Qualitative Research in Germany

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Abstract: Taking into account the variety and (sub-) disciplinary diversity of German qualitative research, this contribution can only offer a brief schematic overview of 1) some historical aspects and shared paradigmatic premises in qualitative social research that go beyond disciplinary boundaries, 2) of somewhat common strategies and methods of collection and analysis of qualitative data, 3) the actual state of qualitative research funding and teaching, and 4) the usage of the Internet and its resources. In closing some aspects, which seem especially worthy for further discussion, are touched upon.

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1. Introductory Remarks[x]

After having written a text about qualitative research for a textbook on Clinical Psychology together with Günter MEY in spring 1999 and believing to be rather familiar with the state of qualitative social research, the idea of writing a contribution for this journal didn't seem very problematical to me. But along the way, my belief in having a good overview was put into question as my experience with the Internet grew: I began to encounter a great number of colleagues and their contributions from other countries, disciplines, and scientific cultures. After an initial irritation in suddenly finding myself to be a learner/novice instead of an expert (what I had considered to be after years of practicing with qualitative research methods), my curiosity soon was aroused. I found myself in a state

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where I could take the opportunity to reevaluate both my understanding of myself and my recognition of qualitative research.[1] [1]

This learning process, which I mention here briefly, also included qualitative (sub-) cultures in my own backyard—i.e. in the German language scenes. Even for those cultures more familiar to me, it makes an important difference if one is only reading contributions from researchers from other disciplines more or less isolated or discussing them with colleagues within ones own discipline, or if direct interdisciplinary efforts are taking place, which recognize and search for creative solutions for the oftentimes difficult implications which accompany such efforts. [2]

With this in mind, I really would have liked to have written this contribution on German qualitative research together with colleagues from other disciplines; unfortunately, after having tried to do just this, I found that it was not possible for several reasons.[2] So, I returned to a rather well-known cooperation: Due to pragmatic reasons and encouraged by our shared interest in qualitative research I asked Günter MEY to collaborate. We agreed that parts of the above mentioned synoptic article (MRUCK & MEY 2000) were developed and formulated in a way that made them quite appropriate for this article. We decided to make new

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1   Some of you might experience a similar irritation when reading the first *FQS* issue: To me, editing this issue meant getting first insights e.g. into the state of qualitative research in Japan (SUZUKI in this issue) or Mexico (CISNEROS in this issue), but also in the usage of qualitative methods in disciplines like Agricultural Economics (BITSCH in this issue) or Sport Science (HUNGER & THIELE in this issue).

2   An important reason—beside the short preparation time—is that in my opinion we will have to learn to consciously resume and write beyond disciplinary borders. To collect at least some additional voices, I followed Bobbi KERLIN's example (in this issue) and sent a request to the two German language mailing lists on qualitative research ("Qualitative Sozialforschung"—QSF-L, and "Biographieforschung" http://www.zbbs.de/mailing.html). My text from October 19, 1999 was as follows:

> "Dear List members,
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> I am currently writing a contribution on German qualitative research for the 1st *FQS* issue in January. Bobbi Kerlin, who in preparation of a similar text on North American qualitative research placed some questions into an English language mailing list, inspired me to ask you some similar questions.
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> Have you recognized any trends and/or moves during the last two decades (or for a shorter or longer term) in qualitative research, in the academic or non-academic field, online or offline? Are qualitative research methods within your discipline/your research field/your institute etc. in the meantime more or less accepted? Within which areas of empirical research are qualitative methods—regarding to your observation—more or less used? What are some future perspectives, developmental potencies, problems for the field of qualitative research? How important are internationality/interdisciplinarity for your own work (beyond the well known pleas: What conferences, journals etc. do you really use or in other words are helpful for you)? What do you think characterizes best the move that qualitative research faces going into the next century? Do you have any references that are especially important for you in answering these questions?
>
> I appreciate any feedback, and you are also welcome to share ideas and topics not mentioned. Please let me also know if I may cite your mails."

The response rate was with about 20 mails comparably poor (when considering that about 250 subscribers belong to the lists, some of them members in both). Additionally, few persons explicitly agreed to be cited, so I decided to anonymize all answers (and to slightly correct orthography if necessary). A little "qualitative hit list" resulted from a request I made in one of the lists and includes important books that some respondents mentioned. Instead of expanding on this, let me just say that sociologists and educational researchers often preferred mentioning books with a clear disciplinary focus, while psychologists—maybe because of the relatively sparse equipment in their own discipline, tended to make more use of neighboring disciplines.

chapters based on the ones in the book, and to revise and to supplement these with additional remarks and notes (especially in Chapters 2., 4.1 and 4.4). So while some chapters were only revised, others (Chapters 4.5, 5. and 6.) were completely re-written. [3]

Since we are both psychologists, the following is an overview very much characterized by our (professional) biographies and our disciplinary affiliation. Nevertheless, we hope that readers not familiar with the large and heterogeneous German language research cultures will obtain a first impression and some information which invites to further reading. Those readers who share German qualitative research culture(s) with us are warmly invited to correct, complete and comment our text: We are interested in creating an attitude called "prosuming" discussed in the introductory contribution (MRUCK in this issue). In the ideal case this contribution, that was originally conceptualized to be written together with others, and which is now written by two authors, will in time become a plural authorship, thus returning to the original idea. [4]

2. The Paradigmatic View: Premises that Many German Qualitative Researchers Share

German qualitative research is represented by a large spectrum of research approaches, data collection and interpretation methods, leading to "very different theoretical, methodological and methodical accesses to social reality" (von KARDORFF 1991, p.3).[3] Ronald HITZLER (1999) makes in a lecture "The State of Discussion in German Language Interpretive Sociology" clear how difficult it is to survey this variety and heterogeneity even for *one* discipline, and how many presuppositions are necessary considering the complexity of such an effort and the perspectivity of its author. Nevertheless, there seems to be a common dominator, some shared "paradigmatic similarities" (LEGEWIE 1991): Referring to Ernst von KARDORFF, the methodical principle which is central for qualitative research is an "interpretive access to a social reality, which is interactively 'constructed' and represented in verbal/linguistic as well as in non-verbal symbols" (1991, p.4). [5]

Proceeding from this assumption, some central principles or postulates may be derived from the discussion taking place within German language qualitative research:

- The "*postulate of being a stranger*" forbids—following ethnological debates (KÖNIG 1984)—an unquestioned presupposition of scientific understanding and concepts; i.e. qualitative researchers should not per se believe in a shared pre- understanding of concepts etc. between researchers and research participants.

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3   Most citations, titles of books etc. mentioned in this contribution are translated into English to give our readers the opportunity to take a look at German discussions, textbooks, etc. Exceptions are contributions we refer to and which are published in this *FQS* Issue in English language and some books we will mark in our list of references.

- Therefore—according to the "*principle of openness*" (HOFFMANN-RIEM 1980), instead of an hypotheses testing approach which presupposes personal concepts—qualitative researchers often prefer to forgo on building hypotheses ex ante. The effort focuses on coming closer to the research field under consideration, using methods as openly as possible and avoiding pre-structuring insofar as possible, a process which successively leads to the creation of hypotheses and theory. Another largely shared dictum, closely connected to the "principle of openness", additionally suggests that all methodical decisions must be in agreement with the respective object under research, they should be "object-adequate" (JÜTTEMANN 1983).[4]

- Last of all, the *principle of communication*[5] originates in the thesis that both the subject and object of research (often: the researcher and the research participants) can only be understood as actors within their respective historical and cultural worlds: Researchers belonging to the quantitative paradigm of "de-contextualization" usually search for the "true value", where possible "noise" has been filtered out. Whereas they try "to standardize, minimize or eliminate subjective and contextual variables" (BERGOLD & BREUER 1992, p.27), qualitative researchers regard the communication between researchers and research participants to be a central and constitutive element in the process of understanding and one upon which he or she necessarily has to reflect. Though this principle's methodological importance is stressed time and again, in the real research process it is often neglected. We have

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4   There is an important difference in German and in English language usage: In German we use "object" in a way similar to the English term "subject", while the German term "subject" stresses activity (of a person). So while "object of research" mostly refers to the issues and topics which research is concerned with, "research subject" is the researcher himself or herself. In this text we additionally use the term "research participants" for those who are being researched.

Some problematic implications of the idea of a so-called object-adequacy should only be shortly outlined: At first, the decision what method a researcher chooses depends not merely on the object/question under consideration, but also on preferences/experiences coming from (professional) biography of the respective researchers, on local access/acceptance of qualitative methods and on possibilities e.g. for research funding. Secondly, the request to choose methods according to the object/question a researcher is interested in (and not to pre-decide because of methodological preferences) is difficult following the qualitative idea of theory generation: As knowledge about a research field develops during doing the research, it is impossible to rely on characteristics of this research field by deciding which methods to use, as these characteristics are not clearly known at the beginning of the research process. Thirdly the idea of object-adequacy stems from a methodological context which thought dividing into subject and object of research not to be problematical, a context that assumed that subject and object exist and that the aim of research is to reveal objects characteristics during a process not contaminated by the researcher and the research procedures. Choosing a paradigm that accepts the construction of meaning within a mutual process means to refute this idea of a pre-existing separation (see more detailed MRUCK 1999).

5   The work of the French ethnopsychoanalyst Georges DEVEREUX is important for formulating the principle of communication and for disseminating the acceptance that any observation/research leads to "disturbances"/"contamination" and needs scientific reflection. DEVEREUX' work is broadly recognized by all those researchers who stress the importance of the "principle of communication". Already in 1967 DEVEREUX, elaborating on the observer-observed-dependency, regards such "disturbances" as "cornerstones for the scientific inquiry of human behavior": Any "behavioral researcher has to learn to accept that it is impossible to observe an event/behavior as it 'could have taken place' without his/her presence, and that a report that he/she has heard second hand will never be the same as the one that the person would tell another person/researcher" (1967, p.29). So in DEVEREUX' opinion, differences between the observations/reports from two researchers do not express insufficiencies which will improve with the development of methods and the accumulation of scientific knowledge, but they remain as a basic of communication and they need additional theoretical effort and explanation".

discussed this in more detail elsewhere (MRUCK & MEY 1996a) and we will come back to this point in Chapter 6. [6]

3. The Historical View: Some Traditional Stances of German Qualitative Research

Many hermeneutic, phenomenological and also psychoanalytic approaches which were important for the development of qualitative research traditions originated within German philosophy, respectively in the fields of German language Humanities and Social Sciences at the end of the 19th / the beginning of the 20th century. The outstanding role of researchers from Austria, Germany, and Switzerland experienced a massive upheaval during the time of German fascist censorship. In the time from 1945 onwards, a quantitative research orientation was predominant in the Social Sciences: Qualitative approaches for teaching and research became marginal within most disciplines, a development which in many cases still holds today. (Günter MEY describes a shift, which began at the turn of the last century within Developmental Psychology, from qualitative approaches towards a dominant quantitative research culture in this issue.) [7]

Interpretive approaches returned to Germany in the late 60's/early 70's, often a (re-) import of qualitative methodologies and research strategies (especially from North America). The reading of important texts from Paul F. LAZARSFELD or Robert K. MERTON, from Barney G. GLASER and Anselm L. STRAUSS, from Howard S. BECKER and Blanche GEER, from George Herbert MEAD and Aaron C. CICOUREL and from many others first began in Sociology and in the Educational Sciences.[6] LÜDERS and REICHERTZ differentiated in a text from 1986—still worth reading—two phases important for the development and spread of qualitative approaches:

- The first "phase of establishment" resulted from the coincidence of political and emancipatory ideas of "a social research dedicated to its participants" (1986, p.90) and was closely connected to traditions of action research on the one hand, and criticism of the implications of quantitative methodologies which began in the late 60's on the other hand. The reception of phenomenological, hermeneutic and interactionist approaches within these parts of the Social Sciences soon led to the development of their own re-search traditions, most times accompanied by the belief that qualitative

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6   It was important for this reception that some researchers translated some of these texts for the German language discussions, so e.g. Christel HOPF and Elmar WEINGARTEN (1979) or Klaus GERDES (1979). Also worth mentioning are the volumes edited by the ARBEITSGRUPPE BIELEFELDER SOZIOLOGEN (1973, 1976); Andreas WITZEL (1982) was successful in an early effort to systematically bundle up the different qualitative approaches. Comparable to these early years, Eberhard BERG and Martin FUCHS (1993) helped to introduce the ethnological debate on the "Crisis of Ethnographical Representation" to German discussions by editing a volume with translated contributions e.g. from James CLIFFORD and Paul RABINOW, from Stephen TYLER and Dennis TEDLOCK. By providing this collection the discussion within qualitative Psychology and Educational Sciences has been truly promoted—concerning the question of representation within ones own culture and the question "in whose name the social scientist is actually speaking, when he/she says that this means this and not that" (SIXEL 1980, p.335). We will briefly touch on the importance of the idea that "talking about others means talking about oneself", and that the "construction of 'the other' ... at the same time [includes] the construction of self" (FUCHS & BERG 1993, p.11) at the end of our contribution.

research methods could reconstruct complex social and individual worlds in a more adequate way. This phase was characterized by extended discussions on the peculiarities of a qualitative paradigm. In addition, questions of data collection earned a lot of attention.

- During the second phase researchers were more interested in concrete empirical projects than in metatheoretical debates. A large variety and heterogeneity of topics, approaches, and methods was recognizable, co-existing more or less independent of one another. [8]

Sociology and Educational Sciences at that time were forerunners in the field of qualitative research, and they still can be seen as leading disciplines: They established academic institutes where the qualitative approach is incorporated in curriculum and research, and they banded together in disciplinary societies, etc. In comparison, other disciplines seem more like secondary disciplines. Nevertheless, there is a partially shared store of knowledge (although for some disciplines such as Psychology, this overlap took place with some delay). But there is still hardly common ground with some disciplines, e.g. Ethnology, History and Philosophy (you might take a look at Note 6 for an actual example which shows that overlaps *can* take place and be very fruitful). [9]

In addition to the differentiation LÜDERS and REICHERTZ suggested, a third more recent phase in the development of German qualitative research seems worth mentioning:

- This third phase is characterized by a shift of methodological attention from data collection to data analysis, by an effort to combine quantitative and qualitative methods, and by a spread in the use of computer-assisted programs for qualitative data analysis. In part, the emergence of a more self-reflexive qualitative research, often as a result of debates taking place in Sociology of Science or History of Science or in ethnological or ethnopsychoanalytical discourses, is also observable (see Notes 5 and 6). [10]

4. Taking Inventory: The Actual State of German Qualitative Research

Even German language qualitative Psychology—still rather marginal with regard to the whole discipline[7]—falls into many subcultures and orientations: For many qualitative psychologists, belonging to Community Psychology, Health Psychology, Narrative Psychology, Cultural Sciences, Critical Psychology, Psychoanalytical Social Research etc. is more important than belonging to the "parent discipline" Psychology. Looking beyond the borders of this discipline, there are a great number of methodological and metatheoretical approaches and

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7   Franz BREUER notes that researchers who decide to use qualitative approaches "also have opted for a *marginal position* within the Psychological *Scientific Community*, which is characterized by dominant ideas of scientific work following the quantitative-nomothetical ideal (although a kind of softening and liberalization of taste seems to be recognizable)" (BREUER 1996b, p.80). "

methods used for qualitative research. Some of them will be briefly described in the following. [11]

4.1 Research approaches

An effort to sort qualitative approaches into three dominant research perspectives was undertaken by LÜDERS and REICHERTZ (ibid.). In the first perspective—interested in *reconstructing an actor's own meanings*—the research participant and his or her interpretive pattern, possibilities for action etc. earn the most attention. His or her view of self and the world are to be reconstructed within a research process, designed as dialogically as possible. [12]

A second perspective aims at *describing social action and social milieus*. Worth mentioning are e.g. ethnomethodological approaches and approaches interested in narrative structures (most times working with transcribed interviews), and, within phenomenological or ethnographical research approaches, the description of milieus and everyday worlds. Special attention is given to data collection and "non-interpretive" descriptions of behavior and milieus. [13]

Finally, studies following the third perspective are interested in the reconstruction of structures which generate interpretation and action. Part of these approaches, differentiating between "manifest structures (subjective meaning, intention) and ... latent structures of meaning" (ibid., p.95), are, especially Objective Hermeneutic, interested in exploring the "objective" meaning of concrete statements through "sequence analysis", and psychoanalytical methods, thus trying to encode the individual or collective unconscious. [14]

Further approaches, to which LÜDERS and REICHERTZ' sorting effort applies only in part, are action research, Critical Psychology, feminist approaches or the large field of biographical research. To get a first impression of different approaches, MAYRING's (1993) "Introduction to Qualitative Social Research" or the "Glossary of Qualitative Methods" from Jutta SCHÄFER (1995) are useful. Besides short descriptions of the respective methods, the glossary contains information about further literature and empirical examples. For additional reading, see either the "Handbook of Qualitative Social Research", originally edited in 1991 by FLICK, von KARDORFF, KEUPP, von ROSENSTIEL and WOLFF or the "Handbook of Biographical Research in the Educational Sciences" by Heinz-Hermann KRÜGER and Winfried MAROTZKI (1999), which has just been published. [15]

4.2 Data collection and documentation

For data collection in German qualitative research many different interviewing methods are used, additionally—though more seldom—group discussions, non-reactive methods, qualitative experimenting, introspection, social network cards, projective or field research methods. All in all, there seems to be a kind of self-

limitation to textual documents since pictures, paintings and other types of access are more or less disregarded.[8] [16]

Interview methods comprehend—according to the research interest—a large variety from highly structured to maximally open strategies, which define the degree to which interviewers and interviewees have a say in shaping the situation in very different ways (see e.g. Christel HOPF 1991, where she takes a look at the different interview methods). Rather usual forms of interviewing are the Narrative-Biographical Interview developed by Fritz SCHÜTZE (1983) and the Problem-Centered Interview developed by Andreas WITZEL (1985; for an up-to-date summary see WITZEL in this issue) or similar forms, sometimes derived from these two. The Narrative Interview and the Problem-Centered Interview both are characterized by not "testing orally biographical data ..., but by allowing an interviewee the freedom to explain their own view of his or her previous life or a part of his or her life story (with thematic prompters which help the flow of storytelling" (LEGEWIE 1987, p.138).[9] [17]

Beyond the methodological reflection included within most interviewing practices, a naturalistic understanding of interview situations seems to dominate: Interviewees are regarded as "information delivery persons" or as a kind of "reporters". For the most part the impact of mutual subjectivity and the peculiarities of interview communication are not taken into account in the subsequent data interpretation. In an effort to make the effect of this neglect of social construction in interview situations more visible, we—by using our own empirical data—have elsewhere shown in which way

> "researchers *and* research participants co-construct a concrete situation, in accordance to 1) personal boundaries of privacy which are acquired biographically, 2) perceptions anticipated from the other and ones own, 3) an interest in self-presentation and other personal aims which are involved when one is talking or being silent, observing and being observed" (MRUCK & MEY 1996b, p.25). [18]

Proceeding from these experiences, the rather familiar polarization within methodological discussions on qualitative interviews—between the assumption of principally asymmetric interactions between researchers and research participants on the one hand and on the other a tendency to claim that interviews are "ideal situations for talking"—seems to require some additional precision:

> "While the idea of interviews as asymmetric interactions is obliged to the idea of researcher power and dominance during the situation, the concept of a non-strategic communication includes an ideal, which neither researchers nor research participants are able [and often: willing] to fulfill. From the very beginning both act within a

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8 Towards the re-use of "Introspection" see "Main Topic: Introspection as a Research Method", which Volume 7, Issue 2 of the "Journal for Psychology" is dedicated to, and also KLEINING and WITT in this issue. Roland GIRTLER attached his "Ten Commandments of Field Study" to his Editorial Board website (see also his "Methods of Qualitative Social Research" 1992).

9 For a comparison of the Narrative and the Problem-Centered Interview see MEY (1999, pp.138-150).

complex mesh of explicit and implicit desires, interests, concepts, etc. *Mutual* instrumentalization is not an exception, or something one hopes to avoid, but a necessary part of every research situation, though often, especially within qualitative research, talking about this seems to be taboo" (MRUCK & MEY 1996a, p.16). [19]

Using interviews for data collection in most cases also means using audio-taping and being responsible for transcription afterwards. How predominant the fixation on textual material is, even in cases where video-tapes are used, becomes obvious within a very interesting book edited by Michael B. BUCHHOLZ (1995), where one and the same therapeutic sequence is interpreted by using different methods (e.g. conversation analysis and metaphor analysis): None of the authors found the peculiarity of this situation—the patient addressing the audio- and video-tape, the presence of a "third person"—worth reflecting or even mentioning. [20]

Regardless of the method used for recording, transcripts must be produced for analysis, usually—if possible—by transcribing the whole tape. Barney GLASER criticizes and objects even to the very practice of taping: "These days taping interviews is almost a way of life. One of the strongest evidentiary invasions into grounded theory is the taping of interviews" (1998, p.107). Although his subsequent counter position (although limited to single researchers) to "not tape interviews" seems a bit too rigorous to us, more flexible decisions and practices of taping and transcribing—taking the research question and interest and the actual state of theory development into consideration—may be occasionally advisable. The same seems to apply to the use of transcription rules, often dominated by efforts to be "as exact as possible" and to obtain a "true copy" of e.g. the interview situation. On the one hand, such efforts neglect the fact that every transcription also means "defamiliarization of a real life, 'lively' interaction is reduced to a rather static text" (JAEGGI, FAAS & MRUCK 1998, p.5). On the other hand, along with BREUER (1999) it might be argued that transcription becomes, with growing precision and detail, more and more unreliable. [21]

If (and what kind of) guidelines are necessary for confidentiality and informed consent, on archiving and on organizing possible re-analyses of qualitative data and which are used, is mostly dependent on (sub-) disciplinary and local habits. While British "Qualidata Archival Resource Centre" (http://www.essex.ac.uk/qualidata/) did important pioneer work, German (inter-) disciplinary discussions on this topic have only just begun.[10] [22]

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10 Important initiatives for the German discussion and networking actually come from the Special Collaborative Center 186 "Status Passages and Risks in the Life Course" (http://www.sfb186.uni-bremen.de) at the University of Bremen; see also KLUGE and OPITZ (1999). *FQS*' Issue 3—edited by members from this Special Collaborative Center, from "Qualidata" and from "ATLAS" (Archive for Technology, Lived experiences, and AlltagsSprache [everyday language])—will be concerned with "Text . Archive . Re-Analysis" and will give some insight into the international and interdisciplinary state of discussion.

4.3 Analyzing qualitative data

Possible methods for interpreting qualitative data vary, depending on research experience, theoretical and/or disciplinary approach and research interest, between trying to develop/use methods as a prescription, which has distinct and rather formalized steps to be followed on the one hand, and on the other stressing the necessity of a continual adaptation of methods to the singular field of interest, i.e. a process of developing methods by using them within concrete contexts. [23]

There are *interpretation strategies developed in combination with methods of data collection*. SCHÜTZE for example suggests ways of analyzing Narrative Interviews, and WITZEL did the same for the Problem-Centered Interview. Furthermore, there are *demarcated methods* such as qualitative content analysis (MAYRING 1997), discourse and conversation analysis or "Objective Hermeneutics" (see HITZLER & HONER 1997), Dialogical Hermeneutics (see SCHEELE 1991), in-depth hermeneutics or psychoanalytical interpretive strategies (see LEITHÄUSER & VOLMERG 1988) or different variants of type and metaphor analysis[11]. Additionally, there are *more complex research strategies*, e.g. "Inductive Diagnostics" or "Comparative Casuistic" (JÜTTEMANN 1985 and 1990) or variants of Grounded Theory (GLASER & STRAUSS 1967, STRAUSS 1991, STRAUSS & CORBIN 1996, GLASER 1998), which make suggestions regarding the design and organization of the whole research process. Rather popular in German qualitative studies are e.g. qualitative content analysis and grounded theory. [24]

Especially in Sociology and Psychology, research tools such as programs for computer-assisted analysis of qualitative data are used.[12] The growing tendency towards textualization and computerization observable in these fields is helpful for managing single steps of analysis, and it is important for gaining a reputation which holds up against the accusation that qualitative research only produces subjective/autobiographic material or essays. At the same time it can occasionally be problematic in reference to some essentials of qualitative research. For example, Uwe LAUCKEN comments, on the development of Social Psychology, that "the ways scientists have to legitimize their work and what kinds of legitimization are demanded ... changed during the last decades remarkably" (1997, p.145). In his opinion not only a growing "mercantilization of science" (ibid., pp.147f.) is recognizable, but also—partly accompanying this mercantilization—a "mechanization of science" (ibid., pp.149f.), which leads one to regard scientific efforts that are not obliged to these changes as suspect and old fashioned (see Chapter 6). [25]

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11 See the overview literature mentioned in Chapter 4.1. Regarding the analysis of types see also KLUGE in this issue, regarding the analysis of metaphors SCHMITT (1999) and in this issue.

12 Susanne FRIESE offers an introduction to using software for qualitative data analysis at http://quarc.de. Towards "Theory Building in Qualitative Research and Computer Programs for the Management of Textual Data" see also KELLE (1997).

4.4 Criteria for judging the quality of inquiry

While quantitative methodologies provide accepted criteria in deciding whether or not a measurement may be regarded as objective, reliable, and valid, within qualitative research a comparable consent on criteria needed for evaluating the research process and its outcome does not exist. Few authors try to take over classical positivist criteria of evaluation and apply them to qualitative studies.

- Usually, demands towards *objectivity* are regarded as quite inadequate under a qualitative perspective. Subjectivity of researchers is not to be eliminated as an interference variable, but to be used for communicative and understanding processes (see LEGEWIE 1987, p.144 and more detailed BREUER 1996a, pp.36ff., who regards researchers "reflective subjectivity" and self-scrutiny as an important criterion for evaluating qualitative research and which can or should not be neutralized technically or in any other way).

- Also rejected are demands towards *reliability*, since (data collection) situations, e.g. an interview, are regarded as being a singular event at a special point in time. Additionally, depending on the (sub-) cultural and biographical background of the persons involved, "people (also test persons) are continually developing and situational conditions are changing, parallel to social change" (MAYRING 1993, p.107). Philipp MAYRING stresses that the research participant is changed even by the mere intervention of the researcher and by the measurement. Siegfried LAMNEK has a similar perspective when he states that "to standardize in a way that is similar to quantitative research would only create a superficial and misleading comparison of the instruments and should be forbidden. (1993, pp.177f.).

- Most attention is given to questions of *validity*, whose importance for qualitative research becomes obvious when one sees how many questions are discussed under this term which elsewhere are partially subsumed to other criteria. Here, from a qualitative perspective, a move "from technical measurement to interpretation and communication" (ibid., p.171) took place. Heiner LEGEWIE, among others, pledged to introduce "communication-theoretical criteria" (1987, p.144), which in his opinion would help take the many different aspects of objectivity and reliability into consideration; to *validate statements made during an interview*, LEGEWIE (ibid.), referring to HABERMAS, suggests some criteria. Processes of consent development and intersubjective agreement are especially important for qualitative researchers in ensuring the *validity of interpretations and generalizations*: Consensus may pertain to members of an interpretation group or research team ("consensus validity"), researcher(s) and research participant(s) (so called "communicative validation"; interpretations/results are discussed with research participants to capture and to include their responses as a part of the research process), and finally between the researcher conducting a study and external persons, e.g. experts or colleagues from other research teams, a process sometimes called "argumentative validation". [26]

Another important standard for writing and publishing research results is to make the pre-assumptions and decisions within the research process as transparent and comprehensible as possible. Most reports of qualitative research do not fulfill this standard. One reason might be that publisher demands stand in the way.[13] Additionally, the style of writing and presentation is often influenced and predetermined by the ductus of research that is seemingly independent of the subject and the concrete research process: Oftentimes when writing about empirical work "the researcher—interacting, deciding, pre-assuming, and sympathetic during the research process—becomes invisible in favor of a mere 'picture' of the other(s). The result oftentimes reminds one of a photograph without camera and photographer" (MRUCK 1999, p.5). Here more systematical reflections, influenced by research in the History of Science, Sociology of Science, etc., seem necessary (and vice versa: many studies in these fields restrict themselves on understanding processes of construction of knowledge that take place in the field of Natural Sciences and only little attention is given to the Humanities and Social Sciences).[14] [27]

4.5 Qualitative teaching and research

In research funding, qualitative studies—compared to their quantitative pendant—are often treated with neglect: Only a minimum of funds in the Social Sciences is given to qualitative research projects. For some disciplines, e.g. Psychology, a kind of "strategic interdisciplinarity" is sometimes good advice, since many reviewers for Psychology in certain funding institutions are very skeptical towards qualitative research. Also, in other disciplines, qualitative studies sometimes only earn a "condescending smile". For example, a colleague doing research on gender differences wrote in answer to the mail-inquiry regarding the state of German language qualitative research (see Note 2) the following:

> "Especially within Industrial Sociology the belief seems predominant to me that individual or collective states are as accurately measurable as e.g. size of company and intervals of time. But maybe this was only a situational effect [of the session I participated in]: The mainly male and (some of them) very renowned representatives of the discipline seem to have felt that their feet were stepped on. Their own sex seemed beyond questioning, so why do research on sexual differences? In short: Qualitative research, in my opinion, encounters quite a few barriers in Work and Industrial Sociology. Not only because this discipline has a long tradition, most times relying on quantitative research strategies, but also because qualitative research threatens to question what seems accepted and usual (and usual is the idea that men are predestined for the working life, be it managers or researchers)." (Mail-survey, see Note 2) [28]

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13 One aim of *FQS* as a online journal is to work against these limitations of print media by using Internet resources (see FQS concept).

14 Besides classics as Ludwik FLECK (1935), Thomas S. KUHN (1962) or Robert K. MERTON (1973) the work of Karin KNORR CETINA is worth mentioning, e.g. her early study on "The Manufacture of Knowledge" (1981); see also BONSS and HARTMANN (1985), BONSS, HOHLFELD and KOLLEK (1993) or FELT, NOWOTNY and TASCHWER (1995). For some ideas on why a Psychology of Science still is missing see MRUCK and MEY (1996a).

Improvement of the funding situation and the representation of qualitative research is—in terms of the field of Psychology—at most ascertainable in specific research areas, e.g. for research in the field of psychotherapy:

> "In my opinion, a lot has happened here during the last years concerning the acceptance and use of qualitative methods. In simple terms, a purely quantitative researching of psychotherapy outcomes has certain limits. In the meantime it has become more or less obvious which kind of psychotherapy is effective towards which kinds of disorders, etc. For some years now, a growing number of studies have been concerned with questions such as "What exactly is the job of a psychotherapist?", "What exactly do clinical professionals do in therapy?", "Which decisions are made on what basis?", and so on. So, increasingly, qualitative methods are being used since they support the development of theories and allow a microanalysis of spoken action. One indicator for this development is that now-a-days at the yearly conferences given by the 'Society for Psychotherapy Research', the most important international organization, about 10% of the contributions presented stem from qualitative studies." (Mail-survey, see Note 2) [29]

Qualitative research (e.g. in Sociology) seems to be most acceptable when it is part of a rather large design—for example in "special research areas"—and in areas where a multi-method approach (quantitative and qualitative) is preferred:

> "The acceptance of qualitative methods has improved—going by reviewer opinions, but also the reactions from contacted researchers ...—during the years ... [Our research efforts]—in which qualitative methods and the combination with quantitative and interdisciplinary work are included—have received high praise in the recent reviews and judgments made by expert reviewers and high international acknowledgment." (Mail-survey, see Note 2) [30]

In Gender Studies as well qualitative methods "are enjoying an increase in interest" according to the above mentioned colleague. Health Science also regards qualitative research to be "an accepted newcomer". Additional positive responses seem to depend on specific local and disciplinary emphases, e.g. Magdeburg and Hamburg for the Educational Sciences:

> "According to my experiences during the last three years, acceptance and interest in qualitative research has grown. Today professors, in comparison to the past, are more ready to advise one to conduct qualitative research for doctoral or post-doctoral studies. Students are becoming more and more interested in qualitative studies and approaches." (Mail-survey, see Note 2) [31]

Such local meeting places or niches seem to exist—likewise for qualitative teaching—for all disciplines, e.g. in Bremen, Munich or Berlin for Psychology. One colleague wrote about qualitative teaching in Psychology:

> "Psychology has the most difficulties with qualitative approaches (compared to Sociology and Educational Sciences); a first sign of rethinking [is recognizable] in that 'Research Methods and Evaluation' became a part of the graduate studies in

> Psychology (see Moosbrugger in the 'Psychologische Rundschau', 50, 3, pp.165-67, 1999). ... [Moosbrugger] conducted a survey of all Psychology institutes, asking what is being taught in this new area. In one of five areas the response was 'Qualitative Methods (interviewing, content analysis, biographical methods, case studies, exploration, hermeneutic approaches)'!" (Mail-survey, see Note 2) [32]

The cautious optimism expressed in this mail is missing in a synopsis Christel HOPF and Walter MÜLLER wrote in 1994 about the development and state of empirical social research in Germany and especially about the state of Sociology:

> "Unfortunately ..., qualitative approaches are not used within academic teaching in accordance with their importance for very elementary questions in Sociology. The teaching of methods of empirical social research in most universities is dominated by the educational/qualification demands which come from quantitative research strategies. No wonder that students and graduates of Sociology usually fail in trying to fulfill even basic requirements of qualitative research" (1994, pp.43f.). [33]

Current experiences in Berlin with the teaching of qualitative methods in Psychology also give little reason for optimism, especially since qualitative research is the first to go when staff reductions occur: In the undergraduate program, qualitative research was already hardly present, even after a chapter about "Qualitative Methods" was inserted into the new edition of the very widely used textbook "Research Methods and Evaluation for Social Scientists" (BORTZ & DÖRING 1995), which emphasizes the importance of including qualitative research in the undergraduate curriculum. Additionally, in Clinical Psychology student requests for courses and mentoring of qualitative research methods is growing, but cannot be met in a time of continually lessening curricular choices. This tendency also applies to a supplementary course of study "Qualitative Methods in the Social Sciences" at the Free University of Berlin, the only one of its kind in Germany. The homepage for this course informs that the "beginning of the ninth enrollment for this 3-semester supplementary course ... as a cooperative course of study from three different departments of the Free University of Berlin ... can momentarily not be set due to insufficient faculty capacity." (http://www.fu-berlin.de/qlmethoden/welcome.html [Broken link, FQS, December 2004]) [34]

An important and well attended offer for doctoral candidates and post doctoral students is the "Workshop for Qualitative Educational and Social Research", organized nationally once a year by the "Center for Qualitative Education, Counseling and Social Research" (information about the third workshop in November 1999 is available at http://www.uni-magdeburg.de/iew/html/zbbs.html [broken link, FQS March 02]). [35]

5. Only just Beginning: The Use of Internet Resources within German Qualitative Research

How German qualitative researchers use the Internet can only be sketched briefly. First of all, besides publishing texts, announcements and private or institutional websites, other types of online media are becoming more common. [36]

Among these are:

- Collections of URLs as within the rubric "Qualitative social research" at *psychologie.de*, in which information, links to conferences, institutes, websites, online-texts etc. are available;
- Websites belonging to academic institutions and allowing access to textual material, contact information etc., e.g. the pages belonging to ATLAS, to the "Center for Qualitative Education, Counseling and Social Research" or to the "Center for Qualitative Psychology" (http://www.qualitative-psychologie.de), the latter is currently under construction. An interesting offer—a cooperative virtual archive for academic texts—is currently being developed by university lecturers from different universities in Munich and Berlin (due to copyright reasons this offer must be limited to mentored students);
- the "Webring qualitative Forschung", which comprehends a comparably small number of most times German websites from individuals, groups or institutions; in the future, linking this ring to other webrings for qualitative researchers, e.g. the "Webring Qualitative Research" may be a possible alternative;
- the previously mentioned mailinglists "QSF-L" and "Biographieforschung" (see Note 2), which—at least potentially—are forums for information and exchange for subscribed researchers. Both lists actually work more or less as information stock markets. An offensive use of the lists e.g. for a kind of argumentative validation (in the sense mentioned before) is still missing, maybe because there are no examples of application. [37]

Communicating via the Internet—so previous experience in the German language community—becomes more difficult if it is not limited to dyads and the more interaction appears necessary and sensible: This proves true for qualitative online-chats, online-research, and online-teaching, as well. The first effort to establish a German language online-chat for qualitative-researchers had to invent virtual persons to at least play with the possibilities and limits of the chat-program as long as other discussion partners did not exist ;-). While the number of offers within the qualitative market research are continually growing, qualitative online research in the academic field is just starting; see as examples the contributions of Karl KOLLMANN (in this issue) or from Kai J. JONAS and Margarete BOOS (in this issue), or the book-series "Educational Areas in the Digital World", edited by Winfried MAROTZKI, Dorothee MEISTER, Mike SANDBOTHE and Uwe SANDER, whose first issue has just been published (MAROTZKI, MEISTER & SANDER 2000). First steps are also being made in the methodological reflection of the changed empirical base of qualitative online research, resulting e.g. from

the move from text to hypertext. Johannes MOES contribution in this issue offers some interesting food for thought in this matter (though it is still unfortunately only available in German). [38]

6. Future Perspectives

We have tried to provide an overview of the state of German language qualitative research, which necessarily remains limited and in need of completion. A special problem, which is also an opportunity, springs from the very heterogeneous readers we are addressing our contribution to: Some may be as unfamiliar with German qualitative research as we are with qualitative research e.g. in Japan or Mexico (and in many other countries!), others are in comparison experienced. Insofar, our effort risks being too specific for some of our readers, keeping them from understanding what we have written. For others we are not offering enough new ideas, thus losing their patience and interest. But for these two unintentionally produced reactions, the Internet and its communicative possibilities can possibly allow clarifications which print media cannot offer in any comparable way: Using the discussion board, some readers might e.g. ask us to make things more explicit, others may complete, correct or comment on our presentation. [39]

We would like to close by discussing and accentuating two tendencies which, in our opinion, the actual state of German language qualitative research contains: One concerns the continual marginalization of qualitative research and a possible perspective for recognition, the other some problematic implications that could accompany the struggle for recognition (and potentially the preservation of recognition). [40]

1. The "birth" of modern Social Sciences was closely followed by the separation of "explaining" and "understanding". Though this separation was dubious—since each observation, everyday or scientific, in the Natural or Social Sciences, means interpretation, according to the "paradigm" (KUHN 1962) or "way of thinking" (FLECK 1935) predominant for a certain point in time and within a discipline—the debates about a qualitative vs. quantitative perspectives continually accompanied the development of Social Sciences up from the turn of the century. Actually, while in the Natural Sciences a shift from physical-mechanical to biological-organic metaphors is recognizable (see e.g. WALDROP 1992), "soft" sciences are still dominated by the idea of "de-subjectifization, de-contextualization and quantification of social experience" (BONSS 1982, p.59). [41]

Wolfgang BONSS made this diagnosis in 1982 and it still seems to be valid for most Social Science disciplines. But some cracks and reorientations are also visible, e.g. if one thinks about the "5th International Conference on Social Science Methodology", taking place between the 3rd and 6th of October 2000 in Cologne where 23 of 96 sessions which are to be held there deal with qualitative research methods (http://www.za.uni-koeln.de/rc33/preliminary_prog-fr.htm [Broken link, FQS, January 2004]). This impressing presence of qualitative researchers must be seen in perspective: "Qualitative Research" is compiled into

a single segment, while e.g. "Data Collection" or "International Comparative Research" are for the most part or exclusively reserved for quantitative approaches. One must also notice that only five of the qualitative sessions are organized by German researchers. An even closer look shows that three of these five deal with computer aided approaches or with the relationship between qualitative and quantitative research methods. A comparable relativity is observable when one looks over the website belonging to the "Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung an der Universität zu Köln" (ZA, http://www.za.uni-koeln.de/), one of the organizers of the Cologne Conference: The few places where a qualitative researcher could contribute are limited to the categories "text analysis" and "historical social research", and even there the emphasis is on more or less quantitative computer aided approaches and efforts towards archiving large amounts of data. In these areas there truly seems to be an important potential for the development of qualitative research, which one colleague also mentioned in the aforementioned mail survey:

> "I can ascertain possibilities for further development and propagation of using methods in combination... [in] secondary analyses based on improved programs for data banks and the improved and less expensive hardware. Especially in view of the enormous time and financial costs for e.g. interviews and their transcription, the [actual] output cannot be seen as sufficient." (Mail-survey, see Note 2) [42]

In view of the previously outlined observations we can assume that the colleague is correct in his assessment of the possibilities for development, which offer possibilities for the recognition of qualitative research. Computer aided approaches for qualitative data analysis can be implemented in all areas (and these are quite a lot!) where the goal is to systematically reduce and condense large amounts of everyday language material. It can also be assumed that this promises more success when qualitative methodology—presented as a ready-made prescription—attaches itself or rather is similar to what is familiar to quantitatively oriented researchers and evaluators; an assumption which is supported by the following, a contribution which was made in the scope of the survey in the mailing lists in regards to the status and perspectives of qualitative research:

> "Within traditional academic Psychology, qualitative content analysis is, as an approach which goes by relatively strict rules and is connected to quantitative analysis, the approach with the most acceptance. I have come to this conclusion after having guest lectured for the last 15 years at 'traditional' institutes of Psychology." (mail-survey, see Note 2) [43]

2. Taking into consideration our reflections regarding the impossibility of research without a researcher, of knowledge without a "knower", of interpretation without an interpreter, a principal revision of quantitative social research is thinkable too, i.e. bringing explaining closer to the paradigm of understanding. The development briefly outlined under 1., though, lets one assume that the perspective for recognition and the accompanying perspective for e.g. research funding contains the reversed danger which BONSS saw for the quantitative mainstream in social

research: that the tendency to "de-subjectify, de-contextualize and quantify social experience" will also influence the qualitative pendant even more than it already does. [44]

Presently we can already see this within an orientation, which is called the "textual turn" in the ethnological debates (FUCHS & BERG 1993): Especially for qualitative-empirical work, textual material seems to be considered as *the* seemingly sure and safe ground necessary for many researchers working with everyday language and interpretive "soft" qualitative research methods. Contrary to this is a position which is described and treated as the "reflexive turn" in Ethnography. It contains the belief that "text ... is never identical with the reality which it reflects" (JEGGLE 1984, p.25), and emphasizes the necessity of research reflection and self-scrutiny. [45]

We like to stress this necessity: Interpretation is unavoidable in the field of qualitative methodology and it makes a systematic reflection of method usage as a data production process which takes place between the researcher, the research participants and the possible users in specific scientific and everyday cultures absolutely necessary. If only because a special feature of the qualitative approach is that the method itself—in contrast to the usage of statistic programs—must be considered to be in need of interpretation: They cannot be merely "taken over"; instead, they need the continual feedback "to the object and context in question. If one is consequent in the train of thought, then this would lead one away from the usage of available methods and towards ones that develop out of the respective question and object of stud." (FLICK 1992, p.49). Openness in the development and the need for interpretation concern all phases of the qualitative research process, from collection to putting it on paper and documenting it, to analyzing and writing about it/publishing it (see BREUER 1999 and MRUCK & MEY 1996b). [46]

"Pillars" upon which reflection relevant for the empirical work can support itself can be, to begin with, the aforementioned types of communicative, consensual and argumentative validation (but it is important to remember that validation is always dealing with knowledge that was won within a context, a product that is merely of provisional nature that again can be used contextually or not). The inherent non-correspondence (of the perspectives, results, etc.) could, in comparison to traditional methodologies in which this is considered to be a hindrance for objectivity and reliability, be used as an additional possibility for discovery, where the divergence of perspective between the various participants—researcher and researched, various researchers in one team, researcher and external colleagues, researcher and those working in the field—can be varied, contrasted and brought into connection with one another. (For an attempt to put this into practice within [post]graduate work, see BREUER 1996b; MRUCK & MEY 1998.) [47]

The necessity of reflection also applies to those qualitative orientations that we described with the term "textual turn": The usefulness of e.g. computer aided text analysis and the acceptance of these beyond qualitative social research does not

release us from the methodological duty to reflect the implications and consequences which result when implementing these in the research process. In that, we do not consider "textual" and "reflexive" to necessarily be an opposing pair. Instead, we see them as being potentially complementary ways of approach. And we do believe that it is absolutely necessary for both to work more offensive-ly towards qualitative research orientations in all scientific areas which deal with "social data" (BONSS 1982) and which have a basic need for a paradigm in which understanding and constructing meaning are central elements. [48]

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