

PAI 705

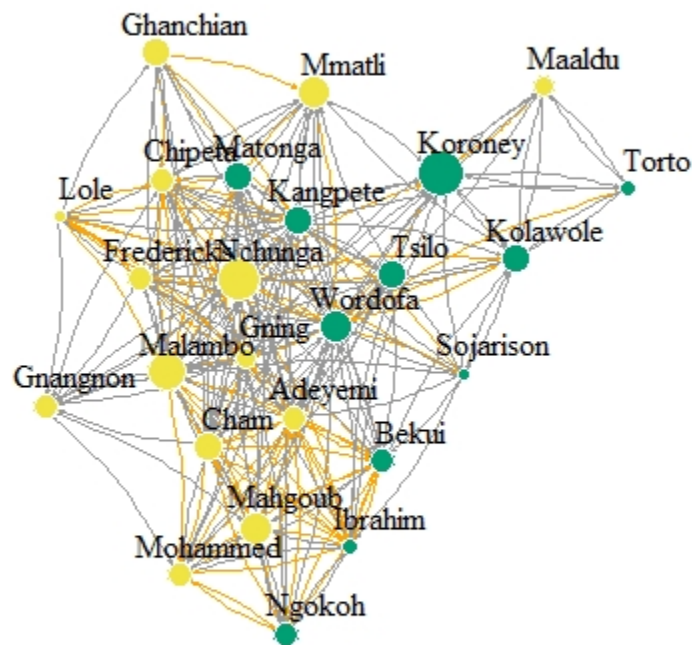
McPeak

Lecture 11

- Babbie calls this next example ‘unobtrusive research’. This is research you can do without concern that by observing it, you have potentially changed the behavior you are observing.
  - Looking for clues that are evidence on social behavior.
- Content analysis. There are all kinds of things out there to analyze. Nursery rhymes. Girl scout handbooks. Newspapers. Social research texts.....
  - Who says what, to whom, why, how, and with what effect?
  - How do you sample with this kind of research?
    - What is the unit of analysis? Sample selection depends on us being clear about the unit of analysis.
  - Sampling strategy can be random (flick on the TV and see what is there at times selected by a random number generator), systematic (look at all ads on channel 8 from 10 to 11 at night), or stratified (alternate days looking at 3, 5, and 9 between 10 and 12 in the morning and 8 and 10 at night).
  - Could also think of a cluster sample; main networks as one group, sports channels, news channels, Kardashian content oriented channels.....

- Coding is the process of transforming raw data into a standardized form. We take what has been communicated and transform it into some kind of coded form using a conceptual framework.
  - Specify a set of definitions and then use these to sort through and filter content to fit it into a conceptual framework.
  - Coding the manifest content; that which is visible on the surface.
  - Wordscores for Stata
    - [http://www.tcd.ie/Political\\_Science/wordscores/stata\\_manual/quickstart.html](http://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/wordscores/stata_manual/quickstart.html)
    - What colors and codes does Disney store use to market things to girls compared to boys?
- You could also try to analyze the latent content. The underlying meaning.
  - This is more interpretive and subjective.
  - What is the messaging of the content of the Disney story to boys compared to girls?
- Coding at some point needs to be numerical. How many times was the image of Elsa presented?
- Distinguish between unit of observation and unit of analysis.
  - Looking at ‘newspapers’ analyzing content of editorials.
  - Looking at ‘novelists’ analyzing content of novels.
- Keep track of the base from which the content is being analyzed. The total number of things looked at to put in context the numbers in the different categories is the idea here.

- This is in the line of ‘conceptual analysis’, keeping track of the concepts that show up in text or other raw material. Might also want to consider ‘relational analysis’, where we look at pairings of concepts. “border wall” and “illegal immigrants”. “SU” and “final four”. Google has you well prepared for this kind of search.



- “Negative case testing”. Start with a theory. Code cases. Interrogate all that don’t fit the pattern more intensively to refine theory. “Wealthy people dominate these discussions” then find cases where there are exceptions. Ah, not wealth, but people with BA degrees or higher

(which is conflated with wealth). Or a combination of wealth and educational attainment.

- Analytical induction, where you are revising the framework based on observations and reconceptualizing the patterns.
- MAXQDA
  - <http://www.maxqda.com/>
- TLAB
  - <http://tlab.it/en/presentation.php>
- Content analysis is great in terms of economy; it is feasible. All you need is time and content.
- Also you have room for error. If you blow a survey question, really hard to go back and ask again / fix it, and then the response does not match up to the context of the rest of your data.
- It lets you look at processes that play out over time.
- It also lets you analyze things without having to worry about your impact on their content, as is the case when you do an interview or experiment. You might have some impact on future content (assuming research has any impact) but not on past content.

Analysis of existing data.

- There are all kinds of data sets out there, take them and conduct social science research.
- What is the unit of analysis?
- World Bank Development Indicators, Penn World Tables, Fragile States Index... country as the unit of analysis.
  - Data might not be at the level of a decision making unit in the sense of a person or firm.

- Problems of validity; somebody else defined and measured these variables.
  - Do they capture the concept you are looking at?
    - I want to look at development and improved well-being, I have available GNI per capita over time.
- Problems of reliability.
  - The ‘vitality of mythical numbers’.
    - What are these numbers actually telling you?
    - Crime rates go up when reporting becomes easier for example.