

AJPS, DA-RT, and Replication Policy

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All of you know about the *American Journal of Political Science's* involvement in the [Data Access and Research Transparency](#) (DA-RT) initiative. As explained in the [2015 Report to the Editorial Board](#), I helped create the DA-RT [Journal Editor's Transparency Statement](#) (JETS) and the *AJPS* was one of its initial five signatories. Furthermore, the *AJPS* has gone farther than any other journal in implementing the DA-RT principles through our replication and verification policy for accepted articles. Our leadership status has been recognized explicitly through the fact that other editors have used the "[American Journal of Political Science Guidelines for Preparing Replication Files](#)" to create replication protocols for their own journals.

The DA-RT initiative apparently has been the subject of some disagreement within certain circles of the discipline. And, as a manifestation of this, a "[Petition to Delay DA-RT Implementation](#)" has recently appeared online. The petition has garnered a few hundred signatures (as of November 7, 2015). However, the authorship is not identified and the intended recipients are not specified. Neither I nor the *AJPS* Editorial Office have been contacted directly about the petition. But, its appearance and apparent circulation within the discipline requires a response.

The purpose of this message is to reiterate that the *American Journal of Political Science* already has expressed a full commitment to the general principles of data access and research transparency. The *Journal* will not compromise this position in any way. This stance reflects the overriding objective of maintaining the impeccably high quality of the work that appears within the pages of the *AJPS*.

The DA-RT principles should be non-controversial for most empirical researchers. These ideas comprise a central element of scientific practice, regardless of subject matter, specific investigative strategy, the nature of the data, or the analytic procedures employed in the knowledge generation process. They pertain to the vast majority of the work that is submitted to the *American Journal of Political Science*. So far, we have had 100% cooperation (and often enthusiastic support) from authors with respect to the replication policies. Requests for exceptions have been based upon practical considerations (e.g., confidentiality protection; proprietary data, etc.), not epistemological objections.

Moreover, the *AJPS* policies already allow for exceptions to the general replication requirements for scholars who follow different research traditions. We have never maintained that "one size fits all" and state explicitly in the policy itself that this is not the case. As a simple and rather obvious example, works in normative and formal theory generally are exempt because they do not analyze empirical data. We certainly are willing and prepared to consider other exceptions due to human subjects protection and other confidentiality concerns. In fact, we currently are revising the replication policy, to incorporate guidelines for information drawn from qualitative research, consistent with our original intention to draft such guidelines with the assistance of respected qualitative scholars. However, we realize that the policy never will be able to anticipate every possible situation that may arise. Therefore, the general requirements always can be adjusted for specific research contexts.

Again, the *American Journal of Political Science* already has publicly demonstrated its commitment to data access and research transparency through our rigorous replication and verification policy. Recent events in political science and other disciplines demonstrate the utility and importance of opening up scientific research to broader scrutiny. This oversight is vital for guaranteeing the quality of the work that guides the theory construction process and contributes to human knowledge. It also helps reassure those outside the immediate scientific community about the legitimacy and utility of our work. Replication policies like that adopted by the *AJPS* contribute directly to the preceding objectives. Any delay in implementation of the DA-RT principles would have detrimental effects on the achievement of these objectives. Furthermore, any suspension of the existing *AJPS* replication policy would provide an unacceptable signal of a diminished commitment to data access and research transparency.

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Sincerely,  
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