Qualitative Transparency Deliberations

hosted by the Social Science Research Institute at Duke University on behalf of the APSA Section for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research
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Data access--costs and inequality

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Data access--costs and inequality

Posted: **Thu Apr 07, 2016 10:41 am**
by **malahtun**
A separate concern raised by data access requirement is: 1) *Who bears the costs of compliance with data access requirements for qualitative work?* The costs involved with referencing, scanning, and linking to every archival source document (Snyder, 2014), or with anonymization of transcripts, may be very high, and even prohibitive for junior scholars and faculty at under-resourced institutions such as liberal arts colleges (Piscopo, 2015). 2) *How can data access be implemented without exacerbating already existing inequalities?*

Re: Data access--costs and inequality

Posted: **Fri Apr 08, 2016 11:03 am**
by **jcteets**
After seeing how several qualitative researchers tried to comply with DART, I am also concerned about the extra burden imposed on researchers using qualitative methods. Translating and transcribing all interviews and providing the context in which these can actually be used by another researcher to evaluate your claims would take as long as researching and writing the article itself, you could easily imagine this "appendix" would be more than 30 pages (the ones I've seen are at least this long). This seems like an undue burden to place on researchers using one method over another, especially if you weigh the value of this "transparency" against the prohibitive costs. If a scholar who is not familiar with the political/social context of this country reads this appendix, will he/she be able to really evaluate my claims? Having seen other scholars' transcripts, I doubt this. In which case, the return is very low and the cost really high, which creates a huge disincentive for young scholars to engage in qualitative research.

Re: Data access--costs and inequality

Posted: **Fri Apr 08, 2016 11:05 am**
by **smcnulty**
I very strongly agree that this is a major concern. As someone at a small liberal arts college, with almost no access to research assistance, the costs of data access requirements are extremely high. Research money for people who do qualitative research is already in short supply. The most likely outcome of the original proposal for data access would be a) more of my own time and money spent trying to comply; and/or b) me

seeking journals that are more inter-disciplinary and may have not signed on to these goals. Both of these outcomes potentially reduce my overall scholarly production and further marginalize me in the field of Political Science.

Re: Data access--costs and inequality

Posted: **Mon Apr 11, 2016 3:22 pm**
by **Guest**
I'd like to affirm that the disproportionate cost is a real issue, and that it is likely to create/exacerbate problematic incentives in the field, especially for junior scholars.

As one of the previous posters said, the time required to transcribe, translate, and explain interviews would easily double the time required to produce a manuscript, and probably add significantly to the cost (either in terms of research time or budgets, both of which are limited). Scanning archival materials used would have the same cost attached. There is no question that this will be a significant deterrent to doing this type of work: it either means spending hours transcribing/scanning rather than doing the kinds of work most of us are in the field to do, or somehow finding additional funding to get someone else to help us do it. Both are costly in different ways.

This also raises the question of whether interview notes actually confer "replicability". A scholar who doesn't have the context of a particular country/issue will often not be able to adequately interpret a transcript/notes in the same way that someone with years of experience in a region or on an issue can. The only way to create this interpretability on a reliable, consistent basis is for the scholar to write an explanatory document telling us not only the background of the country, issue, and research question, but enough about the *interviewee's* background to know how to evaluate and interpret their comments on a particular issue. In addition to the work required, there is often literally no way to provide that background without giving away a lot about the interviewee's identity, which in many cases we cannot ethically (and legally, via IRB requirements) do.

If posting interview notes/transcripts actually conferred replicability of findings, the costs might be worth considering, but I have yet to see a case where the value-added is clear enough to justify the enormous costs imposed on qualitative scholars across the field.

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