Some Uses of Content Analysis in Social Research*

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Although the technique of content analysis is within easy reach of the social researcher, quite a few local social researchers have used it compared to the other methods such as observation, interview and the controlled experiment. This could be due to one or more of the following: 1) the technique is costly of effort and can often be cumbersome, 2) there are no 'standardized' procedures to follow, 3) the reward is often not commensurate to the effort put in, 4) the literature is not sufficiently coherent and systematic, and 5) the method is relatively less known as a social research tool.

This report is an attempt, in capsule form, to identify the technique and to list and explain some of its applications in social science research. Because of the dearth of local data on content analysis, very few local examples illustrating the uses of the technique could be used.

Berelson[1] defines content analysis as "a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication." His definition does not exclude application of the technique to private communications, e.g., conversation or the psychoanalytic interview or the mass communications media.

Schutz[2] proposes enlarging the scope of the definition beyond communication content to include ". . .description of human behavior, particularly linguistic." Berelson's definition is based on his own studies on the subject[3] and those of Leites and Pool,[4] Kaplan and Goldson,[5] Janis[6] and Kaplan.[7]

In general, the uses of content analysis can be stated under four broad categories, as follows: 1) to determine characteristics of content, 2) to develop insight into the source or producers of content, 3) to develop insight into the audiences or consumers of content, and 4) to determine the effects of content upon the audience. Under each of these categories can be found uses of content analysis applicable to social research which is the focus of this report.

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[1] Bernard Berelson, *Content Analysis in Communication Research,* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1952), p. 17.

[2] Schutz, William, *Theory and Methodology of Content Analysis,* Ph.D. dissertation, UCLA, 1950, p. 3.

[3] Douglas Waples and Bernard Berelson, "What the Voters Were Told: An Essay in Content Analysis," University of Chicago (1941) Mimeographed, p. 2.

[4] Nathan C. Leites and Ithiel de Sola Pool, *On Content Analysis,* Library of Congress, Document No. 26, Washington, D.C., 1942, pp. 1-2.

[5] Abraham Kaplan and Joseph Goldsen, "The Reliability of Content Analysis Categories" in Lasswell Leites and Associates (eds.), *Language of Politics,* (N.Y.: Cornwall Press, Inc., 1940), pp. 83-112.

[6] Irving L. Janis, "Meaning and the Study of Symbolic Behavior," *Psychiatry,* 6 (1943) 425-439.

[7] Abraham Kaplan, "Content Analysis and The Theory of Signs," *Philosophy of Science,* 10 (1943) 230-247.

Following are some of the more often quoted applications of the content analysis technique in social research.[8]

To trace the development of scholarship in the social sciences

The development of sociological interests in America over the past half century was gleaned in a study of the distribution of articles in *The American Journal of Sociology.*[9] In recent years, this publication has underscored problems of population, races and nationalities and methodological research studies at the expense of studies on the theory and history of sociology and of research on social reform. This study, as well as those of Hart[10] and Bruner and Allport,[11] aside from describing the developmental trend of a discipline, gives a picture of the status of a social science discipline such as sociology, cited above, at a particular period.

To determine treatment of social phenomena in the communications media

Different communications media treat the same message in different ways. This is perhaps one of several reasons why the various mass media attract different levels of audiences.

This particular use of content analysis has provided answers to the following questions:

1. How differently do newspapers and other print media on the one hand and the electronic media (radio and television) on the other, handle social evils such as immorality and criminality? . . .activities of ethnic groups or minority groups?

2. How do the value orientations of the characters in r a d i o dramas compare with those on television?

3. How is a sex criminal portrayed in the newspapers? . . . in scientific or technical publications?

4. What happens to a "good" book when it is made into a movie?

5. What is done to a tragic ending in a novel when it is serialized on television?

Answer to these questions could provide criteria or standards for the communications media, by comparing content of one channel with another and constructing some kind of a "master profile" from the findings.

A local study done by this writer [12] compared the treatment of the activities of national cultural minorities in the newspapers, radio and television over a five-year period. Research on the coverage of crimes in the local mass media under the supervision of the Philippine Press Council is in progress. The three yardsticks of adequacy of coverage, accuracy and objectivity of reporting are being applied to the analyses.

To audit message content against objectives

Every communication message has an objective or a set of objectives stated either explicitly or implicitly. A measure of the "effectiveness" of the message would be the extent to which it faithfully expresses these objectives. This can be ascertained either impressionistically or systematically.

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[8] Berelson, *op cit*, pp. 26-29.
[9] Ethel Shanas, "The American Journal of Sociology Through Fifty Years," *American Journal of Sociology*, 50 (1945) 522-533.
[10] Howell Hart, "The Pre-War Upsurge in Social Science," *American Sociological Review*, 14 (1949) 599-607.
[11] Jerome S. Bruner and Gordon W. Allport, "Fifty Years of Change in American Psychology," *Psychological Bulletin*, 37 (1940) 757-776.

[12] Gloria D. Feliciano, "Mass Media and National Integration," *The Anthropological Bulletin* 1 (1966).

The literature reports very few systematic studies on this use of content analysis.

Jones[13] analyzed, by subject and type, the production of a major film studio over 30 years, or a total of 1200 films. The findings, which were considered "classified" information, were reportedly useful in studio public relations and in the production of films treating c o m p a r a b l e themes. A similar study on radio by Baker[14] described the content of radio programs for a week in 1946.

This kind of studies are sometimes done by "outsiders" on the basis of the stipulated objectives of the communicators. In early 1951 a group interested in promoting educational programs on television analyzed the "educational" content of television for one week. On the assumption that the television industry was adequately doing its function along this line as argued in FCC hearings, the findings proved the opposite: public issues, 2%; public events, 1%; information programs, 3%; crime drama, 10%; and variety, 14%.[15] Another study focussing on the treatment given to various ethnic groups in magazine fiction by Berelson and Salter[16] showed that the claim of the editors and publishers that their magazines aimed at promoting ethnic equality in the United States, was not being fulfilled.

Content analysis has been used to evaluate messages by assessing performance against *a priori* standards as "balance" or "social purpose." As an illustration, the assumption that "fair and balanced presentation of every major social group on the air is part of radio's obligation to operate in the public interest" was assessed in the treatment of labor in radio news programs during the presidential campaign.[17] The study showed that "labor was presented as being morally wrong five times as it was morally right: on the other hand it was presented as being strong, just as often as it was presented as being weak." The author concluded that dominance of unfavorable references reflects a bias on the part of the communicators.

To aid in technical research operations

Content analysis has been used in three ways in social research operations, namely: 1) in the coding of qualitative research data obtained from interviews or through experimental techniques; 2) in the validation of procedures by which a sample of media is drawn; and 3) in the identification of the characteristics of broad concepts in the social sciences.

Coding is generally defined as the process of reducing lengthy verbal data to essential facts which can be easily understood and/or quantified. It could also be defined as a process of content analysis since it involves the setting up of categories from unordered data, which are clearly stated, objective and mutually exclusive prior to the assigning of codes to said categories and the tabulation of the coded material.

Bettelheim and Janowitz[18] reported that a variant of content analysis has been used to categorize the subjects on the basis of their total response to the interview, with consideration of the point in the interview

[13] Dorothy B. Jones, "Quantitative Analysis of Motion Picture Content," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 14, (1950) 554-558.

[14] Kenneth Baker, "An Analysis of Radio's Programming" in Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Frank N. Stanton, *Communications Research*, 1948-1949, (New York: Harper, 1949), pp. 51-72.

[15] Dallas Smythe and Donald Horton, "Analysis of Television Programs in New York City," *Newsletter*, NAFB, Jan-Feb., 1951.

[16] Bernard Berelson and Patricia Salter, "Majority and Minority Americans: An Analysis of Magazine Fiction," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 10 (1946) 168-190.

[17] Leila A. Sussman, "Labor in the Radio News: An Analysis of Content," *Journalism Quarterly*, 22 (1945) 207-214.

[18] Bruno Bettelheim and Morris Janowitz, "Dynamics of Prejudice: A Psychological and Sociological Study of Veterans," *Harper* (1950).

at which certain responses were made. In their study of the ethnic prejudices of a group of veterans, the respondents were classified into "the intense (anti-Semitic or Anti-Negros), the outspoken, the stereotyped and the tolerant according to whether they made spontaneous restrictive remarks, elicited restrictive remarks, stereotyped responses or explicit references of a tolerant nature." The category of "attitudes of political party in general" was coded on the basis of pro's and con's obtained in response to several questions dealing with political matters, in another case.

In a local study [19] currently being completed, the category "source of information" was coded as either "personal" (family, relatives, neighbors and friends, etc.), "non-personal" (mass media — newspapers and magazines, radio and television) or both, "personal and non-personal."

Local attempts by this writer to use content analysis more directly as a research aid are shown in the analyses of linguistic behavior among barrio interviewers to develop a "rural bias" scale. This was made in terms of such categories as the following: shows rapport with barrio folk, takes inconveniences of rural living in stride, shares the simple gustatory tastes of the barrio folk, shows preference for "informal" barrio attire, feels "at home" with rural value orientations, etc. A "profile of group interaction" was developed by the quantitative analysis of statements made by group members. Indices included the following: shows solidarity, shows tension, release, agrees, gives suggestions, opinion, orientation (and their counterparts). Hypotheses on group behavior under varying conditions were studied by means of content analysis by Bales.[20] The role of the counselor in a therapy situation, shown in the chart, tests his conviction that "if the counselor takes an essentially non-directive role . . . for a period averaging somewhere around forty minutes, a relationship can often be established such that the student ceases to expect the counselor to take initiative and responsibility for solving his problems, but rather undertakes initiative and responsibility himself."

The use of content analysis to validate the procedures by which a sample of newspapers was drawn was demonstrated in the study of two independently selected samples of 50 papers each, drawn from the universe of U.S. dailies. Analysis was made on a series of subject-matter categories pertaining to matters of interest to the National Military Establishment. The findings were compared, and the substantial agreement in content analysis was interpreted as validation. This comparison showed that the same sampling procedures were used in the two cases and not that they were the correct procedures.

What constitutes social acceptablity among University of the Philippines coeds? An attempt to provide an answer to this question is now being made by this writer by means of a content analysis of coeds' columns of The *Philippine Collegian*, official student organ of the state university. Criteria of social acceptability are being gleaned from accounts of coeds' social activities on campus in said columns. This use of content analysis to identify characteristics of broad concepts in the social sciences was tried by Hatch [21] in isolating the criteria of social status on the society pages of *The New York Times*. He hypothesized that analysis of the stories about marriages would reveal the characteristics considered important by the "upper social group"

[19] The Manila Complex Study conducted jointly by the Departments of Sociology and Anthropology, Institutes of Asian Studies and Mass Communication, U.P., 1966-67.

[20] Robert F. Bales, *Interaction Process Analysis. A Method for the Study of Small Groups.* (New York: Addison-Wesley Press, 1950), pp. 14-15.

[21] David and Mary L. Hatch, "Criteria of Social Status as Derived From Marriage Announcements in the New York Times," *American Sociological Review*, 12 (1947) 396-403.

which he reported included "double resid-
ences," "outstanding achievements by all
the male members," etc.

*To determine the psychological state of
persons and groups*

The application of quantitative methods
to the study of psychological material was
undertaken by Allport [22] who analyzed "the
structure of the personality of one individ-
ual life on the basis of a collection of per-
sonal documents." His study "set forth a
new conception of a population in statis-
tics: a population of events and traits with-
in the boundaries of one person. . . which
could bridge the gap between the statis-
tical and clinical point of view."

Another application lies in anthropolo-
gy, in the field of projective tests — Rors-
chach, TAT, etc. — although the quan-
tification is not always systematic or even
explicitly present. The personality charac-
teristics of the subject are inferred from
the messages produced by him in response
to nebulous stimuli such as an ink blot, a
picture, an incomplete sentence. Although
only the content core is necessary to re-
inforce the inference, quantities can be
brought into play. Thus, it has been con-
sidered significant if the subject returns
to certain topics, e.g., sexual references, or
if he sees the name things in different
stimuli, or if he elaborates at some length
on a particular matter. Lasswell[23] has also
shown that many psycho-analytic proposi-
tions are based upon material that can be
provided by content analysis. The method
too, has been useful in substituting sys-
tematic and objective data for "impres-
sions" and "interpretations" as is done on
case records of social work clients.

*To reflect attitudes and value orientations
of population groups*

Content analysis, according to Berelson,
has been used to get at "the spirit of the
age." On the assumption that communica-
tion messages express or reflect some sort
of *Zeitgeist*, some students have used it
as an index to determining the cultural pat-
terns of population groups. This use of
content analysis is based on two charac-
teristics, namely: 1) that inferences about
population groups are made on the basis
of content produced for them and 2) that
such problems are studied this way because
it is not possible to study them directly —
especially where "a historical people" or
"a foreign people" is studied — but which
raises some serious problems of validity.

One example of studies of this kind was
done by Hart [24] who identified the
"changing social attitudes and interests"
in the United States from 1900-1930 through
selected analysis of popular magazines. He
reported that the general decline in the
status of religion during this period is docu-
mented not only by the amount of atten-
tion given to the topic but also by the
decline of favorable references to organized
religion. Such trends in the treatment of
religion in popular magazines are interpret-
ed to reflect a general weakening in the
position of religion among the population.
In like manner, increased popular tolera-
tion of sexual freedom is represented by the
increased percentage of "approving attitude
indicators" in mass circulation magazines.
For instance, in 1900 only 1% of the indi-
cators were approving, as compared with
26% in 1920 and 40% in 1928.

In the same vein, Barnett [25] explained
that the American divorce novel provided

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[22] Gordon W. Allport, "The Use of Personal
Documents in Psychological Science," *Social Re-
search Council* (1942) pp. 35-36.

[23] Harold D. Lasswell, "The Prolonged Inter-
view and Its Objectification," *Psychopathology
and Politics,* University of Chicago Press, 1930.

[24] Howell Hart, "Changing Social Attitudes and
Interests" in *Recent Social Trends in the United
States,* McGraw-Hill (1933). 1, 382-342.

[25] James H. Barnett, "Divorce and the Amer-
ican Divorce Novel, 1858-1937; A Study in the
Literary Reflections of Social Influences." Ph.D.
Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1939,
pp. 138-139.

a sensitive medium in which to observe the divorce trend in America. "After divorce was accepted as a plot element . . . novels were very responsive to changes in public interest in divorce. . . Chronologically, there was a shift in public interest from concern over the fact of divorce, to the effects of divorce on children, to the questions of alimony and later to the problem of post-divorce adjustment."

These, then, are some of the uses of content analysis in social research. A review of the studies included in this report shows that a good number could have been planned better and executed in a more systematic manner. But, the findings have been reportedly useful and so, using this as rationalé, local studies along this line should be encouraged.

Power, Politics and Guns in Jolo: The Influence of Modern Weapons on Tao-Sug Legal and Economic Institutions

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Riddle : "Kasuban sin Tao-sug katan labi dain sin asawa?"
(What are all Tao-sugs more fond of than their wives?)

Answer: "Sinapang" (rifle)

While Taog-sugs have possessed guns since the last part of the 17th century — the word *sinapang* itself is of Dutch origin — only during two periods in their history have firearms been present in sufficient enough numbers to have an effect on the conduct of political life: during the later Spanish period immediately prior to the American arrival, and during the period since the end of World War II. This paper deals entirely with the effect of the widespread dissemination of firearms on traditional Tao-sug law and politics in the post-war period. The conclusions reached here are based on field research in the municipalities of Lu-uk and Panamaw on Jolo Island, although they will apply in large measure to all Tao-sug communities in Sulu.

The community (*Kauman* — Arabic) studied is in most respects a tradition-al Tao-sug rural community. It consists of about 65 houses scattered throughout one square kilometer. The houses are grouped together in small clusters of two or three which usually represent kinship units. The community is led by a single headman of 50 years of age whose *de facto* power in the community has been legitimized by the title of *panglima* given by the sultan. His influence extends beyond the boundaries of his home community and encompasses about 200 additional houses in adjacent communities. Rice and cassava are the major subsistence crops, and considerable copra is grown as a cash crop. A few parcels of land are sharecropped, although the share given to the owner of the land is so small as to be of more symbolic than to be of economic significance. Land tenure is based primarily on Tao-sug law, although there is some understanding — perhaps misunderstanding of Philippine Land law. The household group is based on what term-mongering anthropologists call a *stem family:* a married couple and their unmarried children, one married child and spouse,