this year: Cathie Jo Martin, Daniel Pemstein, Benjamin Read, Ryan Saylor, Jason Seawright, and Erica Simmons.

We encourage advanced political science graduate students and junior faculty based at U.S. institutions who are writing a paper focused specifically on developing, critiquing, challenging, or enhancing a method for collecting, generating, or analyzing qualitative data, or a technique for multi-method research, to submit a proposal for the next EMW, to take place on September 4, 2024 in Philadelphia; the call for proposals will be issued in November 2023. More information on the EMW can be found here: http://sigla.georgetown.domains/emworkshop/

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How Do Ethical Considerations Affect Data and Findings from Field Research?

Ankushi Mitra
Georgetown University

Field research can bring real harm to participants and communities, and a significant literature now focuses on safeguarding ethics throughout the research process (Grimm et al. 2020). However, less attention has been paid to how decisions about ethical dilemmas impact data and findings. Because all stages of research are fundamentally structured by the political contexts in which they occur, ethical considerations can affect data and findings by shaping choices about participant and question selection, documentation, and publication. Below, I briefly overview the conditions under which researchers make these decisions and discuss their potential consequences.

Participant Selection

The dynamic and unpredictable nature of the field means that scholars may elect not to sample or interview certain individuals, households, or groups based on evolving assessments of risk. This can occur when research might bring harm to researchers and research partners, or when the research process is likely to reveal the existence, presence, or social networks of a vulnerable population to state or non-state actors (Fujii 2012). Such decisions can have important implications for data and findings. They may lead groups with specific characteristics to be systematically excluded, generate inconsistencies between what we learn about a population and what we aim to learn, or lead to conclusions that are beyond the range of the data. For example, during my fieldwork with migrants and refugees in Tunisia, black African migrants faced heightened surveillance and policing because they were perceived as disproportionately undertaking risky boat journeys to Europe. To not draw attention to them in our field sites, we interviewed people from groups less vulnerable to surveillance. However, this also meant that we likely underestimated the barriers the broader population of migrants and refugees were facing. Experiences Sub-Saharan migrants were more likely to encounter, like certain repertoires of state control or racism and xenophobia, also remained underrepresented in our data.

Question Selection

In Tunisia, one of our goals was to understand how people made decisions about their journeys and navigated different policy regimes. Alongside us, journalists, humanitarian organizations, and security forces were also gathering data about the same population, but to different ends. Collecting certain information that may be used to surveil or coerce participants or communities is dangerous. In our case, the risk was acute for people aiming to travel to Europe, and asking about their goals and plans thus raised ethical questions. Researchers often avoid certain questions when the very act of hearing or answering them might cause psychological harm (Cronin-Furman and Lake 2018), and when answers can expose participants and communities to broader social and political risks (Wood 2006). However, omitting certain questions may lead to missing critical information and limit researchers' ability to draw conclusions and identify

patterns. In our case, we learned less about some topics, like the practices of political control people attempting to reach Europe were facing, how European practices of containment operated outside European borders, and how relationships between weaker migrant-sending and powerful migrant-receiving states functioned. Missing information can also result in extrapolations and conclusions unjustified by the scope of the data. For example, because we mainly captured information about the journeys and strategies of groups that were less vulnerable to surveillance and coercion at the time, we could not be sure that our findings would apply to the broader population of migrants of interest to us.

Documentation

Ethical concerns also inform decisions about what scholars document, and how they document information. Certain types of records, like audio or video, involve higher risks because they are more identifiable. Dilemmas arise when participants engage in sensitive behavior or hold sensitive opinions, which can bring harm if participation in research and associated data are revealed to others. Legal and political contexts further influence these decisions: researchers may refrain from documenting certain data and opt for less identifiable methods to protect against actors like the state accessing and using it (Bloemraad and Menjívar 2022). For example, four years after conducting research in Tunisia, I was working in India. Because the government had recently passed a law that led to the detention and deportation of Muslim refugees, in interviews, we did not document details about respondents' religious affiliation and community to protect Muslim interlocuters. Such decisions can make some analyses impossible, and could lead to additional issues when undocumented data do not represent the construct researchers aim to measure. For instance, we could not examine how experiences of displacement and political repression varied between identity groups; further we were unable to adequately capture whether Muslim communities and networks shape collective action and political life among refugees in distinct ways. The mode of documentation also matters. Taping interviews might lead participants to withhold information, while relying on memory or notes can lower data quality and complicating comparing responses due to different approaches and abilities to record, recall, paraphrase, or summarize information.

Publication

These ethical dilemmas extend to publication. If respondents can identify themselves or others, data and analysis can affect psychological well-being, interpersonal or community relations, and researcher-interlocuter interactions. Other actors can access and use published information for their own purposes. Such considerations can lead researchers to withhold or delay publicizing certain results (Wood 2006). This can create "file drawer" problems by affecting the overall representativeness of findings about a topic, collective knowledge about a phenomenon or population, and allocation of resources to certain lines of inquiry. Delaying publication creates a time lag between when research is conducted and results shared, which can affect the relevance and usefulness of findings. In India, as one example, I learned about how non-governmental organizations (NGOs) assisted refugees. These data would contribute to our understanding of relationships between civil society, the state, and marginalized communities. However, I hesitated to publicize information about any organizations working with refugees. Under India's Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, NGOs must register with the state, granting authorities the power to jeopardize their legal standing for political reasons. My concern turned out to be well-founded—recently, some NGOs revealed that their ability to operate in India had been threatened by the government for aiding refugees (Sullivan and Sur 2023).

Recommendations and Conclusions

Because decisions made at these pivotal moments can shape the trajectory of a project, scholars must evaluate ethical challenges and their social and scientific consequences throughout the research process, and use these evaluations to inform research practices and outputs.

First, it is important to delineate the boundaries of what we can and cannot know as completely as possible by placing research within the context in which decisions about data collection, analysis, and sharing were made and describing the scope, range, constraints, and limitations of the data and findings. This involves introducing ethical constraints, identifying pathways through which they affected research, and explaining their impact and specific implications for the aims, research activities, and findings of a project. This aids meaningful interpretation of the data and results, communicates research relevance, and can guide future inquiry.

Second, transparency about ethical decision-making is important. While complete disclosure is not always possible, scholars can explain how decisions were made and data analyzed (MacLean et al. 2019). This involves sharing the principles, criteria, processes, or frameworks used to identify, evaluate, and respond to ethical issues throughout the research process, and how the social and scientific consequences of these decisions were judged. This allows others to understand researchers' decision-

making processes, assess the sources and impacts of potential variation in researcher choice, and share best practices.

Third, ethically important moments can become opportunities to reveal new perspectives and information, develop the next phase of research, shift the focus of a project, generate new lines of inquiry, function as metadata, and witness how power structures shape data generation. They can also push researchers to think about other ways of gathering information, like visiting other field sites, interacting with other populations, or using other methods. For these reasons, scholars should

discuss productive approaches to further investigation in their research outputs. This offers pathways for advancing inquiry based on researchers' direct, relevant experience and insights.

These steps provide a starting point for further mainstreaming the process of analyzing ethical problems and parsing out and addressing their analytic implications. Such considerations are critical because, as this article demonstrates, the politics of the field can shape researcher decision-making and the data and findings from research at all stages of the process, from design to dissemination.

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Balancing Standardization and Flexibility: How to Get the Most Out of Your Interviews

Sara Morell
The College of New Jersey

When positivist researchers use observational data, they make research design decisions that consider both standardization and accuracy. They take a theory, or a simplification of the world based on a hypothesized relationship between an independent and dependent variable, and test that theory with observational data. This requires an empirical approach that accurately represents the world, while ensuring extraneous factors don't impact the outcomes from the data. In other words, positivist researchers consider standardization, in that they want to justify that their findings are not the result of units being treated differently (King et al. 1994). Positivist researchers also consider accuracy, in that they want to justify that the data collected reflects their phenomenon of interest, in order to facilitate rich interpretation or make causal

claims (Martin 2013; Mosley 2013). In my own research, I use interviews to study how the tactics candidate training organization's use impact women's political ambition. In this context, I compared organizations focused on women and organizations not focused on gender. I wanted my findings to accurately reflect the approaches used by these organizations, and I wanted to affirm that *if* responses from women's and non-gendered organizations were different, it was because of organizational approach and not differences in the interview method itself.

In interview research, accuracy is achieved through flexibility. Interview researchers may adjust their tone and question-wording to build rapport or get respondents to open up (Rubin and Rubin 1995). Researchers who carry out interviews may also take an interview in a new