Qualitative Transparency:
A Social Science Revolution

1. Transparency is a basic norm of social science.

2. For qualitative researchers, it has a specific meaning.

3. Digitally enabled citation (“active citation” or AC) is emerging as the “default” publication standard.

4. AC has large benefits and low costs (individual and collective).

5. AC will happen very soon: January 2016!
This will have a large impact!

- Well over 50% of IR scholars (US and world) do mostly qualitative research.

- 92% of IR scholars do some qualitative research.

What is Research Transparency?

Definition: A disciplinary norm whereby empirical researchers publicize how and why they reach conclusions.

Plain English: Scholars “show their work.”

Note: Related to, but not identical to replicability.
What is Research Transparency in Political Science?

For evidence-based knowledge claims, researchers should strive for research transparency. It has three dimensions:

• **Data Transparency**: Access to data.

• **Analytic Transparency**: Explication of the link from data to descriptive/causal conclusions.

• **Process Transparency**: Revelation of procedures used to collect, generate or choose data, theory, and methods.

What does research transparency mean for qualitative research?

Research traditions/communities define transparency differently.

Appropriate standards of any research community must be tailored to distinctive:

1. Epistemological structure

2. Practical “real-world” constraints
Transparency and the epistemology of qualitative research

• MOST qualitative political science is “classic” case study analysis with:
  • Relatively few “case studies”
  • Textual evidence (not statistics)
  • Process observations and analysis linked to steps in narrative (not dataset observations)

So need to create transparency instruments consistent with discursive footnotes.

Transparency and practical “real world” constraints on researchers

Five “real world” constraints matter:

• Intellectual Property Rights
• Ethics (Confidentiality/Human Subject Protection)
• Logistical Burden
• First-Use Rights
• Publishing Format
Conventional Citation Does Not Assure Transparency

- **Word limits**

- “Scientific” citations are designed for a world where articles cite articles.

- **Lack of de facto access to data sources via citations**
  - Sloppy citation (e.g. 20% wrong, no pages, etc.)
  - Non-availability of evidence (about 15%)
  - Even “available” evidence is costly to find

- **No requirement or room for analytic or process transparency.**

→ **CONCLUSION:** Any enhancement must be digital...

4 Potential Formats to Promote Qualitative Transparency

- **CONVENTIONAL CITATION**

- **HYPERLINKS TO ON-LINE SOURCES**

- **QUALITATIVE DATA ARCHIVING (AND SOFTWARE DATABASES)**

- **ACTIVE CITATION (AC):** “Digitally enabled citations” linked to annotated source excerpts in an appendix.
WHAT IS AN ACTIVE CITATION?

BODY OF ARTICLE
(Remains Unchanged)

MAIN TEXT
Contestable
Knowledge-based
Claim

CITATION
Footnote,
Endnote or
In-Text

TRANSPARENCY APPENDIX
(New)
WHAT IS AN ACTIVE CITATION?

BODY OF ARTICLE (Remains Unchanged)
- MAIN TEXT
  Contestable
  Knowledge-based Claim

CITATION
Footnote, Endnote or In-Text

TRANSPARENCY APPENDIX (New)
- TRANSPARENCY APPENDIX ENTRY
  1. Source Excerpt
  2. Annotation
  3. Full Citation
  [ 4. Optional Scan or Link to Full Source]

AC and Process Transparency

**Issues**: Choices and robustness with regard to data selection ("cherry picking"), theory choice and specification, analytical methods, weigh conflicting evidence, etc.

- No way ever to achieve an **ideal** or **perfect** process transparency, but...

- AC provides a special first "methodological" entry in the TRAX. Length is at the author’s discretion.
Resembles Best Practices: Legal Academia
(Yale On-Line Law Review)

An Example: Jack Snyder

https://qdr.syr.edu/discover/projectcontentsnyder
Five Benefits of Qualitative Transparency

1. Fulfills our ethical responsibility as social scientists

2. Better communicates richness and rigor
   - More space (e.g. word limits and interpretive footnotes)
   - One-click” access to:
     1. Data in which political actors speak in their own voices
     2. Scholarly analysis and interpretation
     3. Methodological (process) information
   - Self-awareness and collegial debate incentivize more attention to richness//rigor
     (e.g. the “multi-method thesis”)

[ NB: Interpretivists should really like this! ]
Five Benefits of Qualitative Transparency

3. Qualitative scholars can more easily debate, extend, reuse, improve and transcend existing research.

• Data, analysis and methods become public goods, fostering discussion and extension (critics need only provide marginal data)

• Incentivizes innovation and investment in qualitative methods and skills (e.g. inductive methods, area studies, functional knowledge, policy expertise, historical knowledge, interpretive skill, digital ability)

Five Benefits of Qualitative Transparency

4. Qualitative scholars can demonstrate and validate excellence and expertise, enhancing legitimacy inside the discipline.

• Documents (or quotes) trump conjectures

• Disciplinary acknowledgement of merit

• Greater demand for expert gatekeepers (e.g. publishing, evaluating)

• Methodological skills of interpretation, language, etc.

NB: 90%+ of political scientists use qualitative analysis
5 Benefits of Qualitative Transparency

5. Qualitative social science will gain more credibility and legitimacy outside academia

• Interdisciplinary research (e.g. Law, History, Public Policy, Sociology)

• Policy Analysis

• Funders and the Public

The benefits are large, but what about the costs?

Not as large as most people imagine.
Costs are Low

1) Some political scientists already do it
The Costs of Transparency are Modest

1) Some political scientists already do it
2) Only “contestable empirical claims” need AC
3) Authors choose length of quotations and annotations
4) Modern technology + advance planning lighten the load
5) Writers, editors and publishers keep existing formats
6) Standard practice in other disciplines (law, history, classics), political science (once upon a time), as well as journalism, policy and the web.

From these perspectives, AC is a very modest proposal!

Qualitative Transparency: It is happening...

- Sponsored Articles/Workshops/Special Issues on Conceptual and Practical Issues (Funding from IQMR, NSF, APSA, ISPR)
- Developed Active Citation (AC)
- Established a Qualitative Data Repository (QDR)
- Created NSF/QDR On-line Demonstration Portal: 20+ scholars retrofitting “classic” and forthcoming research to AC (e.g. Snyder, Saunders, Boix, me)
- Developed Training Materials and Sessions at summer institutes and universities
- Revised APSA and QDR Guidelines (Quant and Qual)
- Designed New Software
Qualitative Transparency: It is happening NOW!

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- 25 journals (and increasing steadily) have signed on to a qual/quant transparency package that mentions AC, to be implemented in January 2016
25 Journals have adopted (Oct 2014 – Feb 2015)

- American Political Science Review
- American Journal of Political Science
- Journal of Conflict Resolution
- Comparative Political Studies
- International Security
- Political Analysis
- Research and Politics
- State Politics and Policy Quarterly
- Political Science Research and Methods
- Journal of Theoretical Politics
- Quarterly Journal of Political Science
- Political Behavior
- The Political Methodologist
- Italian Political Science Review / Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica
- Journal of Peace Research
- European Union Politics
- International Interactions
- British Journal of Political Science
- Security Studies
- The Journal of Politics
- European Political Science
- Party Politics
- Cooperation and Conflict
- Conflict Management and Peace Science
- European Journal of Political Research
- Journal of European Public Policy

Bottom Line:
You snooze, you lose!
Materials available at the QDR: https://qdr.syr.edu/

and the APSA DA-RT: http://www.dartstatement.org/

Materials from this lecture available at:
www.princeton.edu/~amoravcs
under “DATA AND METHODS”

• SLIDES FOR THIS LECTURE
• RECENT ARTICLES
  - *PS* (2010, 2014)
  - *Qualitative and Multi-Method Research* (2012)
• Links to APSA DOCUMENTS

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University of Chicago – Peking University Summer Institute on International Relations Theory and Methods (Beijing, August 2015)

“Trust, but Verify”: What the Digital and Transparency Revolutions in Social Science Mean for You

Andrew Moravcsik
Princeton University