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Book Reviews

Huysmans, F., De Haan J., and Van den Broek, A. (2004). *Achter de schermen. Een kwart eeuw lezen, luisteren, kijken en internetten* [Behind the screen. Twenty-five years of reading, listening, watching, and Internet use in The Netherlands]. Den Haag: SCP. ISBN 90-377-0129-9 (297 pp.)

“There is a ... need for more analytic thinking about, and above all more comprehensive and critical inquiry into, communication phenomena and their relation to the way societies function.” (MacBride, 1981: 223). This well-known, although somewhat dated statement of the so-called MacBride commission published in the early 1980s, proves to be prevalent today in a variety of ways. First of all, in providing policy makers and ordinary citizens with insights into the development of communication media within modern society by means of social and/or cultural indicators, and related statistics. Secondly, in terms of the ongoing task of providing fellow researchers with information on development and trends in media and communication in order to solve the problem of designing relevant projects of current communication research.

One of the prerequisites of successful communication research, of course, is the proper documentation and discussion of results, findings and insights of previous research efforts. How else can one learn from previous successes, and profit from past failures? How else are we able to know about relevant developments and trends, which are urgently needed if we are to design our research projects in an adequate manner?

In contrast to these rather self-evident, or even common-place statements, comprehensive overviews of inquiries into the development of communication phenomena and their relation to the way the Dutch society functions have been essentially lacking. Despite the impressive amount of money spent on Dutch communication research – academic or administrative – over the past twenty-five years, comprehensive overviews of developments in media provision, media equipment, and media exposure, and thus, comprehensive overviews of trends in media use have not emerged.

The only recently published study *Behind the screen* (“Achter de schermen”) by Frank Huysmans, Jos de Haan, and Andries van den Broek, all of them affiliated with the Dutch Social and Cultural Planning Office (SCP), has changed this situation significantly. As the Dutch media landscape underwent far-reaching changes in the period between 1975 and 2000, this study focuses “... on the impact of media diversification on the media use of the Dutch since 1975, looking in turn at printed media,

audiovisual media and digital media.” (267). The hardware changes of the Dutch media landscape in the last quarter of the century include the introduction of color television, hi-fi stereo music installations, video recorders, and personal computers with Internet access in Dutch households. The software, or organizational, changes in this period include, among other things, the introduction of commercial radio and television. In regard to three media types – print, AV, and digital media – a distinction is made between media provision, ownership of media equipment, media reach and the time devoted to media exposure.

The authors introduce these concepts thoroughly as follows: “The media provision encompasses the total spectrum of news, background information, leisure, music, etc. Ownership of media equipment relates to the presence of equipment and information carriers in the household. Together, the media provision and media equipment offer a range of options that could not possibly be fully utilized by every individual, and thus choices have to be made. Media reach indicates what proportion of the population uses a particular medium. The time use measure indicates the duration of that use.” (ibid.). This proves to be convenient, as the authors explicitly aim at providing “... policy-makers with a comprehensive overview of the size and profile of the groups using the various media, as well as of changes therein.” (267).

Of course, it is not the right place here, to go too far into the details of this indeed comprehensive overview that is especially intended to close an existing information gap regarding media use in the Netherlands. However, some of the main results will be presented here, since they reveal some expected as well as some surprising trends in media provision, media equipment, and media use. The data, mainly Dutch and European-based studies such as time-budgeting studies, refer to the Dutch population older than 12 years of age.

- The decline in the use of printed media by the Dutch continued during the whole period under investigation, 1975–2000. Despite just a gradual reduction in the number of newspapers “... fewer and fewer households take a newspaper regularly ... and book sales overall have shown a marked decline.” (269). Time spent on reading books, magazines, and newspapers was reduced from an average of 6.1 hours per week in 1975 to an average of 3.9 hours per week in 2000, accounting for 21% (33%) of the total time spent on media and ICT use in 2000 (cf. Table 9.1: 199).
- In regard to AV media, there was an explosive growth in the number of televised program hours during the period 1975–2000. “Leaving aside foreign broadcasters and broadcasters focusing on specific target groups, the number of program hours on Dutch television doubled within the space of a few years.” (270). This growth in AV program-

ming was accompanied by a considerable increase in the amount of technically advanced AV equipment: “The single black-and-white television set was replaced by one or more color TVs with remote control, generally linked to a video recorder, and towards the end of the period increasingly frequently a DVD player, and possibly high-quality sound equipment.” (ibid.). The time spent on TV lags behind the enormous expansion in supply and ownership of AV equipment: “The largest increase in TV use took place in the period up to 1985, i. e., before the increase in the number of (foreign, commercial) broadcasters. The time people now spend watching commercial channels has therefore mainly been at the expense of the time spent watching the public broadcasters.” (ibid.). Time spent on watching TV increased from an average of 10.2 hours per week in 1975 to an average of 12.4 hours per week in 2000. In short, the amount of time spent on watching TV in 2000 represents 66% of the total time spent on media and ICT use (cf. Table 9.1: 199).

- Ownership and use of personal computers and Internet in the period 1975–2000 show a somewhat different development in the Netherlands: “The breakthrough of the PC was driven by its use as a gateway to games, accounting systems and desktop publishing applications. This was later followed by the rise of the Internet; within the space of a few years around the turn of the millennium, the number of Internet users rocketed.”(271). In the Netherlands, as well as in the rest of the world, young people, higher income groups and the highly educated led the way in the purchase of PCs and the use of the Internet. Time spent on computer, Internet and e-mail use increased from an average of 0.1 hours per week in 1985 to an average of 1.8 hours per week in 2000; this accounts for 9% of the total time spent on media and ICT in 2000 (cf. Table 9.1: 199).

One of the surprising developments with regard to media supply, media equipment and media use in the Netherlands – as depicted by the study of Huysmans, De Haan, and Van den Broek (cf. Huysmans and De Haan, 2002) – can be characterized using the following three facts:

- Whereas media supply and media equipment within Dutch households increased considerably in the period 1975–2000, the time spent on media use in general essentially remained stable in this period. In 2000 the average time spent on media use in the Netherlands amounts to 18.7 hours per week (1975: 18.5 hours).
- In 2000 more than 40% of the total leisure time of the Dutch population (45 hours per week) is devoted to the use of the media and ICT, i. e., on average 18.7 hours per week.

- In 2000 approximately 66% of the total time devoted to media use was spent on watching television (1975: 55%). In 2000, watching TV amounts to an average of 12.4 hours per week (1975: 10.2 hours), which makes up 27% of the total leisure time of the Dutch population older than 12 years.

These findings are very much in line with Livingstone's (2002) conclusions, since one of the probably central results of her study on *Young People and New Media* reads as follows: "Despite all the hype about new media displacing old media, for most children television remains far and away the most popular medium ..." (60). Is it possible that we are still overestimating the impact of ICT and New Media on our everyday time budgets?

All in all, it is evident that the present study successfully closes the information gap with regard to trends in media supply and equipment, media exposure and media use in the Netherlands. This is managed against the background of recent societal changes within the Dutch society, while the book also explores comparisons with (data from) European Union member states. It is thus a useful publication, not just for policy-makers but also for the community of communication researchers seeking a comprehensive and critical inquiry into communication phenomena and their relation to the way the Dutch society functions.

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Schrøder, K., Drotner, K., Kline, S., and Murray C. (2003). *Researching Audiences*. London: Arnold. ISBN 0-340-76274-8 (422 pp.)

Most of us, even those of us who claim research methodology as an area of expertise, do not read methods textbooks for pleasure. Distaste towards this genre of literature is a reaction to the generally technical

orientation, cookbook-style, and just plain boring presentation of the content. Well, there is a 'new boy in town' and *Researching Audiences* does short shrift with the above-mentioned stereotypes. This methods textbook is, in a word, excellent and is well suited for a wide array of readers – students and researchers – concerned with the elusive entity known as media audiences. The book is targeted, in the words of the authors, at 'mature undergraduate students' (viii), but the engaging and scholarly presentation is equally suitable for graduate students and practicing researchers.

The four authors of *Researching Audiences*, based in Denmark and Canada, have prepared a lucid and historically grounded presentation of the main strands of media audience research: Ethnography, reception studies, surveys, and social science experiments. Each of these paradigms of audience research is developed with a set of three chapters – one that lays out the practice of audience research from the perspective under consideration, a second that defines the field, and a third, called a 'tool-box', which contains practical comments and suggestions particularly aimed at student readers and researchers undertaking a study in a particular niche of audience studies for the first time.

These sets of chapters are preceded by a section that outlines the argument for these divisions, sketches the history of audience research and lays out an argument for methodological pluralism and what the authors term 'discursive realism'. The book concludes with a two-chapter section devoted to aspects of methodological pluralism (Chapter 17) and the emergence of new media, a development that challenges traditional notions audience and suggests a new term, 'users', to convey the more active stance required when communication technologies such as mobile telephones and the Internet are the topics of study (Chapter 18).

One of the attractions of the book is the extended critical discussion of empirical studies conducted within the four areas of audience research. For example, media ethnography is situated in the long, rich tradition of ethnographic studies in anthropology and sociology. Sections of this chapter (Chapter 6) treat the transformation of the research approach to communication studies, providing discussion of research designs, position of field researchers and duration of studies, developing theoretical constructs, and finally, preparing scholarly publications. These features are repeated for each of the paradigms presented in the other divisions of the book.

Researching Audiences is not a textbook in the conventional American conceptualization of such literature with end-of-chapter items such as review questions, exercises, and annotated readings. Nor is there a separate guide for instructors that accompanies the text, including outlines

for lectures, in-class exercises and homework assignments. Perhaps the one explicit textbook feature in the book is the 'toolbox' chapters concluding each of the four sections on central approaches to audience research. These chapters will undoubtedly be valuable for student readers and others who are not familiar with the 'nuts and bolts' of doing ethnography or conducting reception studies. At the same time, the toolbox chapters for both ethnography and survey research provide only limited attention to the computer software available for data entry and analysis in qualitative and quantitative studies. A few references are given for supplementary literature on software supporting qualitative studies, which are helpful to readers interested in these tools. More attention, however, might have been given to these developments and to the major software packages for processing quantitative data. The authors probably felt that there is more than adequate literature on SPSS and SAS, which is true, but I am not certain this applies with the same force to software supporting qualitative data collection and analysis such as Nud.ist, Kwalitan and Ethnograph.

The bibliography is extensive and serves as a valuable resource for all readers of the book. I would think, however, that students would benefit by short annotated selected references at the end of core chapters, which would make the some 600 entries in the 33-page list of references more manageable.

A thread running through the entire book, of course, is the notion of audience. Discussion of the concept is initiated very early with an appropriate quotation from Denis McQuail who emphasizes the multiple meanings attributed to the concept across time and between specializations of communication studies. The authors bring concreteness to this general, somewhat theoretical, discussion through presentation of a typical diary of media behavior (9) where some dozen moments of media attention and use are recorded.

This discussion continues through all of the chapters and comes to a climax at the end of the book, in Chapter 18, where the concept is considered within the context of interactive media. Here, the authors present a valuable discussion of interactivity, drawing on the now classic conceptual framework developed by the Dutch scholars Bordewijk and Van Kaam, but astutely adapted by the Dane Jens Jensen for a variety of new communication technologies. In this context, the authors of *Researching Audiences* acknowledge that 'audience' is perhaps an inappropriate, if not misleading, term for studying interactive media, where audience members become the producers of media messages, as is the case with many forms of community media and new communication technologies.

This discussion leads, almost seamlessly, to consideration of the need for methodological pluralism and discussion of triangulation of research

methods. This is not a new idea, but the strength of the argument, as presented in Chapter 17, is exceptional. This argument dismisses the frequently facile call for triangulation of methods, correctly pointing out that such a simplistic compilation of data from multiple sources does not necessarily provide robustness to the conclusions of a study. The authors persuasively demonstrate the fallacy of this stance. More important, they recommend a solution – reconsideration of a research method that integrates qualitative and quantitative approaches developed decades ago: Q-methodology. The recommendation is persuasively illustrated with communication studies where the methodology has been successfully employed. This chapter is, in fact, an illustration of the solid critical scholarship present in the book and resembles work more usually identified with a journal publication than a textbook. In this sense, the book is illustrative of both a high-quality scholarly monograph and, at the same time, an engaging primer in research methodology.

Although the authors advocate multiple methods in the study of audiences, they do not address the need to incorporate all the components of the communication process into a research design: The producers of messages, the messages themselves, and the receivers or audience members of media content. In a sense, this is understandable for a book concentrating on audiences. For an all-encompassing research design, however, messages and message producers must be taken into account, and I would have been interested in the way the authors would construct such an overall study.

Independent of such criticisms, I highly recommend this book to instructors needing a supplementary textbook for undergraduate or graduate coursework on communications research methods or on audience studies. I also recommend it to scholars approaching audience research for the first time and needing a thorough and readable introduction. The pedagogical deficiencies in the book, mentioned above, could be overcome through development of a Web site for the book, providing some of the conventional instructional materials often desirable for coursework: Assignments, study questions, supplementary literature and Web sites devoted to research methods and audience studies. I would recommend the authors, possibly in collaboration with readers, contribute to such resources. In that manner the volume could become a collective and dynamic ‘living’ resource for a growing and important segment of the field, researching media audiences.

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Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content analysis. An introduction to its methodology* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oakes: Sage. ISBN 0-7619-1544-3 (413 pp.)

For many decades, content analysis was mainly known in journalism and newspaper studies. In the last decades, an increasing number of media and a corresponding multiplication of media documents have made content analysis one of the most important research methods for the social sciences at large.

Krippendorff's *Content Analysis* (1980) was for long the primary sourcebook for the history and core principles of content analysis as a research method. Although welcome because of its profound discussion of assumptions, framework and logic of content analysis procedures, this first edition is mostly remembered by my students as an unattractive bundle of rather dense text. In contrast, the revised edition must be praised for its clear organization and readability. Much effort has been made to give the book an attractive layout. Also, although only a handful of substantive paragraphs have been added, the message is brought in twice as many pages (188 pages in the first edition versus 411 in the second edition).

The (same) chapters are now grouped in three main parts. Part I, *Conceptualizing Content Analysis*, starts with an overview of the history of content analysis. In Chapter 2 a definition of content analysis is discussed that gives the method a distinguished place between other methods of social scientific inquiry. Chapter 3 gives an overview of some of the ways in which content analysis has been applied.

The chapters in Part II, *Components of Content Analysis*, outline the procedures used in content analysis. In Chapter 4 designs for content analysis and their procedural logic are discussed. Chapter 5 addresses the units of analysis relevant for content analysis. Chapter 6 is devoted to an overview of the sampling techniques that can be applied. Chapter 7 describes the process of recording and coding, the core process of data-making in content analysis. Chapter 8 and 9 discuss the transformation of raw data with the use of data languages and analytic constructs.

The chapters in Part III, *Analytical Paths and Evaluative Techniques*, are devoted to several practical content analysis procedures. Chapter 10 discusses different statistical techniques that can be applied. Chapter 11 discusses the procedures to evaluate the reliability of the coding process, and Chapter 13 develops a typology of validation efforts that the content analyst may utilize. Strangely enough, Chapter 12 separates the two chapters devoted to methodological evaluation. This chapter is devoted to the use of computers and computational techniques in the research

process. The final chapter is dedicated to a practical guide that summarizes the foregoing discussion from a practitioner's perspective.

Although the outline of this new edition remains essentially unchanged from that of the first edition (only the chapters on computer use respectively validity were moved), all chapters have been revised, many chapters have become an introduction paragraph, and in several chapters developments that have taken place in the last decades, such as qualitative procedures and computational content analysis techniques, are discussed extensively.

Chapter 12 on computer aided text analysis is completely rewritten and discusses the many ways computers can support content analysis nowadays. The chapter reviews computer-aided text analysis, searches on electronically available documents, forms of computational content analysis, computer programs assisting in qualitative analyses, and discusses future developments of computer use in content analysis research. A second relevant revision concerns the discussion of qualitative forms of content analysis. This improvement, however, has not lead to a new integrative chapter, but is limited to the introduction of paragraphs on procedures for qualitative content analysis in Chapters 1, 4, 6 and 12.

A third relevant revision concerns the chapters on reliability (Chapter 11) and validity (Chapter 13), which are completely rewritten and provide new procedures and corresponding statistical formulas.

Krippendorff introduces content analysis as a method designed to study symbolic phenomena. Its most important methodological advantage is its unobtrusiveness: The raw text materials (such as news reports, video clips, graffiti, meeting minutes, police records, television comedies, or billboard advertisements) are produced in everyday social situations, out of any kind of researcher control. In contrast to the participant observer, interviewer, or survey researcher, who has to deal with the reactivity of their method, the content analyst uses natural documents that already exist. Moreover, content analysis processes documents that are produced according to the aims and criteria relevant in these everyday situations. These documents in turn allow the researcher to make inferences to the contexts relevant for their production.

In short, in Part I Krippendorff presents content analysis as a method for systematic inferential research on symbolic materials. In his view, all reading of texts is qualitative (16), but the protocol the analyst has to follow should be systematic. In discussing his analytical perspective on content analysis as a research method, Krippendorff has reformulated and reordered the core concepts of his framework for content analysis. *Data, context, knowledge, target, inference* and *validity* are now reformulated in terms of *texts* (in regard to data, this was also used in quite another sense in the logic: Data-making), *research questions* (instead of

the ambiguous term target), *context*, *analytical constructs* (instead of knowledge), *inferences* and *validating evidence*. In discussing the forms of content analysis (Chapter 3) he has reformulated some of his inference models too. The system model for inferences is now termed *extrapolations*, and the communication model has been reformulated *conversations*. These revisions have clearly contributed to the readability of the text.

Although Krippendorff underlines in his conceptual perspective on content analysis the interpretive basis of the method, the procedures in the rest of the book follow the protocols for systematic-quantifying research designs. Qualitative approaches are mentioned (as alternative ways for *exploring* texts systematically) but in the elaborations of the components of the content analysis (logic components), qualitative procedures are not systematically discussed in terms of an integrative logic. But the same holds for quantifying procedures: The book gives an overview of alternative procedures for sampling, recording and analysis from an analytic methodological perspective, but does not choose integrative protocols. The book provides a palette of alternative procedures with their pros and cons for each component of the research design, but somewhat neglects the coherence between chosen elements in one design.

Perhaps that is why the chapter on the observation instrument (the coding scheme as basis for each type of content analysis) has been left out. In order to find relevant data to obtain answers to research questions, the analyst should translate the conceptual model into observational terms that fit the document text. In content analysis, operationalization of concepts means the definition of topics, characteristics and related categories, but also related recording and context units and instructions to use units, topics, characteristics and categories. All these are discussed in the book, but scattered over several chapters (Unitizing, Recording, Data languages and Analytical constructs). The instrument itself, the coding scheme, is only discussed in analytical terms. Even in the practical guide (Chapter 14) the coding scheme as the instrument to be applied is only discussed in terms of developing categories and recording instructions (such as operational definitions). The practical aspects of developing and using the coding scheme, its relationship with the conceptual framework and analytical constructs, are not illustrated. It is a book for architects, not for builders.

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