Beyond the Coding Process: A Review of Margrit Schreier's Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice

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Abstract

Schreier's work, "Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice," is a well laid out book for novices that begins in assuming the reader has little to no prior knowledge in the area of content analysis. Schreier introduces the historical, theoretical, and conceptual frames, which lead to the development of content analysis to include analysis beyond just coding. Using within-chapter summaries, key points, and end-of-chapter questions, this book offers opportunities for reflection to ensure the reader has a full understanding of the information presented. Recommended use of this text is as a supplemental text to more seminal works on content analysis or as a supplemental text for a qualitative course with an emphasis in content analysis.

Beyond the Coding Process:
A Review of Margrit Schreier's
Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice

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Schreier's work, "Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice," is a well laid out book for novices that begins in assuming the reader has little to no prior knowledge in the area of content analysis. Schreier introduces the historical, theoretical, and conceptual frames, which lead to the development of content analysis to include analysis beyond just coding. Using within-chapter summaries, key points, and end-of-chapter questions, this book offers opportunities for reflection to ensure the reader has a full understanding of the information presented. Recommended use of this text is as a supplemental text to more seminal works on content analysis or as a supplemental text for a qualitative course with an emphasis in content analysis. Keywords: Qualitative Analysis, Content Analysis, Qualitative Method, Coding

The ways in which individuals communicate today are rapidly changing and new forms of data are constantly emerging, especially in written form, thanks to the advent of the internet and social media. In *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*, Margrit Schreier (2012) explores the ways in which undergraduate students, graduate students, and researchers can make sense of written content. With this text, individuals at varying points in their academic or professional careers can utilize specific or overarching information regarding the process of qualitative content analysis (QCA). The chapters in Schreier (2012) are set up in a way that the book may be read in its entirety or each chapter can stand alone as specific reference guide. As a second year Ph.D. student in my final semester of classes and very new to qualitative research, I found this book particularly helpful in furthering my understandings of the specific tasks required when entertaining the idea of and implementing QCA. This proves to be useful and is a key reason why I would recommend this book for anyone in the beginning stages of their research journey. This book consists of twelve chapters, which, for the purpose of this review, I divided into three parts: Background Information, Coding, and Getting to Work.

Part 1 (Chapters 1-3) Background Information

For students new to qualitative research or for individuals who are wondering if their data set would be best analyzed using content analysis, chapters 1 through 3 of Schreier (2012) provide a solid background about what QCA is, where it came from, and if it will work for a specific set of data. Chapter 1 explores the origin of QCA and situates this methodology in the historical timeline of ever-developing qualitative analysis. The information provided in chapter 2 helps to delineate the differences in quantitative and qualitative research. I would recommend this chapter for individuals making the switch from quantitative to qualitative or for those more comfortable with the quantitative tradition. This chapter is a quick guide to what qualitative inquiry is and how it can be helpful for research. That being said, I believe chapter 3 is the most important of the three beginning chapters. This chapter helps the reader decide if QCA is the preferred method of data analysis for their project. Through her many examples of appropriate data and easy to follow tables, this

chapter will be the most beneficial for individuals who are not sure if this is the methodology they want to use.

Part 2 (Chapters 4-8) Coding

For researchers who already understand QCA and have decided that they are going to use this analytical method, I would recommend starting at chapter 4. This chapter is particularly useful for anyone adopting coding, regardless if using QCA or not. The most useful part of this chapter is the way Schreier explains the logic behind coding and the step-by-step guide to create a good coding frame. Chapters 5-8 introduce quite possibly the most helpful sections of this book which are the 'Beginner's Mistakes' sections. These are short explanations of many of the mistakes novice coders make and how to avoid them. While chapters 5 and 6 set up the bases for what a coding frame is, chapter 7 exemplifies the ways in which a researcher would transform their data into significant segments which are necessary when using QCA for analysis. Again, through the use of examples, discussion of common mistakes and frequently asked questions, these chapters become the backbone of successful organization of codes and possible themes.

Chapter 8 discusses the process of testing out a data-coding frame before using it in a research project. This chapter explains the process of analyzing data to ensure the information being extracted is congruent with the focus of the research. Additionally, Schreier discusses how to navigate this process when working with a partner; a useful tool for anyone new to collaboration.

Part 3 (Chapters 9-12) Getting to Work

Though the previous chapters aid in the set up a system of coding for the analysis of data, Schreier reiterates throughout this book and mostly in chapter 9 that coding and the use of a coding frame must continuously be monitored for reliability and validity. In other words, to make sure that the tool that has been set up to extract information is doing so efficiently. Again, the information about working with a peer that is discussed in this section is invaluable when trying to navigate these issues in practice.

Finally, in chapter 10, Schreier discusses the actual process of coding. I would recommend starting at this chapter for anyone who has a solid background in coding and coding frames. Advice for navigating working with a peer, an assistant, and working alone are given in this chapter and explain the politics and policies to take into account when deciding to proceed with the main coding of data. Again, these short but important pieces of advice have great use when maneuvering research relationships especially when beginning to learn about reliability and validity in QCA when working with one or more other researchers.

For information on what to do after analysis, chapter 11 highlights some of the ways in which individuals can present their findings that may be more attractive for those who are more inclined to conducting quantitative data or for those who are looking for a quantitative flare in their research. As a researcher with an affinity for qualitative inquiry, I am always looking for new ways to present my data to individuals who do not share my partiality.

In regard to my personal needs, chapter 12 was the most salient chapter. Once the data is gathered and a coding frame is set up there are many ways to conduct QCA. Many individuals choose to code by hand, but as someone who elicits the aid of technology whenever possible, understanding software is paramount in my success as a scholar. The most pertinent information for me is having an understanding of what programs are out there, specifically what I need to look for in software before starting to code large chunks of data. Though Schreier navigates these necessities well, this chapter is where the age of the text is

most notable. Since its publication in 2012, there have been software advances, which, for obvious reasons, are not included. The QCA software of today has much better collaborative functions and coding options than mentioned in the book, Lastly, on the topic of software, the absence of Dedoose is personally troubling mainly because it is my personal software of choice based on its collaborative abilities and cloud based, aesthetically pleasing, and easy to use design.

Aside from this limitation, I would highly recommend this book to anyone who needs deeper knowledge of QCA beyond that which would typically be presented in an introduction to qualitative methods textbook. Schreier's text is a great starting place for any scholar interested in content analysis or those new to qualitative research. As a scholar in a doctoral program for educational leadership and policy with a strong interest in content and document analysis, I would recommend this text to my peers for conducting content analysis.

References

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Author Note

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