PAI 705

McPeak

Lecture 11

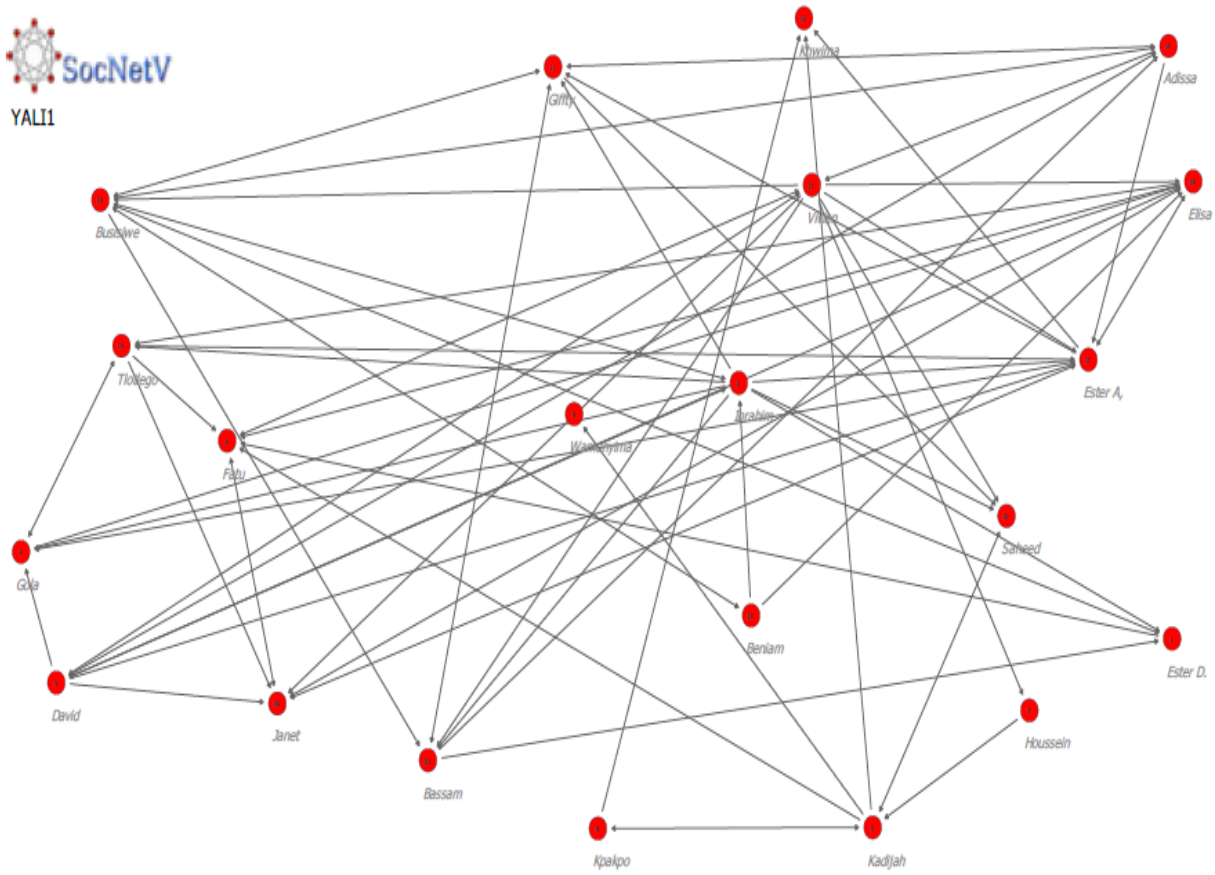
Babbie describes this category as ‘unobtrusive research’.

This is research you can do without concern that by observing it, you have potentially changed the behavior you are observing / had an impact on the data.

- Content analysis. There are all kinds of things out there to analyze.
  - Nursery rhymes.
  - Girl scout handbooks.
  - Newspapers.
  - Social research textbooks……
- 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,…

- Coding is the process of transforming raw data into a standardized form.
- We take what has been communicated / observed and transform it into some kind of coded form using a conceptual framework.
    - Specify a set of definitions and then use these to sort though and filter content to fit it into a conceptual framework.
    - Coding the manifest content; that which is visible on the surface.
    - Wordscores for Stata is one software for this.
- 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 a Disney film to boys compared to girls?
    - Coding at some point needs to be numerical.
        - How many times was the image of Elsa presented?
- Sometimes we distinguish between unit of observation and unit of analysis.
    - Looking at 'newspapers' analyzing content of editorials.
- Keep track of the base from which the content is being analyzed.
    - How many observations were looked at?

    - This allows us to put in context the numbers in the different categories.
        - We saw outcome A 543 times. Is that a lot or a little?
- This is a kind of 'conceptual analysis', in which we keep track of the concepts that show up in text or other raw material.
- Another pattern we may want to consider is 'relational analysis', where we look at pairings of concepts.
    - "border" & "wall"
    - "illegal" & "immigrants"
- We can also look at clusters of common interest.



- We may also want to apply “Negative case testing’.
    - Start with a theory.
    - Code cases.
    - Categorize 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.

- Content analysis is great in terms of economy; it is feasible. All you need is time and content.

- You have more room for error.
    - If a survey question fails, really hard to go back and ask again in order to fix it.
    - If you do, the timing of the response does not match up to the context of the rest of your data.
    - However, note that the content of the data you access might change given updates and revisions.
        - That is why you cite the URL and the date accessed when reporting sources.

- It lets you look at processes that play out over time.
    - Media coverage
    - Published reports

    - Political debates
    - Public opinion.

- It 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.
    - No Hawthorne Effect concerns.
    - You might have some impact on future content (assuming research has any impact) but not on current or 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?
- Data might not be at the level of a decision-making unit in the sense of a person or firm.
- In some cases the country is the unit of analysis.
    - World Bank Governance Indicators,
    - World Development Indicators,
    - Penn World Tables,
    - Fragile States Index.
    - OECD Stats
    - Sustainable Development Goals
    - Food and Agriculture Organization
    - Comtrade
- In some cases it is household level data.
    - World Bank LSMS
    - US Census
    - USAID
- In some cases it is individual data
    - NLSY
- In some cases it is not about people directly
    - AVHRR
    - CHIRPS
    - ACLED

- Issues 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.
        - I want to look at incomes but only cash income is reported, not home produced and consumed.
- Issues of reliability.
        - Somebody else gathered them and maybe if you gathered the data you would get different answers using the same methods.