The Future of Social Support

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Introduction

Prior to the industrial revolution many tasks that are done by machine now were done by skilled artisans. Combing wool or cotton and spinning it into yarn and thread were done by people with tools. Then those threads and yarns were woven into material on looms. That material was then used to create garments. Those garments took much time to create and their cost represented that time and care. In the 1800s people began creating machines that could do these repetitive jobs without assistance of a skilled artisan (Conniff, 2011).

This technology was disruptive of the jobs that it replaced. We are on the precipice of a new revolution that will displace many workers, preventing them from making a living (Conniff, 2011). To support those who are displaced and to improve the lives of those in the lower income brackets a Universal Basic Income (UBI) has been suggested from many sides (Flemming, 2011).

Finding employment in the current business environment in the United States is proving more and more difficult. With the addition of robotics and automation, for much of the workforce, jobs are even more scarce and those that exist pay less and less. In fact, the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), produced a report back in 2017, for each robot, human employment is reduced by between 0.18 and 0.34 per thousand people. This trend also reduces the hourly wage for those who do manage to find employment by between a half and a quarter of a percentage point, again, per robot (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2017).

With the inevitable reduction in employment, it is likely that we will also see an inevitable rise of poverty. To reduce the suffering of the populace, the social safety net should be reworked to provide for those who will be disenfranchised by this disruptive technology. Who these changes affect over time is resistant to prediction. What does that look like from the position of the work force? Would a UBI improve the life satisfaction of those for whom work is not available?

History

In the Beginning

UBI has been called several things in its history. The idea is not new. In fact, the first generation of thought about the topic was mulled around for thirty years between 1910 and 1940. The problem economists want to solve with this idea is the persistence of poverty even through economic growth for a society (Widerquist, 2024). Universal Basic Income (UBI) has been called several things in its history. The idea is not new. In fact, the first generation of thought about the topic was mulled around for thirty years between 1910 and 1940. The problem economists want to solve with this idea is the persistence of poverty even through economic growth for a society (Widerquist, 2024).

In much of the literature, opponents of UBI point to the potential effects on the labor market and how it will influence what employers will have to pay in wages. Arguments of negative effects on the market are coupled with the idea that programs already exist to prop up the poor. Are those arguments now trumped by evidence that could be collected on our recent COVID experience?

Defining Universal Basic Income

It has been suggested that the components of UBI have been floating around in the zeitgeist for as long as there have been people in societies. For example, the able bodied in small hunter gatherer tribes providing sustenance for the entire population is similar to the social assistance provided by UBI. An income to provide the necessities of existence allowing citizens the leeway to pursue things that are not just survival (Widerquist, 2024).

While these behaviors cannot be called UBI they do define the foundation of UBI. Thomas Spence is probably the person responsible for the shape our thoughts on UBI currently take. Sometime in the 1790s Spence, and his contemporary, Thomas Paine defined, for the first time, now consider the idea of Universal Basic Income (Widerquist, 2024). According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), UBI is a financial support program intended to reach most or all of a population with little or no qualification conditions. This will be the working definition going forward (Francese & Prady, 2018).

Literature Review

Social Safety Nets

When the topic of public assistance comes up it often revolves around welfare, SNAP, Women, Infants and Children (WIC), Medicaid, Medicare, and other such social safety nets. The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation did an assessment on the usage of these federal programs. They found that nearly half of all school aged children and more than a quarter of all working aged adults are enrolled in at least one social safety net program. With that much of the populace applying and qualifying for income limited assistance, it makes one wonder how many more would

qualify but cannot or will not apply for whatever reason (Macartney & Ghertner, 2023). None of these programs qualify as UBI. While they may provide funds to those in poverty, there are requirements for the programs that narrow the number of people that can be provided for.

It is a constant balance between the amount that can be provided by the benefit and the number who can be provided for. Sure, the state of Minnesota's SNAP program can provide for thousands of households, but $35 a month does not apply much to a family's grocery bill (Macartney & Ghertner, 2023).

Pros and Cons

All sides of the discussion stipulate that UBI should have no qualifying requirements. Proponents of the program point out that UBI lacks all the things that make current programs unviable for application to large swathes of the population. Most support programs have an upper limit on income requirements meaning that making above that limit eliminates the benefit. This prevents people from being able to better their situation as the leap required not to need the subsidy outweighs the available income. A program that does not require qualification, however, does not require people to implement and gatekeep, thereby reducing the cost of said program (Francese & Prady, 2018).

Opponents argue that, under UBI, those who do not require income assistance still receive that assistance. Fleischer and Hernler address this in their paper. They point out that the receipt of this benefit by those in higher income brackets would find that income to be taxed. This creates a substitution that is hard to study but appears to

reduce the income of those receiving the benefit in higher income brackets providing some of the subsidies for the program overall (Fleischer & Hernel, 2019).

Another argument against UBI suggests that receiving the benefit would encourage people to stop working there by reducing the labor pool. However, there are two programs in the United States that suggest otherwise. These programs have shown that the provision of unconditional income has no effect on participation in the labor market when there is no danger of losing the benefit by receiving an income (Fleischer & Hernel, 2019).

The first of these studied programs involves the Eastern band of Cherokee Indians in western North Carolina. Every adult in the tribe receives $2,000 without qualification (Fleischer & Hernel, 2019). This amount of income has not reduced the labor pool in any significant or measurable way. The second is the Alaskan state program called the Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend. This program gives each adult resident of Alaska $4,000 a month from oil sales (Hasdel, 2020). This program was also studied and found no significant reduction in the available labor pool. This is positive proof that an unconditional income of between $2,000 and $4,000 per adult is unlikely to reduce the labor pool significantly (Fleischer & Hernel, 2019)

The measurement of the outcome of an unmanaged blanket benefit has often focused, erroneously, on employment productivity of those receiving the benefit, or on the potential monetary effects on the economy of such potentially large payouts. This monetary focus is short sighted. It fails to recognize the positive effects on the people receiving the benefit and the savings garnered from the lack of infrastructure required for implementation and maintenance (Ward, 2021).

Potential and viability

Up until the COVID pandemic era there were many programs in the United States that were compared to a UBI style option. Many of them are still in existence today as the country slips back into its pre-pandemic habits. All of these programs have an upper income limit that does not follow the UBI philosophy. Programs like welfare and SNAP base the benefit on the earnings of the family reducing the benefit as more income is earned preventing improvement (Fleischer & Hernel, 2019).

The 2019 University of Chicago Law Review article by Fleischer and Hernel attempted to seriously address the concerns and holes in the idea of UBI. This paper attempts to make the policy viable in all of the mechanical ways that are often used to shut down the discussion. The paper establishes the philosophy of the benefit from a welfare of humanity perspective rather than the previously lauded market participation arguments.

Fleischer and Hernel discuss their opinions from several different perspectives. They look at resource egalitarianism and point out that a common argument has prevented the UBI philosophy from taking hold. This is the idea that if someone is receiving a benefit and deciding not to also work what they do with the money provided by the benefit is still at their discretion. This idea does not sit well with voters. This is part of the reason our existing programs limit what the money can be spent on. In the WIC Program, for example, participants receive coupons that can be exchanged at the grocery store for very specific things like powdered milk, oatmeal, cheerios and eggs (Fleischer & Hernel, 2019).

In 1968 a paper written by Milton Friedman for the National Symposium on Guaranteed Income in December of that year pointed out that part of the issue with the welfare system is its contentious nature. Because there is an income limit that does not make room for a successful transition off the benefit, those tasked with implementation must monitor and chase down the participants that under report their income. This responsibility turns administrators into investigators to the detriment of the program. It makes the programs cost more than they should by requiring enough staffing to cover these investigatory duties (Friedman, 1968).

While the welfare programs have changed since then the structure has remained largely the same. Administrators are still tasked with ensuring that the participants are reporting all their income, no matter how insignificant, and ceasing payment when the participant has earned anything over the income limits. This means that these programs still cost more to administer than they should. Stringent gatekeeping also creates a stigma on the programs that discourage use by the community (Macartney & Ghertner, 2023).

Tax Code programs

Another issue that Mr. Friedman points out is the number of tax programs intended to assist those in the poorer economic brackets to take advantage of income tax returns that are larger than the low income person’s initial pay in. Those programs require the tax payer to know they exist. As those in the lower income brackets largely do their own taxes, these programs are rarely taken advantage of by those for whom they were designed. This means that administration costs are wasted on benefits that are never claimed (Friedman, 1968).

Many of these concerns were never addressed in Mr. Friedman's time and the issues persist. For example, However, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) in 2019 required a minimum income of $11,833 in order to claim the benefit (Fleischer & Hernler, 2019). That total went down to $10,000 in 2021, which leaves the very poorest populations without any benefit at all while those with dual incomes up to $400,000 a year are able to receive the benefits (26 U.S.C.A. § 24 (West))which opponents fail to acknowledge. Currently people may qualify without children if they made under $63,000 but have dependents (45 C.F.R. § 233.20). Those who are underemployed, for example, but without dependents would not be able to apply.

Possible Compromise

Even though EITC is available to those making between $10,000 and $400,000 a year, it still does not apply to all people. This benefit is mostly available to those with children or adult dependents. Benjamin Leff suggests that a modified EITC that made the benefit available to more people could substitute for a UBI. Forcing people to work to receive the benefit would improve its popularity among voters (Leff, 2019). This suggestion makes EITC available to the underemployed and would help to bridge that gap. However, it still does not address those who cannot work or make the minimum income unless other benefits can be counted as income.

While the author acknowledges that not having a work requirement on the benefit would be better overall, he does not believe it is possible to create a fund that is acceptable to taxpaying voters that does not include a work requirement (Leff, 2019). This approach neglects situations that are difficult to work in, a single mother with four children and no free daycare, for example. This kind of situation also neglects those

with disabilities and the inability to work or those who cannot find a job in their location or cannot find a job that pays them enough to qualify for the benefit. Thus, leaving the most destitute without assistance (Fleischer & Hernel, 2019).

Fleischer and Hernel point out the missing humanitarianism in the requirement to work. It is impossible to know who is capable of working. Ideas around disability and worthiness have changed over time and will continue to change. Rather than requiring individuals to prove their worthiness, benefit should be provided to every citizen regardless of situation or worthiness. Compassion for the circumstance of existence should be built into an empathetic society (Fleischer & Hernel, 2019).

Arguments for exclusion

Among the programs that currently exist in the United States, Social Security benefits to the elderly are a large part of those funds. There are arguments against including the elderly who already receive a social security payment in a UBI. Firstly, it reduces the cost of the benefit by excluding the 57 million plus people who would receive it on top of their Social Security payments. This stance neglects the fact that the social security benefits currently being provided are not preventing elderly people from poverty (Fleischer & Hernel, 2019).

In all the talk of numbers, taxes, and exclusion the point continues to be missed. The elderly are still people and deserve some quality of life. Even receiving social security benefits, 10% of those over the age of 65 fall below the poverty line. Many of those not receiving social security benefits are elderly women who have no work history. If our culture has reached a point where profit is more important than people perhaps it is time to reassess (Scherer & King, 2024).

Poverty and Crime Rates

Quantitatively we can draw a line between the pressure of poverty and a rise in the rates of certain crimes. While there is not an overwhelming amount of contemporary data, the data we do have shows a pattern of behavior. As the price of survival increases, so do assault, theft, and property crimes . These patterns have been observed in more primitive economies. Flemming, in a cross sectional study about economy and crime, points out that a study was done regarding 19th century Bavarian grain prices. This study shows a pattern whereby the cost of grain, a highly influential crop, dictated crime rates. When bread is more expensive, people steal to eat (Flemming, 2011). Providing a minimum income can assist in the reduction of violent crime like assault and property crimes like shop lifting. Financial security reduces the need to commit these crimes.

Perceptions of poverty

In all of the literature and thought that has gone into the discussion about UBI, there is missing data. There is little qualitative data on the experiences of the people who must engage with the programs that are currently in play. The information about what it is like to go to the welfare office and apply for the programs that are available is not a mainstream focus. There is no material mainstream understanding from the point of view of immigrants, the disabled, widowed, or even just those living in depressed areas without the ability to find or participate in jobs and job programs (Population Reference Bureau, 2002).

There are many surveys and studies that look at the perception of the poor. What do people who are not poor think of those who are? Those who do not exist in the

problem of poverty tend to think those who do are there because of laziness and lack of motivation. The richest of those surveyed felt that the actions of those in poverty were more to blame than the circumstances they found themselves in. While those in poverty were more likely to point to circumstances than actions to explain their financial situations (Population Reference Bureau, 2002). Often those on social programs feel the social stigma and would prefer work to receiving benefits.

The pandemic and The CARES Act

During the COVID-19 pandemic Congress passed a relief program, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES).This program provided $1,200 per adult and $500 per child under 17. This program put up to $3,400 per family of cash relief directly into their hands. This relief was renewed several times (U.S. Department of Treasury, n.d.).

Due to the lockdown many businesses had to close and lay off their employees. This left many people with no place to go and no work to do. In addition to the relief payments, the CARES program included an unemployment compensation fund. This gave states unable to handle the sudden influx of unemployment claims the money to cover that shortfall. This program falls squarely into the definition of UBI for the majority of the population. Millions of people have now lived through a UBI program, some of them for several years (U.S. Department of Treasury, n.d.).

Individual Lived Experience

There are many things to learn about certain moments in time. Watershed societal moments alter the way we behave and think. The assassination of JFK, for example burned that moment into the minds of Americans. If a citizen alive at that time

was interviewed, they often share where they were when that event occurred how it changed their perception of the world. Other similar historical happenings have continued to change Americans view of themselves, both as a collective and as individuals.

Phenomenological research approaches seek to understand that lived experience and how the context of society colored that experience. In this case, the study of how unconditional income affected the well-being of those receiving that benefit. By doing long form, semi-structured interviews those experiences can be recorded in context and used to potentially tweak and create a program that is good for the economy, the people, and the country (Marshall, et al, 2021).

Methods

Participation

The participants in the qualitative interview will need to be people who received the benefit or lived in a household that received the benefit. There were three different programs that could potentially provide more than the usual household income. Combined the programs allowed for up to an entire year of unemployment insurance with an extra $600 tacked on to each week's compensation (Fleischer & Hernel, 2019).

The goal of the interview is to understand the profound effects of available income without the need to spend time at a job. Most research on income benefits looks at the way those benefits are funded and whether people will work if they are receiving income already. The stigma around social safety net type programs often prevents people from engaging with the programs thereby improving their mental and physical

health. What is the difference in self-perception when the benefit is provided without a need to opt in (Hasdel, 2020).

Sample questions

First, we need the answers qualifying questions have been asked about participation in the required programs. The next thing we need to know is how the income from the program compared to the income that they had pre-pandemic. Here it might also be useful to ask what they do for work now versus pre-pandemic. This line of questioning should also guide the participant to the level of job and life satisfaction pre and post pandemic. If the person was a necessary worker, how they felt about that designation. Questions about what their income during lockdown was (with or without a job) would be the final question in this section.

The initial questions will help to establish what the baseline is for normal. The next questions will be about how they were or were not able to change their routine and do different things over the course of the pandemic assistance. What they were able to do differently and what things had to change back when the assistance ended. How much better were their lives and were they able to hang on to any of those changes after the assistance ended. This is the meat of the information. How was life better during the pandemic because of the funding?

Lastly it would be useful to know the level of stress people remember enduring. How did the pandemic regulations, lockdowns, and restrictions affect their lives? What level of stress did they feel around grocery buying and how did they endure that stress? How did they change their behaviors because of those regulations? The memory of that time may be biased by the amount of stress endured creating a magnification of the

good of the benefit. The bias cannot be eliminated so understanding its shape is helpful to parse the received information (Marshall, et al, 2021).

Stakeholders

There are many people who become stakeholders in this research, whether they benefit from it or not. First, the people who would benefit most from a Universal Basic Income, the poor. Knowing that they would benefit, that there is a potential plan, and that they could take advantage of that plan are things that could be supported by this research. Without knowing it is a possibility they cannot work in their own best interest, educating others, and encouraging voting when that can help forward this agenda.

Legislators and lawmakers may be interested in supporting their constituents, especially in places that are fiscally depressed. Providing a universal basic income in places where jobs are hard to come by might be one of the first places where these kinds of funds need to go. If lawmakers and legislators know that programs could exist to assist their own voters, they may be apt to study, tweak, or fight for those programs.

Finally, voters need to know about this idea and potential programs. They cannot inform their legislators if they do not first have the information for themselves. Voters can educate other voters in their districts. If enough people know about these programs and would like them to be available to their locality, they can call their representatives and ask them to present it, investigate it, or fight for it.

What drives interest?

One of the main reasons policy and lawmakers should be interested in this idea is the increase of automation in the workplace. Companies like Bastian Solutions are

enlisted to create automation to do jobs that people are currently doing. Order picking, warehouse organization, shipping, production among other things are being swallowed up by this type of automation (Bastian Solutions, n.d.).

AI is taking over some customer service and management positions. With the ability to collect data and make changes, AI can work 24 hours a day seven days a week without the requirement for pay or time off. This limits the number of jobs available to lower educated people. Automation will also eventually take over jobs like fast food. AI is already being used in the ordering process with fast food restaurants often having order kiosks rather than an employee at a register. The automation of food production is not far ahead of us. All of this creates unemployment numbers that become untenable. Providing a minimum income can eliminate other programs that are expensive to enact in favor of a program that pays for itself through substitution taxing of those in higher income brackets (Fleischer & Hernel, 2020).

Purpose

The world is moving on. Technology has started to eliminate job positions and the United States economy is beginning to feel the pinch of overall job loss (Rotman, 2013). This creates an issue. People are already living paycheck to paycheck. With an estimated 55% of Americans using 95% of their income for necessary expenses, something has got to give (Bank of America Institute, 2024). On top of this, AI and robotics are reducing the employer's need for people leaving folks in the lurch for income in a capitalist society (Rotman, 2013).

How does the government plan for mass unemployment brought on by technological disruption? Keeping people housed and out of poverty in a capitalist

society where there is no work is daunting. Paving a path to support the technological transition is necessary. What options are available to smooth that process and protect the life satisfaction of those who will be dipping below the poverty line without assistance in the newly jobless landscape?

As a society America now has some experience with mass joblessness. The 2020 pandemic inspired the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). This was a series of economic assistance programs that did a number of things. It provided low payback loans for small businesses to weather the closure. It provided unemployment benefits for employees who were fully laid off due to business closures and staff reductions (U.S. Treasury Department, n.d.).

It also provided extra weekly funds for those receiving unemployment benefits. For many families this benefit functioned in the same way a universal basic income (UBI) would function. This was an unconditional benefit provided to every household regardless of income and without oversite of how the money was spent. This, in conjunction with rent freezes provided a more comfortable financial position than many of these families had ever enjoyed (U.S. Treasury Department, n.d.).

The goal of collecting qualitative data from those who received the CARES Act benefits would be to prove the concept of UBI and explore the ways in which it improves the lives of those who receive it. There have been many studies on implementation, and funding of a similar benefit, who would pay for it, who would receive it, how it would be distributed, and even how such a program would affect the economy (Hasdell, 2020). However, there has never been a qualitative study done on the experience of those receiving the benefit.

Because this study deals with a specific experience in time that is shared by a number of people the best approach would be phenomenological. One of the requirements of this method of study is that the researcher spell out their own experience with the phenomenon. This analysis allows the researcher to understand how their experiences flavor their perspective on the phenomenon and allows them to compare their experiences to those of the interviewees thereby highlighting biases making them easier to see (Marshall, et al, 2021).

The three-interview structure employed for phenomenological study would look a little different than the textbook description. The first interview would include questions about their lives pre-pandemic. What approximate income were they working with? What work schedule were they working under? What was their life satisfaction in this situation? Were they happy? What kinds of things were they lacking? What kinds of things did they want to do that they were unable to do?

The second interview would be about their experience of the pandemic assistance programs. What income were they working with under the CARES Act? Was it more than they were making pre-pandemic? Was there still a work schedule? If so, what was it? If not, how did that change their day-to-day schedule? What things were they able to do on pandemic assistance that they were unable to do before? Did relationships change during the pandemic? If so, how? Allowing the interviewee's input to shape the discussion can allow for more input that prescribed questions could never anticipate.

The third and final interview would then be focused on the participant's experience now, post-pandemic and what their reflection of that experience is. How has

your life changed now that the CARES Act has ended? In what ways is it better? In what ways is it worse? If you continued to receive the CARES benefits how would you have utilized that long term? If given the opportunity, would you use those benefits differently today? What would you do with them? This wrap up looks at the reflection on the experience with the benefit of hindsight.

By the Numbers

Qualitative data transforms quantitative numbers into people who have lives, families, dreams, hopes, emotions, health concerns, traditions, biases and all the rest of the trappings of humanity. The numerical data can be gathered through data bases that are kept by the government and big stores that were able to remain open. We can learn many things through these numbers. How many people received the benefit? What was the median income for all those who received the benefit? What was the median benefit received? What kinds of things were purchased during the pandemic?

Because this phenomenon affected the entire world, the population to define in this instance are all people who live in the United States regardless of income, race, or location within the country. Knowing how many people were laid off during the pandemic can tell us what the level of support was for the populace. Knowing how many people were included in the “essential” category and including an essential worker in the qualitative interviewing can give us a window on to how that status was perceived and how it affected the psyche and experience of those who worked those essential labor jobs at that time.

Evaluation

Analysis

Once the data has been collected, both qualitative and quantitative, the next task is phenomenological reduction. This is the process by which the researcher clusters the data looking for patterns in the experiences of those who were interviewed. This assessment is then applied to the experience to expose the structure of the experience and all the possible perspectives available through the interview process. This processing and analyzing distills the gathered information into a descriptive essence of the studied experience.

Justifying

In the history of conversation over Universal Basic Income (UBI) the discussion has focused on the economy, the labor market, taxes, or politics. There has been speculation about how people would behave when receiving enough of a benefit to replace income (Hasdell, 2021) .

There are two programs in the United States that have been studied that behave like an UBI, one in Alaska and one in the Cherokee Nation. Both programs provide an unconditional income of a significant amount. The studies that were done in these instances were quantitative and focused on employment and how the benefit was used per household. These studies debunked the idea that a UBI would discourage people from operating in the workforce. Survey participants indicated that the extra money was used for investment, education, and to give them options when job hunting allowing them to be choosey (Hasdell, 2021).

It has been suggested that things like the Earned Income Tax Credit qualify as a UBI. However, this program only applies to people who make a minimum of ten thousand dollars. The most destitute among the low income are not covered at all by this program. While it is beneficial for those who can participate, it is not enough and leaves a lot of people behind (Leff, 2019).

In all the available research no one has taken the trouble to examine the experience of those who must rely on these programs to keep themselves and their families fed and housed. There is a built-in stigma against those on assistance programs. The propaganda states that people on assistance are lazy and unnecessarily burdening the system. There have been many a politician disparaging those who have limited resources or the inability to hold down a traditional job for whatever reason. To counter the propagandist information and belief an understanding of the experience of those on government assistance from qualitative research may be helpful to humanize this portion of the population (Jensen& Tyler, 2015).

In 2020 the COVID 19 pandemic lockdowns provided an unprecedented opportunity for research of a UBI type benefit. The COVID era saw the United States Congress pass the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). This temporary relief fund provided emergency money for small businesses to be able to continue paying employees. It also provided extra unemployment benefits as well as a weekly household stipend of $600 to those who were laid off due to business closings or reducing staffing (United States Treasury, n.d.).

The unemployment benefit combined with the stipend provided more money for some people than they had ever held in their hands at one time. It allowed some

families the ability to interact and bond that simply is not available to parents working 2-3 jobs. For some the lockdowns behaved differently. As “essential workers” some got the extra benefit and “hazard pay” but were required to work more hours in places like grocery stores (Asebedo, et al, 2021). How did their experience differ from those who were laid off and essentially entirely locked down? What is the experience of those who had enough income to not worry about which bill to not pay this month for the first time in their adult lives?

Autoethnography as Bracketing

In the last 20 years the idea that research has to be objective has been abandoned for the truth that humans are incapable of objectivity. Rather than attempting to keep personal opinions out of the research, it is encouraged that researchers make notes about their feelings about interactions and the research itself. This note taking process is referred to as bracketing (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

A person’s positionality consists of all of the influences that helped to shape that person’s beliefs and behaviors. This could include political beliefs, education, socioeconomic disposition, family systems, culture, and religion among other unlimited inputs. Personal reflection helps us to understand the world around us and the systems we exist within. When doing qualitative research personal reflection allows us to take ourselves out of the research, or, barring that, understanding our place within the research (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

This idea brings us to autoethnography. Autoethnography is a type of autobiographical writing. It seeks to allow the researcher writer to understand their positionality in the study and to address their personal beliefs so that the reader may

understand the lens through which the research was conducted and the report written. Since I was also present during the pandemic and affected by the benefits that were provided, an autoethnography to provide comparison and understanding will be a part of this project (Marshall, et all, 2021).

Ethics

The main ethical concern in qualitative research is the interpretation of the information derived from interviews. Are the responses being synthesized in a way that is true to the answer or is it being manipulated to meet the desired outcome of the study? This is the purpose of the researcher sketching out their own feelings prior to engaging in this work. It is important to recognize ones own biases while creating the descriptive work that explores these topics and allows others a window to these experiences (Marshall, et al, 2021).

Quantitatively, the information gathered should be publicly available. The main ethical concern here is that it is being applied appropriately to the information gathered in the interview portion of the study. Again, manipulation of the data to fit the desired outcome is sometimes an issue that has been uncovered in past studies (Marshall, et al, 2021).

Conclusion

Evolution happens with time. Ideas, societies, and cultures change as we progress through history. Governments have to keep up with those changes. The point of the government is to care for and protect the people. In order to determine the best way to do that a conversation with those citizens is helpful, even necessary. Research

such as this gives the system a path to follow to provide for the citizens in ways that are useful, helpful and fulfilling for the individual.

Resources:

26 U.S.C.A. § 24 (West) (description of EITC program)

45 C.F.R. § 233.20 (regulation for EITC)

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