Content Analysis as an Empirical Research Tool

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From Small N Rep Grid to Large N Content Analysis: Methods for Studying Cognition and Strategy

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SMA Meetings
November 2012
Early Work
* Reger & Huff, SMJ, 1993
* Reger & Palmer, OS, 1996
* Gustafson & Reger, AOMBP, 1995

* Structured interviews to uncover mental models
* Cognitive strategic groups
* Automatic and controlled categories
* Organizational Identity
Early Work

* Lyles & Reger, JMS, 1993
  * Cognitive causal mapping of hundreds of pages of interview transcripts
  * Upward influence in a multi-partner international joint venture
  * Case study
  * Short term gains in autonomy may lead to long term loss of autonomy

* Small N Content Analysis
Duriau, Reger & Pfarrer, ORM, 2007

A Content Analysis of the Content Analysis Literature in Organizational Studies: Research Themes, Data Sources, and Methodological Refinements

* 98 journal articles over 25 years
* Multiple hand coding
  * Themes
  * Topics
  * Type of Content Analysis
  * Others

*Medium N Content Analysis*
Managing the Message: The Effects of Firm Actions and Industry Spillovers on Media Coverage Following Wrongdoing

Zavyalova, Pfarrer, Reger, Shapiro; 2012 Academy of Management Journal

* Large N Content Analysis
Structured Content Analysis
* CPSC Press Releases
* Toy recalls by U.S. public companies 1998-2007
* No Cognitive Theory
* Assumed to be “Factual Data”

Structured Content Analysis
* 5,500 Company press releases - Factiva, 944 firm quarters
* 45 companies, 20 experienced recalls
* “Mind of the Strategist”
* Hand-coded

Affective Tone Content Analysis
* 32,000 articles & web blogs - Lexis-Nexis, LIWC
* “Eye of the Beholder”
* Computer-coded

* Large N Content Analysis
* Toy recalls by U.S. public companies 1998-2007 - CPSC
* 5,500 press releases - Factiva, hand coding
* 32,000 articles & web blogs - Lexis-Nexis, LIWC

* Arellano-Bond estimation (Arellano & Bond, 1991)
  * Robust to heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation
  * Similar to DID or Fixed-Effects
  * Year fixed-effects

* Endogeneity of announced actions
  * FE OLS on a matched sample

*Large N Content Analysis*
* Match content analysis methods to research questions
* Celebrate diversity of methods and approaches
* Learn from samples from 1 to very large N
* Large N isn’t necessarily better than small N

*Conclusions*
Thank you!