

# **Data Access and Research Transparency**

**Developing and Instantiating  
a Meta-Standard**

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# The DA-RT Initiative

- Disciplinary project to encourage openness in Political Science.
- DA-RT, committee of the American Political Science Association.
- Discipline with a lot of people strongly holding *different* views on how social inquiry is best conducted.
- Transparency as a common value, not a commitment unique to one episteme.

# Transparency as a Meta-Standard

- We approach transparency as an “upstream” meta-standard, which applies regardless of the type of social inquiry being conducted.
- Contrast view that transparency is a “downstream” concomitant of a particular view of science. For example, registration of research designs to prevent star-gazing or publication bias.

# Transparency as a Meta-Standard

- Descriptive content of the meta-standard will (or at least should) be non-controversial.
- Building consensus around things people can agree on.
- Test of whether it works: can you run it past variety of scholarly communities, response is “we knew *that*.”

# For all rule-based social inquiry

- Scholarly communities hold shared and stable beliefs that *research designed and conducted in particular ways possesses certain characteristics.*
- The *conduct of social inquiry* and the written products that represent its conclusions are *designed to capture those characteristics.*
- For any given piece of research in a particular tradition, the *ability of scholars to claim the underlying warrants depends on their showing that it was designed and conducted in accordance with those rules.*

# Open about what?

- Our prescriptive methodologies all involve:
  - extracting information from the social world,
  - analyzing the resulting data, and
  - combining evidence and its analysis to reach a conclusion.
- Examples: ethnographic field work, a laboratory experiment, archive-based case study, or the statistical analysis of a large data set.

# What does DA-RT ask?

- *A Guide to Professional Ethics in Political Science* (2012) described new expectations and requirements for sharing data and providing information about how knowledge claims were derived. Scholars must provide:
  - Data access,
  - production transparency, and
  - analytic transparency.

# A. Data Access

- To the extent that scholars' evidence-based knowledge claims rely on data they themselves generated or collected, they should
  - provide access to those data
  - or explain why they cannot.



## B. Production Transparency

- Scholars providing access to data *they generated or collected* should offer
  - a full account of the procedures used to collect or generate the data.

## C. Analytic Transparency

- Scholars making evidence-based knowledge claims should
  - provide a full account of how they drew their analytic conclusions from the data
  - (i.e., clearly explicate the links connecting data to conclusions).

# Default position limited to:

- A) address human subjects concerns
- B) comply with relevant and applicable laws, including copyright
  - Must be in good faith and on reasonable grounds.
- C) provide first use of data by scholar who generated them.
  - One year after publication but journals can require sooner.

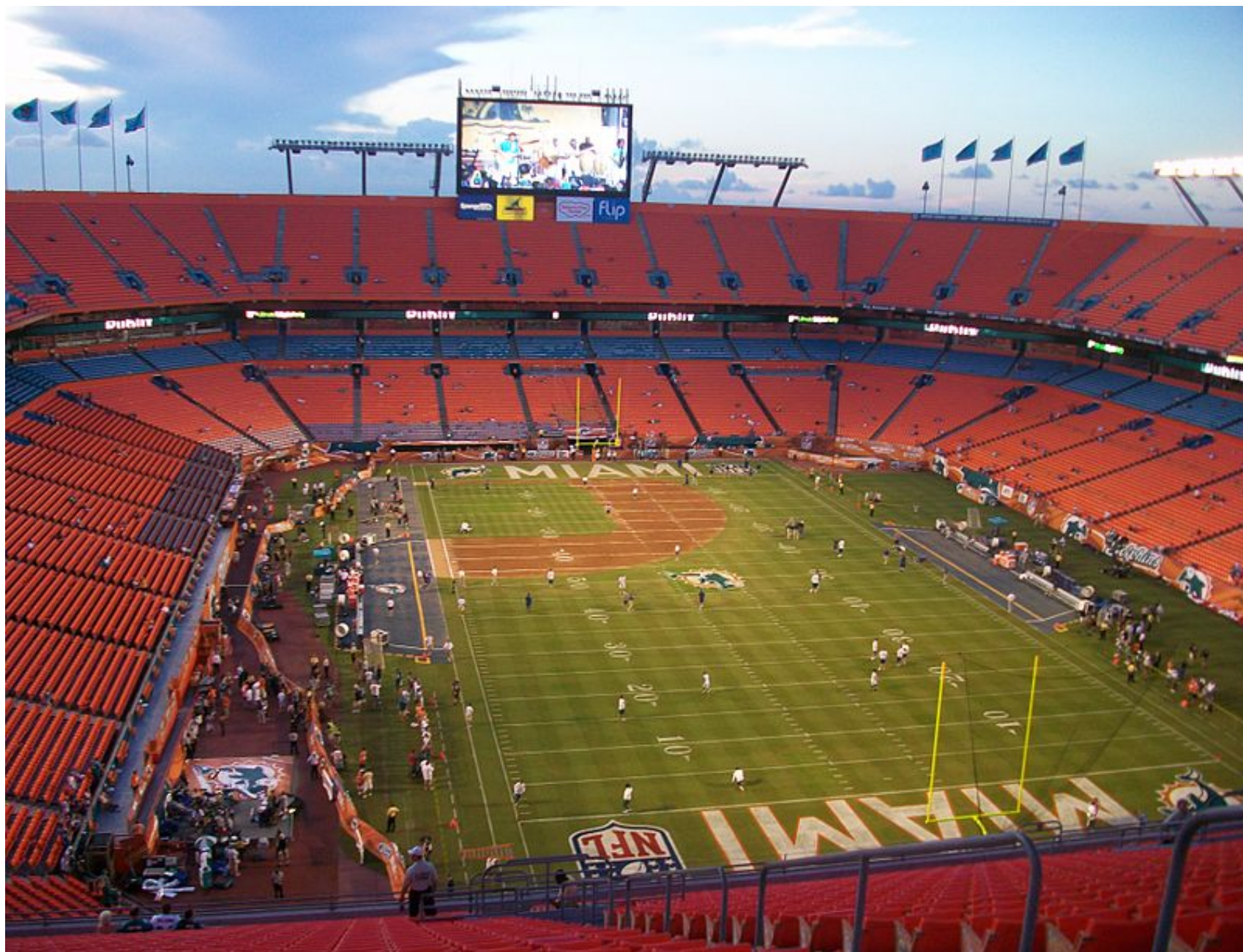
# DA-RT follows a community standards approach

- The meta-standard is by definition epistemically neutral. Applies wherever scholars use a shared logic of inquiry to reach evidence-based conclusions.
- The justification for openness (the desire to establish a knowledge claim's legitimacy) and its general content (showing both evidence and analysis) are epistemically neutral.
- DA-RT recognizes that the optimal means of achieving openness respect the challenges and opportunities that characterize various research traditions.

# Caretakers or Crusaders?







# Why be caretakers and not crusaders?

- Downstream approach requires agreement on epistemological issues that are matters of belief.
- Not everyone is comfortable with a view of social science that requires leadership by Arnaud Amalric, Abbot of Citeaux.
- Epistemologies change. If you anchor transparency to one belief, it loses its justification when that belief falls.



# Some next steps:

- Instantiate general principles in research tradition specific follow-on guidelines from two committees QUANT DA-RT & QUAL DA-RT
- Promulgation and outreach via APSA publications, website and panels (e.g: Symposium in January issue of PS)
- Build trust through dialogue and example.
- Provide infrastructure matched to research communities. Example, QDR.