

Translating Texts into Interpretations and Numbers

Department of Government
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1 Texts as Sources

2 Content Analysis

3 Group Discussions

Preview

- Three weeks on data collection
 - Text analysis
 - Interviewing
 - Participant Observation
- Problem Set 4
 - Due December 15
 - Team assignment

1 Texts as Sources

2 Content Analysis

3 Group Discussions

What counts as text?

- Tertiary sources
- Secondary sources
- Primary sources

How do you use texts?

- Think about your own experience reading, interpreting, and interacting with textual sources for academic purposes (e.g, for writing a term paper).
- With the person sitting next to you, discuss:
 - 1 The process by which you try to understand the meaning and content of texts
 - 2 How you choose texts to read

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 - Possibly serve as basis of CPO

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- Text as DSOs
 - Treat texts as units

Challenges of Text

- 1 Subjectivity
- 2 Historiography
- 3 Selection bias

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Content Analysis

- Definition: “systematic description of the contents of a communication”
- Treat texts as DSOs or a source of multiple DSOs
 - Data set observation: score for a case on a variable
- Technique can be applied to any kind of document

Content Analysis Process

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- 5 Assign scores to texts based on codebook
- 6 Summarize results

Example 1: Categorization

- Common RQ relates to categorization:
What is this text saying?
- Example RQs:
 - What arguments are raised in this text?
 - Are certain ideas more prevalent in some texts than others?
 - How is an issue discussed in politics?

Example 1 (Frames/Discourses)

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Developing Codebooks I

- Developed deductively
 - 1 Start with set of concepts
 - 2 Describe how those concepts might be expressed in text
 - 3 Create a “coding scheme” by which to score a case on a variable

Developing Codebooks II

- Developed inductively
 - 1 Examine texts for key ideas and expressions
 - 2 Create a set of categories that summarize those expressions
 - 3 Examine new texts for expressions of those categories
 - 4 Expand and clarify the codebook as new concepts or expressions emerge

Codebook Examples

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- 4 List all frames used in the text
- 5 Count number of words (or characters) in sentence

Example Scoring Sheet

	Mention	Count	Affect	Frame
UKIP				
Conservative				
Labour				
LibDems				
SNP				
Greens				

Example 2: Dictionary Methods

- Rather than rely on subjective interpretation, dictionary methods create a “dictionary” of terms or expressions that operationalize a concept
- Score is based on word presence of words or their frequencies
- Often, goal is to categorize the text based on how it scores relative to other texts

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 - Sentiment (positivity/negativity)
 - Ideology (left/right)

Affect/Sentiment

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Affect/Sentiment

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Unit of Analysis

- Can be difficult to decide what the correct unit of analysis is
- Possibilities:
 - Author/Source
 - Text as a whole
 - Section
 - Page
 - Paragraph
 - Sentence
 - Sentence fragment

Sentence

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Sentence fragments

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“Bag of Words” Approaches I

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“Bag of Words” Approaches II

only all politicians could believe Britain UKIP
does only they could share our positive vision
Britain proud independent sovereign nation
country respected world stage major player
global trade influence authority comes
tackling pressing international issues day

“Bag of Words” Approaches III

independent sovereign nation country international
world global

positive proud respected major influence authority

politicians player Britain Britain UKIP

believe share tackling pressing

could could does comes

vision stage day trade issues

only only all they our

N-grams and “words”

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- These allow for *multi-word expressions*
 - “If only” has a negative connotation even though “if” and “only” are basically neutral words on their own

Content Analysis in Practice

- Inductive processes generally require a “training set” and “test set”
 - Establish coding scheme on “training set”
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 - Establish coding scheme on “training set”
 - Apply it to broader “test set”
- Be cautious about scope conditions
- Develop a precise and reliable codebook

Intercoder Reliability

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- Definition: “extent to which two (or more) coders agree on scores”
- Have multiple coders analyze same text using coding scheme
- Assess % of time they assign same scores
- Increase specificity of codebook if reliability is low ($<80\%$)

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Problem Set 4

- 1 You have been assigned teams
- 2 Develop a research question that can be answered using the party manifestos from the UK 2015 General Election
- 3 Develop a content analyze scheme or codebook and use it to analyze the manifestos
- 4 Write up your results as a group

Group Discussion Time

With remaining time, gather in your Problem Set 4 groups and discuss the assignment.

Let me know via email or office hours if you have questions between now and the due date.

Enjoy your holiday break!

