

# *Interpretive Methods*

## **Draft Report of QTD Working Group III.2**

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Proponents of the Data Access and Research Transparency (DA-RT) initiative, the Journal Editors' Transparency Statement (JETS) and indeed the Qualitative Transparency Deliberations have tended to assume that “transparency is a universal value and that its institutionalization does not trouble, challenge, reorder or impose an explicit or implicit hierarchy of worth on the ontological and epistemological diversity of existing research communities and traditions...[transparency is cast] as a strictly neutral vessel, which scholars from every research tradition can implement and enforce” (Pachirat 2015, 27-28). Yet the considerable discussion among scholars that culminated in a petition signed by 1,173 political scientists to delay journals' implementation of DA-RT policies draws attention to well-known and widely publicized concerns about the adequacy of conceptions of transparency informing these initiatives. (For a full discussion of these issues, see Htun 2016, 32).

### ***What Transparency Occludes***

The transparency impulse in political science was generated by specific concerns, most notably a failure to replicate findings published in leading journals—a concern especially central to positivist approaches to empirical inquiry. The emphasis on replicability tends to assume that “all evidence-based social science is about the extraction of information, which is then subsequently processed and analyzed as data in order to produce knowledge...[yet] the ontological framework of data extraction is anything but neutral with regard to other logics of inquiry” (Pachirat 2015, 29). Interpretive approaches are not as focused on replication and would certainly *not* tie replication to the extraction of information or see either of those endeavors as value-neutral. There are ways to understand replicability, moreover, that the transparency discussions ignore. Because meaning-making is a social activity, its practices are “replicable” in the sense that some social scientists care about replication. Subsequent researchers can go to the field and even if they do not talk to the same people or have different experiences talking to the same people, they can nevertheless be attentive to a given range of possible interpretations relevant to a particular phenomenon under study. One's own individual experience of marriage to person X may not be replicable, for example, but the social convention of marriage is. Such scholarly interpretations, which are always less (as well as more) than the experience of the subjects themselves, also make sense only within socially accessible (and *therefore* contestable)

standards, including standards for what counts as a fact and what does not. “Facts,” as the literary theorist Stanley Fish puts it, “emerge only in the context of some point of view” (1980, 338). Even something as seemingly straightforward as George Washington having died on December 14, 1799, presumes a specific world of language in which the Gregorian calendar has authority and death is understood to mean the cessation of life on earth. Or, to return to Hanna Pitkin ([1972], 1993, p. 178), “empirical investigation presupposes conceptual definition,” and conceptual definition requires what Wittgenstein calls a “life world” (See Wedeen 2002; and In Preparation).

Interpretive methods encompass diverse traditions including critical theory, hermeneutics, existential phenomenology, genealogy, ethnography, deconstruction, decolonial and postcolonial analysis, critical race theory, feminist theory, semiotics, structuralism, poststructuralism, science and technology studies, among others. Although huge differences shape the research methods of these diverse approaches, they all challenge the notion of raw data extracted by neutral methods designed to control the subjectivity of the scientific observer. Attuned to the politics of representation, interpretive scholars analyze how concepts, definitions, measurements, and methods that produce data are themselves structured by power and incorporate unexamined social values.

Standards of evidence, levels of analysis, types of explanation, and forms of argumentation deemed appropriate vary across diverse forms of analysis and investigation. Knowledge production involves deliberative processes that require individual and collaborative efforts to assess the merits of contending views; yet the rich intellectual exchange involved in these assessments cannot be captured by the notion of transparency. Acknowledgment that nothing is manifest or self-evident requires scholars to attend to the theoretical frameworks that construct and accredit evidence within particular research practices. Knowing how particular theories structure perception and construe relevant evidence is crucial for the evaluation of evidentiary claims. Researchers often contest the parameters of debate within and across academic disciplines. They interrogate existing categories, question how boundaries have been drawn between one phenomenon and another, challenge the “operationalization” of terms, probe omissions and distortions, examine metaphors and analogies that structure understanding, develop new concepts, introduce new modes of argument, and appeal to different registers of experience. Debating the evidence relevant to a particular inquiry, then, is a markedly creative endeavor that involves the collective efforts of networks of scholars who engage one another in the identification and justification of, as well as contestations about, innovative analytic strategies.

Rather than acknowledging the multiplicity and complexity of these research traditions, DA-RT forces “rich research communities and traditions...into two tired but tenacious proxies of ‘qualitative research’ and ‘quantitative research’” (Pachirat 2015, 28), then asks qualitative researchers to explain and justify their research practices in terms of the very transparency notions they reject.

## *The Multiplicity of Research Logics*

A brief discussion of several analytic approaches central to interpretive methodologies may help to explain why transparency notions are inadequate for assessment of non-positivist, or indeed anti-positivist, research.

Analysis of texts is a staple of interpretive scholarship, but what exactly counts as a text? Different theoretical frameworks afford different answers to this basic question.<sup>1</sup> Hermeneutics originated as a mode of biblical interpretation. With secularization, the Bible lost its place of privilege and the great works of philosophy and literature were deemed the texts worthy of scholarly attention. Historians of various stripes expanded the range of texts appropriate for analysis to include historical documents, speeches, diaries, letters, newspapers, interviews, pamphlets, even cartoons. Psychoanalysis conceived texts warranting analysis to include everyday speech, digressions, “slips-of-the-tongue,” dreams, and recollections from childhood. Discursive analysis extended the meaning of “texts” beyond books and documents to utterances and embodied practices of any kind, privileging the work categories do, for example, while attending to the omnipresent power relations and micro-processes of rule. Inspired by Derrida’s (1997, 2) famous quip that “there is nothing outside of the text,” scholars of deconstruction too had a capacious understanding of what a text was, suggesting that everything—art, architecture, films, bodies, institutions, social practices--was potentially open to textual analysis.

If the question of what counts as a text can be the subject of lively contestation, so too can questions of how texts (broadly construed) get interpreted. Debates about interpretive strategies have been rife within and across generations of scholars, and the position one takes concerning modes of interpretation dictates what counts as textual evidence. “Intentionalists” stipulate that the meaning of a text is determined by the intention of the author; “formalists” insist that interpretation focus exclusively on the formal characteristics intrinsic to the “literariness” of texts; “historicists” argue that the meaning of any text can only be understood in the context of the historical, cultural, and linguistic practices and connotations at the time of its creation; “psychoanalytic” approaches suggest that meaning is connected to longings, desires, drives, and fantasies that are only partly available for conscious inspection; semioticians construe meaning in terms of cultural codes or myths through which ideologies and counter-ideologies circulate in a particular society; reader response theorists argue that meaning must be understood in terms of prevailing popular culture and a particular audience’s reception of a text; and deconstructionists posit the ambiguity and indeterminacy of meaning in all texts.

To analyze a text, then, requires very different kinds of evidence depending upon the interpretive theory that guides the analysis. For an intentionalist, evidence of authorial intent might be found in the structure of argument in the text itself, in autobiographical and biographical writing, the author’s letters, diaries, notes, marginalia, or other published works, interviews with the author, or even students’ notes of lectures given by the author. Formalists bring markedly different concerns to their analyses of texts. Trying to understand and explain the aesthetic qualities of particular works, formalists seek evidence in the particular literary devices (figures of speech, genres, rhetoric, symbology) deployed by an author to achieve novelty, creativity, originality. For historicists, texts provide a window into specific cultures at determinate points in history. Correct interpretation of texts, then, demands immersion in the

specificities of history: evidence drawn from other writings of the period such as religious, philosophical, political, literary, and scientific documents illuminate the worldview or “spirit of the age,” which shapes the connotation of language used in a particular text.

In marked contrast to historicists’ call for socio-cultural specificity in the understanding of evidence, some psychoanalytic interpretations posit a structure of human psychology that transcends particular historical contexts. Others do not. Whether embedded in Freud’s theory of psycho-sexual development (1905), Winnicott’s theory of object-relations (1957), or Lacan’s account of the subject’s entry into the Symbolic Order (1966) (a reformulation of Freudian theory in the context of structural linguistics), psychoanalytic interpretation claims some level of universality, suggesting that it can provide interpretive mechanisms that move beyond cultural specificity. Because these are insights into unconscious psychological processes insulated, in part, from conscious reflection, evidence within this theoretical framework is always indirect. Psychoanalytic theory maps the range of defense mechanisms (repression, sublimation, projection, introjection, displacement, reaction formation) and the task of the analyst is to search texts for symptoms that provide clues to these unconscious psychological processes.

Semiotics, derived from the Greek *semeiosis*, involves the “observation of signs.” Although Locke (1690 [1975] 4.21.4, 175) referred to semiotics as “the science of signs and signification,” contemporary theories of semiotics are more typically drawn from the pragmatic philosophy of Charles Peirce, the linguistic structuralism of Ferdinand de Saussure, and the literary and cultural theory of Roland Barthes. Peirce (1883 [1982]) identified three dimensions of semiotics that constitute evidence somewhat differently: pragmatics, which investigates the ways that humans, animals or machines, such as computers, use linguistic signs; semantics, which examines the relation between signs and their meanings, abstracting from their use; and syntax, which explores the relation among signs themselves, abstracting both from use and meaning. Saussure (1916 [1974]) focused on the latter dimension in developing his account of structural linguistics. Challenging notions that there is an essential relation between words and things, “signifiers” and “signified,” Saussure argued that meaning is established by relationships of difference and distinction within a linguistic system, which is itself a system of opposites and contrasts. Rejecting referential theories of language that suggest that words are labels for independently existing things, Saussure suggested that language is constitutive: signifying processes create meaning through the interplay of relationships of selection and combination, through the juxtaposition of similarities and differences within a grammatical structure without necessarily referring to anything outside of the language. For Saussure, the task of structural analysis was to reveal the rules and conventions that structure meaning within particular linguistic systems. Barthes (1967, 1973) appropriated Saussure’s structural account of signification to probe the means by which dominant meanings or “myths” are produced and circulated in culture. Barthes construes myth or ideology as a body of ideas and practices that defend and legitimate the status quo, actively promoting values that serve the interests of the dominant groups in society while operating outside the intentions of any particular writer or author. Indeed, in “The Death of the Author,” Barthes (1977, 146) insists that the meaning of texts cannot be conflated with authorial intention, for a text is “a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centers of culture.” Within Barthes’ (1973, 11) theoretical framework, evidence emerges from interrogation of “the falsely obvious,” and the unmasking of

the “bourgeois norm” (1973. 9) to reveal the cultural codes that sustain modes of domination. The analytic task of the “mythologist” is to demonstrate the means of ideological production, to reveal how oppressive images and meanings are naturalized and rendered morally unproblematic.

Providing a bridge from structuralism to post-structuralism, Barthes’ proclamation of the “death of the author” laid the foundation for reader response theory, which posits that it is the reader who defines the meaning of a text. In the act of reading, the reader brings a temporary unity to the text, momentarily fixing meaning that is otherwise fluid. Celebrating the free play of signifiers in the contradictory readings of texts by multiple readers, proponents of reader response theory emphasize that there can be no such thing as an “authoritative interpretation” of a text. The methodological consequence of this relativist stance is manifest in the conception of evidence that surfaces in reader response theory. As the focus of analysis shifts from the text to individual interpretations of a text, relevant evidence becomes sociological. The reader response researcher must gather evidence of how readers are actually interpreting texts. Reader response theorists adopt methods, such as focus groups, interviews, and surveys to generate quantitative data about popular reception of particular texts.

Derrida’s theory of deconstruction moves the site of fluidity in meaning from multiple readers to the ambiguity of language itself. Deploying a notion of “*différance*,” Derrida suggests that meaning is elusive, always deferred, never fully present, but rather simultaneously absent and present. In contrast to the structuralist focus on the relation between the signifier and the signified, Derrida’s (1978, 25) post-structuralism suggests that the continual deferment of meaning establishes relations only among signifiers: “the indefinite referral of signifier and signifier... gives the signified meaning no respite... so that it always signifies again.” Neither context nor connotation can fully control the meaning of signifiers, which carry with them traces of meanings from other contexts. If meaning is always unstable, the task of deconstruction cannot be a futile effort to fix meaning. On the contrary, critical interrogation of binaries is intended to supplement meaning, illuminating flawed attempts to constrain interpretation within the binary formation, decontextualizing and recontextualizing terms in order to disrupt dominant frames of reference. Within this deconstructive framework, evidence itself is linguistic, unstable and unfixed, but attention to contradictions, lacunae, false totalities, and homogenizations within particular relations of signification, can provide an opening for efforts to trace multiplicities of meaning, deconstruct binary oppositions, and overthrow the hierarchies and privilege they attempt to establish.

Genealogy has been described as a diagnostic “history of the present,” traced in order to undermine the self-evidences of the present and to open possibilities for the enhancement of life. Unlike traditional techniques of historical analysis, genealogy rejects any search for origins, notions of progress or unilinear development, and assumptions concerning definitive causes and unbroken continuity. Genealogy’s “unit of analysis” is not “the past” as it was lived (which is taken to be unknowable), but the historical record, the documents and narratives with which people have explained their past. Following Nietzsche, genealogists problematize such established discourses, insisting that historical narratives are framed by questions that reflect the preoccupations and concerns of their writers who are themselves embedded in a social world. Thus, the genealogist attempts to identify the conditions under which particular discourses arise;

to illuminate multiplicity and randomness at the point of emergence; to interrogate the interests and presuppositions that inform the narrative, and to question the values that sustain a discursive formation. In an effort to trace complexity and disparity, genealogists begin their analysis with particularity, chance, disjuncture, accidents, dredging up forgotten but often exemplary documents, windows into a world worthy of elucidation.

Genealogy is a unique form of critique premised on the assumption that what is taken for granted—

objects, ideas, values, events, and institutions—have been constituted contingently, discursively, practically. The genealogist attempts to lay bare that constitution and to probe its consequences. In seeking to reveal the arbitrariness of what appears “natural” and “necessary,” the genealogist aspires to open possibilities, by stimulating reflection on and resistance against what is taken for granted about world and about ourselves. In this sense, genealogical narratives are oriented toward the enhancement of life through critique.

Foucault’s version of the genealogical method includes examination of the discursive practices that produce particular fields of knowledge—power-knowledge constellations or “epistemes” constitutive of a particular historical period. Foucault suggests that these power-knowledge constellations structure criteria of intelligibility that span disciplines in the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. They structure how questions are posed and answers made tenable, organizing the very strategies of inquiry through which we are made subject to and subjects of complex power relations (Foucault 1973, 1977, 1980). Foucault enjoins scholars to examine the historical conditions of possibility that have generated the discourse under study, and then to investigate the “work” the discourse does. “Work” here is two-pronged, requiring an account of the discourse’s logic(s) (its underlying assumptions; the ways in which concepts within a discursive formation relate to one another, and the kinds of imaginings that are foreclosed in the discourse’s reproduction). “Work” also refers to the discourse’s effects, the consequences it has generated in the world.

Phenomenologists focus their analysis on characteristics distinguishing human existence from the existence of other forms of organic life and inanimate objects. Chief among these is intentional consciousness, which is the source of the concepts and categories that humans produce to bestow meaning on our existence. Thrown into a world of ambiguity and contingency, humans create “*lebenswelt*,” intersubjective “life worlds,” that organize experience, make sense of conscious sensations, and provide the categories through which actions become meaningful. Phenomenological analysis seeks to identify and explicate the structures of the life world constituted in and through intentional consciousness. Insisting that the life world is the domain of the “lived body” or “embodied consciousness,” phenomenologists reject the mind/body dualism of Cartesian philosophy. Acknowledging the intersubjective constitution of the life world, they also reject forms of radical individualism and solipsism that deny the social constitution of lived experience (Bernstein 1976).

Phenomenologists have developed a range of techniques with which to analyze the structures of meaning constitutive of the life world and of embodied consciousness. “*Verstehen*,” the complex process by which we interpret our own action and the actions of those with whom we interact, is perhaps the best known of these. *Verstehen* is a hermeneutic technique that differs

from introspection and from psychological inference in important respects. As a way of understanding the “stock of knowledge at hand” that each person uses to make sense of the world, *verstehen* excavates the socially constituted, intersubjective conceptual frameworks acquired in the course of socialization. Because the life world is shared, it is amenable to interpretive efforts to analyze its most basic modalities. Thus, for example, phenomenologists might explore how “common sense” is constructed and naturalized, how it structures expectations and typifications (attributions of particular properties to categories of objects), and how it lends an air of inevitability to particular modes of action. Beliefs, values, intentions, motivations, explanations that we offer for our actions and the complex assumptions that inform these forms of intentionality constitute the evidence in phenomenological analysis (Bernstein 1976).

In short, interpretive methods are keyed to a range of philosophical positions and debates, none of which are consonant with the transparency norms currently on offer in the discipline. Transparency norms do not fit the interpretive methods described above because they assume “a particular view of social science that seeks a veridical understanding of the world as a set of objective processes...To codify uniform expectations for the handling of “data,” and indeed to reduce all questions of evidentiary argument to the language of “data,” does a disservice to many kinds of political science inquiry” (Isaac 2015, 276).

### ***Transparency as Political Concept***

As part of an effort to “make political science a science,” transparency norms are designed to certify a realm of autonomous facts separated from values (Wedeen 2016, 33-34). Yet in couching objectivity in terms of a dichotomous division of the world between facts and values, mainstream political scientists have failed to see certain connections between their research practices and liberal politics. “The insistence of separating fact from value...has excluded viewing science as a value in itself, indeed as a metaphysics. Political scientists do not tend to ask how scientific knowledge operates to cultivate passionate belief or why science is inherently the most valuable form of knowledge....the split between fact and value has prevented thinking through how epistemological assumptions and national political commitments coalesce to defend the stability of liberal politics—how liberalism is itself ideological or ‘hegemonic’ and how political science helps make it so. Epistemologies have a politics, and knowledge production in political science tends to shore up certain liberal assumptions and aspirations even while overt prescription and ‘bias’ are seen to be outside the objectivist goals of science....The split between fact and value allows methodology, in particular, to be viewed as value neutral, as a technique devoid of normative assumptions. This view permits positivist political science to occupy the position of authorized (because disinterested) discoverer, teacher, enforcer of what counts as true or justified statements about politics—a position congenial with liberals’ tendency to see liberalism as neutral as well” (Wedeen 2016, 34-35).

When proponents of transparency invite “qualitative scholars to demonstrate the power of their inquiry” but insist the evaluative criteria fall within positivist frames (Elman and Kapiszewski 2014, 46), they replicate decades of marginalization of non-positivist, anti-positivist, and post-positivist scholarship. The very framing of the DA-RT initiative—whereby

“data” is presumptively positioned as the privileged currency of research—is symptomatic of the marginalization of political theory in the profession more generally. Within the terms of DA-RT, qualitative research and interpretive approaches register as an exception, as a problem to be solved by creating data “lite” requirements that simultaneously discipline non-quantitative scholars while highlighting their inherent inability to fully live up to professional standards of research integrity.

We propose to flip this script. Rather than treating political theory as superfluous to the “scientific” study of politics, we suggest that the transparency debates present a prime example of the impoverishment of a political science in which empirical research proceeds in ignorance or denial of insights drawn from theoretically-informed investigations. Here, we highlight two main points about transparency that are well-established in the critical literature, and that challenge the way transparency has been framed in the DA-RT debates.

First, professional deliberations on the transparency imperative have largely presumed transparency to be an *apolitical* value. In contrast, political theorists generally have treated transparency as an ideological construct, one premised on the fantasy of truths that are not only self-evident, but self-enforcing. This ideology has been diagnosed as having distinctively detrimental effect in democratic contexts by encouraging counter-critical attitudes that undermine the practice of self-government (Dean 2002; Žižek 2002).

Second, within the profession, the transparency debate has focused on proposals to impose new burdens on individual scholars pursuing publication and funding opportunities. This appropriation of transparency represents a startling reversal of the concept’s more familiar usage within democratic theory to designate the idea that the state legitimacy depends on making the existence and justification for exercises of power visible to those who are subjected to it. Put otherwise, transparency is understood as a constraint on the powerful, not the relatively powerless. From this perspective, rather than encouraging journals to impose more obligations and constraints on would-be authors, we believe the transparency imperative must be applied first and foremost to journal editors as a demand to address the ideological and other biases of gatekeepers to academic publishing. Indeed, if there is a problem with transparency in the profession, the rigors of the peer review process lead us to conclude that it lies not in the unwillingness of authors to make their data known, but rather in the implicit standards that journal editors and anonymous peer reviewers use to define meritorious work.

The emergence of transparency norms in political science in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century just a few years after the publication of the *Report of the APSA Task Force on Political Science in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (2011) raises additional questions about the politics of transparency. Appointed by APSA President Diane Pinderhughes, the task force documents that “studies conducted since the 1980s have consistently shown a bias against the study of race and inequality within political science as compared to most other social science disciplines....Flagship journals have, on the whole, rarely addressed issues of race, ethnicity, and gender....[and] text books treat race, ethnicity, and gender...as marginal aspects of the political system, rather than as woven into the fabric of American politics (2011, 14).” As a consequence of such sustained neglect, the *Report* concludes that the discipline is “ill-equipped to address in a sustained way why many of the most marginal members of political communities around the

world are often unable to have their needs effectively addressed by governments... [and] ill-equipped to develop explanations for the social, political and economic processes that lead to groups' marginalization" (2011,1). The Task Force also concluded that "Political Science tends not to be self-reflective about the analytical limitations of many of its traditional methodological approaches. The tendency to accept its approaches as 'objective' science, for example, tends to inhibit the development of a more critical debate about the potential phenomenological bases of much empirical social science" (2011, 18). Rather than engage these troubling issues, DA-RT reasserts commitments to openness and transparency while burying substantive concerns about political bias in the discipline under guidelines for data archives and adherence to methodological strictures. In an era when the cynical manipulation of facts has become the new normal (as evidenced by the OED's selection of "post-truth" as the international word for 2016), what does it mean for political science to be doubling down on transparency? Such a public display of fealty to transparency runs the risk of being perceived not simply as an act of extraordinary naïveté, but as an ethical failure—insofar as political scientists seek the comfort of the authorizing cloak of transparency while failing to confront the inherently political nature of knowledge production, which transparency discourse functions to obscure.

### ***Reframing Priorities***

There are real questions concerning transparency in the profession—but is data access chief among them? One might, for example, prefer making transparent scholars' un-interrogated beliefs "about the inherent value of science as a method of producing objective truth about the real world," on the one hand, or scholarly commitments to "the value of preserving liberalism," on the other (Wedeen 2016, 31). Or one could attend to the ways in which these two sets of norms have coalesced to produce and maintain a dominant epistemological community that supplies and enforces what may and may not be asked (Wedeen 2016, 35). Although contestation within political science has entailed criticizing fact/value distinctions, the reduction of politics to calculations of expedience, and the desirability of objectivity (to name a few subjects of critique), the embrace of diversity and recent calls for institutional change on those grounds have tended to revive efforts to unify the discipline. The current transparency initiative can be seen in this light, as an effort to discipline the discipline by making qualitative data more legible to scholars of quantitative political science, thereby riding roughshod over potentially fecund areas of epistemological, methodological, and political discovery and disagreement. The very justification of transparency's merits as a way for the discipline to enjoy "legitimacy" or "credibility" in Washington, D.C., moreover, might be read as symptomatic of a problem in our disciplinary thinking, an inattention to the ways in which scholarly production is tied to our "aspirations to the kind of power that is presumed to accompany...science," to borrow Foucault's felicitous phrase (1980, 84).

Thus, while there are transparency issues to confront, JETS is completely irrelevant to addressing them. The problem of fixating on data transparency is not limited to opportunity costs, however—doing so is also harmful insofar as it perpetuates the false belief that the profession currently lacks standards to ensure research integrity. In reality, such measures do exist and appear to be working well. This is not to say that there have not been lapses, but it is to question whether these lapses are due to a lack of adequate standards, or rather to individual

instances of failure to uphold them. Viewed in this way, JETS provides a solution that simultaneously misidentifies the relevant problem, while creating a whole host of new ones.

### ***Recommendations***

Although QTD initially privileged transparency in the very title of its intellectual project, it has become increasingly clear through ongoing discussions that QTD should not presume the primacy of the intellectual value of transparency—both because there are other important, sometime competing values and because transparency may not be a meaningful intellectual value from some epistemological and ontological perspectives. The QTD should speak to broader end-goals such as knowledge production, research excellence, research integrity, and ethics, while placing transparency in the context of a range of values and mechanisms for achieving those values. One valuable resource for apprehending the perspectives of interpretive scholars on this topic is the [Dialogue on DA-RT](#) website.

In recent years, symposia on DA-RT have been hosted by both *the Comparative Politics (CP) Newsletter* and the *Qualitative and Multi-Method Research (QMMR) Section Newsletter*. Several authors included in the *CP Newsletter* symposium underscore the ethical quandaries engendered by the transparency impulse. These issues range from the risk of compromising the anonymity of vulnerable interviewees to concerns about the dehumanizing effect of reducing complex human interactions to an archivable form of data (Büthe and Jacobs 2015; Fujii 2016; Hall 2016; Htun 2016; Pachirat 2015). Across the profession, scholars have demonstrated that transparency as it is defined in the DA-RT statement is conceptually inadequate, and that researchers should not be required to submit their data as a condition of publication.

We did not find support for DA-RT amongst interpretive scholars. Indeed, many made compelling arguments in favor of its retraction. Given the lack of manifest support approaching anything close to a consensus, we are deeply troubled by the adoption of the DA-RT guidelines, which many have expressed could do real harm. Naïve notions of transparency are dangerous because they elide the interpretive moments that undergird every research interaction with the research world in favor of a non-relational and anonymized conception of information and data (Pachirat 2015, 31)

It has been proposed that the QTD offer specific recommendations for a “clear, strong alternative to DA-RT standards and the specific editorial politics and reviewer demands spawned by those standards” (*Guidelines*, 2). Our recommendation is that the peer review system, already in place, is sufficient to insure research integrity (Isaac 2015; Trachtenberg 2015).

Rather than defending transparency norms, the APSA should embrace a plurality of standards for research excellence carefully suited to the diverse methodologies within the profession. Indeed, APSA should take seriously the inclusive practices of *Perspectives on Politics*, its second flagship journal, and embrace diverse “Scholars whose work has met demanding standards of double-blind peer review—deploy a perspective that they consider to be most illuminating for the purposes of understanding a problem at hand; explain why this perspective ought to be considered illuminating; employ methods and techniques, and present

evidence to support their explanation; and offer an account of why the perspective that has been presented is interesting, important, and fruitful for further thinking about things that matter. In every case these authors challenge some existing interpretation. And in every case it can be assumed that at some future point another author will come along and renew the challenge” (Isaac 2015, 279).

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<sup>1</sup> The methodological discussion in the following section is drawn from Hawkesworth (2006), particularly chapter 4, "Evidence."