Qualitative Transparency Deliberations

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[From Steering Committee] some thoughts on REP and QTD

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Posted: **Thu May 19, 2016 11:53 am**
by **kimjohnson**
As someone who works at the intersection of REP and APD, I have concerns that overlap with many already voiced in the previous discussions. However, I think that REP field offers a valuable lens through which to view this debate. For example, a number of posts have made a distinction between “democratic” and “authoritarian” regimes with perhaps the assumption that adhering to transparency norms faces no obstacles in a “democratic society.” This gives me pause as continual active monitoring of Muslim-Americans, Black Lives Matter (#BLM) activists, and as well the U.S. national government’s continued monitoring of American citizens, continues unabated.

Given the very real and possible consequences that derive from domestic state surveillance and punishment, the concerns of the real harms that DA-RT might impose on research participants and researchers (particularly non-tenured and POC) are real. I'm wondering abut the extent to which researchers engaged in with these groups must offer some type of anonymity; not necessarily because the state might punish them for their views (and indeed in the case of Muslim-Americans may target them for sting operations); but, because the very act of talking to a possible agent of the state may lead to unintended and possibly negative outcomes. These outcomes may range from a refusal to share information or insights with the researcher; or lead to a temptation to reveal only that which the research subject believes that the researcher would like to hear.

Finally, power, subordination and agency seem to rarely fit easily into quantitative categories. Tracing these relationships often involves painstaking years of developing new methods and new types of data. I believe that these concerns should be part of a broader discussion. Perhaps as others have mentioned this is all a fuss about nothing, but I do worry about the direction of the discipline if the pursuit of a mythical "science" leads us away from considerations of power and powerlessness.

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