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JDAA
The Naming Phallacy

Louis A. Gottschalk and Goldine C. Gleser


Louis A. Gottschalk, Carolyn N. Winget, and Goldine C. Gleser


Reviewed by Kurt Salzinger

Luis A. Gottschalk, coauthor of both books, is Professor and Chairman, Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior, University of California at Irvine, California College of Medicine. He received his MD from Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis and was Research Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine for many years. Goldine G. Gleser is Professor of Psychology and Director, Division of Psychology, Department of Psychiatry, University of Cincinnati College of Medicine and Division of Graduate Studies. Carolyn N. Winget is a Research Associate in the Department of Psychiatry at the same institution.

The reviewer, Kurt Salzinger, is Professor of Psychology at the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn and Principal Research Scientist, Biometrics Research, New York State Department of Mental Hygiene. With his wife, Suzanne Salzinger, he edited Research in Verbal Behavior and Some Neuropsychological Implications (CP, 1968). He authored Psychology: The Science of Behavior. In press he has Schizophrenia: Behavioral Aspects.

Unlike old generals, complex theories neither die nor fade away—they just keep on rolling along. The books under review provide an explicit method for the quantification of some of the ambiguous and elusive concepts of the theory of psychoanalysis. Although validation of psychoanalytic concepts was not the intention of the authors, such concepts did, in fact, serve as the basis for the constitution of the categories of their content analysis. The contribution of these books is primarily methodological, i.e., they provide operational definitions of the concepts supplemented by frequent examples.

One such category, mutilation anxiety (considered by the authors to be synonymous with castration anxiety), includes the following examples: "The boat has a hole in it." "I got sunburned." "Now (because of the operation) I can't have babies." The reader is similarly exposed to a number of other psychoanalytic concepts and can watch them being tabulated and quantified, converted to normality by the square root transformation and analyzed by sophisticated statistical methods, related to the subjective ratings of trained psychoanalysts and to the plasma 17-hydroxycorticosteroid levels of the speakers. Despite the (in this reviewer's opinion) shaky foundation of psychoanalysis, these books present important material: extensive discussion of methodology, including the way in which the behavior of interest is evoked from the subject, how the experimenter acts during the course of data collection, the methods by which the raw data are transformed into material amenable to precise descriptive analysis ready for hypothesis testing, and, finally, more insight into the process by which the...
investigators arrived at the concepts and
in their work.

The aim of these volumes is certainly unassailable, for it consists of
making explicit a method of analysis to be applied to the most important kind
of behavior in which human beings engage, namely verbal behavior. Although
occasionally we are asked to 'do,' rather than to 'talk,' most of the time we get
away with talking rather than doing.

With respect to psychopathology one must remember that independent of
cause, behavior usually obtains its appellation 'abnormal' from the effect it
has on other people.

Verbal behavior is of course the primary avenue of social interaction and,
therefore, the phenomenon which calls the attention of the authorities to an
abnormal individual. These authorities must then make a judgment concerning
the normality of the person, based on what he says in the course of an interview.
These facts make the quantitative analysis of speech a very significant
contribution indeed.

More specifically, the authors present a method for the content analysis
of brief speech samples (typically five minutes long) collected under standard
instructions with minimal interference from the experimenter, who requires no
special training beyond that of strictly following the investigator's instructions.
The work of the coder requires only a minimum amount of interpretation.
The construction placed upon a particular speech sample, e.g., that it manifests
ambivalent hostility, is made at the level of the initial constitutions of
the categories of the content analysis rather than, as is the case in methodologically
unsound content analyses, by interpretation at the time the content analyst
is coding the material. The Gottschalk-Gleser approach not only makes the
system reliable but also translatable to investigators who have not themselves
undergone analytic training.

A number of scales that can be applied to the speech samples are presented,
five of which are described in detail: the anxiety scale, the hostility-
ated-outward scale, the hostility-
ted-inward scale, the ambivalent-
hostility scale, and the schizophrenic
(social-alienation and personal-disor-
ganization) scale. These descriptions,
accompanied by many examples in the
manual, are presented along with esti-
mates of coder reliability, and studies of
validity and generalizability. Unlike
the classical content analysis, which
limits the analyst to presence-absence
judgments, the Gottschalk-Gleser scales
are also assigned weights with respect
to degree or magnitude. The assignment
of the weights is sometimes based upon
the use of a term of emphasis, such as,
"really," which the coder can easily
find; in other cases, the assignment is
not made so explicit. For most of the
scales the weights are integers, such as,
1, 2, or 3. In the case of the schizo-
phrenia scale the weights are positive,
negative, and 0, and can take the values
of fractions as well as those of integers.
All the values are based on 'common
sense' guesses modified by validity
studies. This procedure, and the inclu-
sion of the weights in a summarizing
formula, serves to obscure what con-
tribution each category in the content
analysis makes to the success of the con-
tent analysis as a whole.

Although all the arithmetic operations
can somehow be justified to arrive at a
simple index rather than a measure of the
category in question, the formula and its complexities result in a number,
the origin of which cannot be substan-
tively explained. It serves to hide the
relationship of the raw data to the re-
sultant number which is supposed to
characterize those data. Furthermore, it
does not state the relationship among
the variables (the subcategories) which
constitute the equation. In fact the
Gottschalk-Gleser formula yields no
verbal statement worthwhile making.
And I think the authors would be among the
first to admit that the formula in
question has only the purpose of con-
vieniently summarizing some data and
does not state how the various kinds of
anxiety (to take but one example) in-
teract to yield the resultant overall
anxiety. That is the greatest shame of
all, and it applies not just to these
authors and this study. Those of us
working in psychopathology spend too
much time worrying about the elegance
of our summarizing measures and not
enough time on their substantive mean-
ing.

In general, the estimates of reliability
for the various categories are respect-
able, and the methods of arriving at
these estimates are sophisticated, from
a statistical standpoint. The validity
studies include the usual ones, namely
the relationship to results obtained
through interviews, global ratings, sub-
jective estimates, and personality tests,
but there are also additional studies re-
ating the indices to changes in physi-
ological functioning, biochemical states,
and drug effects.

The sophistication of this content analysis is greater than is usually found
in psychopathology. The authors, in considering what type of behavior they
wish to measure, have differentiated
those categories that they believe mani-
fest permanent behavioral tendencies
from those that are measures of tran-
sient states only.

On the other hand, the investigators
have not wholly avoided the pitfall of
the naming fallacy. Even if a particular
category differentiates two populations,
so does not necessarily follow that the
name given it identifies the variable
that differentiates them. While it may
be true that a person who is about to
undergo radiation therapy uses words
categorized as anxiety words, it does not follow that any differential use of
these words reflects a difference in the
'state' of anxiety. Establishment of a
real difference among subjects or situa-
tions, or in response to different drugs,
is a result only of an extensive investi-
gation of the variables responsible for
having produced the initial difference.
Rather than reflecting a difference in
the state of the organism, it may reflect
the conditioning history of the subjects,
the way people talk when given no
feedback, or the discussion the subject
had with others before entering the ex-
perimental situation.

Finally, two specific problems in the
content analysis should be noted: de-
termination of the unit and determina-
tion of its size. It is incumbent upon
content analysts to demonstrate the rel-
iliability of unitization, especially in the
case of schizophrenic speech, which con-
tains a large number of irrelevant words, making the boundaries of units rather uncertain.

The definition of the word as a unit might seem to the novice to be quite obvious. However, the definition of a word as a group of letters separated from others by spaces is not so obvious when considering speech and is not as convincing when one considers such words as 'New York.' In grappling with this problem, the authors count 'Mary Jane Smith' as one word, and yet view 'General Electric Company' as three, and the 'Good Samaritan Hospital' as two words.

In summary, although this reviewer disagrees with the writers in their choice of the basis for their categories and in some of their methodological decisions, he finds the explicitness of their approach, their attention to methodological detail, and their appreciation of the problem of validating their measures refreshing. Surely no investigator in the area of content analysis ought to construct a new system without at least seeing how Gottschalk, Winger, and Giesler handled it in these books.

Self-direction vs Conformity

Melvin L. Kohn


Reviewed by Anthony N. Doob

Melvin L. Kohn, the author, is Chief, Laboratory of Socio-environmental Studies, NIMH, where he has been since receiving his PhD in Sociology at Cornell. He is coauthor of Social Isolation and Schizophrenia; and Situational Patterning in Intergroup Relations.

The reviewer, Anthony N. Doob, is Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University of Toronto. He received his PhD from Stanford and taught there prior to his present position. With Jonathan L. Freedman he has written Deviancy: The Psychology of Being Different.

If you think you might be interested in this book because it is going to report a large number of laboratory studies where social class is the independent variable and Asch-type conformity is the dependent variable, forget it. But if you want a well-written, data-filled report of three massive studies on values as a function of social class in the United States and Italy, then this is the book for you.

Melvin Kohn, a sociologist with psychological interests, has presented very elaborate findings supporting the hypothesis that lower- and middle-class people tend to value different things for their children. Specifically, he finds that American and Italian middle-class adults tend to give high priority to values that reflect the internal dynamics (happiness, seriousness, etc.) of their children, whereas lower-class people tend to value conformity to societal norms (obedience, neatness, etc.). This finding comes up over and over again in the monograph, yet the monograph is not repetitive. The author finds this class difference consistently in virtually every conceivable splitting of the data (into different races, nationalities, groupings within social classes, etc.).

The book is set up in such a way that people with different interests can read it easily and get what they want out of it. The three basic studies are presented in the first 72 pages. Then the more intricate hypotheses are discussed as hypotheses rather than as results of each separate study. Statistical detail is usually found in footnotes at the bottom of the page, where it can be ignored by the trusting and studied by the skeptic. The exact procedures of the studies are not imposed on the casual reader, but are presented in detail in three appendices. Thus, anyone interested in reading the book simply for Kohn’s many findings can do so without burdening himself with unnecessary detail. On the other hand, if he wants to know exactly how a certain finding was arrived at, he doesn’t have to look far.

The author has presented virtually every piece of data that relates to his hypotheses in the form of sixty or so tables of correlations, each table containing a large number of different correlation coefficients. Very seldom does Kohn talk about things that are not directly related to at least one of these correlation coefficients. One of the obvious problems, of course (and it is a problem that the author is clearly aware of), is the tendency to look at a correlation matrix with, let’s say, thirty coefficients, and to discuss those six that are (happen to be?) significant. However, I should point out that this is usually true only in the secondary findings reported, not in the basic findings of the studies. A related problem is that when one is dealing with sample sizes as large as those in Kohn’s largest study (about 3,000), a correlation as small as .05 will be highly significant. As a result if one is not careful, one occasionally wastes time thinking about a correlation that is accounting for less than half of one percent of the variance but is significant beyond the 1% level. When talking about some of the secondary findings, Kohn occasionally uses this, but since the correlations are there in plain sight for any reader to look at, the reader always has the option to ignore the discussion.

One of the most interesting parts of the book (to me) was the section dealing with the forms of punishment used by the different social classes and, more specifically, with the kinds of behavior that were punished by parents in each social class. In this chapter, and indeed in most of the last two-thirds of the book, Kohn discusses how punishment and other factors propagate the values of each social class. He clearly believes that the relationship of class to values and orientation toward life is caused by such things as education and occupational position. In other words, from his correlations he attempts to draw causal inferences, yet these inferences are clearly labeled as speculative, and the reader never feels pressured into accepting the speculation.

In passing, Kohn has very interesting ideas about other related questions.