Plan Overview

A Data Management Plan created using DMPonline

Title: Uncertainty, Ambivalence and Doubt: 'Indo-Guyanese' futures in the context of oil, flooding, and COVID-19

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Project abstract:
This project will explore how individuals of 'Indo-Guyanese' heritage are thinking about the future of Guyana given three major changes: 1) the discovery and production of offshore oil; 2) worsening flooding caused by climate change and deteriorating infrastructure; 3) the COVID-19 pandemic. More specifically, many scholars have written about 'Indo-Guyanese' history and identity in terms of uncertainty and ambivalence. This includes a focus on histories of indentured labour, contemporary relationships to India, and interaction with other racial/ethnic groups. I aim to investigate if these categories are relevant for how 'Indo-Guyanese' individuals view the future, and how these categories may shape, or be shaped by, the potential changes which Guyana faces. Methodologically, this project will be comprised of initial interviews, conducted over Zoom video conferencing software, and more informal follow-up conversations conducted over social media messaging, email, and further video interviews. Participants will be drawn from within Guyana and the Guyanese diaspora abroad, and will be recruited via outreach on online groups and forums, as well as prior participant recommendations.

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Assessment of existing data

Provide an explanation of the existing data sources that will be used by the research project, with references

N/A

Provide an analysis of the gaps identified between the currently available and required data for the research

There are no existing accessible datasets regarding 'Indo-Guyanese' communities and their concerns regarding the future. Available datasets regarding Guyana are quantitative in nature and generally economic in focus. There is therefore a gap regarding qualitative data on 'Indo-Guyanese' outlooks, including individuals of 'Indo-Guyanese' descent in diaspora communities abroad.

Information on new data

Provide information on the data that will be produced or accessed by the research project

This research project will consist of interviews with individuals in both Guyana and the diaspora communities of the US, UK, and Canada. Interviews will be conducted via video conferencing software. The data produced will be of two kinds: 1) Semi-structured interviews and follow-up conversations, which will be more informal in tone, will form the basis of ongoing ethnographic fieldnotes; 2) Some discrete interviews will be recorded and transcribed. The process of participant recruitment will also generate personal data on individuals, such as contact information.

Quality assurance of data

Describe the procedures for quality assurance that will be carried out on the data collected at the time of data collection, data entry, digitisation and data checking.

The collection of high quality data will be assured by the maintenance of best practice in semi-structured and informal interviewing. This will include providing participants with clear and succinct summaries of the research project, and giving space and time for participants to raise questions, both at the start of the project and then through ongoing access and interaction. Preliminary results of the project will be shared with participants to enable them to verify, contest, or otherwise expand upon researcher findings.

The recruitment of participants will rely on initial researcher-led investigation of online groups, such as Guyanese diaspora forums, followed by snowball sampling through participants recommending this project to others in their network. This method is required as potential participants may be difficult to find and there is no established population boundary. However, this method does introduce the risk of researcher and selection bias, and the sample under study may not refer to an underlying population in a way that allows for wider inference of results. This bias is, in part, unavoidable, and will be managed through a transparent summary of how participants were recruited in published work and accessible data storage.

The sound quality of recorded interviews will be dependent on participants' own available technology, either through computer or mobile phone, due to necessary restrictions in conducting online interviews in line with COVID-19 restrictions. Transcriptions will be carried out by the researcher directly to limit the disclosure of any confidential material in recorded interviews and to maintain high levels of accuracy. Transcriptions will use a naturalised approach where possible, recording all verbal sounds.

Backup and security of data

Describe the data security and backup procedures you will adopt to ensure the data and metadata are securely stored during the lifetime of the project.

Data from this project will be securely stored using LSE's OneDrive for Business cloud storage. Recordings and transcripts of interviews will be stored in a separate folder to participant information like contact details. At the end of this project, I will migrate transcript data to an industry standard data archive. Original recordings of interviews will be destroyed and files will be securely erased using an overwriting program.

Management and curation of data

Outline your plans for preparing, organising and documenting data.

In transcribing recorded interviews, a standardized form will be used. This will include a header page detailing the time and date, interviewer name, interviewee details (anonymized with a pseudonym), general context, and a unique identifier for the interview.

Data will be stored in a logical hierarchy, utilizing online folders that separate interviews by date and tag them with appropriate labels relating to key themes.

Difficulties in data sharing and measures to overcome these

Identify any potential obstacles to sharing your data, explain which and the possible measures you can apply to overcome these.

There are two kinds of data that would be difficult to share. The first relates to things said in confidence by participants. There are topics relating to this research project that may generate answers which could cause harm to participants if openly shared. An example would be reasons given by individuals against returning to Guyana, where this may include knowledge of corruption, drug smuggling, or other illegal activity.

This kind of confidential information may still be curated and ethically shared in cases where anonymization is possible. Anonymization strategies include utilizing pseudonyms for people and places. Where individuals are still likely to be identifiable, even given attempted anonymization (through uniqueness of narratives, for example), then data will only be archived with strict access restrictions allowing vetting of third-party access. Consent for data sharing will be gained through informed consent forms that the researcher will talk through with participants who agree to have interviews recorded.

The second kind of data that would be difficult to share is researcher fieldnotes in response to ongoing informal conversations with participants. This is because fieldnotes are work-in-progress documents involving general observation and partial interpretation, which could be easily misconstrued. No fieldnotes will be made accessible in a data archive. However, meta-data on the extent and general topics of fieldnotes will be shared.

Consent, anonymisation and strategies to enable further re-use of data

Make explicit mention of the planned procedures to handle consent for data sharing for data obtained from human participants, and/or how to anonymise data, to make sure that data can be made available and accessible for future scientific research.

Consent for data sharing will be gained through informed consent forms. In line with common anthropological practice, and responding to the risks of over-professionalization for building deep and ongoing relationships with participants, these forms will not be presented at initial interviews. Instead, individuals who verbally consent to having interviews recorded will be contacted at a later date, before the close of the project, to ask for explicit consent to store and share interview transcripts. This will likely take the form of a digitized eConsent form that carefully explains the ways in which data will be handled, as well as the mechanisms by which they can retract their consent in the future. Transcripts from individuals who do not consent to have their data stored or shared will be destroyed.

Anonymization of participants will be adaptable to local frameworks of meaning, responsibility and harm. A flexible approach seems most appropriate as some may want to remain anonymous, particularly if there is a risk of statements or actions reflecting back on them in the future. However, others may expect me to name them as a recognition of their contribution, for example. What is locally expected will become clearer throughout the research process. If I judge there to be a risk to participants that they themselves are not aware of, I will act in accordance with my ethical obligation to anonymize individuals. Strategies may include the use of pseudonyms, collapsing multiple stories together (and clearly explaining where this has been done), or erasing narratives entirely.

Copyright and intellectual property ownership

State who will own the copyright and IPR of any new data that you will generate.

The copyright of recordings and transcripts generated through this project will belong to the researcher.

Responsibilities

Outline responsibilities for data management within research teams at all partner institutions

The principal investigator, Rhys Madden, will be responsible for all aspects of data management outlined in this document, including garnering informed consent, securely storing data, ensuring data access and futurity through data archiving and sharing, and producing and sharing relevant metadata.