Qualitative Transparency Deliberations

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Challenges to Transparency in Authoritarian/Repressive Settings

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Challenges to Transparency in Authoritarian/Repressive Settings

Posted: **Wed Sep 14, 2016 2:02 pm**
by **SheenaGreitens**
What distinctive challenges might arise that should be addressed by the researcher to satisfy this goal in authoritarian settings? In other words, what must a researcher be explicit about to meet the standard of "transparency" in these settings?

Re: Challenges to Transparency in Authoritarian/Repressive Settings

Posted: **Fri Nov 25, 2016 11:23 am**
by **Guest**
[quote="SheenaGreitens"]What distinctive challenges might arise that should be addressed by the researcher to satisfy this goal in authoritarian settings? In other words, what must a researcher be explicit about to meet the standard of "transparency" in these settings?[/quote]
One of the distinctive challenges that arise when working in authoritarian settings has to do with dealing with changing political situations and the implications this has for transparency. For instance, what happens if a researcher makes public interview transcripts (even if they are made anonymous) at a given time, but the political situation changes at a later date, such that the information collected becomes particularly sensitive, putting interview subjects at risk? The primary challenge, it seems to be me, has to do with the unpredictability of political conditions in a given authoritarian setting. I have conducted research in Egypt before the January 2011 uprising. Since then, many of the issues that I looked at became particularly sensitive and it would have been difficult for me to predict this at the time. This makes making field notes or interview transcripts public particularly tricky. - Dina Bishara, University of Alabama

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Re: Challenges to Transparency in Authoritarian/Repressive Settings

Posted: **Tue Dec 13, 2016 8:24 pm**
by **Jacques Hymans (University of Southern California)**
I agree with Professor Bishara. I would add that her points also apply to democratic regimes that might suddenly become authoritarian, including the United States.
Jacques Hymans
University of Southern California

Re: Challenges to Transparency in Authoritarian/Repressive Settings

Posted: **Fri Dec 23, 2016 3:16 pm**
by **jcteets**

> *Guest wrote:*One of the distinctive challenges that arise when working in authoritarian settings has to do with dealing with changing political situations and the implications this has for transparency. For instance, what happens if a researcher makes public interview transcripts (even if they are made anonymous) at a given time, but the political situation changes at a later date, such that the information collected becomes particularly sensitive, putting interview subjects at risk? The primary challenge, it seems to be me, has to do with the unpredictability of political conditions in a given authoritarian setting. I have conducted research in Egypt before the January 2011 uprising. Since then, many of the issues that I looked at became particularly sensitive and it would have been difficult for me to predict this at the time. This makes making field notes or interview transcripts public particularly tricky. - Dina Bishara, University of Alabama

I agree with this - it is difficult, if not impossible, for researchers to know what will or will not be politically sensitive (or declared illegal) in the future. If the goal of transparency is to help other scholars evaluate scholarship, perhaps it would make the most sense to focus on being more transparent about research methodology rather than our interviews/surveys. There was an interesting thread about using Bayesian analysis as a way to focus more explicitly on transparency in research methodology, but I think we also need to think about how much transparency we need (when the burden outweighs the benefit) and how to do this with current word limits of less than 10,000 for most journals.

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