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# Show me the data: research reproducibility for qualitative methods

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Publishing

NCRM Research Methods Festival

University of Bath

Thursday 5th July, 11:15 - 12:45

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UK Data Service

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# Session Tweeting

#RMF18

#reproducibility

#qualidata

#IDocumentMyData

@UKDSRDM

# Today's debate

- In quantitative methods, reproducibility is held as the **gold standard** for demonstrating research integrity
- Threats to scientific integrity, such as fabrication of data and results have led to some journals now requiring **data, syntax and prior registration of hypotheses** to be made available as part of the peer-review
- The **'reproducibility' of qualitative research** has been questioned but has also been protected from the recent transparency agenda. But for how long?
- What if journals begin to mandate the **sharing of data and analysis** for qualitative research?



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# International transparency agenda

- Increasing drive for openness and sharing – **value and transparency**
- Funders, Professional Societies and Journals driving **open research mandates**
- Data sharing: [RCUK Common Principles on Data Policy](#)
- UK Parliamentary Science and Technology Committee Inquiry on **Research Integrity** - so-called 'crisis in reproducibility' of research



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# But, a slight terminology crisis

Open research

Open science

Open access

Open data

Open Research  $\neq$  Open Data

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Integrity

Transparency

Reproducibility

Verification

Replication

Restudy

Follow-up



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# Replication and **process** transparency

- Much fieldwork is impossible to fully replicate
- But, we can better expose **methods/process transparency**
- What **evidence /documents** can help provide this?
- What is the qualitative equivalent of code/syntax?
- Surely depends on the level of ‘immersivity’

Can we respond to questions around ‘**quality**’ of **qualitative research**’ more positively by better showing methods and data? Or not?



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# Advocating methods /data sharing benefits

- Fundamental in collaborative and multi-stakeholder projects
- Extend voices of participants
- Make best use of hard-to-obtain data, e.g. elites, socially excluded, over-researched
- Not burden over-researched, vulnerable groups
- Provide greater 'research transparency'

*In each, ethical duties to participants, peers and public may be present*



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# Documenting Methods and Data

- **Documentation of method**
  - Described method in articles, often highly sanitized; unlikely to be fully transparent
- **Raw and derived data in qualitative research**
  - What counts as 'data'?
  - What is 'replication data' – a 'subset' of whole data?
  - Ethical issues in exposing data
  - Time and cost to prepare, often not planned well



# Providing research context – through data?

- **Research Data Policy** in place in UK since 1995
  - People share what they feel they ‘can’ share
  - Hard to see exactly what data were created, what methods were used and what fieldwork represented the research
- Evidence base: 1000 **qualitative data collections** shared
- **Context debate** about reusing data in sociology dating back to 1995 (**UK Qualidata**). [Literature](#)
- Guidance on how to ‘do’ context
- Lots to learn from historians on **methods for assessing provenance and assessing value** of a data collection



# The Data Paper

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## The 2015 Qualitative Election Study of Britain in Research Data Journal for the Humanities and Social Sciences

Authors: Kristi Winters<sup>1,2,3</sup>, Edzia Carvalho<sup>1,2,3</sup> and Thom Oliver<sup>1,2,3</sup>

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Online Publication Date: 21 Aug 2017

Article Type: Research Article

Volume/Issue: Ahead-of-Print

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/24523666-01000007>

Abstract/Excerpt **Full Text**

### Abstract

Related data set "Qualitative Election Study of Britain, 2015" with DOI <http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-8117-1> in repository "UK Data Service".

The Qualitative Election Study of Britain (QESB) is the first (and only) qualitative longitudinal dataset to investigate political attitudes and voting behaviour over multiple elections and referendums in the United Kingdom. During the 2015 UK general election over 90 voters participated in 23 focus groups across England, Scotland, and Wales before and after polling day. These participants represented a range of political party supporters and independent voters, age groups, and economic backgrounds. They discussed a range of political issues including their vote choice in the election, their impressions of the major party leaders, why they would consider voting (or never voting) for a political party, and their expectations for the country moving forward. Special focus groups were also held around the three leaders' debates. The 2015 QESB also

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Introduction

Research Aim

Replicating Qualitative Research

Pre-Election Topics

Additional Topics Only Asked in Pre-  
Election Leaders' Debates Focus  
Groups



# 'Analytic' transparency

- Linking a **claim** to a **data source(s)**
- [Annotation for Transparency Initiative \(ATI\)](#)
  - 'facilitates transparency in qualitative research by allowing scholars to 'annotate' specific passages in an article. Annotations amplify the text and include a link to one or more data sources underlying a claim; data sources are housed in a repository*
- A challenge for qualitative research
  - not simple running code
  - assumptions about the sources (e.g. historical memo)
- But, [a slippery slope](#)?...

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We are here to debate ‘reproducibility’ approaches, issues, and what standards for ‘process transparency’ might look like for qualitative research

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# Questions

- How can we **respond positively** to transparency calls?
- What is the **'evidence'** and where should it sit?
- What are some of the **issues and challenges**?
- How do publishing outlets – **journals and data archives** work together to solve this?
- What **advocacy and training** do we need and when should it start?



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# Our speakers today

- Dr. Nicole Janz, Assistant Professor in International Relations, The University of Nottingham @polscireplicate
  - Learning how to do research reproducibility in political science
- Prof. Sarah Nettleton, Department of Sociology, University of York
  - Crisis what Crisis? Can qualitative data archiving enhance transparency?
- Maureen Haaker, Senior User Support Officer, UK Data Service @mahaake
  - Some practical protocols for transparency for qualitative research



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