Content Analysis – Research Designs

- I. Use analysis of text to shed light on attitudes and values of the source
  - McClelland's analysis of children's fiction as a measure of "achievement motive"
  - Dodds-Danforth study of "happy" lyrics, blog posts, and State of the Union messages
  - Race-ethnicity of criminal suspects in local news as an indicator of prejudice

- II. Using content of news reports messages to assess causes of news programming, e.g. importance of market forces
  - Comparing public broadcasters and commercial broadcasters for extent of hard-soft and international-domestic coverage
  - Comparative analysis of niche versus generalist sources (e.g. Wall St Journal vs. NYT)
  - Partisan vs non-partisan sources

- III. Examining content to make inferences about effects of messages on behavior
  - Suicide notes
  - Diplomatic cables and onset of war
  - Candidate rhetoric and vote share
  - Infotainment and market share

Stages of Content Analysis

- (1) Identify relevant sources, identify the population of messages (op eds vs news; front-page news, etc., and draw a sample)
- (2) Develop content categories
  - Categories guided by theoretical-conceptual considerations (e.g. market forces make news organizations over-produce soft news; campaign news dwells on "horse race" and strategy at the expense of policy)

Coding Scheme

- Content categories to reflect underlying concept – soft news, objective news, news as negative (bad versus good news), reliance on official sources, etc etc.

- Categories should be <u>exhaustive</u> and <u>mutually exclusive</u>

- Categorization process to be independent, i.e. categorization of any given message should not depend on categorization of previous message

Table of Contents

- Intro – statement of the problem, why this is relevant/important; theory and hypothesis
- Outline your research design/strategy – sample of news sources, coding scheme, inter-coder reliability
- Presentation and interpretation of results
- Discussion-Implications

Unit of Analysis and Reliability

- What gets coded – words, sentences, paragraphs, entire news report

- holistic coding; roles played by men and women in advertisements; treatment of minorities in entertainment programs

- Issue of inter-coder reliability; have multiple coders categorize the same messages

Presentation of Results

- Tabulate results of coding – word counts, percentages, column inches
- Interpret results in terms of theoretical expectations

Online Databases

Lexis-Nexis includes >500 daily newspapers, magazines, Blogs, and some transcripts of TV programs

http://lib.stanford.edu/lexis-nexis-academic