Qualitative Transparency Deliberations

hosted by the Social Science Research Institute at Duke University on behalf of the APSA Section for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research
https://www.qualtd.net/

When do costs of transparency outweigh the benefits?

https://www.qualtd.net/viewtopic.php?f=20&t=170

When do costs of transparency outweigh the benefits?

Posted: **Sat Nov 05, 2016 3:20 pm**
by **ingorohlfing**
If one accepts that research transpareny is a good thing, in principle, there can be reasons not to achieve transparency. An obvious reason is the need to keep sources confidential, which usually should be easy to decide. Another reason, which is for example part of the APSR guidelines, is that the costs of establishing transparency outweigh the benefits. What does contribute to the costs of transparency? What would you say are situations in which the costs come prohibitive? If you have to transcribe 10 non-confidential interviews? 20? 30? If you upload 1GB of PDFs distributed across hundreds of files? Please write down anything that comes to mind when you think about costs of transparency.

Re: When do costs of transparency outweigh the benefits?

Posted: **Mon Dec 12, 2016 5:25 am**
by **Guest**
[quote="ingorohlfing"]If one accepts that research transpareny is a good thing, in principle, there can be reasons not to achieve transparency. An obvious reason is the need to keep sources confidential, which usually should be easy to decide. Another reason, which is for example part of the APSR guidelines, is that the costs of establishing transparency outweigh the benefits. What does contribute to the costs of transparency? What would you say are situations in which the costs come prohibitive? If you have to transcribe 10 non-confidential interviews? 20? 30? If you upload 1GB of PDFs distributed across hundreds of files? Please write down anything that comes to mind when you think about costs of transparency.[/quote]

Maya Tudor, Oxford University. One of the issues that arises is how to cite archival or secondary research when one is doing lots of it but only making notes on what seems germane (i.e a small fraction). When I was doing research for my dissertation and recent book, I spent a lot of time reading through archives and making only a few photocopies/notes from what seemed relevant of my reading. As I was reading, I was inductively identifying what, in the Indian National Congress papers over decades for example, indicated that the party was developing along the three dimensions I articulate. Though this is replicable (I cite the relevant files in the archives) and in theory transparent, it would have been absolutely prohibitive for me to take detailed notes from the 30 years of party papers I looked at. In a paper I am currently writing, I am using secondary sources to code opposition emergence across Indian states. I cite these secondary works - but I worry a bit about how much more work these new rules will require in terms of laying out exactly my justification.

Especially when I feel that there is so much more work required anyway of this type of research.

Re: When do costs of transparency outweigh the benefits?

Posted: **Sun Jan 01, 2017 3:03 pm**
by **Guest**
[quote="ingorohlfing"]If one accepts that research transpareny is a good thing, in principle, there can be reasons not to achieve transparency. An obvious reason is the need to keep sources confidential, which usually should be easy to decide. Another reason, which is for example part of the APSR guidelines, is that the costs of establishing transparency outweigh the benefits. What does contribute to the costs of transparency? What would you say are situations in which the costs come prohibitive? If you have to transcribe 10 non-confidential interviews? 20? 30? If you upload 1GB of PDFs distributed across hundreds of files? Please write down anything that comes to mind when you think about costs of transparency.[/quote]

Kent Eaton, UC Santa Cruz. My general practice is to take notes, often in a slap-dash mix of Spanish and English, in the Spanish-language interviews that I tend to rely on in my research. Many years ago, I experimented with the use of a recording device and found that, across the board, my interviewees became less frank, candid, free-wheeling, and expansive - even when I was asking them about what I saw as non-controversial or non-sensitive topics. This led me to reverse course and decide that, rather than give my interviewees any reason to self-censor, it was better to run the risk of not capturing every potentially significant thing that they might say in the course of the interview.

In order to allow others to access my interview data, "transcribing" for me would involve typing up these notes (rather than manipulating audio files). So, in terms of substantiating the "costs of transparency," I believe that the main cost for me would be the time and energy it would take to render my notes legible (though to be honest I'm not sure how much time it would take to type up hand-written notes as opposed to transcribe audio files --- The former might actually not be as time consuming as the latter since there is so much that an interviewee says that I do not commit to paper).

The bottom line for me is that I'm afraid that if scholars come to anticipate having to spend more time transcribing/processing interview notes after the interview is over, they may end up doing fewer interviews. Scholars might decide that they should focus only on interviews with those informants they believe in advance to have the highest likely payoff, and forgo interviews with others whom they believe might not be worth the time and effort -- not so much because of time constraints "in the field" but rather after they've completed field research and returned home to begin the write up. In every research trip I've ever taken, some of the interviewees I most look forward to questioning turn out to be duds, and it is always the case that some of the most useful material comes from people who up front seemed less promising and more marginal to my project.

More generally stated, one of the "costs of transparency" could be an unintended narrowing or thinning of data sources.

Powered by phpBB® Forum Software © phpBB Limited
https://www.phpbb.com/