

It is hard to disagree with the overall aims of the DA-RT guidelines. It goes without saying that it is important to show how one's conclusions are backed up by strong evidence. I think that is the essence of doing rigorous research, along with being able to demonstrate the importance of the subject, how it advances knowledge, and its theoretical significance.

But I fear that guidelines that treat all types of research the same, without distinguishing specific challenges inherent within them, will further privilege those who do quantitative research and will seriously disadvantage 1) comparativists; 2) researchers who work in non-democratic contexts; 3) researchers who do qualitative fieldwork; and 4) researchers who do not work at R1 institutions. They will serve as a disincentive to junior scholars to pursue qualitative research projects, especially in those parts of the world we understand the least, precisely because they are difficult to work in. While it is important to do quantitative analyses, they are insufficient to being able to understand complex processes and dynamics in a country or countries.

There seem to be protections for people who work in authoritarian contexts in the guidelines, but when editors actually see the kinds of restrictions the Human Subjects committees place on us, I wonder how much flexibility there will be in practice. I worry not so much about the guidelines and more about how aware those implementing them will be of the ethical considerations in and challenges of doing research in non-democratic contexts.

Even interviews that are not particularly sensitive can be barred from being revealed publicly and must be destroyed after a certain amount of time to meet IRB requirements, especially if one is working in a non-democratic context. The people who serve on the IRB committees also don't always fully understand the research context and place restrictions based on their own limited knowledge of a country. The DA-RT guidelines refer to such situations as being an exception, but as IRB restrictions and requirements expand, I wonder how exceptional these cases are going to be. I worry that in actually implementing these guidelines, many of us are going to find ourselves caught between a rock and a hard place.

But even if there are no onerous IRB restrictions, do people who are interviewed really want their interviews made public? Will they have a say in any of this? If they know the interviews are going to be made public, how will this affect interviewees' willingness to be fully open and honest even if the interviews aren't associated with a name or affiliation? Often the content of the interview will reveal who the person is to those who know the context especially for those of us who do elite interviews. Won't that erode trust and confidentiality in the interviewer? I study women and politics and women's movements in Africa and I can't imagine people would want some of the things they say publicly attributed to them or their organization or even to the women's movement and its opponents. They don't want their strategies, jealousies, frustrations or weaknesses revealed to their competitors, opponents, or people they are lobbying. The same is true for those who oppose the women's organizations. If you have ever been interviewed by someone else you will know exactly what I mean, even if you have nothing in particular to hide.

I have interviewed people in contexts of war, where people do nasty things to each other. In the course of interviewing, people have confided in me about other politicians who tried to kill them or succeeded in killing their loved ones, admissions of stealing, of being raped, of having affairs with key leaders, of sabotaging industrial production to increase prices, and so on. Most of these specific comments should never be made public in any form, in part because they are potentially libelous. But one might want to write generally about a certain related phenomenon based on

such comments. How would one provide evidence without providing actual texts of interviews that people who made the statements never dreamed would be made public?

I have no idea how the replication part would work for qualitative research. It is already hard enough to conduct research in many parts of the world. I am working in North Africa at present and just to carry out research in what is a politically challenging environment to say the least, I had to learn not one but three languages (all of which are used on a daily basis), obtain funding, find a research affiliation, get research clearance and dozens of other complicated permissions, apply for writeup funding, line up research assistants, negotiate my personal life and a leave from my department, take care of complicated logistics in a country where all the systems are unfamiliar and sometimes unpredictable, go through an onerous IRB process, and establish a wide network of contacts. Anyone who wants to replicate this to check that my interviewees said what they said, you are more than welcome to do so.

This whole debate is already dividing departments and creating further divisions in the field. I wonder if the quality of our research will really be significantly strengthened by these requirements? I am concerned that the benefits of these new requirements do not outweigh the transaction costs of meeting them, at least in some key parts of the discipline, and in other cases they will create serious ethical dilemmas and force researchers to violate IRB requirements if they comply. It would be good if APSA and the journals would give more consideration to how the DA-RT initiative will affect the whole field and find other ways to ensure greater rigor without making research and publication impossible for important sections of the field.

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