

First, I want to thank you for the time and care with which you have crafted this letter. I know how much time it takes to do this kind of thing and appreciate your devotion to an important issue. Second, I agree with your views and wish to second the response as you describe it by Bingham Powell about the JETS statement. Third, I encourage the APSA Council at its next meeting to re-open this issue and to consider fully the kinds of considerations raised by Powell, especially as concerns the tension between ethics, confidentiality and privacy of subjects on the one hand and transparency on the other. I will copy Rodney, Jennifer and David so they can respond as they wish but are included in the conversation.

I was one of the many people who worked to get the Qualitative methods set up, am a member and a recipient of the Sartori prize in 2013. I use qualitative methods extensively in my own work and teaching. I try to publish my data, and have been fortunate enough that the presses I work with have been willing to publish these data in my books, even when doing so increased the number of pages in books that presses would much prefer be shorter. I have placed many of my data -- in the form of complete but edited interviews-- on line at the UCI Ethics Center. I want to make these data available to as many scholars as possible both because I believe in openness and transparency and because I know that later scholars, using more sophisticated techniques than those available to me, will have the opportunity to employ these different techniques using my data, many of which are in the form of interviews with people now dead. Their findings may well contradict mine or add to earlier findings in important ways, so sharing data is an important part of science. All of which is to say that I believe in data transparency and try to act on that principle as much as possible.

Nonetheless, the people I interview are human beings, not just subjects, and are entitled to their privacy. As a researcher, I must protect them. So I show them the interviews and, even after they approve them for analysis, I try to protect them by sometimes editing out things that are too personal or might reveal something about the speaker that the speaker later might not desire. Often people reveal their identities without revealing it, and I will modify things in their transcripts to protect them when they do. One example: An Iranian woman interviewed for "A Darkling Plain: Stories of Conflict and Humanity during War" left Iran in protest against the current political regime. Her husband and family are now back there. Although we had carefully avoided asking personal questions, I thought it prudent to give her more children, move her from one city to another, one job to another. I asked her permission to do this, in order to protect her family on the off chance that anyone would ever read the book and figure out who she was. She agreed. This is a simple illustration. Others are more complicated. One such complex illustration comes from my work on gender equality within academia. One woman speaking about gender issues in academia told of having to leave her baby alone in a crib in a large US city because she needed to take her language exam. The woman's husband was working and the babysitter did not show up. The woman was distraught and did not know what to do. This was the last time she could take the exam before she left the city for a job. So she left the child alone, an act that could have gotten her into trouble with

the law and which I figured would not make her child – now grown -- happy. I thought the story was an important one because it revealed the difficult tension that a female scholar can have to face in balancing career and family. But I did not think it was something that the woman's child would welcome knowing. So even though the woman herself had signed off on the interview, I felt obliged to pull that story from the interview. I suggested to her that we delete it from her interview and leave it in the study as a free-floating illustration that could be analyzed but which would not be connected to any one person's name. Was I violating transparency? I certainly was tampering with the interview in a substantive way. Nonetheless, I felt my obligations to another fellow human being trumped any desire to not manipulate data, which is what I view interviews. (I should perhaps note that I consider these interviews data close to holy in my book so editing even for clarity is a long and difficult process for me.)

These are just some of the ethical questions that scholars who use certain kinds of interview data confront. I hope that they can be allowed for in any statement on transparency. I've had the Provost at my university try to get me to reveal data so I know how uncomfortable the pressure on a scholar can be, and young scholars who need to publish to keep their jobs are especially vulnerable. But the bottom line for me is that you can stick burning matches under my fingernails and I'll not violate any one's privacy. Expressing it that way sounds a bit dramatic and strange to express in that theatrical a manner but I think many of us feel that passionately about these ethical issues. I hope any statement that can be worked out will allow those of us who are concerned with these ethical issues to continue to work AND to publish in our top journals.

I'll copy Rodney Hero, Jennifer Hochschild and David Lake and encourage them to reconsider their positions and to take up this issue at the next Council meeting.

Feel free to distribute – or ignore – this comment as you like.

Best wishes, Kristen Monroe,

Chancellor's Professor of Political Science and Director of the UCI Ethics Center