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/

Question 2: Transparency

https://www.qualtd.net/viewtopic.php?f=28&t=123

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Question 2: Transparency

Posted: **Tue Sep 06, 2016 4:52 am**
by **millilake**
2. In your experience, list any measures you have taken to be transparent about your research (broadly defined), particularly in the publication process (eg providing field notes in an appendix)
a. Explain why you took these measures (eg journal required them)
b. List any benefits and disadvantages of these measures—please provide examples from your experience

3. What does research transparency mean to you, particularly in the context of research with V/M communities? (optional)

Re: Question 2: Transparency

Posted: **Thu Oct 20, 2016 3:22 pm**
by **Guest**
[quote="millilake"]2. In your experience, list any measures you have taken to be transparent about your research (broadly defined), particularly in the publication process (eg providing field notes in an appendix)
a. Explain why you took these measures (eg journal required them)
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3. What does research transparency mean to you, particularly in the context of research with V/M communities? (optional)[/quote]

To the extent possible, I have tried to include a thick description of my research methods/techniques and my research sites/subjects in my work. I have done this not because publishers have required it (they haven't), but because my approach is interpretive and requires me to provide these details to support my argument. In other words, the description I provide is part of the data bolstering my argument.

I do not include field notes in my work, because I do not believe that including those notes would provide the kind of information that the reader would find useful for transparency purposes. My current work focuses on, among other things, religious practices and events. In many ways, these entail embodied experiences. Description (through field notes or other means) does little justice to the kinds of understandings I gain through my own participation in and observation of these events. Thus, I see little benefit to including these

notes in my publications. Moreover, the IRB stipulations attached to this project require that I avoid making public any identifying characteristics of my interviewees. My field notes are full of references to names and other identifying characteristics, making the publication of these notes problematic.

For me, good interpretive work will always engage in research transparency through the way the scholars presents her work. As I note above, when I write up an article or chapter, I am required to lay out how I did my research, to describe, in detail, my "data," and to clearly articulate why I came to my conclusions. In this way, I am already being transparent in my research. Moreover, with vulnerable or marginalized communities--like those engaged in conflict resolution and other sensitive areas--we have an ethical responsibility to protect the identities of our subjects. - Tanya B. Schwarz, University of Notre Dame

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Re: Question 2: Transparency

Posted: **Wed Oct 26, 2016 6:31 pm**
by **Guest**
[quote="millilake"]2. In your experience, list any measures you have taken to be transparent about your research (broadly defined), particularly in the publication process (eg providing field notes in an appendix)
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3. What does research transparency mean to you, particularly in the context of research with V/M communities? (optional)[/quote]

I have provided my data and republication code to a journal after an article was published. I wasn't required to do this but it was encouraged. I have not yet, but I intend to register a research design of an upcoming project on the EGAP website.

A benefit of this, of course, is allowing for the scientific pursuit of replication. A disadvantage I have found in my own research comes when the data is proprietary. Groups / organizations are less likely to share data when they realize there is a condition to make it public. I have also found that organizations are less likely to condone a survey of their membership if the data are to be made public.

To add an additional perspective on data and transparency (although not necessarily related to V/M communities), I think it is important to document fully were data came from, including giving credit to individuals who are often overlooked in their assistance in data collection efforts in the global south.

Re: Question 2: Transparency

Posted: **Mon Oct 31, 2016 3:30 pm**
by **CrJackson**

> *millilake wrote:*2. In your experience, list any measures you have taken to be transparent about your research (broadly defined), particularly in the publication process (eg providing field notes in an appendix)
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> 3. What does research transparency mean to you, particularly in the context of research with

V/M communities? (optional)

So far, I have not done something like provide field notes verbatim or anything like that. I feel like that could be problematic and just plain boring (why analyze something and create an article if I'm just going to give out my raw data?).

I try to be as explicit as I can about my subjectivity, a feminist approach to being transparent with research. Through the LR and my methods sections, I try to be clear about who-I-am-in-relation-to-participants. I don't claim objectivity. Historically situating the theoretical frameworks can also help with that.

Research transparency means to me:
a) I can reasonably replicate the study from what is shared in the publication
b) I am open with all potential research participants (consent forms, and beyond)
c) I am honest and clear about my theoretical positionality
d) Subjectivity, not objectivity, since objectivity is a false position

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Re: Question 2: Transparency

Posted: **Tue Nov 01, 2016 6:03 pm**
by **SMajic**
Thanks, Tanya! These are great points re: balancing thick description with participant protection!

Guest wrote:

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Re: Question 2: Transparency

Posted: **Tue Nov 01, 2016 6:07 pm**
by **SMajic**
Thanks! These are excellent points. Could you elaborate more on how you give credit to overlooked individuals who help with data collection (and provide general examples of who these individuals may be), while also-- if necessary-- ensuring their identity is not revealed?

Re: Question 2: Transparency

Posted: **Tue Nov 01, 2016 6:10 pm**
by **SMajic**
This is really helpful, Crystal! Could you elaborate a bit on how or what details you may share for replication purposes, particularly if you also want/need to protect participants' or organizational identities?

> *CrJackson wrote:*
>
> > *millilake wrote:*2. In your experience, list any measures you have taken to be transparent about your research (broadly defined), particularly in the publication process (eg providing field notes in an appendix)
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Re: Question 2: Transparency

Posted: **Thu Nov 03, 2016 7:59 pm**
by **Filiz Kahraman**

I have conducted both ethnographic work and case law analysis so far. I am going to publish the case law data I created for transparency purposes and for the use of other scholars. However, I am not willing to do this for my ethnographic work. Similar to what Tanya described, I have also tried to include a thick description of my research methods and fieldwork. My descriptions included the names of the organizations I contacted. Where appropriate, I indicated the names of the people I interviewed as well. I was, however, not able to do this for all of my respondents, as some of them had been composed of people who had been subjected to surveillance at work and had lost their jobs. I did not want to publicize all my fieldwork notes and I did not want to specify the names of some of my respondents in order not to subject them to further risks. I was not asked to do this anyway. I also provided descriptions of my field-sites and the kinds of data I gathered.

I appreciate the efforts to make qualitative work transparent. But scholars who work with vulnerable populations should not be asked to share fieldnotes or interview transcripts, not even with the editors of a journal. Our first ethical responsibility is towards the populations that we study and we need to make sure our work does not pose any further risk to these populations.
I also have another concern. Even in research that does not directly concern vulnerable populations, scholars have a responsibility to protect the privacy of their subjects. Interviewees often times say things off the record or during meetings respondents share stories/opinions with the understanding that they will not be cited for everything they say. This brings in an enormous responsibility on scholars who conduct qualitative work to edit hundreds of hours of participant observation and interview transcripts for any information that their respondents might not want to be cited for. Hence, asking to publicize this kind of data brings an extra hurdle for qualitative scholars whose research already takes a long time to prepare for publication.

Filiz Kahraman, University of Washington

Re: Question 2: Transparency

Posted: **Sat Nov 19, 2016 10:14 am**
by **lafujii**

> *millilake wrote:*3. What does research transparency mean to you, particularly in the context of research with V/M communities? (optional)

I should say that for the kind of work that I and many others do, transparency does not have any of the

valence that DA-RT proponents would like it to have. Indeed, in the DA-RT rendering, the term is meaningless to me.

To me, good research requires scholars to be thoughtful and reflexive about how the research actually unfolded as opposed to what the research design called for--that is, an explicit engagement with the messiness of research, with all the contingencies, ethical dilemmas, "mistakes" or mis-steps and surprises that the actual process entails. In some studies, it might mean explicitly discussing what changed from the original design to implementation and why. In others, it mean working through these issues through writing it out, even though much of the text might not (for ethical reasons) make it into the published work. I think Jane Gilgun is right: writing this out oftentimes helps us to think through the multiplicity of issues that are often in play during actual research with human participants.

But this type of explicit discussion need not and should not in any way lead to a loosening of protections, particularly for vulnerable populations. Writing through these issues might help a research think through many different aspects of the research process; but editing for the final published work might mean taking out any and all passages that might bring unwanted attention to any participants (or their communities, families, networks, etc.)

In other words, I think we can be reflexive and explicit about our processes without putting anyone in harm's way. Indeed, I believe being reflexive is precisely what helps us to protect vulnerable pops.

Re: Question 2: Transparency

Posted: **Thu Dec 29, 2016 4:53 pm**
by **Ricky Price**

Hello--

I work on the politics and history of the AIDS epidemic, and I think the issue of transparency in our fieldwork, is placed here because of it's relationship to potentially creating harm in the communities we are conducting research within. I think most quallies and interpretive folks are more than happy to give you an exhaustive account of what we did, how we made our decisions, and justify those choices within a broader research literature. What concerns me, and many others on this site and thread, is when transparency drifts into areas that go beyond methodological scrutiny. If I am to publish my fieldnotes, anonymization becomes a very tenuous problem. Even if using pseudonyms, or other methods of anonymization, the people in my research notes and fieldwork might be identifiable to employers, shelter managers, police, etc, in ways that I can prevent in a journal article, but not if my field notes are available. While my research is on people living with HIV/AIDS, a highly stigmatized and criminalized disease, this problem would still exist if I was working with cancer patients, refugees, or supreme court clerks. Gaining trust with interview subjects, activists, archivists, and community members is one of the most important assets in conducting qualitative research and these proposals threaten that foundational relationship.

Thank you,
J. Ricky Price
PhD Candidate, Politics
New School for Social Research

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