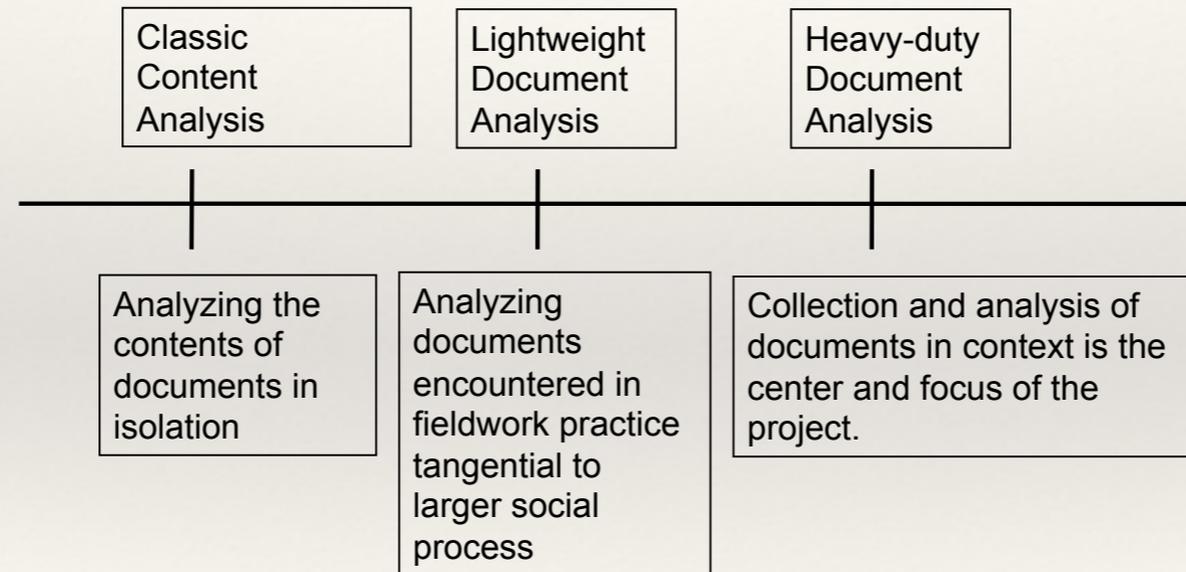


INFO 272. Qualitative Research Methods

Text and Document Analysis

Fall 2014

Outline



Classic Content Analysis

Method: Units

- ❖ Syntax vs. Semantics
- ❖ Units: Words, sentences, paragraphs, articles
- ❖ Also, propositional units

[source: Martin Bauer, "Classical content analysis"]

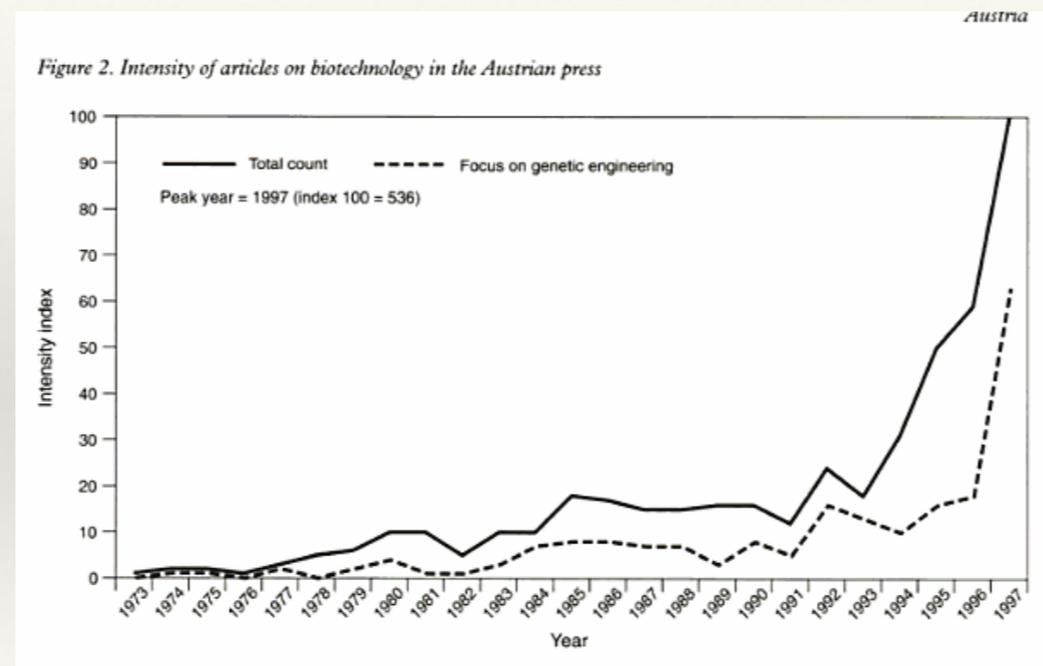
Method: Propositional Units

“biotechnology, the most recent among post-war base technologies, enters the public arena in the 1990s”

4 separate propositions in the above sentence:

- ❖ “biotechnology enters the public arena in the 1990s”
- ❖ “biotechnology is a base technology”
- ❖ “biotechnology is a base technology of the post-war period”
- ❖ “biotechnology is the most recent base technology”

Method

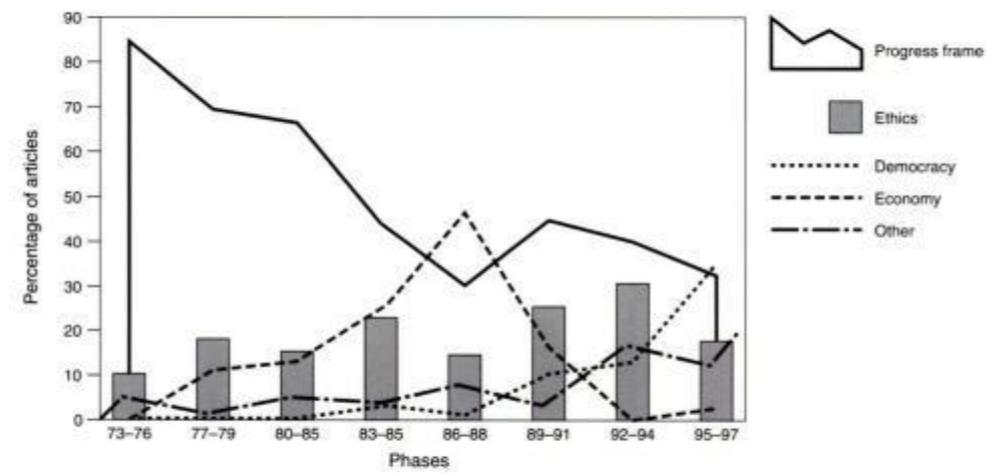


[Example: *Biotechnology in the Public Sphere: A European Sourcebook*, Durant, Bauer and Gaskell]

Important to point out here that 'coding' in relation to content analysis is a very different practice from the kind of inductive analytical coding (grounded theory style) that we've been talking about before.

Method

Figure 3. The development of frames in the media coverage of biotechnology in Austria



[Example: *Biotechnology in the Public Sphere: A European Sourcebook*, Durant, Bauer and Gaskell]

Method

Appendix 5

V26. Frames

- 1 'Progress': celebration of new development, breakthrough; direction of history; conflict between progressive/conservative–reactionary.
- 2 'Economic prospect': economic potential; prospects for investment and profits; R&D arguments.
- 3 'Ethical': call for ethical principles; thresholds; boundaries; distinctions between acceptable/unacceptable risks in discussions on known risks; dilemmas. Professional ethics.
- 4 'Pandora's box': call for restraint in the face of the unknown risk; the 'opening of flood gates' warning; unknown risks as anticipated threats; catastrophe warning.
- 5 'Runaway': fatalism after the innovation; having adopted the new technology/products a price may well have to be paid in the future; no control any more after the event.
- 6 'Nature/nurture': environmental vs genetic determination; inheritance issues.
- 7 'Public accountability': call for public control, participation, public involvement; regulatory mechanisms; private versus public interests.
- 8 'Globalisation': call for global perspective; national competitiveness within a global economy; opposite: splendid isolation.

Commentary. We suggest to use the term 'frame' with the following preliminary definition: a frame is a structure that **1** organises central ideas on an issue, **2** deploys particular symbolic devices and metaphors, and **3** defines a particular controversy within the frame (i.e. an agreement about how to disagree). A frame's function is to construct meaning, incorporating new events into its interpretative envelope.

We suggest distinguishing 'theme' and 'frame' as figure-ground ambiguity: the frame is ground, the theme is figure. The same theme, e.g. genetic testing, could be presented in different frames, and the same frame can accommodate different themes. There may be however statistical associations between themes and frames.

[Example: Biotechnology in the Public Sphere: A European Sourcebook, Durant, Bauer and Gaskell]

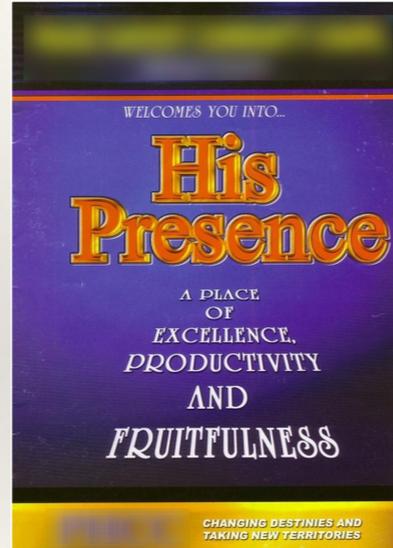
Purpose

- ❖ **Media monitoring** – can be a continually updated evaluation frame
- ❖ Comparisons (between newspapers, between audiences, against standards)
- ❖ Construct indices (of societal values) – how people describe themselves and ideal partners in lonely hearts columns

[source: Martin Bauer, "Classical content analysis"]

Document Analysis: Lightweight

Projective Interviewing



- ❖ Collecting encountered documents while in the 'field'
- ❖ Incorporating collected documents into interviews

Projective Interviewing

J: “um, I kept the brochure, that said that the church was **‘changing destinies and taking new territories’** and I wondered if you could sort of explain what that means for the church?”

M: “yeah, um, changing destinies means that people...look at their lives in a particular way. For example, people who would look at the patterns in their family and they may say well all our family, everybody is an alcoholic so I’m more likely to become an alcoholic or people looking to their families and say that we all come from very poor backgrounds so we are all likely to become poor and so you know, they have a mentality that predates and is based on what they’ve been told...”

World Summit on the Information Society

- ❖ Content analysis (loose & informal) of collected documents
- ❖ Combined with other forms of data (observational) to make an argument about 'inclusiveness' at the conference



Document Analysis: Heavy-Duty

Method: record of medical clinic consultation

Examining document contents:

- ❖ Identify categories
- ❖ Ordering of text within a unit (i.e. a single entry in the medical record)
- ❖ The geography of entries
- ❖ Inferences drawn from what is *not* written

Method: record of medical clinic consultation

Observing documents in the field:

- ❖ Document within doctor/patient interaction
- ❖ Written for what audience?

Method: outcome of the analysis

Critique of motivation to digitize records:

- ❖ What are the 'bad' organizational reasons for good clinical records?
- ❖ Systematic data entry interferes with expressing ambivalence, subtlety, with strategic ordering and omission

Document Analysis:
Final Thoughts

Interrogating Your Documents

- ❖ Who is the author? Are they identified or not?
- ❖ Is it bound with other documents and where is its placement?
- ❖ What is the document material?
- ❖ Is it written or printed? What can you say about the fonts, size?
- ❖ Is a signature on a document required and what does it mean?

In Summary

- ❖ Limits of content analysis
- ❖ Lightweight document analysis where documents support central research concern
- ❖ Heavy-duty document analysis where documents are the central research concern