

## RESEARCH INTO PERSONAL VALUES IN TERMS OF QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF DOCUMENTS

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**Abstract.** *This research has emerged from a real-life situation where there was a need to find out for what are the life values and which values are followed by a participant.*

*The study was commissioned in connection with legal proceedings. In this research there is only one participant. The purpose of the study is to explore the categories of personal values and the inherent characteristics of the person revealed in the documents submitted to the study. The study was conducted using a qualitative data-processing method: contentanalysis.*

*The documents analysed in this study consist of three sets of data: telephone text messages, letters and notes and conclusions of psychological studies.*

*A total of eight letters and notes on ten pages have been analysed four hundred and forty-two telephone text messages have been analysed and six psychological investigations conclusions have been analysed on fifteen pages. The conclusions of the psychological investigations where that they were also used as instruments for confirmation of external credibility. The study resulted in individual-specific value categories and external validation of the research has been confirmed.*

**Keywords:** *document analysis; contentanalysis; values; forensic psychology, personality*

### Introduction

Practical work that involves an examination of a client's personality usually makes use of quantitative research methods such as tests and surveys. These methods require a long time of client involvement, because they usually have to answer a great many questions; here may even be more than 100 question is a single test. Qualitative research methods such as interviews and conversations can also be used in such research processes, but it must be noted that these methods mean that the client must definitely be involved in the process and be motivated to do so. Such processes also have certain shortcomings in that the client may want to manipulate the information that is provided. According to Pipere, for instance, if a direct question is posed that might characterise the respondent from an undesirable perspective, then the person might want to provide a false answer to create a better impression about himself than is actually the case (Pipere, 2011a). Plummer and Johnson also argue that people who talk about their lives

tend to forget something, change facts or keep quiet about them (Plummer, 2001; Johnson, 2001).

For that reason, this study is based on the goal of examining a person's value categories and personal characteristics. The author proposed three research questions:

- A) Does the content of notes and short letters reveal personal values and characteristics?
- B) Does the content of SMS messages on a telephone reveal personal values and characteristics?
- C) Is the analysis of SMS messages, notes and short letters valid to determine personal values and characteristics?

Document analysis is the research method. Pipere argues that this is qualitative data extraction method that makes it possible to examine a specific process of phenomenon (Pipere, 2011a). She writes: "Documents are any written materials that contain information about the phenomenon that is being studied" (Pipere, 2011a, 188).

### **The literature review**

An examination of the currently available broad diversity of research, there were no similar studies of how psychological and qualitative research methods can be used for document analysis that leads to the processing of results with the content analysis method so as to determine the individual's value system. In psychological practice, however, this research instrument would be of practical value, because it makes it possible to examine a person's personality without the individual's presence or involvement, thus learning about his or her value system.

According to Shalom Schwartz in "Theory of Basic Values," values are a factor that is brought to bear in describing various groups, cultures and individuals. These values change over the course of time, allowing us to explain human behaviours and attitudes. That is because when we think about our values, we think about that which is important in our lives. Our values are directly one of the central components of a personality, and they are a critical motivator when it comes to human behaviours and attitudes. Equally important is the fact that human values determine how they accept or reject overall social norms (Schwartz, 2012).

Schwartz identifies ten basic values:

1. Power: Control or dominance over people and resources;
2. Success: Personal achievements which confirm competence in accordance with social standards;
3. Hedonism: Enjoyment and sensual self-satisfaction;
4. Stimulation: Excitement, youthfulness and challenges in life;

5. Self-direction: Independent thinking and actions with choices, creativity and research;
6. Universalism: Understanding, recognition, tolerance and protection of the welfare of all people and their nature;
7. Favour: Preserving and improving the welfare of those with whom one frequently communicates;
8. Tradition: Observing and accepting traditions and ideas from traditional culture or religion;
9. Conformity: Limitation of activities, yearnings and impulse that may bother or harm others or violate social demands or norms;
10. Security: Security in societies, relationships and oneself, along with harmony and stability (Schwartz, 2012).

Milton Rokeach, for his part has divided values into two groups:

1. Terminal values, which people seek and wish to achieve in their lives as final goals -- enjoyment, freedom, family safety, internal harmony, a comfortable life, fortune, peace in the world, mature love, achievements, self-respect, true friendship, salvation, beauty in the world, social recognition, national security and equality.
2. Instrumental values that determine the dominant model of behaviour and the model of activity that will achieve terminal values - responsibility, courage, joie de vivre, honesty, ambition, intellect, helpfulness, imagination, logic, love and independence (Rokeach, 1973).

When writing down notes or letters, people express their thoughts. This involves specific words or statements. Thoughts can not only be written down as notes, but also expressed in stories that people tell about their own lives. Such stories, whether they are related to the past, present or future, are researched on the basis of a different qualitative research method - the narrative method. A narrative is a story about oneself (Miles & Huberman, 2002) from the first-person perspective (Pipere, 2011c) or from the third person perspective (Haug, 1987).

According to Pipere, a narrative can be autobiographic, biographic, related to the history of one's life or an autoethnographic story (Pipere, 2011c). It can identify future dreams and expectations (Pipere & Dombrovskis, 2012), an indicator of future goals (Dombrovskis, 2017), or an indicator of aspects of personal identity (Dombrovskis, 2011). A narrative also reflects a person's values (Elliott, 2005).

In evaluating and analysing these two qualitative research methods - narrative and document analysis - one really can see that the boundaries between them are very vague and unclear. This makes it hard to know what exactly being analysis. Analysis of newspaper articles, for instance, means that they are to be seen as documents, while the true analysis focuses on interviews, life stories or

the presentation of facts. Narrative psychologists Willing and Stainton-Rogers argue that any document that has been written by a person must be seen as a narrative and can be used as a source of information when examining a person's personality (Willing & Stainton-Rogers, 2008).

## **Methodology**

### *Data extraction and analytical methods*

Research data were obtained by the client, who submitted a set of documents with three subsets - SMS messages (notarised), letters and notes, and texts related to conclusions from psychological research (prepared by professional psychologists). These are documents with elements of a narrative. Notes are random and without an addressee. Here are a few examples:

*"On board a bus, a terrorist pulls the key off a hand grenade and hands it to the driver (as if he were paying for a ticket). When the driver receives the grenade, it explodes at the moment when he presents the ticket, and the terrorist receives the driver's hand with the ticket. He is satisfied, takes the ticket and disembarks from the bus."*

Another example:

*"In a carriage, but large and bearded. The mother feeds her child (infant) with a little spoon and watches television at the same time. She is excited about something interesting that she sees. The infant is also excited. He eats the little spoon and his mommy's hand. A caramel!"*

Letters involve more self-reflection (Vargas, 2018), as opposed to transferring messages or learning things. The author analysed 23 notes and letters on ten pages. An example:

*"I know, however, that I am sometimes contradictory, and I have no reason to be ashamed about that, because that is who I am, and I do not at all want to change."*

The point of SMS texts was determined on the basis of what the other person wrote. The author numbered and analysed 442 SMS messages. The analysis was based on conclusions from six psychologists on 23 pages, prepared with various time intervals between 2014 and 2018. The psychologists used various research instruments, and not all of them indicated the achieved results, instead only writing about the most important accents and providing a generalised review with conclusions.

The data were analysed with the content analysis (Kroplis & Rascevska, 2004) or, more precisely, the qualitative content analysis (Pipere, 2011b) method. This meant a separation between SMS messages, letters and notes, preparing a unit of purport and reducing the content of the texts to keywords. These keywords were counted up and expressed in percentages to determine their weight in the

analysed set of data. From the conclusions from psychologists, the author identified the characteristics that were discovered via psychological testing. The results of analysing said characteristics were used to compare the content analysis result and to test their validity.

### *The research cohort*

The specifics of this qualitative study meant that the research involved legal proceedings in which one person took part. The person is a man, 48 years old, married and with several children. He is quite successful in life and has had noticeable results in the things that he does. According to qualitative research scholars (Pipere, 2011c), the number of people on the qualitative research cohort is not strictly defined. It can be made up of just a few people or several dozen, but if there are too many or too few members of the cohort, there are fundamental shortcomings such as a lack of information or, on the contrary, too much information. Still, there are cases in which there is only one participant in the qualitative research.

## Results and discussion

*Table 1 Results from the analysis of letters and notes (Dombrovskis, this study)*

| Keyword              | Frequency of use | % of all statements | Phrase  |
|----------------------|------------------|---------------------|---|
| Subconscious sadism  | 17               | 33%                 | "Torment you frequently and each time that I have problems"                 |
| Loss of self-control | 11               | 22%                 | "I am afraid of my own inhuman spite"                                       |
| Hurting someone else | 6                | 12%                 | "I had bad feelings an wanted you to have them, too"                        |
| Confusion            | 3                | 6%                  | "I don't know what to do"   |
| Threats              | 2                | 4%                  | "I will hate you"   |
| Humiliation          | 2                | 5%                  | "I wanted to humiliate you"   |
| Apathy               | 2                | 4%                  | "Unless you allow me to love you, I will start to hate you."                |
| Use of the other     | 2                | 4%                  | "You love yourself, and I need your personality as an object of confession" |
| Inferiority complex  | 2                | 4%                  | "The desire to be different"  |
| Causing pain         | 1                | 2%                  | "I am not shy about hurting you"  |
| Pain                 | 1                | 2%                  | "Brotherhood in pain"   |
| Haughtiness          | 1                | 2%                  | "I would present myself a gift so that I am appreciated"                    |
| Lies                 | 1                | 2%                  | "This text will create an incorrect understanding of me"                    |

The author defined 13 categories (Table 1). The most often discovered elements were sadism (subconscious sadism with 17 citations or 33%), a lack of self-control (11 citations, 22%), and the desire to harm the other person (6 citations, 12%). Less often mentioned categories included confusion, threats, humiliation, apathy, use of the other, an inferiority complex, causing pain, pain, haughtiness and lies.

Analysis of notes and the text of letters showed that dominant value categories include a subconscious desire to be sadistic so that the other person suffers. The person cannot control these yearnings.

*Table 2 The results of analysis of SMS messages (Dombrovskis, this study)*

| Keyword                   | Frequency of use | % of all statements |
|---------------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Aggression                | 9                | 17%                 |
| Not counting on the other | 8                | 15%                 |
| Meeting                   | 6                | 11%                 |
| Violence                  | 6                | 11%                 |
| Concern                   | 6                | 22%                 |
| Incomprehension           | 4                | 8%                  |
| Excuses                   | 3                | 6%                  |
| Nihilism                  | 3                | 6%                  |
| Accusations               | 2                | 4%                  |
| Incompetence              | 2                | 4%                  |
| Promise to care           | 1                | 2%                  |
| Communications problems   | 1                | 2%                  |
| Apathy                    | 1                | 2%                  |
| Manipulation              | 1                | 2%                  |

Content analysis of SMS messages (Table 2) involved 14 categories and coded words - meeting, accusation, care, promise to care, aggression, incomprehension, communications problems, not counting on the other, nihilism, violence, excuses, apathy, incompetence and manipulation. Most often used in the contacts were aggression (17%), not counting on the other (15%), care, violence and meeting (11%) and incomprehension (8%). The other categories were mentioned 6% or less of the time.

To compare the keywords from the letters, notes and SMS messages to the conclusions from psychologists, the author first synthesised the keywords so as to define 16 categories (Table 3). This shows that there are four major categories - subconscious sadism, harming the other and humiliating the other (31.7%), meeting and care (12.5%), a lack of self-control (10.6%), not counting on the interests and needs of others (10.6%), as well as aggression (8.7%). The proportion of the other defined categories was between 3.8% and 1%.

**Table 3 Comparison of the results of analysing letters, notes and SMS messages to conclusions from psychologists (Dombrovskis, this study)**

| Keyword   | Frequency of use | % of all statements | Characteristics noted by psychologists   |
|---|------------------|---------------------|--|
| Subconscious sadism, harm, forcing the other to suffer, humiliation | 33               | 31.7%               | There is emotional violence  |
| Meeting and care  | 13               | 12.5%               | The desire to meet and establish relationships and contacts  |
| Lack of self-control  | 11               | 10.6%               | ---  |
| Not counting on the needs or interests of others                    | 11               | 10.6%               | Taking decisions that are only important for the individual, not counting on the needs or interests of those who are close to the individual |
| Aggression  | 9                | 8.7%                | Easily violates rules  |
| Incomprehension   | 4                | 3.8%                | Does not understand the needs of others  |
| Using the other, manipulation                                       | 4                | 3.8%                | Reaching goals at any cost   |
| Confusion   | 3                | 2.9%                | Increased stress that leads to confusion and depression  |
| Excuses   | 3                | 2.9%                | No admission to one's mistakes   |
| Nihilism  | 3                | 2.9%                | Criticism is perceived, but not respected  |
| Inferiority complex   | 2                | 1.9%                | Feeling helpless   |
| Threats   | 2                | 1.9%                | Reaching goals at any cost   |
| Haughtiness   | 1                | 1.0%                | Denial of problems, demonstration  |
| Communications problems   | 1                | 1.0%                | ---  |

The comparison from these categories and the conclusions of psychologists (Table 3) show links in 13 of 16 cases, or 81%. It is also evident that the results of content analysis related to letters, notes and SMS messages provide more extensive information about the individual.

In analysing the values that were identified via the content analysis and in comparing these to Schwartz's (Schwartz, 2012) "Theory of Basic Values" and the ten values identified therein, the research subject coincided with these values: power, success, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction and a complete indication or opposite (negative pole) relation to basic values such as favour, universalism and conformity.

In comparison to the value classification of Rokeach (Rokeach, 1973), links can be found to terminal values such as freedom, achievements and social recognition, as well as instrumental values such as courage, ambition and independence. It is also to define terminal values such as relationships, as well as instrumental values such as humiliating others, punishment, aggression, manipulation, ignoring others, blamelessness, nihilism and creation of fears.

## **Conclusions**

The research results make it possible to draw conclusions and to answer the research questions.

When it comes to the first one - whether the content of notes and short letters reveals the values and characteristics of the individual - the answer is yes. Such content does reveal the person's values and characteristics, and the author found that the dominant value categories and personal characteristics are linked to a subconscious desire to be sadistic and violent, as well as to humiliate another person so as to cause suffering and pain in that person. The person cannot control these yearnings and lacks empathy.

The second question - whether the content of SMS messages reveals the individual's values and characteristics - can also be answered in the affirmative. This content reveals values and characteristics which point toward aggression, violence, not counting on others, manipulation, haughty carelessness about others, as well as the desire for communications and care for the other person which may not happen because communicative problems, while the inability to be guilty requires excuses.

The third question - whether analysis of SMS messages notes and letters is valid and can be used to study the person's values and characteristics - can also be answered affirmatively. A comparison of the categories that were defined during content analysis of letters, notes and SMS messages to the conclusions of psychologists, it was found that there was correspondence between the two in 13 of 16 cases, or 81%. What is more, the results from the content analysis of letters, notes and SMS messages offered broader information about the individual.

The conclusion is that the results of content analysis of short letters, notes and SMS messages lay bare the person's values, leading values, as well as terminal and instrumental values.

## **Summary**

This paper, "Research into Personal Values in Terms of Qualitative Analysis of Documents," offers a review of theories about qualitative research methods in the field of psychology -- the narrative approach, analysis of documents and



content analysis to characterise an individual. The paper is about a study that was aimed at examining categories of values and characteristics in the individual, as found in the documents that were submitted to the author. The first question: Does the content of notes and short letters reveal personal values and characteristics? The second: Does the content of SMS messages on a telephone reveal personal values and characteristics? The third: Is the analysis of SMS messages, notes and short letters valid to determine personal values and characteristics? All three questions were answered in the affirmative. The theoretical part of the paper reviews qualitative research related to narratives, document analysis and qualitative content analysis, taking a look at theoretical aspects of personal values, classification of these aspects, as well as a definition of fundamental, terminal and instrumental values. The validity of the results was inspected on the basis of conclusions from many psychologists, and the validity was demonstrated, thus indicating that the method can be brought to bear in practice. The research cohort involved just one man, and that had to do with the practical commission of the study and the specific fact that a legal process meant that there was a need for such research.

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