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ROUTLEDGE

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS USING NVivo

THE FIVE LEVEL QDA® METHOD

NICHOLAS H. WOOLF
CHRISTINA SILVER

FIVE LEVEL QDA

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS USING NVivo

Software is cut and dried—every button you press has a predictable effect—but qualitative analysis is open ended and unfolds in unpredictable ways. This contradiction is best resolved by separating analytic strategies—*what you plan to do*—from software tactics—*how you plan to do it*. Expert NVivo users have unconsciously learned to do this. The *Five-Level QDA*® method unpacks the process so that you can learn it consciously and efficiently.

The first part of the book explains how the contradiction between analytic strategies and software tactics is reconciled by "translating" between them. The second part provides both an in-depth description of how NVivo works and comprehensive instruction in the five steps of "translation." These steps are illustrated with examples from a variety of research projects. The third part contains real-world qualitative research projects from a variety of disciplines, methodologies, and kinds of qualitative analysis, all illustrated in NVivo using the *Five-Level QDA* method. The book is accompanied by three sets of video demonstrations on the companion website.

The book and accompanying videos illustrate the Windows version of NVivo. As there are some differences in screen and interface design between the Mac and Windows versions please watch the video 'The NVivo Mac Interface' in the Component Orientation series of videos (available on the companion website).

The *Five-Level QDA* method is based on the authors' combined 40 years of experience teaching NVivo and other software packages used as platforms for conducting qualitative analysis. After many years observing their students' challenges, they developed the *Five-Level QDA* method to describe the process that long-time NVivo experts unconsciously adopt. The *Five-Level QDA* method is independent of software program or methodology, and the principles apply to any type of qualitative project.

Nicholas H. Woolf has worked as an independent qualitative research consultant, coach, and trainer since 1998. He has conducted or consulted on numerous research studies, from single-site to multinational studies in various fields in the behavioral sciences using a wide range of methodologies, from highly structured content analyses, to evaluations, grounded theory-style projects, and interpretive phenomenology. As a trainer Nick specializes in teaching qualitative analysis using ATLAS.ti. He has conducted 285 workshops at over 100 universities and other institutions, primarily in the USA and Canada, for more than 3,000 PhD students, professors, and research and evaluation consultants. In 2013 Nick introduced *Five-Level QDA* in his keynote address at the first ATLAS.ti user's conference in Berlin (Woolf, 2014).

Christina Silver has worked at the CAQDAS Networking Project at the University of Surrey, UK, since 1998. She is responsible for capacity-building activities and has designed and led training in all the major qualitative software programs, including ATLAS.ti, Dedoose, MAXQDA, NVivo, Transana, QDA Miner, Qualrus, and Quirkos. Christina also works as an independent researcher, consultant, and trainer, supporting researchers to plan and implement computer-assisted analysis and contributing to doctoral research programs in several UK universities.

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Nicholas H. Woolf and Christina Silver

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Dedicated to Ben Woolf,
who fearlessly overcame
seemingly insurmountable obstacles
with grace and humor.

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CONTENTS

List of Figures *xiv*
List of Tables *xvi*
List of Boxes *xviii*
Acknowledgments *xix*
Case Contributors *xxi*

Orientation 1

PART I
The Principles of the *Five-Level QDA* Method **11**

1 Strategies and Tactics 13

2 Developing Objectives and Analytic Plans (Levels 1 and 2) 26

3 Translating Analytic Tasks Into Software Tools (Levels 3, 4, and 5) 44

PART II
The *Five-Level QDA* Method in Practice **59**

4 Orientation to NVivo 61

5 The Architecture of NVivo 66

6 Mastering the Process of Translation 111

PART III
Case Illustrations **153**

7 Orientation to Case Illustrations 155

8 Case Illustration — An Exploratory Literature Review: Exploring the Literature on Interfaith Dialogue 164
Elizabeth M. Pope

9 Case Illustration — A Program Evaluation: Violence Prevention Initiative 178
Kristi Jackson

Appendices *195*
Appendix 1: Three Levels of Detail of Analytic Tasks *197*
Appendix 2: Five Analytic Activities *198*
Appendix 3: Examples of Units in Analytic Tasks *201*
Appendix 4: Identifying the Units of Analytic Tasks *202*
Appendix 5: Identifying the Purpose of Analytic Tasks *205*
Index *208*

EXTENDED CONTENTS

List of Figures *xiv*
List of Tables *xvi*
List of Boxes *xviii*
Acknowledgments *xix*
Case Contributors *xxi*

Orientation 1

PART I
The Principles of the *Five-Level QDA* Method **11**

1 Strategies and Tactics 13
The Contradictions Between Strategies and Tactics 13
Different Ways to Reconcile Contradictions 18
One-Level QDA 19
Three-Level QDA 19
Five-Level QDA 22
References 24

2 Developing Objectives and Analytic Plans (Levels 1 and 2) 26
Level 1: Objectives 28
Clear Objectives 28
Adopting a Methodology 29
An Everyday Illustration 33
Level 2: Analytic Plan 35
The Conceptual Framework 37
Analytic Tasks 38
Knowing What You Plan to Do Next 41
References 42

3 Translating Analytic Tasks Into Software Tools (Levels 3, 4, and 5) 44
Level 3: Translation 44
The Framing of Analytic Tasks 45
The Framing of Software Features 46
The Process of Translation 48
Level 4: Selected-Tools 50
Level 5: Constructed-Tools 53
The Sequence of Tasks 54
References 56

PART II
The *Five-Level QDA* Method in Practice 59

4 Orientation to NVivo 61
The Different Versions and Editions of NVivo 61
Working in Teams 62
Delegation 62
Leadership Style 63
Constraints 63
Frequency of Integration When Working With the Single-User Versions of NVivo 64
Using NVivo for Teams 65

5 The Architecture of NVivo 66
The Different Versions of NVivo 66
Component Orientation Videos 66
The Organization of the Program 66
Components 67
Components Are Not the Same as Project Items 67
Actions 67
Tools 68
The NVivo Interface 68
The NVivo Project 69
Importing Data to an NVIVO-PROJECT 69
Backing Up an NVIVO-PROJECT 72
One NVIVO-PROJECT per Research Project 72
Providing Data 72
Sources 73
Folders 76
Cases 78
Attribute-Values 79
Conceptualizing Data 81
References 83
Nodes 84
Coded-References 91
Query-Results 94
Sets & Search-Folders 96

Writing 99
Annotations 99
Memos 100
Visualizing 101
Maps 101
Charts 103
The NVIVO-PROJECT as a Whole 105
Interrogating 105
Outputting 106
Keeping Up to Date 107
Backing Up and Moving Projects 107
Working in Teams Using NVivo 108
Everyone on the Same Cycle 108
What Happens When You Merge 109
Principles of the Foolproof Method 109
Procedures of the Foolproof Method 110
Inter-rater Reliability 110
References 110

6 Mastering the Process of Translation 111
Translation as a Heuristic Process 112
Writing Analytic Tasks 113
The Analytic Planning Worksheet 114
The Format of the Analytic Planning Worksheet 114
Analytic Planning Worksheet for the Sample Analytic Task 116
The Five Steps of Translation 116
Step 1: Identifying Units 116
Units of Analysis 118
Units of Data 119
Units of Meaning 119
The Rule of Thumb of Two Units 120
Step 2: Describing Purposes 122
The Difference Between a Purpose and an Action 122
The Rule of Thumb of One Purpose 123
Step 3: Identifying Possible Components 123
Possible Components for the First Unit 125
Possible Components for the Second Unit 127
Additional Possible Components When Purposes Require Writing or Visualizing 129
Step 4: Choosing Appropriate Components 130
Illustrations for Steps 4 and 5 130
Actions That Can Be Taken on Components 130
The Context of Analytic Tasks 133
Step 5: Finalizing Selected- or Constructed-Tools 138
The Distinction Between Selected- and Constructed-Tools 138
When to Use a Selected-Tool 140
When to Use Constructed-Tools 144
References 151

PART III
Case Illustrations **153**

7 Orientation to Case Illustrations 155
Learning From Case Illustrations 155
Learning by Analogy 156
Authentic Learning 157
Learning From Multiple Illustrations 157
Video Demonstrations of Case Illustrations 158
Case Illustration Videos 158
Harnessing Components Videos 160
Accessing Video Demonstrations 160
The Two Full-Case Illustrations 160
Case Illustration 1: A Literature Review 161
Case Illustration 2: A Program Evaluation 162
References 163

8 Case Illustration — An Exploratory Literature Review: Exploring the Literature on Interfaith Dialogue 164
Elizabeth M. Pope
Analytic Strategies 164
Background 165
Focus of This Case Illustration 165
Guiding Methodology 166
Stages of the Analysis 167
First Stage: Preliminary Partial Literature Review 168
Second Stage: Review and Rationalize the First Stage 171
Third Stage: Expand the Scope of the Literature Review 172
Fourth Stage: Identify Major Themes in the Literature 172
Fifth Stage: Rewrite the Literature Review 175
Sixth Stage: Ongoing Expansion of the Literature Review 175
Acknowledgments 176
References 176

9 Case Illustration — A Program Evaluation: Violence Prevention Initiative 178
Kristi Jackson
Project In Brief 178
Analytic Strategies 179
Overall Project Objectives 179
Focus of This Case Illustration 180
Guiding Methodology 181
Stages of the Analysis 181
First Stage: Planning the Analysis of First-Round Interviews 182
Second Stage: Descriptive Thematic Analysis of First-Round Interviews and First Report 183
Third Stage: Concept Sensitizing and Descriptive Thematic Analysis of Second-Round Interviews and Second Report 187

Fourth Stage: Critical Incident Analysis of Third-Round Interviews and Third Report 189
Fifth Stage: Discourse Analysis on Fourth-Round Interviews and Integration of All Stages 191
Sixth Stage: Synthesis of All Stages and Final Report 191
Stakeholders, Published Works, and Funders 193

Appendices *195*
Appendix 1: Three Levels of Detail of Analytic Tasks *197*
Appendix 2: Five Analytic Activities *198*
Appendix 3: Examples of Units in Analytic Tasks *201*
Appendix 4: Identifying the Units of Analytic Tasks *202*
Appendix 5: Identifying the Purpose of Analytic Tasks *205*
Index *208*

FIGURES

1.1 The contradictory nature of qualitative data analysis and computer software 15
1.2 Three-Level QDA 21
2.1 The five levels of the *Five-Level QDA* method 27
2.2 A first overview of the iterative process of the *Five-Level QDA* method 27
2.3 Level 2 of the *Five-Level QDA* method 36
2.4 Meal Planning Worksheet—Version 1: Objectives and initial plan 39
2.5 Meal Planning Worksheet—Version 2: The first three tasks 40
3.1 Level 3 of the *Five-Level QDA* method 44
3.2 Thinking with affordances: Drag and drop with unwanted change in formatting 47
3.3 Thinking with components: Drag and drop with the desired effect 48
3.4 The mechanics of TRANSLATION 49
3.5 Level 4 of the *Five-Level QDA* method 51
3.6 Meal Planning Worksheet—Version 3: SELECTED-TOOLS 52
3.7 Level 5 of the *Five-Level QDA* method 53
3.8 Meal Planning Worksheet—Version 4: CONSTRUCTED-TOOLS 55
3.9 The five levels of the *Five-Level QDA* method 56
5.1 The NVivo for Windows interface 70
5.2 The NVivo for Mac interface 71
5.3 SOURCES 77
5.4 FOLDERS in the different versions and editions of NVivo 78
5.5 CASES 80
5.6 ATTRIBUTE-VALUES 82
5.7 REFERENCES 85
5.8 NODES 90
5.9 CODED-REFERENCES 93
5.10 Coding Query 95
5.11 QUERY-RESULTS 97
5.12 SETS & SEARCH-FOLDERS 98
5.13 ANNOTATIONS 100
5.14 MEMOS 102
5.15 MAPS 104

5.16	CHARTS	106
6.1	Emergent, heuristic, and algorithmic mind-sets	112
6.2	Template of the ANALYTIC PLANNING WORKSHEET	115
6.3	ANALYTIC PLANNING WORKSHEET for sample analytic task	117
6.4	The steps of TRANSLATION	118
6.5	ANALYTIC PLANNING WORKSHEET for sample analytic task: Identifying units	121
6.6	ANALYTIC PLANNING WORKSHEET for sample analytic task: Identifying purposes	124
6.7	ANALYTIC PLANNING WORKSHEET for sample analytic task: Identifying possible components	131
6.8	Schematic Level 2 of the ANALYTIC PLANNING WORKSHEET	137
6.9	ANALYTIC PLANNING WORKSHEET for sample analytic task: Choosing appropriate components	139
6.10	First example of a SELECTED-TOOL	141
6.11	Second example of a SELECTED-TOOL	142
6.12	ANALYTIC PLANNING WORKSHEET for sample analytic task: SELECTED-TOOL	145
6.13	First example of a CONSTRUCTED-TOOL	147
6.14	Second example of a CONSTRUCTED-TOOL	149
6.15	ANALYTIC PLANNING WORKSHEET for sample analytic task: CONSTRUCTED-TOOL	150
7.1	Overview of video demonstrations	159
7.2	Schematic of stages, phases, and analytic tasks	161
7.3	Presentation of stages, phases, and analytic tasks in Chapters 8 and 9	162
8.1	Theoretical framework for dissertation	166
9.1	Stages and phases of analysis	182
A2.1	Silver and Lewins's (2014) five analytic activities	198

TABLES

2.1	Selected resources for learning to write clear objectives	29
4.1	The different versions of NVivo	61
5.1	The four clusters of components	67
5.2	The 13 components of NVivo	68
5.3	Components most associated with providing data to an NVIVO-PROJECT	73
5.4	Areas for storing NVivo sources	73
5.5	Components most associated with conceptualizing data	83
5.6	Components most associated with writing	99
5.7	Components most associated with visualizing	101
6.1	Summary of possible components for "teachers," "reactions," and "kinds of bullying"	126
6.2	The sequence of practical instruction in NVivo's components	132
6.3	Analytic actions that can be taken on all components	132
6.4	Component-specific analytic actions	133
8.1	The six stages of analysis	168
8.2	First Stage (Phases 1–3): Preliminary partial literature review	170
8.3	Second Stage (Phase 4): Review and rationalize the First Stage	171
8.4	Third Stage (Phases 5–6): Expand the scope of the literature review	173
8.5	Fourth Stage (Phase 7): Identify major themes in the literature	174
8.6	Fifth Stage (Phase 8): Rewrite the literature review	175
8.7	Sixth Stage (Phase 9): Ongoing expansion of the literature review	176
8.8	Summary of the nine phases of analysis	176
9.1	Examples of formative and summative research questions at the initiative level and the site level of the Violence Prevention Initiative	180
9.2	The six stages of analysis	182
9.3	First Stage (Phases 1–3): Planning the analysis of the first round of interviews	184
9.4	Second Stage (Phases 4–7): Descriptive thematic analysis of first-round interviews and first report	186
9.5	Third Stage (Phases 8–11): Concept sensitizing and descriptive thematic analysis of second-round interviews and second report	188

9.6 Fourth Stage (Phases 12–14): Critical incident analysis of third-round interviews and second report 190
9.7 Fifth Stage (Phases 15–17): Discourse, critical incident, and thematic descriptive analysis on all rounds of interviews 192
9.8 Sixth Stage (Phases 18–19): Synthesis of all rounds of analysis and preparation of the final report 193

BOXES

0.1 Why We Use the Acronym CAQDAS 2
1.1 A Deeper Look: Cut-and-Dried Versus Emergent Processes 15
1.2 A Deeper Look: Edward Luttwak's Five Levels of Military Strategy 23
2.1 A Deeper Look: Alternative Ways of Knowing 31
2.2 A Deeper Look: Why We Use an Everyday Illustration 34

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CASE CONTRIBUTORS

Chapter 8: An Exploratory Literature Review

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Chapter 9: A Program Evaluation

Kristi Jackson, PhD, is co-author with Patricia Bazeley of the book *Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo*, now in its second edition, and in 2002 she founded Queri (www.queri.com), a qualitative research consulting firm. With over 25 years of experience in qualitative research design, data collection, analysis, reporting, and stakeholder relations, she is an expert in a diverse array of qualitative methodologies. She also has extensive experience in large-scale and small-scale team research and evaluation research. As Chair of the Special Interest Group (SIG) on Digital Tools for Qualitative Research at the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, she continues to cultivate decades of collaborative, international relationships with a wide range of stakeholders in the Qualitative Data Analysis Software (QDAS) community. Her theoretical frames tend to be sociological, and her research interests include conceptualizations of qualitative research transparency and the constantly changing spaces where qualitative researchers and technologies meet.

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ORIENTATION

Learning to do qualitative analysis with NVivo does not mean *learning how to operate the program really well*. Instead it means *learning to harness NVivo powerfully*. These two objectives could not be more different, and this orientation prepares you for what is to come.

Orientation means *finding one's location in an environment*. Orientations are common in the business world to socialize new employees in an organization, with activities to gain their commitment, reduce their anxiety, and let them know what they should expect from the organization. Only then are employees trained for their specific jobs. It is in this sense that we provide this orientation. The purpose is to alleviate your concerns and enlist your patience for what is to come by telling you why this book is written in the way that it is.

Three areas require orientation. The first is what kind of program NVivo is and what it means to harness it powerfully. The second area is the best way to learn to do this. We have drawn on our combined 40 years of teaching experience to develop an approach to learning that is not what is generally expected in software training. The third area concerns the differences between using NVivo in solo research projects and in research teams. The orientation ends with a roadmap through the book.

NVivo Is Not an Analysis Program

Some researchers expect—or hope—that NVivo will somehow do the analysis and reduce the hard mental work of qualitative analysis. Others are fully aware that this is not the case, yet they unconsciously expect that NVivo will make at least some contribution to the analysis. Part of the problem is the names for these types of programs—Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data AnalysiS (CAQDAS), or qualitative data analysis software (QDAS), or simply qualitative analysis software. All have *software* and *analysis* in them, which inevitably suggests that the software performs analysis. (See Box 0.1 for more on the history of acronyms for these dedicated software packages).

The idea that the software does some kind of analysis can be hard to overcome. The natural assumption is that NVivo is a qualitative cousin to statistical software packages like SPSS or SAS. But programs like Scrivener or Microsoft Word that support the writing process offer a more useful comparison. Microsoft Word is never called a computer-assisted writing program—it is not a writing program at all. It just displays characters corresponding to the keys you press, with bells and whistles to move text around and format text to make it look appealing. There are no