

A Companion to Qualitative Analysis

Theory and Practice
of Thick Analysis



Jeanine Evers

Inkijkexemplaar



Qualitative analysis resembles a puzzle; you are confronted with a heap of data and you find yourself wondering: what should I do next? Ideally, you have already started the analysis before the amount of data becomes overwhelming. However, realistically, qualitative research inevitably generates a large amount of data that requires thorough organization, interpretation, combination and manipulation.

A Companion to Qualitative Analysis introduces the concept of *Thick analysis*, a triangulation strategy that enables you to systematically examine your data from a broad perspective to get the most out of your research. Part I of the book provides a theoretical overview of different analysis methods, the use of QDAS (qualitative data analysis software), ethical considerations and quality demands. Part II illustrates what the combination of different analyses of the same dataset by several researchers yields. This is what Thick analysis is about!

Jeanine Evers wants to challenge you to think and grow, while reading and rereading, to understand what Thick analysis might mean for your own research.

Jeanine Evers studied Cultural Anthropology and Public Administration. She has been associated with several universities in the Netherlands as lecturer of qualitative research methods. Currently, she is owner-director of Evers Research & training, an agency that provides training and coaching in qualitative methods and analysis software for researchers and PhD students.

Appropriate for PhD, Master and Bachelor students and researchers in different phases of their career

Amsterdam
University
Press



Inkijkexemplaar

A Companion to Qualitative Analysis

A COMPANION TO QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS
THEORY AND PRACTICE OF THICK ANALYSIS

JEANINE EVERS

AMSTERDAM UNIVERSITY PRESS

Inkijkexemplaar

Cover illustration: Haags Blauw, Den Haag
Cover design: Wendy Kulsdom | Geindesign, Den Haag
Lay-out: Wendy Kulsdom | Geindesign, Den Haag
Translation: DeepL NMT-plugin in Trados Studio 2024 (Trados Team, Leiden University). Post-editing and revision: Think & Thick Translators Inc. under supervision of Aletta G. Dorst.

© Jeanine Evers / Amsterdam University Press B.V., Amsterdam 2025

isbn 9789048569175
e-isbn 9789048569182
doi 10.5117/978904856917
nur 143

All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the written permission of both the copyright owner and the author of the book. Every effort has been made to obtain permission to use all copyrighted illustrations reproduced in this book. Nonetheless, whosoever believes to have rights to this material is advised to contact the publisher.

FOREWORD

The idea for this book arose around 2005; it became a diptych about interviewing and analysis in qualitative research. I did not want to write a recipe book as I think that qualitative research is more than just applying techniques. Instead, I wanted to allow room for the creativity of the researcher whilst keeping it concrete and not construct a 'black box'. Therefore, both books have a format in which the first part discusses the theory behind the method, supplemented with tips from practical experience. The second part of both books consists of articles in which experienced researchers illustrate their practical experiences with applying the method. The first part of the diptych, *The Qualitative Interview: Art and Skill*, appeared in 2007 in Dutch and is now in its third edition in Dutch (2023).

The second part of the diptych, on qualitative analysis, first published in 2015, has had a long run-up. Therefore, the analyses discussed in Part II of this book have been completed at different moments in time. In this second edition of the Companion, which is the first edition in English, I will go into more detail on the meaning of *Thick analysis* as a method and I have added a number of analysis methods. It also discusses the different ways of reasoning one can use. I wish you a lot of fun and creativity in your analysis!

I want to finish with thanking several people for their hard work under time pressure, their support and thoughts along the way.

First, I would like to thank all the authors of Part II for their willingness to participate in this analysis experiment and for making their valuable time available. In alphabetical order: Aletta G. Dorst, Arthur Edwards, Baldwin van Gorp, Richard Staring, and Elsabé Willeboordse. I would also like to thank René van Horik for his contribution on archiving data files. Without you, Part II would not exist!

Thanks to Jasmijn Boonacker from Amsterdam University Press and Aletta G. Dorst from Leiden University for your belief in this project. You made this project possible to begin with!

Furthermore I would like to thank the students of Think & Thick Translators Inc, in alphabetical order: Ekin Arslan, Joyce Belleflamme, Amy Michèle van den Brink, Rachel Brochus, Desi Brockbernd, Isabeau Bruinsma, Daniëlle van Dort, Jenna Hoekstra, Deirdre de Jonge, Amber Kleinekoort, Hanna de Koning, Anna van Meijeren, Lisa Moers, Jolijn Mulder, Levi Nieuwenhuizen, Aysha Ooms, Sanne te Riele, Nynke Rollema, Branco Rood, Matthieu Rood, Maxime Spithorst, Fleur van Tellingen, Nathan Vilé, Robin de Vries, Li Zhao and their supervisor Aletta G. Dorst. Thanks to all of you for your help and guidance with the translation of this companion!

Last but surely not least I would like to thank Wendy Kulsdom for the graphic design of both the cover and the text of this companion. Thank you so much for your patience in our endless talks on the layout and your accuracy in doing so!

This has become a more beautiful book because of you all!

Jeanine Evers

The Hague, February 2025

www.eversresearch.nl

CONTENT

PART I	THEORY AND PRACTICE OF THICK ANALYSIS	13
1	A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	15
1.1	Introduction	15
1.2	What is qualitative research?	17
1.3	Qualitative research: design and process	20
1.4	Data collection methods and analysis software	24
1.5	Reflection as a steering mechanism	26
1.6	Planning your project	27
1.7	Conclusion: relationship between design, data collection, and analysis	28
2	QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS AND THICK ANALYSIS: EXPLORATION OF THE CONCEPT	31
2.1	Cookbook, black box or intelligent creativity?	31
2.2	Classifications of qualitative analysis	32
2.3	Definitions of qualitative analysis and thick analysis	35
2.4	How does qualitative analysis compare to quantifying analysis?	39
2.5	Role of the researcher and analysis software in qualitative analysis	40
2.5.1	What role does analysis software play in your analysis?	41
2.5.2	Who are you as analyst?	43
2.6	Qualitative analysis: a concept in transition	44
3	QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS AND THICK ANALYSIS: EXPLORING THE PROCESS	45
3.1	Coding versus analysis method	45
3.2	Thick analysis: analytic techniques, analytic tactics and analytic strategies	47
3.3	On operationalization and codes in quantitative research	49
3.4	Different definitions of code (and coding) in qualitative analysis	53
3.5	Coding in qualitative analysis: interpretative act or technical act?	56
3.6	Characteristics of Thick analysis	58
3.7	Analysis methods and reflection in Thick analysis	62
3.8	Thick analysis as a multiform process	66

4	AN ACCOUNT OF ANALYSIS METHODS THICK ANALYSIS:	69
4.1	Analysis methods in Thick analysis, an overview	69
4.2	Analytic techniques: searching and finding through codes	74
4.3	Analytic tactics: connecting codes and data segments	89
4.4	Analytic strategies: transcending interpretation of codes, memos and visualizations	115
4.5	Examples of Thick analysis and other analytic strategies	118
4.6	Final notes	127
	Annex Chapter 4.1 Fallacies arranged by rule for critical discussion	128
5	QUALITY REQUIREMENTS FOR A RESEARCH PROJECT	129
5.1	Introduction	129
5.2	Quality requirements: a short introduction	129
5.3	Quality requirements: further elaboration	131
5.3.1	Reliability in your research	131
5.3.2	Validity in your research	135
5.4	Quality assurance: questions to be asked at the various stages of research	141
5.5	Conclusion: quality is of all time	143
6	INFLUENCE MECHANISMS DURING THE RESEARCH PROCESS	145
6.1	Introduction	145
6.2	Pressure and conflict	146
6.3	Influence from the external research environment	147
6.4	Influence from the internal research environment	151
6.5	Researchers' reactions to influencing mechanisms	152
6.6	A subject that is still relevant	156
	Annex Chapter 6. 1 Questions used in research into pressure experiences of researchers	157
7	THE FINAL ANALYSIS STEP: REPORTING YOUR PROJECT	159
7.1	Introduction	159
7.2	Ethical professionalism: professional conduct and technical skills in conjunction	160
7.3	Techniques to clarify the research question	162
7.4	Research primacy or not?	164
7.5	The 'tool box' of the ethical professional	166
7.6	Institutional solutions to support ethical professionalism	170
7.7	Tips for reporting	172
7.8	Structure and philosophy of science	176
7.9	Quality of reporting	177
7.10	Conclusion	179
	REFERENCES PART I	181

PART II	CONCERNING AN ANALYSIS EXPERIMENT, DATA MANAGEMENT AND ARCHIVING	193
8	INTRODUCTION TO PART II <i>Jeanine Evers</i>	
	Annex chapter 8.1 Letter to analysts with instructions	197
	Annex chapter 8.2 Dataset, used in part 2 a companion to qualitative analysis	198
9	CRASH, CRUNCH, CARNAGE: CRISIS METAPHORS IN NEWS TEXTS <i>Aletta G. Dorst</i>	
9.1	Introduction	199
9.2	Method	202
9.2.1	Selected texts	202
9.2.2	The Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP)	202
9.3	Results: the headlines	205
9.4	Results: the texts	209
9.4.1	Dead metaphors – or not so dead after all?	209
9.4.2	Conventional metaphors: alive and kicking?	211
9.4.3	Creative and innovative metaphors	216
9.5	Conclusion	220
	References	221
	Annex chapter 9.1 MIPVU metaphor analysis	222
10	DEBATING THE BANKING CRISIS: AN ARGUMENTATION ANALYSIS <i>Arthur Edwards</i>	
10.1	Introduction	249
10.2	Approach to the analysis	252
10.3	Principles for a more just society with greater social cohesion	255
10.4	What is wrong with the soft approach of the banks?	263
10.5	Are market players and policy makers starting to respond to threats of inflation that do not exist?	265
10.6	Britain's biggest buy-to-let mortgage lender blaming the decline in profits	266
10.7	Conclusions	269
	References	271

11	FRAME ANALYSIS: FINDING A WAY OUT OF THE FINANCIAL CRISIS BY MEANS OF FRAMES <i>Baldwin van Gorp</i>	
11.1	Introduction	273
11.2	The american financial crisis that had global repercussions	275
11.3	Research questions	277
11.4	Method	279
11.4.1	Analysis procedure	279
11.4.2	Assessment criteria	282
11.5	Results: three central frames	282
11.5.1	Frame 1: greed is the root of all evil	284
11.5.2	Frame 2: the failing government	285
11.5.3	Frame 3: the runaway system	286
11.6	The role of different actors in the financial crisis	286
11.6.1	The way in which the actors are framed	286
11.6.2	The usage of frames by the actors	289
11.7	Conclusion	291
	References	293
	Annex Chapter 11.1 Open coding - framing	296
12	ON RECKLESS SPECULATION AND THE ETHICS OF SAVING: GROUNDED THEORY THE STARING WAY <i>Richard Staring</i>	
12.1	Introduction	327
12.2	Stage 1: Atlas.ti and open coding	328
12.3	Stage 2: selective coding	330
12.4	Stage 3: theoretical coding or the naming of relationships	335
12.5	An initial answer to the research question	339
12.6	Reflection	340
	References	341
	Annex Chapter 12.1 Code Filter: All	342
	Annex Chapter 12.2 Code-Filter: Code Group "Actors"	348
	Annex Chapter 12.3 Code-Filter: Code Group "causes"	350
13	TRIPOD BETA ANALYSIS OF OPINIONS ON THE FINANCIAL CRISIS <i>Elsabé Willeboordse</i>	
13.1	Introduction	351
13.2	Tripod and Tripod Beta	351
13.3	Process and components of a Tripod Beta analysis	355
13.4	Demarcation, limitations and the selection of the data	356
13.5	Characteristics and development of the analysis and interpretation process of the fixed dataset	358

13.6	Results of the Tripod Beta analysis of the blog ‘How do you feel about the Economy?’	361
13.7	Results of the analysis of a trio of Guardian articles by Elliott and Atkinson	373
13.8	Results of the analysis of Mandarine’s text	380
13.9	Discussion	381
13.10	Conclusion	383
	References	384
	Annex chapter 13.1 Codes-quotations list code-filter: all	385
14	DATA MANAGEMENT: REUSE AND ARCHIVING OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DATA <i>René van Horik</i>	
14.1	Introduction	415
14.2	Types of research data	416
14.3	Digital sustainability	417
14.4	Trusted digital repository	418
14.5	Data management for researchers	419
14.6	Data set A companion to qualitative analysis	420
14.7	Final notes	421
	REGISTER	423
	ABOUT THE AUTHORS	431

Part I
Theory and practice of *Thick analysis*

Jeanine Evers

The introduction this chapter will first discuss the objective of this book. The remainder of the chapter is dedicated to a general introduction of qualitative research: the designing process, the data collection, the role of reflection, the use of analysis software and the planning will be discussed.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

'If there is one thing that produces poor studies, it is a researcher who is blind to the methodological consequences of research decisions.' (Clive Seale, 1999, p.49)

This book is the second in a diptych on qualitative research methods and it is specifically focused on qualitative analysis. The first book was about qualitative interviewing (Evers, 2023). The books have a special format. The first part is written by me and is more focused on highlighting the theoretical side of the subject, supplemented with practical tips. For the second part, several researchers have been invited to write from their practical experience. In this book, the second part is about a particular analytic tactic or analytic strategy¹ that each individual author is highly skilled in, while in the book on qualitative interviewing this part was about a particular kind of interview or a particular kind of participant with which the researcher had a lot of experience. In part two of this book, Arthur Edwards writes about argumentation analysis, Baldwin van Gorp about frame analysis, Aletta Dorst about metaphor analysis, Richard Staring about the grounded theory approach and Elsabé Willeboordse about Tripod Beta analysis. I have chosen this format because I believe that qualitative research is more than just applying techniques; it also involves a great deal of creativity and reflective capacity from the researcher. With this format I hope to challenge you as a reader to *think along* with the book and grow (by reading and re-reading as in the hermeneutic circle) in understanding and interpreting what *Thick analysis* and qualitative analysis really is and what it could mean in your research practice. In my experience, methodological knowledge is something

1 Terms that I introduce in this book as a classification criterion and which are elaborated on in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4.

that grows over the years; you will slowly understand it better, fathom it and then apply it differently.

Theme and target audience

The central theme of this book is, as the title indicates, *Thick analysis*², which presumes the usage of analysis software. Analytical triangulation, the use of multiple methods of analysis on the data, or, as I have called it elsewhere, looking at the data through multiple lenses (Evers & Van Staa, 2010), is the central starting point for that.³ This book aims to provide an overview of qualitative analysis in such a way that you as a reader will have a sound enough understanding of the topic to make well-considered choices for the use of certain analysis methods in your own project. Where possible, this will be done in accordance with existing terminology. At the same time, a simple and effective classification of qualitative analysis has been developed: analytic techniques, analytic tactics, and analytic strategies are used to reduce the web of terms and classifications that characterizes the literature on methods in this field. Since analysis is closely related to several other aspects of the research project, such as design, quality requirements, and research ethics, these will also be addressed in Part I.

Layout of the book

As previously mentioned, the book is divided into two parts. In Part I, mainly theoretical notions surrounding qualitative analysis and the various analytic techniques, tactics, and strategies are discussed, supplemented with tips from my many years of practical experience. After a general introduction to qualitative research (Chapter 1), the *concept* of qualitative analysis is the first to be explored in Chapter 2. Subsequently, Chapter 3 discusses the *process* of *Thick analysis*. Chapter 4 briefly discusses a large number of *analytic techniques, tactics, and strategies* from which you can select the combination that suits your research question and data best. Chapter 5 explores *quality requirements* throughout the research process and discusses questions that can be asked regarding this issue. Chapter 6 reports on a study among researchers on the *pressure* they experienced during their research. Lastly, Chapter 7 discusses the *reporting* of your research project and issues related to it. Part II discusses an *analysis experiment*. Several authors describe a particular analytic tactic or strategy that they apply to the problem statement and data set provided by me. These are argumentation analysis, frame analysis, grounded theory, metaphor analysis and Tripod Beta, respectively. The appendix/appendices to each respective chapter explain, if necessary, the analysis with parts from the analysis.

2 This concept was developed at the time (2010) by myself and AnneLoes van Staa, stemming from the observation that the popular GT was often used in publications as justification for the method used, while this turned out to not be the case upon closer inspection.

3 This is very nicely depicted in the wood engraving *Other World* by Escher, which I discovered by chance in the closing phase of the first edition of the book. Please do read the explanation of the curator; I could not have thought of a nicer explanation of analysis triangulation! (<https://www.escherinhetpaleis.nl/showpiece/other-world/?lang=en>).