Jamie: Yeah, so I'm an anthropologist by training, and I work on issues related to migration and media use in both China and Japan. So with that in mind, that means that the majority of my research takes an ethnographic approach, and I've used, like, a wide range of methods within that kind of methodological approach, including interviews, surveys, and even ethnographic films. So, I'm, I do visual anthropology and photographic work. And I also do digital and virtual ethnography. So I do participant observation mostly in online spaces. I have also done things like platform walk-throughs, and all app walk-throughs, and yeah, a whole range of different kinds of creative approaches along those lines as well. In the past, before I started my PhD, I also worked as a research assistant for a psychiatric epidemiologist, and so, I have a little bit of experience with some quantitative methods, although I don't really use them in my own research. So alongside those ethnographic approaches, I've also done research as more, kind of, humanities-oriented so, and film analysis. And other kinds of multimodal analysis, and archival research for, kind of analyses, of like, documents and historical materials as well. So that's the right range and…

Jamie: …just in terms of the software, I'm sometimes using Nvivo, but I've found that moving between institutions and licensing has meant that I ended up moving away from trying to rely on paid subscription services. So I tend to have very basic kind of text format data sets that I take around with me, but now that I'm more stably, institutionally based, that might change, but so far so, that's been kind of what I've done.

Jamie: Yeah. So I mean, I think if I had to kind of translate it for other disciplines, I would usually call it an interpretivist approach.

Jamie: But those kinds of big labels are as common within anthropology to be honest. Anthropologists tend to say I'm an anthropologist, but, but, yeah. So, kind of translating it for sociologists or other colleagues in the social sciences, usually I would say, which kind of a constructivist, um to Interpretivist approach, with occasionally somewhat of more of a critical realist lens. So yeah, epistemologically that's basically, if you were going to ask me, I think most social phenomenon is a product of human action and history. So in that sense, they're kind of constructed, and we can't take specific terms for granted as, like, ontologically true or anything like that. So yeah, I guess interpretivist.

Jamie: Um, I think that qualitative data is the, how to put it? Because of my training, it is the most obvious starting point in any kind of research project that involves people, I would say. All kinds of social or cultural phenomenon, even when I've worked in projects that end up using large quantitative data sets - such as in my work before I started my PhD I found that without qualitative research, the kinds of questions that researchers would often ask tend to be inappropriate. And I think this is particularly a big problem when you're working cross-culturally as I do. because so many of the quantitative approaches within, like, research about East Asia, really misunderstand context. And so qualitative research is really good for understanding context, and also understanding what kinds of questions might even be appropriate in the first place, that's the best starting point.

Jamie: So, I'm curious about open research. I recently gave a talk about Open ethnography as part of a research network here at Sheffield.

Jamie: The term open ethnography has a slightly different history to some of the discussions around open qualitative research. Originally, open ethnography was considered ways to make ethnography more accessible and easier to understand, basically. And more applicable to everyday contexts. So, from that perspective, I've always been really interested in, kind of trying to create Open ethnographic approaches that emphasise working with participants to develop major ideas around what is important to them, and, but I'm still uncertain about some of the wider conversations around making data sets available to other researchers as part of the kind of open research paradigm, just because particularly with participant observation there is, there isn't a standard way of note-taking that would necessarily make those notes accessible for other researchers. It could also potentially lead to, like, significant harm to participants, just because of the kind of exploratory research that you often do with participant observation notes. So for example, in my own research working with migrants, it's quite common to come across people who have engaged in certain kinds of illegal activities that - and not, like, violent or anything like that - might be visa overstay, or they might disclose those sorts of bits of information, and having that disclosed as open data could really be quite a big problem. And it also could have political effects. Um, in terms of, you know, creating an image of bad migrants that might not necessarily be the goals of the project as well. So I've always been a bit cute and ambivalent about that, but recently after giving a talk about these sorts of issues, I was reminded that archiving for future use with an embargo period could be a potential solution around some of these issues. because I'm originally from Australia, and in the Australian context, embargoed archives of recorded materials have actually been really useful for indigenous communities who had, you know, linguists and anthropologists and folklorists collect materials in, like, the ‘40s and ‘50s, and those recordings were then stored within university archives. And, you know, a real movement over the past [sort] of 20 years to reclaim those materials for those communities. It's actually been very valuable to them, because there was a lot of knowledge loss over the past 70 years because of some pretty nasty government policies and relation to Indigenous culture. So, even though I'm sure in the ‘40s and ‘50s, that the collection of that data probably seemed extractive - the fact that it was kept and then made available to future communities did actually end up being really valuable for them. So I could, I could potentially see something like that being an interesting avenue that I hadn't considered before. One of the ways in which I've tried to do some more open kind of qualitative research myself is with my visual methods research. So, I now conduct practical observation with a camera. So, a mirrorless camera that, and I do this for two reasons, it's about being open about my position as somebody observing. So basically, in contemporary urban settings, most people kind of understand what a camera does. And so, if they see me with a camera and they say, “Hey why are you filming things?” I can actually explain to them, and I feel like it makes it more transparent about what the process of that is, from observation is, and it's kind of more, it's easier to understand, I think, for a wider range of audiences, like, rather than the kind of classic taking notes and things like that. So, I like that approach now, because I feel it gives people more of an option to, from the very beginning, say “Hey, don't film me” or “Don't observe me”. Of course, that wouldn't be possible if I was looking at more sensitive issues. So, so, I kind of understand that that's the limitation there, and then after collecting that video footage, so, for example, my last project I collected about, it's 28-30 hours worth of footage. I edited it with a couple of key participants into a 50 minute film, and that was a collaborative editorial process. So that was another way of trying to kind of work in more participatory and open ways. And then, the nice thing about that is also that it means that that film has a kind of observational data set, even if it's like strongly edited, is available to other scholars to look at, interpret, and perhaps provide their own kind of thoughts about some aspects of the filming, even though it's still very much framed and influenced by what I was doing. I probably wouldn't make all of the video footage I collected freely available though, but then again, somebody took, said all “What about archiving it and like releasing it in 20 years time?” and I was like “Oh, Maybe, that would be interesting”. Yeah. Yes,…

Jamie: …at the very long answer to your questions, sorry.

Jamie: I think it really depends on the data. So I can, I can see why anonymised structured interview data sets could be useful for people to access, and not just for research reasons, but also pedagogic reasons, so you could definitely like, you know, use them in the classroom to help train future social scientists. That kind of data is much easier to share in a relatively ethical way. Whereas, for example, observational data from social media platforms, which often involves a kind of mishmash of screenshots and notes and screen capture. I think that it would be very difficult to make that available to people in an ethical way. Just because people forget those observational circumstances in ways, that I mean, they don't always have the capacity to consent to everything. And, so you have to take extra protective measures on the other side of the data collection process. So I probably wouldn't suggest that

Jamie: Um and that kind of applies to most participant observation, I think that, that's probably a kind of data that might not be easy to have open access. When dealing with these sorts of questions, I think that the question of translation is also a big one. And something that I haven't really heard much spoken about so far, I think there's a closet assumption that data sets collected are in English. And, you know, I, most of my data sets are in Japanese and Chinese. So the benefits to that, because it means that if you translate it into English, there's an extra degree of anonymization, but on the other hand, it means that anybody who comes up and tries to interpret that data afterwards they’re already kind of looking at it through multiple filters. I've already seen like a few people working with, for example, translated materials. And then, was, that they made really bad interpretations to be perfectly frank. So there's something about needing to help a bit more attachment to context. I think that if you're starting to deal with cross-cultural qualitative data, a lot can go wrong. If the person is not familiar with the context…

Jamie: So, I think that the barriers to it are questions of ethics. And also, I think from talking to other, like, qualitative researchers, particularly those of us who spend, like, years conducting fieldwork and learning languages other than those we grew up speaking, there's a real concern that it'll just be used for kind of extractive Big Data style analyses. So you'll end up with the, kind of, rise of armchair researchers to basically treat fieldworkers like, I don't know, you call them data collection monkeys, who are, like, you know, basically subservient and to these kind of bigger claims, and that in some senses the drive to make things open access is a pressure from people who actually don't conduct fieldwork. So, they want to be able to see what we're doing, including government agencies. So, so, I think that's something that is a big challenge. Like, how do you navigate that? How do you make reassurances? And how do you put in systems to prevent that kind of situation arising, and also recognize, like, the significant labour that goes into certain kinds of data collection. So that's a challenge I think.

Jamie: Yeah. The discussion on archives though, is like a possible solution, or like a possible benefit. Yeah, I think being able to conduct like historical research on these data collection processes down the line. To be able to reflect on how a field is developing in the future. That actually sounds pretty compelling, and like a good reason for why we should do that. Um, so yeah, so if I was going to sort of say, okay what they should do, I think having some kind of archiving process that is rigorous, and has lots of guarantees and protections around it. I guess somewhat like the protocols that surround things like Hansard or something like that, you know? Like, so the proceedings in Parliament don't get fully released until years later, but…

Jamie: …I also had to advise them, and remind them that this is going to be available, like, once it's on the Internet. Basically, it will be available in a variety of ways forever. And so, like, are they sure that they want to have certain aspects? And so in the editorial process, then we did decide, you know, to edit out certain things because they realised that for example is young Chinese people, certain kinds of political statements or actions, you know, could have negative effects on them in the future. So I think that even if a participant says “Oh yeah, I want it to be open access”. You would have to have ongoing and dynamic conversations about the ethics of what of what that means, because sometimes depending on the power-relationship in a fieldwork project, you, they might end up thinking, “Oh yeah, I don't mind about something”, that you need to kind of remind them that, you know, that could have future implications, so just to double check. Are you still okay with that? um, so I've been working with a colleague [Redacted - Researcher name] over in [Redacted - University department name] kind of revisiting the ideas of a priori and ethics approval and the problems that surround that. I think that that would definitely have to apply, that when we talk about open access and, like, making those assets open access, we also need to kind of have a clause around the right to be forgotten, and the ongoing kind of approval of that data being accessible. So, for example, if you had an archive that was embargoed for a period of time, I think you would also need to be able to double-check consent once embargo lifts and that material is made available. But that could be really difficult, because people might have passed away, obviously that contact details change, so, so I'm not sure [of] the practicalities of that. But, yeah, I think [there are] a lot of ethical issues around it.

Jamie: Yeah, so I mean, at the time I didn't use the language of open access, but but I you know, when I was making film work, for example, I said, okay, so I'm making a film and I'm using these materials for my own research and that means that it might appear as a film that's distributed to other people. And so that's how I talked about it. The language of open access wasn't kind of part of the conversation at the time, but yeah, I always get consent at first, and I also always remind people of that ongoing consent relationship. I particularly do it If they, you know, tell me something that I can recognise as sensitive or potentially contentious, so yeah. So it's consent at the beginning and then also ongoing consent.

Jamie: But okay, whatI should say is, that, I often have spoken scripts for that rather than signed forms, just because In Chinese studies there's a lot of anxiety around collecting written names on documents. So, it's often considered not best practice to cons.., to collect the kinds of standardised consent forms, usually expected in other contexts - just because of the history of silence through government and things, like,

Jamie: I think that, like, my discussion of context probably means that that's where the tension lies, because most qualitative data, particularly from, like, a cross-cultural researcher perspective, you need to have understanding of context. And when I say context, I don't just mean like kind of national cultural labels like Chinese or Japanese, but often, you know, this person that you've been speaking to my, what point did you talk to them about it, how did that fit into what, the what, was going on in the scene at the time? And so, I think that any kind of analysis conducted on qualitative data sets will never be as good as the analysis conducted by the person who collected it.

Jamie: And I even think that applies to big qualitative team style projects, where you know, you might have lots of people collecting. I think interviews are okay in a sense, but other kinds of data can be a bit of a problem sometimes. So, so, I think even that can sometimes present a problem. But yeah, so epistemically, I think the kind of analysis you can do with an open access qualitative data set probably wouldn't do justice to, like, the original collection method. But, I could also see, so that's kind of from the qualitative side of my research, but the other side like in anthropology, that kind of comparativist approach is quite popular and, and I really like the idea of like trying to develop theory based on comparing different contexts. And so, with that in mind, I think it could actually be really beneficial. How you navigate that, though, is quite tricky, because the classic approach is basically everybody writes a single authored monograph, and then we all read each other's monographs and interpret. What we do, based on what we've, what are our experiences, and then comparing it with what other people have written about. But, you know, there's not, that's multiple layers of interpretation, and that's why and anthropologies kind of started off as a very kind of positivist approach, and then moved more and more to an interpretivist approach. So yeah.

Jamie: So I would love to do it more, and I think it's very likely. I'm quite interested in trying to make multimedia and multimodal, like open access outputs, and I think going forward I definitely will. It's also because the topics that I'm interested in, I think lend themselves towards that. It's about people, you know, and hoping to do more work with artists and musicians. So these are people who benefit from having their public profile and their ideas and thoughts made available to others. If I was dealing with asylum seekers, for example, I would definitely not want to do that, so it's really about the subjects that I'm looking at, and my hope to kind of help the people that I work with. As, by actually kind of, you know, making their thoughts and experiences available to others in a variety of ways.

Jamie: Yeah, exactly. It's all about, like, what would be most beneficial for the participants and yeah. So, and I, you know, I think that I'd be interested to see what scholars are able to do with it, but I just think there are certain subjects that can't be made open.

Jamie: But, I'm more interested in researching the ones that will be openable anyway.

Jamie: Hmm. yeah, I think I would to be honest, but it would really depend. So, I think if it was somebody's work who I already knew, or that I had on awareness of where it was coming from, I might use it for comparative purposes. But, if it was a data set from like a context that I have very little knowledge about, then I probably wouldn't…

Jamie: …probably prefer to actually get in touch with the researcher and see if they wanted to elaborate [on] something rather than just working with the data set by itself.

Jamie: Yeah, yeah. If I wanted, if I became interested in like, research about, like, if I found a data set about a particular group in Brazil, I don't have very much knowledge of Brazil, and I would feel like that wouldn't be appropriate. So I definitely want to get in touch with the researcher who had collected that data set, it'd be really interesting to see it, but I think in the analysis I'd still want to have work, like, work with them on a, rather than just do like a big kind of cross-cultural comparison without any of that added context.

Jamie: Um, yes, so I was looking at this not too long ago. There was a report conducted by AND (North American Organization), the acronym - it's mostly attached to politics and political science, but it's kind of broader as well, the qualitative research network, something, something report. Yes. And now my brain is just kind of failing me…

Jamie: but…yes, I did look at that just recently.

Jamie: Every place. Yeah, sorry, it's probably weird to have somebody Google while doing an interview, but yes…

Jamie: The stuff that I was looking at comes from, yeah, so there's some interesting discussions of open ethnography from some applied ethnographers, called Danny and Sunderland. And then yeah and then there's the qualitative transparency deliberations for the Social Science Research Network, the SSRN and by Jacobs et al. (2020), which you know that's been why I've been using to have some of these conversations with colleagues around what it might actually constitute. And I'm in general agreement with what they've found basically which is You know, that's it's probably a bit tricky but yeah.

Jamie: I think it would be really useful to have more, like librarians, or information technicians, and people like that, who are able to talk about this question of archiving, and that also have some, like, standardised protocol around what you might label things. So that it's comparable. So this used to be a more standard practice in ethnography, but kind of from the 1980s onwards, was sort of [a] post-structuralist writing culture movement, and people moved away from it. So, I think that would be useful in terms of making things comparable with open access stuff. So, it would require more training about how to actually archive, and make things safe. Unfortunately, I actually don't know if the expertise really exists, because, for example, a lot of librarians I have spoken to are not very knowledgeable about the kind of legal climate in China. So the National Security Law, for example, has several clauses that can be extraterritorially applied. So if a Chinese citizen is found saying something critical of the government in the UK, and then that's archived, you'd actually have to have quite strict security protocols about protecting that information from state actors, because it could be used against somebody in an illegal case with, as we know, quite dangerous effects at the moment. So I don't know as much about other contexts, but that's the strongest example, and I think with that in mind, we really need to have some, like, strong ways of securing and encrypting that kind of information that we were to archive.

Jamie: Yes. So, in terms of what I meant by saying open, like, so I, you know, it's basically about film production and…

Jamie: …that's the only bit of my data that I would consider kind of open. So from the start of the plan, I'd basically talk to the people. I'm working with saying that this material is going to be viewable from an open access film archives. So there's one that's run out of Bergen University that I use, called the Journal for Anthropological Film. And it's like a peer reviewed journal that also is open access and you submit video in files to them. So it's quite novel, it hasn't been around that long, only about five/six years. And so that's the place where I've put it means that anyone connects it, but So that's the first stage I say, this is where I'm going to put it, then in the collection of those materials. it's about being very explicit and clear that, when I am filming, so you don't film surreptitiously, you, you always ensure that people are clear about the purpose of your research and having the camera in hand is actually very useful for doing that. And then, once you start working with the materials you do a series of, so basically, what I do is I create [indecipherable] from basically the footage of film, and then I show it to, so if, so for example, in the the one that I'm thinking of, so I had about 28-30 hours [of] footage. I edited it down to about three hours of material, so that's, you know, a significant reduction, and then that three hours of material, I showed to the people that I wanted to work with. And we watched it together. We took notes together and worked out which parts we would want to edit down. And then we basically mapped out a storyboard for how we would edit it to turn it into something shorter. That would then be made available to other people.

Jamie: Um, I'm only partially aware of it. There's some, let's see, there's a network called the Cultural Evolution Network, which is basically a group that tried - mostly made up of linguists - who try to look at how language and symbolism, and things like that, change over time. And then, what like, produces those changes. And so they often have data sets based on interviews, which they then turn into grammars. So, a kind of, like, special kind of linguistic anthropological dictionary as you might call it, that is to, and they share with you. And they use, like, those to do different kinds of archival work. In my work in epidemiology, like years and years and years ago. So this was in, this was in 2007 and 2008 - a very long time. And that data they would often compare the quantitative results with open access qualitative data sets. And mostly, just looking at the transcripts that were available -but during that project, it was interesting because the data set wasn't actually open access to start off with. But then the institution that it collected, it moved to an open access format, so it was made open access halfway through the project that I was working [on], and that was interesting. But you know, this was Australians all interpreting farmers’ conversations around mental health in rural Australia during a period of drought. So, it was fairly easy to interpret, but it was only used in a kind of illustrative or communicator way, so it didn't really influence the data. So, basically, in their research, the real data I guess was the quantitative findings, and the qualitative stuff was basically used as quotes to add some colour and texture to the quantitative findings. So they didn't really drive the research per se.

Jamie: And that's great. That's a wonderful summary there. One thing I just realised is, I know this is going to be open access, but I, could I possibly not have the final comments about my previous employer including there. I just realised that I didn't check with them. So