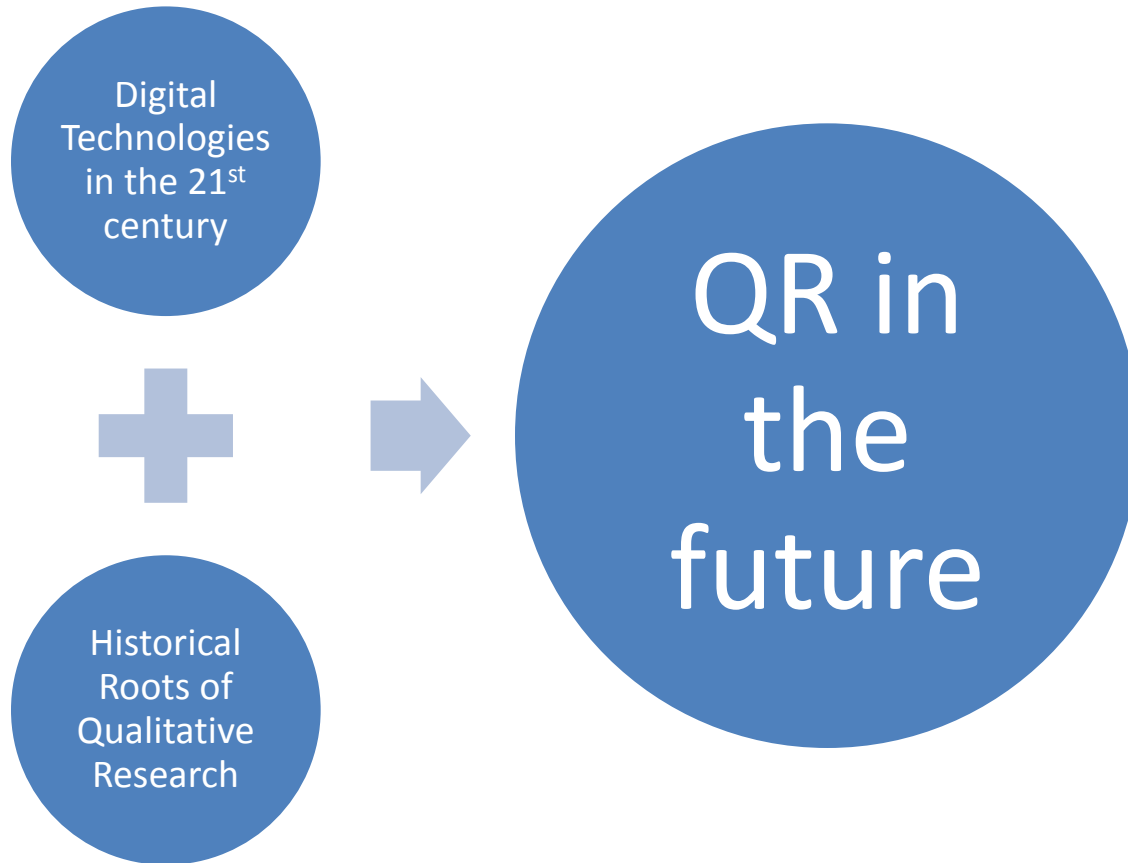
10/2/11: Integrating Numerical and Non-Numerical Data

8/19/11: Qualitative Research in a World of Big Data



ICQI 2012: Panel on Sharlene Hesse-Biber's new book

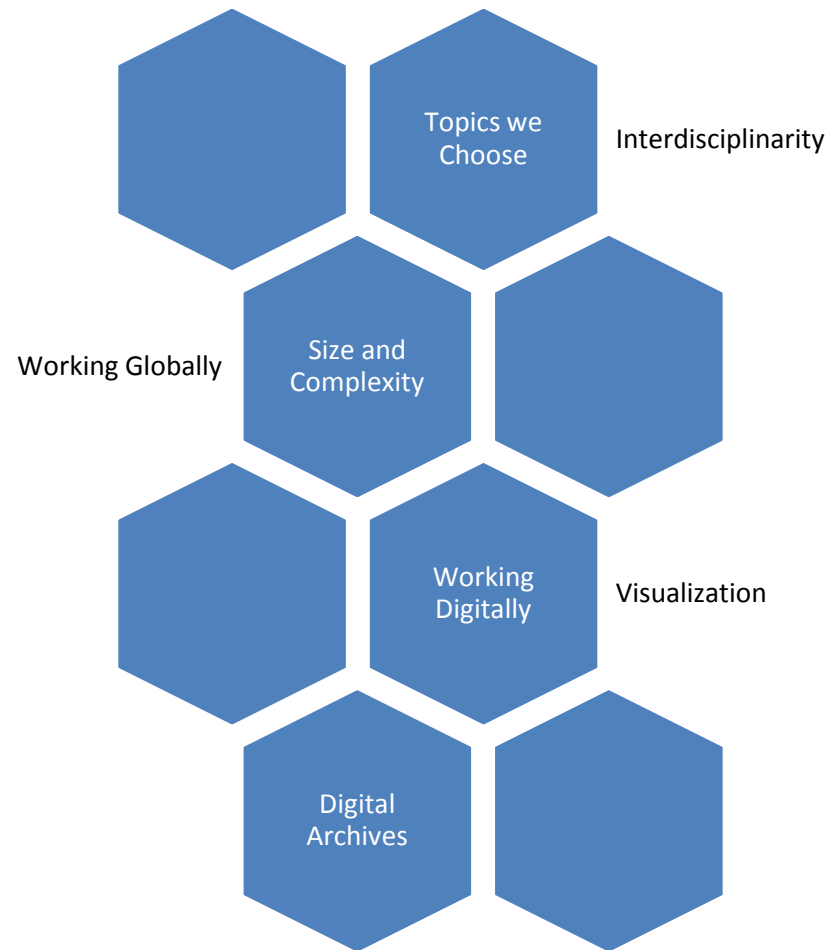




21st century: Big Data, Virtual Worlds, Micro-applications, visualization/spatialization

Roots of Anthropology and Sociology in colonialism and the industrial age to post-modernism and critical social science

Big Data as a Set of Impulses Striking Qualitative Researchers



Case Example: The Sexting Project: 2010-2012

What is the effect of Big Data on this Qualitative Researcher?

- Building a Prevention Framework to Address Teen Sexting
- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), part of the U.S. Department of Justice (OJJDP GRANT# 2010-MC-CX-0001



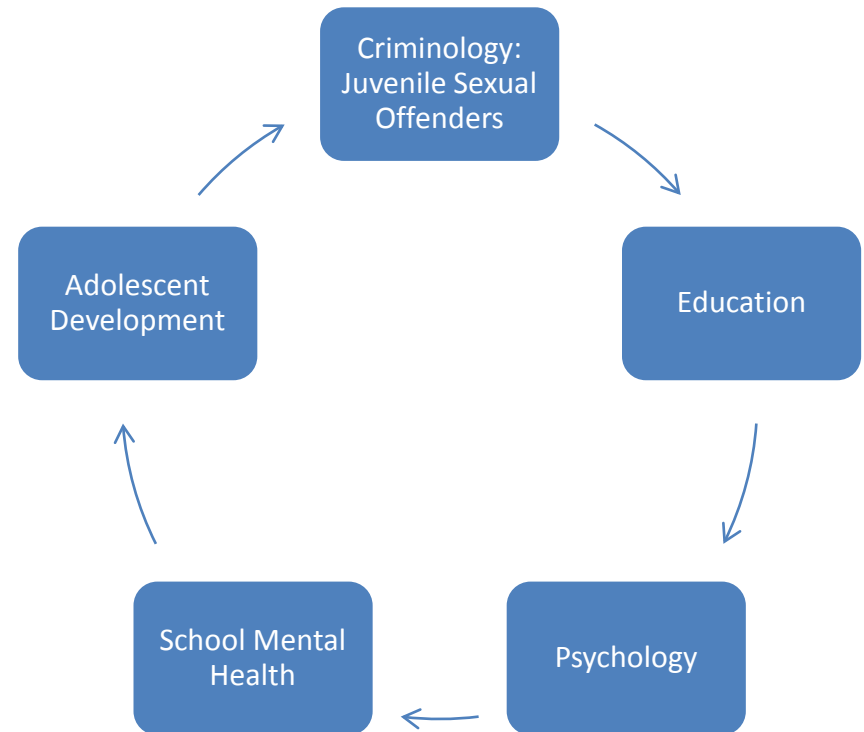
What are the perspectives of teens, caregivers, and practitioners about teen sexting?

- Primarily a qualitative research study: focus group and survey data
- Three research institutions (UMass Lowell, Miami Ohio, Medical Schl of SC)
- 1 qualitative researcher; multiple quantitative researchers

Big Data Impulses at Play

Interdisciplinarity

The topics we choose...

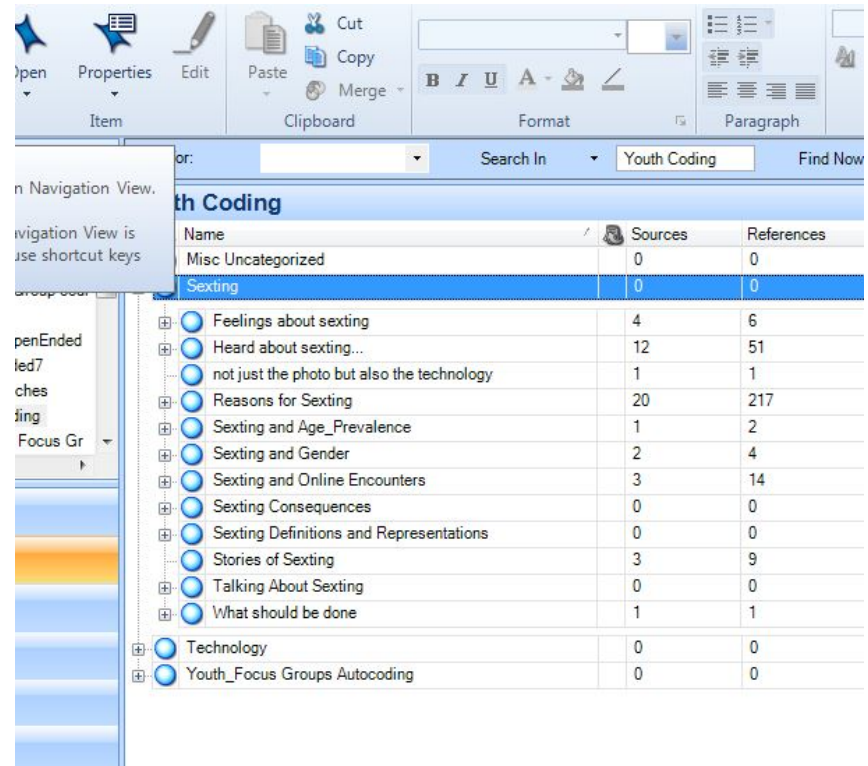


Views from 3 US Regions

Working Digitally

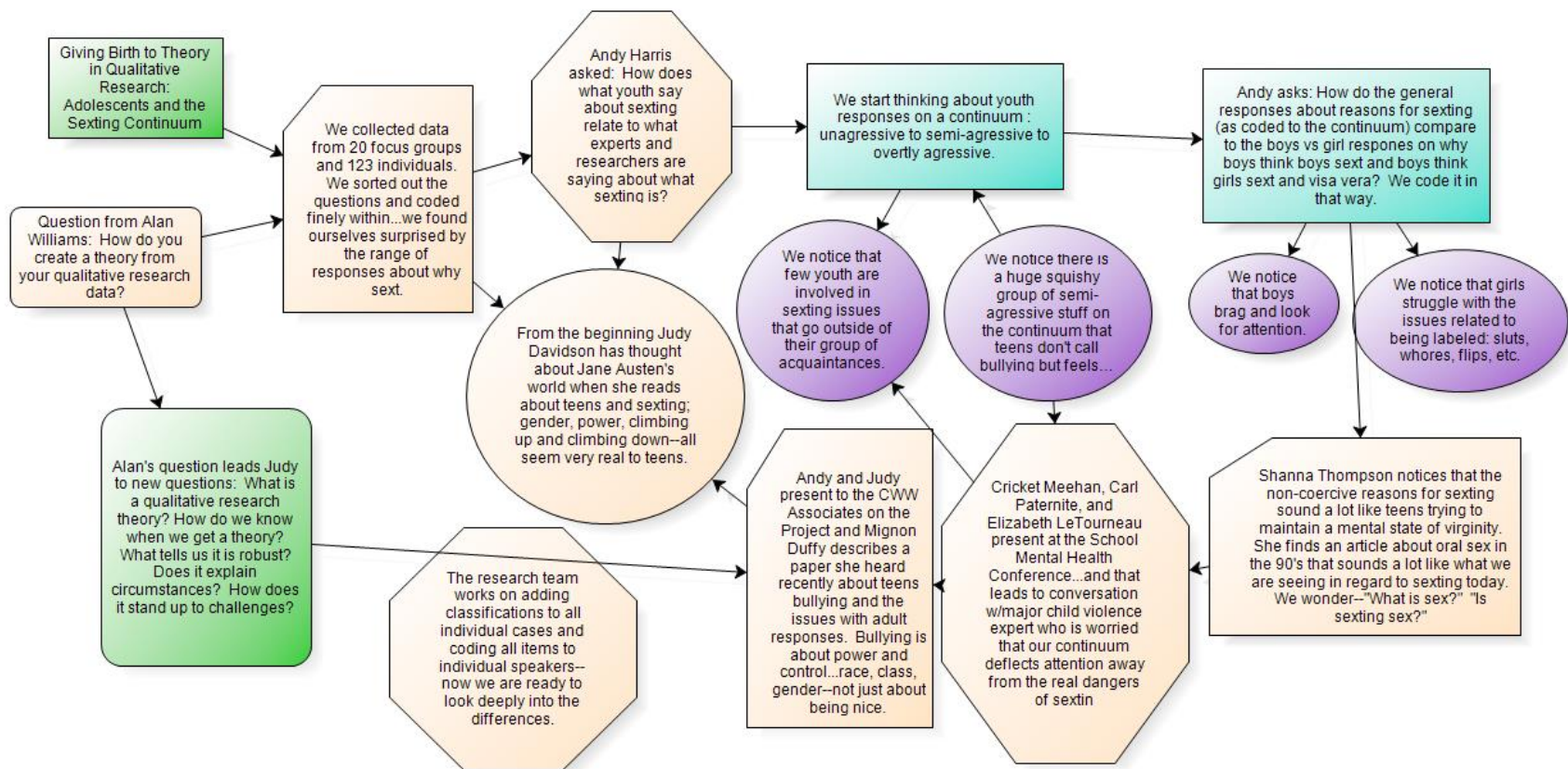
Size and Complexity

- 123 youth in 9 high schools (male and female focus groups)
- 92 caregivers in the same 9 high schools
- 110 educational and community practitioners from the three states.



Name	Sources	References
Misc Uncategorized	0	0
Sexting	0	0
Feelings about sexting	4	6
Heard about sexting...	12	51
not just the photo but also the technology	1	1
Reasons for Sexting	20	217
Sexting and Age_Prevalence	1	2
Sexting and Gender	2	4
Sexting and Online Encounters	3	14
Sexting Consequences	0	0
Sexting Definitions and Representations	0	0
Stories of Sexting	3	9
Talking About Sexting	0	0
What should be done	1	1
Technology	0	0
Youth_Focus Groups Autocoding	0	0

Visualization



Archiving Qualitative Research Data

- UK and EU lead the way
- US Projects:
 - ISPCR (University of Michigan; National Institute of Justice and Gates Foundation; IR Partnership)
 - Henry A. Murray Center (Harvard)
- NSF Funded Archival Efforts
 - Archeology Discussion (AAA/Antiquities group)
 - Political Science Data Base (Syracuse University)
- New Mandates from NSF, Department of Justice, and White House

(Davidson & Fisher, 2012. Archiving Qualitative Research Data: The Volcano is Erupting. Presentation to the QSR Nvivo Trainers Conference, Cambridge, MA: August 4, 2012.)

Evelyn Ruppert: The Economies and Ecologies of Big Data:

The Contexts or Landscapes of Big Data	The Practices of Research
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requires an Understanding of Economies and Ecologies of Big Data• Moves fast and changes rapidly• Integrates quantitative & qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interdisciplinary• Collaborative• Bottom-up and Emergent• It finds us!
The Materials of Research	The Tools of Research
<p>Extracted from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interactions• Transactions• Movements <p>Recorded by digital devices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Driven by new forms of visualization• Requires new kinds of technologies• Instrumental in the drive toward digital archiving

Implications for Qualitative Researchers

- We can move out of our methodological clique.
- Blurred boundaries allow us to move beyond declaring allegiance to one form of qualitative research.
- We can exercise digital creativity.
- We will need to learn how to use the technologies of our field.
- We must give careful thought to archiving.

Big Data Rocks: Even for a Qualitative Researcher

Judith Davidson

Associate Professor

Research Methods

UMass Lowell

Judith_Davidson@uml.edu

Qrfrag.blogspot.com

