The Identity Politics of Qualitative Research.
A Discourse Analytic Inter-Text[1]

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Abstract: We intend this paper to be read as an inter-text between selected *FQS* articles, which in one way or another engage in the identity politics of qualitative research, and the broader discussion of quality in the social sciences. Subjecting those texts to a discursive investigation, we highlight how the semantic scope of what is called "qualitative research" is decisively delimited by the positivist associations of "good research". Our overall aim is to take issue with two binaries that are commonly employed by qualitative researchers and thus collide with the evolution of creative/aesthetic science. Simultaneously, however, we seek to enliven qualitative research by providing an (ancient and thus marginal) understanding of research and of approaches that are still outside the prevailing canon. To this end, we start by investigating the binary between quantitative and qualitative research that is perpetually reified as our colleagues invoke the positivist quality criteria, subordinating the qualitative pole to an inferior position. Second, we provide examples of the ways that qualitative research is habitually separated from "non-research" such as the arts, journalism and fiction, ostensibly to justify calling it "scientific". Pondering how these binaries endow qualitative research with a limited identity and a supplementary status, we draw on some postmodern works so as to elaborate on alternative understandings of "science" and scientific quality. Finally, we argue for a "politics of difference" which we envision as a point of origin for extending qualitative research by multiplying its genres, styles and tropes.

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1 This paper has been written as a collaborative effort. We have placed our names in alphabetical order but this should not be misread as a hierarchical distinction between "first" and "second" author.

1. Introduction

> "[C]riticism is not a passion of the head, but
> the head of passion."
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> (KAMENKA, 1983, p.117)

Historically speaking, academic psychology has often determined its identity in concert with questions of methodology (ROSE, 1985). Thus, more often than not, such identity politics have been pursued in conjunction with the polarity between qualitative and quantitative streams of psychological research. While it is arguable that the discourse on methodology has kept scholars in the social sciences busy at all times, we would like to point out that the polarity between the two methods has led to certain rebarbative tendencies. In recent years the "naked hostility" (BURTON & KAGAN, 1998) between qualitative and quantitative researchers has been partly mitigated, due partly to the growing recognition that no single methodology can provide a universal, exhaustive understanding of the phenomenon at hand; still, we can hardly depict the current situation as affirmative, respectful or cooperative. After all, given that some of the initial antagonism has continued, the least detrimental approach to date appears to be mutual ignorance. A second, more conciliatory, mode of interaction looks for pragmatic solutions to the avowed incommensurability between qualitative and quantitative research; its practitioners encourage, for instance, a "paradigm of choices" (PATTON, 1986) or "mixing methods" (BRANNEN, 1995). While some say that mutual ignorance disrupts the dialogue on and negotiation of epistemo-logical and ontological differences, that very engagement forces us to decouple the philosophical grounding of research from questions of methodology. [1]

For quite some time, acute discussions have been occurring in various research traditions on the incommensurability of methods, methodologies or paradigms (e.g. KUHN, 1970); we contend, however, that the question of what it means to "do science" and to work scientifically has gained particular importance in relation to recent identity politics in the sphere of qualitative research. What we argue in this article is that the status, legitimacy and support for qualitative research within the scientific community has become a pivotal concern in the *FQS,* especially in the *FQS* 6(2) and 6(3) issues on <u>Qualitative Inquiry: Research, Archiving, and Reuse</u> and <u>The State of the Art of Qualitative Research in Europe</u> (KNOBLAUCH, FLICK & MAEDER, 2005; MRUCK, CISNEROS PUEBLA & FAUX, 2005; EBERLE & BERGMAN, 2005; BERGMAN & COXON, 2005; and especially EBERLE, 2005). More precisely, what we construe as examples of identity politics in the *FQS* issue on "Qualitative Inquiry: Research, Archiving and Reuse" relates to the plea to promote qualitative research by developing national (research and archiving) centres. In the "The State of the Art of Qualitative Research in Europe" we see this process happening in those investigations that highlight the differences and diversity within qualitative research in different European national cultures so as to "provide unique insights into the variety and richness of qualitative social research in Europe" (MRUCK et al., 2005, par.4). On its face, the political agenda of what is called "qualitative research" seems to thrive on

building acceptance and proliferating its methods and practices. Although many of the articles in the above two *FQS* issues contain both urgent and worthwhile arguments and ideas, we would like to point out that the resulting constructions of "qualitative research" are also conjoined with implications that require critical attention. [2]

Consequently, the starting point of our reflection is the question of how "qualitative research" is discursively constructed in the exemplary texts pointed out above, and what major consequences derive from these identity building processes. We thus use the term "identity politics" to denote the establishment of identifiable groups through binary distinctions, such as "qualitative versus quantitative" or "research versus non-research". Conceiving identity as a discursive creation and the processes of identity building as reflexive endeavours, it becomes clear that any use of these binary distinctions is accompanied by a (re-) construction and, therefore, reification of the very distinctions. Beyond that, identity building also reinforces the respective hierarchy between the invoked categories and therefore perpetuates particular conditions of oppression (BUTLER, 1990). In consequence, defining what qualitative research *is* (i.e. the obvious presence of ideology) will also invariably determine what it *is not* (i.e. ideology's deliberate absence; cf. LAW, 2004). We most notably aim to render this process both visible and problematic. [3]

Thus our critical comments delineate a particular inter-text which is inserted at the nexus between both the *FQS* 6(2) and 6(3) issues. We use the term "inter-text" not only because we discuss issues relevant in two issues of *FQS*, but also because we want to take a discursive perspective (e.g. GERGEN, 1997) to reflect on and extend a so far mainly political agenda. Hence, we will focus on the question of *how* specific ways of discursively constructing the identity of "qualitative research" cut off evolving alternatives for qualitative research by virtue of creating and reifying distinct binaries. To address this issue more specifically, we will use our magnifying glass on two different kinds of binaries: the one between qualitative and quantitative research, and the one between research and non-research. These reifications have consequences for identity politics but also for the stipulation of criteria for qualitative research; analysing these consequences will hence allow us to discuss the implied relations of dominance and exclusion. In conclusion, we will provide some tentative ideas on what qualitative research could *become* if we could restrain ourselves from ultimately defining what it *is*. Emphasising the existing diversity within qualitative research and drawing on theories and approaches from other academic disciplines and non-academic genres, we suggest a more open and inclusive approach to the identity (or, better, alterity; cf. LEVINAS, 1999) of qualitative research. To make our argument more vivid, we draw primarily on exemplary vignettes taken from EBERLE (2005) that let us render concrete and intelligible the problems we see emerging from current conceptions of (qualitative) research. We do not suggest that this is an exclusive attribute of EBERLE's text—far from it. Rather, we see it as characteristic and illustrative of how "qualitative research" is constructed in contemporary discussions and publications about qualitative research. [4]

2. Qualitative Versus Quantitative Research: Dismantling the Hierarchy

> "In modern social science, the concepts of validity, reliability, and generalization have obtained the status of a scientific holy trinity. They appear to belong to some abstract realm in a sanctuary of science, far removed from the interactions of the everyday world, to be worshipped with respect by all true believers in science."
>
> (KVALE, 1995, p.20)

Probably the most important division that arises in the identity performance of "qualitative research" is the qualitative-quantitative binary. Thus it does not seem exaggerated to claim that this binary has become an accepted dividing line in social science research, at least since LAZARSFELD's proclamation in LERNER's (1961) seminal "Quality and Quantity" (COXON, 2005). Despite its obvious popularity, we proclaim that this binary is less than helpful for our present objective and that the realm of qualitative research could actually gain much by sidestepping the line between qualitative and quantitative methods/research (DACHLER, 1997, 2000) or by obliterating it altogether (REHN, 2002). [5]

Before doing so, however, we must take a look at where the identified binary obtrudes and interferes in the determination of "qualitative research". Arguably, it still seems utterly commonplace to display qualitative research methods against the backdrop of their quantitative counterpart (e.g. DENZIN & LINCOLN, 2000). As MRUCK et al. (2005, par.2, paraphrasing ATKINSON, 2005) make unmistakably clear, "[p]ositivism and its concomitant quantification are worthy adversaries, indeed making it a struggle, for many, if not most, social scientists aim for scientific respectability. And respectability is assessed most often through the lens of positivism". On the face of it, the positivist epistemology is undoubtedly pervasive (GARRAT & HODKINSON, 1998, p.515), though some have hinted that it is in fact "dead" (MOTTIER, 2005, par.5). Yet, MOTTIER (2005, par.6) simultaneously admits that the "strongest remnants of positivism are now possibly to be found in the social rather than in the natural sciences". A cursory glance at the prevailing qualitative research thus reveals that many scholars perpetually try to justify their work by relying on the "scientific holy trinity" that is, validity, reliability and generalisation, all of which are cheerfully encouraged by positivist epistemologies (GARRAT & HODKINSON, 1998; LATHER, 1993; SCHWANDT, 1996; SEALE, 1999).[2] [6]

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2   For instance, putting out "generalisation" as the topic for last year's Workshop for Qualitative Psychology in Velden (Austria) implies making reference to a quality criterion which is quite obviously rooted in positivist ontological and epistemological assumptions about good science and which, therefore, is deemed untenable for a debate on qualitative research. In our view, this state of affairs might lead some to equate "positivist" criteria with "scientific" criteria without reflection; doing so invariably presents some risks and problems regarding the identity of qualitative research.

Notwithstanding the abundance of so-called "new" or "alternative" approaches for imparting the criteria of qualitative research (ALTHEIDE & JOHNSON, 1994; KVALE, 1995; LINCOLN, 1995; REASON & ROWAN, 1981), we argue that it is still possible to recognise the positivist assumptions that the world is objectively observable (read: objectivist epistemology), provided that one uses the pertinent procedures (GARRAT & HODKINSON, 1998). What is revealed quite prominently in such endeavours is a listing of preordained criteria which are usually based on or at least influenced by variations of the positivist criteria of validity, and (to a lesser extent) of reliability and generalisation. [7]

We argue, on the other hand, that such undertakings are futile to the extent that they fail to recognise that validity, reliability and generalisation represent a set of quality criteria which are commensurable and tenable only to researchers working on the basis of a (post-)positivist paradigm (LINCOLN & GUBA, 2000). Following SANDBERG (2005, p.43), we further posit that the "problem with embracing positivistic criteria when justifying the results of interpretive approaches is that they are not in accordance with the underlying ontology and epistemology". [8]

To be sure, SANDBERG's argument is by no means new, but it does seem to be ignored all too often. Hence, when talking about either qualitative or quantitative research, the focus is often directed towards "methods" and not towards the question of ontology or epistemology. Thus "qualitative research" becomes associated with specific "qualitative methods" such as interviews, ethnographies, and participant observations, while "quantitative research" is conventionally conjoined with "quantitative methods" such as questionnaires, surveys or experiments. As SANDBERG (2005) argued, qualitative researchers are presumed to work on behalf of an "interpretative paradigm" (WILSON, 1970) which hinges on theoretical traditions such as phenomenology, hermeneutics, or constructivism (MOTTIER, 2005).[3] Moreover, the interpretive tradition is "supported by and dependent upon a line of thought that is orientated towards meaning, context, interpretation, understanding and reflexivity" (cf. *FQS* 6(3): KNOBLAUCH, FLICK & MAEDER, 2005, par.5). Quantitative researchers, on the other hand, often depart from a "normative paradigm" which corresponds with theoretical traditions such as positivism or post-positivism. Therefore, to avoid having a "subtle realism" (GARRAT & HODKINSON, 1998) penetrate our understanding of what can count as "sound" qualitative research, we must be careful with the ontological and epistemological grounding of our arguments. [9]

In addition, we must remember that thinking in dualisms or binaries (read: "dualist ontology"; cf. SANDBERG, 2005) such as "qualitative" and "quantitative research" has a long tradition in Western thought (cf. DERRIDA, 1976; 1981). The operation of binaries is revealed, for instance, in oppositions such as subject-object, female-male, nature-culture, sane-insane (e.g. HUGHES, 2002; PLUMWOOD, 1993). Such binary constructions of identity categories have been cogently analysed and/or deconstructed by feminist researchers (cf. HUGHES,

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3 We make this specification to account for our understanding of qualitative research and, in particular, to distinguish between interpretive qualitative research (which represents our home ground) and qualitative positivism (PRASAD & PRASAD, 2002).

2002; PLUMWOOD, 1993), and post-colonial (e.g. SACHS, 1992) and critical scholars (e.g. DERRIDA, 1976; LYOTARD, 1993). Thus it is important to notice the modus operandi in binaries: each side always needs the other side in order to become meaningful (DERRIDA, 1981). For instance, as HUGHES (2002, p.15) cogently pinpointed, "[i]n the male-female binary, to be a woman requires us to have a corresponding concept of man". By extending the constitutive dynamic of binaries we thus come to see that the concept of "quantitative research" makes sense only in opposition to "qualitative research". [10]

Importantly, while both sides of a given binary need one another to sustain a sense of stability, self or identity, they also entail a hierarchical relationship, meaning that in any pair one side always tends to dominate the other. As described by DERRIDA (1981, p.41), "[o]ne of the two terms [of the binary] governs the other […] or has the upper hand", which further implicates that there can be no question of a "peaceful coexistence of a *vis-à-vis*" (emphasis in original). Following DERRIDA, we see that binaries are irrevocably determined by "violent hierarchies"; this holds true both for the opposition between women and men and for that between qualitative and quantitative research. Allegorically speaking, qualitative research can be equated with women's position in the binary system and quantitative research with men's position.[4] That is, the dominating side is always valued as being higher in the hierarchy, as being more sophisticated, competent, beautiful, powerful, etc.—a situation that corresponds to current (and very pervasive) gender stereotypes (cf. SCHEIN, 2001; SPREEMANN, 2000). Another important consequence of binary constructions is their exclusiveness. It follows from this that the moment one is said to belong to one side of the binary one logically cannot belong to another (LYOTARD, 1993). This logic of "either-or" explains why binaries give rise to the "building of camps" and "monocultures" (EBERLE, 2005) which support the establishment of ostensibly stable identities, while simultaneously disabling them and closing off any possibility of their intermingling with one another. [11]

Relating binary thinking back to the identity politics of "qualitative research", we have at our disposal a scheme which provides us with some insights regarding, for instance, the problems pertaining to the stipulation of quality criteria. A first problem, briefly alluded to above, is that positivist quality criteria such as generalisation, validity, reliability and objectivity are omnipresent and virulent—which allows them to fortify the binary as well as the hierarchy between qualitative and quantitative methods. If we accept "their" criteria, that is, the quality criteria of the "quantitative camp", as important and indeed superior to those of qualitative research, we perpetuate the dominant position of the former rationality (cf. also FIELDING & SCHREIER, 2001). [12]

A good example of this subtle pervasiveness of the positivist criteria occurs in a section of EBERLE's (2005, par.11) article where he supports the construction of a centre for qualitative research in Switzerland. By assigning an autonomous architecture to qualitative research, EBERLE seeks to raise its very visibility and

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4   See also GHERARDI and TURNER's (1999) insightful essay "Real men don't collect soft data."

thus to lift it onto the same hierarchical level as quantitative research. Yet, only a few sentences later he claims that this would imply "an investment in the quality of qualitative research" (EBERLE, 2005, par.11) because it would otherwise attract "students as well as practitioners who are not at ease with demanding quantitative procedures and who expect that in qualitative research they can substitute methodological sophistication with common sense". [13]

Three questions force themselves upon us at this stage. First, why does EBERLE highlight how demanding quantitative procedures are and at the same time talk about qualitative ones as being close to common sense? By doing so he suggests that quantitative procedures require a certain specialist knowledge and training, while qualitative techniques can be easily handled using everyday knowl-edge. Second, why would these ostensibly uninformed students and practitioners have the power to define what qualitative research is? Taking their judgements as seriously as EBERLE does almost treats them as experts and thus may give them more voice than they deserve. And third, how does he legitimise his assumption that the quality of qualitative research is not good enough today and needs this prospective improvement towards higher rigour? [14]

EBERLE, so it seems, introduces these premises in a subtle way. He hence continues to argue for more rigour in qualitative research on behalf of a rhetoric that trades on a binary that we might describe as "good rigorous [quantitative] research" and "predominantly bad, without quality criteria (anything goes) research which is qualitative". More precisely, quoting SILVERMAN (2001, p.34), EBERLE and ELLIKER say the rigour they are arguing for should be achieved by defining (general) quality criteria for qualitative research, which are juxtaposed with, for instance, "anecdotalism, the habit of many qualitative researchers to present a few, 'telling' examples of some apparent phenomenon, without any attempt to analyse less clear (or even contradictory) data" (EBERLE & ELLIKER, 2005, par.12). Evoking a binary that distinguishes between "good" and "bad" and associating it with "quantitative" and "qualitative" research, EBERLE and ELLIKER are very much in danger of falling into a positivist rhetoric of "rigorous research" which will do nothing but reify the qualitative-quantitative binary and its hierarchical relationship. [15]

Departing from these elaborations, it is our firm contention that the opposition between qualitative and quantitative research demeans rather than strengthens qualitative research and that qualitative researchers must come up with an answer about what makes their work valuable and unique starting from assumptions beyond the quantitative orthodoxy. It follows that if our objective is to empower qualitative research/methods within our scientific community, we might be well advised to put forward autonomous quality standards that ignore the dominant logic of positivism (cf. KIENER & SCHANNE, 2001). This would entail, among other things, building research communities that work on behalf of independent values, awards, scholarships and grants, journals, centres, etc. This proposal is much in line with feminist strategies to build "women only" spaces or "safe spaces" (HILL COLLINS, 1991) in order to create a community for women that does not interfere with men's spaces. Such initiatives reveal that, if we are to

leverage the inferior pole of the binary, we must disturb the deadlocked hierarchical relationships of the system. Additionally, as the dominant term of a binary can never be "completely stable or secure, since it is dependent on that which is excluded" (FINLAYSON, 1999, p.64), it is always possible to undermine the quantitative-qualitative binary by calling into question the very root assumptions of positivism. Such a nitty-gritty approach would necessitate direct confrontation and continuous discussions with "quantitative researchers", but also with qualitative researchers who support these assumptions. As we see it, our paper is but one preliminary step in this endeavour. We are writing it in order to deconstruct what we perceive as the predominant way of writing about quality criteria in "qualitative research". [16]

To this end, we want to point out another problem that derives from the qualitative-quantitative binary: the homogenisation (PLUMWOOD, 1993) of the category "qualitative research". What we mean by homogenisation is that if one places qualitative in opposition to quantitative one gets to elicit the impression that each side of the binary represents a homology wherefore one gets to ignore the irrevocable diversity of qualitative research. By implication, following FOUCAULT (1984, p.197), it is facile to understand how "the power of the norm functions within a system of formal equality, since within a homogeneity that is the rule, the norm introduces as a useful imperative and as a result of measurement, all the shading of individual differences". Yet, to accept prima facie that qualitative and quantitative research build a homogeneity would be a gross misunderstanding since both signifiers would be bereft of their undeniable variety and diversity (HAMMERSLEY, 1995). Thus, it is harmful to homogenise qualitative research because whenever doing so conceals the richness and variety within its practices and theoretical assumptions. Consequently, adhering to seemingly clear-cut categories through a stereotypical representation of the respective poles not only denies the differences within each category but also helps to maintain the hierarchy between quantitative and qualitative research. [17]

Again, the debate on homogeneous categories has been prominent, for instance, in recent feminist publications (cf. EVANS, 1995) that point out that the category "women" is inappropriate for accounting for all the potentially infinite possibilities of "being a woman". When women are labelled stereotypically, they are all subjected to a single category which then keeps the hierarchy within the dualism of women and men. What about black women, Moslem women, women in leadership positions, women being mothers? Are they all the same and thus capable of being subsumed under a single code? Obviously not. Be that as it may, grouping all women by using stereotypical characteristics makes the label "woman" more visible than other possible features, for instance being a skilled engineer. [18]

Returning to the issue of research, to scrutinise the impression of clear-cut, distinct and uniform categories, we need to enhance the visibility of both qualitative and quantitative research's diversity, equivocity and heterology. Hence focusing on multiplicity instead of unity, we can no longer hold the biased polarity, with qualitative research being on the one end and quantitative on the other, or

the situation in which "any mention of qualitative research seems to conjure up images of diverse philosophical perspectives, research techniques and procedures, and styles of presentation" (PRASAD & PRASAD, 2002, p.5), [19]

As PRASAD and PRASAD make clear, qualitative research does include an abundance of hybrids such as qualitative positivism which makes it intuitively compelling to believe that not all quantitative researchers work on behalf of a positivist paradigm, nor do all qualitative researchers or students try to get away with unsophisticated methods (EBERLE, 2005). This said, we must all admit that qualitative research derives its inspiration from such a wide range of sources that we must relinquish any assumption of unity. [20]

By and large, the 2005 September issue of *FQS* appears to be very valuable because it highlights the differences in qualitative research in European countries; in particular the qualitative-quantitative binary seems to have concerned research scholars in France much less than those in other European countries (cf. ANGERMÜLLER, 2005).

> "Whatever the reason, it appears that the boundary between qualitative and quantitative research is not as distinct as it is in most other countries. It is as if the weak impact of the interpretive paradigm on French methodological social scientific thinking was the cause that made the cleavage between qualitative and quantitative research appear [of] much lesser importance in France than elsewhere." (KNOBLAUCH et al., 2005, par.5) [21]

Exploring what is "taken for granted" in other countries about different versions of qualitative research could provide some valuable insights and help us step beyond the qualitative-quantitative binary when trying to (re)construct what "qualitative research" might become. [22]

Consequently, if we take up the effort of leveraging qualitative research within our scientific community, we simultaneously need to reduce existing hierarchies and establish autonomous identities. As a first step towards that end, we should continue and increase the search for diversity, but not only across nations (as in the case of *FQS* 6(3)). Exploring different approaches towards data collection and analysis, methodology, theory, paradigms, philosophy of science and epistemology, we might discover even more differences than we initially expected. Following the characteristics of the interpretative paradigm and considering the different levels and spheres of what has so far been called "qualitative research", we need to take a close look to determine if we really mean the same thing while talking about interviews, discourse analysis, constructivism, etc. *FQS* so far has done a wonderful job in that respect: it has initiated a debate about the different approaches of qualitative research. Yet, what we are still missing in most discussions about "qualitative research" is the paradigmatic level, that is, a debate on the level of philosophy of science. Discussing these issues and pinpointing the basic assumptions of our research in order to define our standpoint would help us all see that it is in fact a misunderstanding to exclusively relate existing differences between and within

qualitative and quantitative research to the level of "methods". To put this slightly differently, good research is not only a question of sound methods; it is equally a matter of epistemology, philosophy of science, paradigms, theory, methodology, data collection and analysis (EBERLE, 2005). [23]

In the face of the irreducibly rich diversity of qualitative approaches, what we are suggesting is that we cannot define "good" qualitative research by defining fixed and transcendental quality criteria. Rather, in acknowledging the uniqueness of the single (qualitative) approaches, we are called upon to define and in fact to invent, quality criteria for the respective study at hand while still considering the epistemological position of the respective project. Hence, if we think of the research question as defining methodology and methods (MOTTIER, 2005, par.2), we concomitantly claim that epistemology defines the criteria for judgement. Having provisionally argued that the qualitative-quantitative binary is futile and unhelpful, we would like now to reflect upon a different kind of signification for "qualitative research" and, by doing so lay a foundation we can use to change and extend its very meaning. [24]

3. Science Versus Non-Science: On the Etymology of Science as "Making Knowledge"

> "A new archivist has been appointed. But has anyone actually appointed him? Is he not rather acting on his own instructions? Certain malevolent people say that he is the new representative of structural technology or technocracy."
>
> (DELEUZE, 1988;
> cited in JONES, 2004, p.50)

Arguably, the qualitative-quantitative binary is by far the most prominent frame for representing and arguing for (or against) qualitative research. However, we would like to intensify the discussion on the identity politics of qualitative research and show how binary distinctions determine what does and does not count as scientific research. At this juncture, let us return to the discussion of a Swiss Centre for Qualitative Research introduced by Thomas EBERLE in the 2005 May edition of *FQS* 6(2).[5] EBERLE points out that the goal of the initiative would be to reach a "consensus on quality standards and teaching requirements, and to explore the viability of an archive and resource centre for qualitative research" (EBERLE, 2005, par.1). In delineating the criteria for inclusion in the archive, he specifies that "[p]ostmodern approaches which proclaim that 'anything goes' and which draw no distinction between social science, journalism and art, and which

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5 This initiative has its roots in a conference co-organised by the Swiss Information and Data Archive Service for the Social Sciences (SIDOS) in April 2002 where leading researchers deliberated about the current peculiarities and future requirements of qualitative research in Switzerland (EBERLE, 2004).

call the methodological practices of qualitative inquiry a 'bricolage' […] are not particularly helpful" (EBERLE, 2005, par.11). [25]

Given EBERLE's claim, we should hardly be surprised at what unfolds in front of us: the construction of another binary. This binary, so it seems, makes it possible to distinguish between proper qualitative research (respectively social science) and its "supplement" (DERRIDA, 1976), which takes the form of non-research such as fiction, art, and journalism. Hence, we can see that EBERLE stimulates, by means of an essential "dividing practice" (RABINOW, 1984, p.8), a normalising judgement that "introduces […] the constraint of a conformity that must be achieved […] [here] the rule [must] be made to function as a minimal threshold, as an average to be respected, or as an optimum toward which one must move" (FOUCAULT, 1984, p.195). We thus construe EBERLE's text as engendering a decisive game of the insider-outsider and as controlling the enunciation of qualitative research, that is, what qualifies as qualitative research and how it must be practised, conducted, disseminated, etc. It follows from this that a research centre must be reflected as an institutional domain that operates and thrives on a particular rationality and that advocates a certain and, importantly, exclusive kind of knowledge (FOUCAULT, 2000). EBERLE quite obviously seems to invoke the archive as a sort of "expert system" through which certain practices come to be described, categorised and valued. While it is beyond question that the repercussions of archiving are univocally positive, DERRIDA (cited in COHEN, 2001, p.1) reminds us that "[t]he technical structure of the archiving archive also determines […] its relationship to the future. The archivisation produces as much as it records the event".[6] [26]

Hence, to understand the "regime of truth" (FOUCAULT, 1984) that EBERLE is so keen to suggest, we must look more deeply into his attempt to draw a demarcation line between research and non-research, that is, between art and journalism and genuine social science research, because this distinction presupposes a particular rationality about what actually constitutes research. In other words, to grant such a distinction, some distinguishing features must belong uniquely to one tradition and by logical extension be lacking in the other. EBERLE provides the reader with two arguments that seem to justify his partition. [27]

The first difference EBERLE identifies between social scientific research and non-research is that the social sciences rely on approaches which "make explicit in what way they employ methodological procedures which can be learned and discussed" whereas the latter represent more of "an art which can only be judged by the authority of some charismatic 'master'" (par.11). While EBERLE is by no means the only person to think this way, it is interesting to note that his argument comes to hinge upon a peculiar fusion of method and science; thus it gives the impression that just by properly explicating one's method it will be possible to "translate from the field […] to the printed page [...]". This translation is deemed

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6 For a more extensive elaboration of the issue of archiving consult *FQS* issue 1(3) on Text, Archive, Re-Analysis and the more recent *FQS* issues 6(1) on Secondary Analysis of Qualitative Data and 6(2) on Qualitative Inquiry: Research, Archiving, and Reuse.

vital; without it, "science has no transparency, no basis for replicability, no way to persuade" (HARDY & CLEGG, 1997, p.146). [28]

The second rationale EBERLE puts forward is that qualitative researchers need to "present their whole dataset to the public in the same way as most quantitative researchers now do" (par.12). The underlying logic of this second argument is that only if researchers make their data available can other researchers carry out "secondary analysis" and "foster critical debate" (par.12). EBERLE rests his account on an understanding of research with two premises worth examining. He assumes, first, that research is primarily a matter of transparently applying proper research methods and, second, that interpretations can be judged post hoc regarding their plausibility, truthfulness, etc. Given this state of argumentation, it is hardly surprising that such a logic hinders our ability to see fiction, narratives of the self, performance science, polyvocal texts, responsive readings, aphorisms, comedy and satire, visual presentations, and mixed genres (HARDY & CLEGG, 1997) as legitimate forms of scientific knowledge. Essentially, this logic does not challenge the existence of a natural dividing line between (social) science and non-research, and thus leaves completely unexamined the question of knowledge's status and legitimisation (CZARNIAWSKA, 2004). [29]

At this point we would like to call into question EBERLE's assumption that proper methods are sufficient to entitle one's research as "scientific". The pivotal problem we sense in such approaches is that any over-involvement, or dare we say obsession, with method (i.e. our efforts to "improve" them) is quite detrimental to our objective of producing exciting and valuable knowledge. As we move "closer" to (the truth of) our subject matter by means of an ever-heightening engagement with method we risk thwarting the aesthetic appeal of the text. Thus, it seems, a dilemma materialises between the precision of method and a given text's aesthetic quality. Or, as VAN MAANEN (1995, p.139) eloquently observed,

> "it seems to me that the more we try to be precise and exact, the less we are able to say and that the harder we try to follow a rigorous […] system, the more we are tempted to fill it out with uninspired observation […]. This state of affairs recommends that we put our theories forward with an awareness of a haunting irony: To be determinate, we must be indeterminate." [30]

What we are saying here is that method, at whatever level of sophistication, does not necessarily guarantee that a particular piece of qualitative research truly "works" (DELEUZE, 1995). If we follow BLOOM's assertion that "there is no method […] there is yourself, and you are highly idiosyncratic" (cf. SALUSINSZKY, 1987, p.67), then, to put it bluntly, we can no longer "hide" behind the argument of having followed the state-of-the-art rules: the proper technique of qualitative research. [31]

With this in mind, we must first recognise that EBERLE's enunciation of research is canonical and thus well accepted; etymologically it can be traced back to the

modernist understandings, respectively of "scientific inquiry" (1939)[7] and "non-arts studies" (1978). We should consider, however, that science—before it had been construed in contrast to the arts and hence in conjunction with rigorous procedures and rules which gave it a pompous and meaningful position in post-industrial society (LYOTARD, 1984)—was interpreted differently. That is, the word science, which derives from Greek "epistemonikos" (making knowledge) and from Latin "scientificus" (scientia: knowledge and ficus: making), originally alluded to the contingent and creative potential of knowledge (creation). Given this etymological sense of the term, we prefer an understanding of qualitative research that thrives on the idea of "searching closely" (from French "rechercher", 1539) which we deem more apposite for venturing beyond the modernist understanding of science, especially its over-alliance with method. Importantly, both of the above etymologies—"scientific inquiry" and "non-art studies"—testify that the meaning of research or science/scientific has only recently been used to draw a line between the arts or philosophy and the kind of scientific method and knowledge that is commonplace today in social science and humanities departments. In contrast, the notion of "searching closely" embarks on an exegesis of research that appoints appropriate space to creativity and opens up towards multiple ways of knowledge creation. [32]

This being said, we would like to vote for an understanding of research that liberates us from the "straitjacket" of method. As mentioned before, for one's research to qualify as qualitative does not presuppose that one adheres to certain (pre-established) procedures or methods, nor is there any justifiable imperative to disclose one's "data" so others can judge their accuracy. Quite likely, "searching closely" does away with the quality criteria of the positivist paradigm; we additionally concede that we do not mean to rashly sidestep the discussion on quality. By arguing for a novel understanding of research and science we have at our disposal good arguments for blurring the boundaries of our historical heritage of qualitative research, and to actively seek to "resist the rules of positivism, or to be confined, policed, and disciplined by outdated notions of its limits" (PRASAD & PRASAD, 2002, p.6). As a consequence of what we have discussed so far, in the next section we describe why we must rethink the accepted limits of what is called "qualitative research" and reflect on what we can gain by importing or actively inheriting textual practices that have thus far been kept away from the canon of qualitative research. [33]

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7   These and the following dates and significations are derived from the Online Etymology Dictionary; cf. http://www.etymonline.com/.

4. Rejuvenating Qualitative Research: Some Postmodern Suggestions

> "Since the science does not yet exist, no one can say what it would be; but it has a right to existence, a place staked out in advance."
>
> (DE SAUSSURE, 1974, p.33)

As mentioned above, one of EBERLE's primary aims is to facilitate a consensus regarding the quality standards of qualitative research as well as the "minimal requirements for the training of students in qualitative methods" (EBERLE, 2005, par.13). What we deem problematic here is that he is trying to base his effort on consensus. Where it is accepted that consensus has considerable power to establish the norm, to normalise a particular understanding of qualitative research (cf. above), it becomes clear that every time a group adopts a prescriptive code it eradicates any possibility of knowing differently. Therefore, we defy consensus as the modus operandi for channelling the interpretation of qualitative research (in Switzerland as well as elsewhere); instead we would like to return to what we said earlier about the diversity of qualitative research and invoke LYOTARD (1984) in order to delineate a viable alternative. [34]

In referring to LYOTARD as one of the major figures in postmodern theory, we are reminded that EBERLE's own conception of postmodernism is utterly negative, since it is rhetorically tied up with the notion of "anything goes" so as to give the impression that postmodernism is nothing more than a limitless and disoriented tradition. His appropriation of "anything goes", of course, is utterly cunning: it makes it possible to repudiate postmodernism by alluding to the commonsense assumption that its relativistic supposition represents a nihilistic and hence unworthy mode of thought (CARR, 1988).[8] In opposition to that view, we favour a different view of postmodernism. It places some emphasis on enlivening "qualitative research" and provides a rationale that works out the opportunities inherent in difference; that is, it highlights the problems that would arise if it were eliminated. This brings us to the point where we admit that "postmodernism" is an elusive concept which we partly use for the lack of a better signifier.[9] However, while we accept that postmodernism has stipulated the crisis

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8   As many know, the term "anything goes" is quite prominently linked to FEYERABEND's (1975) seminal book "Against Method" which has often been deliberately misread by its critics to undermine and ridicule postmodern theory.

9   The adjectives "postmodern" and "postmodernist" are among the most often used in contemporary social science and humanities writing. At times they are contrasted with "modern" and "modernist", and sometimes not; at times they are used synonymously, sometimes not. We do not aim to sort out the semantic confusion once and for all, but we do wish to propose a temporary order for the purposes of this text. We therefore use the term "postmodern" to denote a special kind of attitude, a sensibility which has its roots in one or another kind of disenchant-ment with what LYOTARD calls "the modern project" (1984). This exegesis of "postmodern" thus comprises an "attitude of scepticism towards the solutions of modernism ("more control, better control") combined with the realisation that actions aimed at wringing order out of disorder seem to be necessary, albeit they are at best only temporarily successful" (CZARNIAWSKA, 1999, pp.26-27). On this note, we understand the notion of "postmodernism" not as a distinct historical period, but as an epistemology that is counter to modernist paradigms such as logical

of representation in order to put forward a language-based understanding of science (e.g. DENZIN & LINCOLN, 2000, p.17), we still believe in the merits of this code because it is important to show the value of being open toward newness. [35]

In order to facilitate difference within "qualitative research", we turn to LYOTARD and advocate his "politics of difference" (SMART, 1993) which actively seeks to counteract universal judgements and theories (i.e. metanarratives; LYOTARD, 1984). With its operational principle of dissensus (and not the consensus suggested by EBERLE), LYOTARD's politics is grounded on an openness towards multiple language games;[10] still, what distinguishes and thus legitimises it is the very fact that it conveys a tolerance for complete otherness, or what LYOTARD (1988) himself called the "unpresentable" or the "differend".[11] LYOTARD (1984, p.xxv) thereby makes unmistakably clear that "postmodern knowledge is […] not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to differences and rein-forces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable. Its principle is not the expert's homology, but the inventor's paralogy". In his treatise on difference and knowl-edge LYOTARD describes the most powerful antidote against the delimiting forces of unifying theories—which quite clearly includes the kind of restricted orthodoxy of qualitative research that EBERLE (2005) proclaimed. This antidote is hence meant to resist the fixed boundaries of signification and to refuse freez-ing the free play of language games. This plea for an "irreducible plurality" of language games is thereby well in line with FEYERABEND's (1975) advocacy of pluralism, specifically the "epistemological anarchism" he established in his still timely "Against Method". There FEYERABEND states that there has never been a unified science and that there has always been, however oblique, a multitude of practiced sciences, which more often than not stood in harsh contrast with each other. In the following paragraphs we elaborate on how we can conceive of the "maceration" of our understanding of research and/or science as a necessary pre-requisite for extending our ideas on what qualitative research could become. [36]

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positivism (cf. for example COOPER & BURELL, 1988).

10 Notice that LYOTARD & THÉBAUD (1985) draw inspiration from WITTGENSTEIN's "language game" theory.

11 The "differend", following LYOTARD (1988), represents the silencing of a player in a language game. It occurs when there are no agreed procedures for deciding what is appropriate and legitimate (be it an idea, an aesthetic principle, or a grievance) to be presented in a particular domain of discourse.

4.1 Innovation through boundary-crossing

> "An invention always presupposes some illegality, the breaking of an implicit contract; it inserts a disorder into the peaceful ordering of things, it disregards properties."
>
> (DERRIDA, 1992, p.312)

Because we take seriously FEYERABEND's scrutiny of the omnipotence of (positivistic) science, we are keen to discuss some of its implied ramifications for qualitative research against the backdrop of SERRES' (2000) notion of "cross-fertilization". Here, we use that term to signify the extension of epistemology through approaches that are conventionally deemed non-scientific; we assume that not all streams of science proceed by means of "paradigm shifts" (KUHN, 1970); rather they proceed by blithely ignoring ruling conventions (e.g. verification or falsification, cf. FEYERABEND, 1975) in order to impose a radically new view on social reality. [37]

Assuming that "progress" in science depends just as much on aesthetic creativity as on better theories (BREUER, 2000; HUBER, 2001) and on undaunted boundary-crossing, we would like to exemplify this assertion on the grounds of sociology, which has been the dominant discipline in recent issues of *FQS* as well as the discipline from which the September 2005 edition of *FQS* insolently tried to define the state of the art of qualitative research. In that context, what we want to claim is that theories and models now accepted as being "sociological" initially necessitated the inclusion rather than exclusion of innovative thinking. Hence, in response to EBERLE's rebuttal of "postmodern bricoleurs", we like to assert that if sociologists had always been rejecting movements external to their own academic discipline there would never have been any possibility of innovative development. To illustrate this argument, we refer to GAME and METCALFE (1996). They show convincingly that COMTE, who seems to have coined the term "sociology", is described in many textbooks as the founding figure of academic sociology. Several other names lead the lists in contemporary textbooks, according to GAME and METCALFE's meticulous analysis: PLATO, ARISTOTLE, ROUSSSEAU, MILL, MEAD, GRAMSCI, ADORNO, etc. Where contemporary sociology seems to thrive on those *big names,* respectively their work, we are told by GAME and METCALFE that many of those "celebrities" either worked before the invention of sociology or actively rejected any association with academic sociology. GAME and METCALFE conclude that, if in fact many so-called sociologists were not "really" sociologists, the volume of university textbooks would shrink to a peculiarly small size. Importantly, this is not meant to say that sociology is a sloppy or rogue discipline where "guards patrol in the name of the founding fathers, protecting the discipline's "integrity" from the incursions, profanations and seductions of improper sociology" (GAME & METCALF, 1996, p.74). Instead, we would like to affirm that, as in any discipline, the boundaries between insiders and outsiders represent a distinct cultural creation. [38]

Regarding the discipline of psychology, our own academic home ground, PARKER (2004) particularly reminds us that some of the discipline's most creative methods and approaches were quite evidently derived from outside it. For instance, the "qualitative turn" in psychology quite evidently borrowed ideas and developments from other disciplines such as cultural studies, anthropology, literary and language studies and, of course, sociology (BURTON & KAGAN, 1998). The tenet we are eager to postulate here is that it is not necessarily a misdeed to "breach" (VAN MAANEN, 1995), that is, to make use of styles of writing that are not in accord with conventional textual practices in the respective field of "science". On the contrary, we argue that it is commendable to take measures that will help us better explore our scholarly black boxes and to harvest the prolific results that become possible through the influx and appropriation of paradigms, genres and tropes from other scholarly disciplines. Applying SERRES' notion of "cross-fertilization" to qualitative research would thus entail permission to take ideas, models and methods not only from neighbouring academic disciplines but equally so from literature, movies, poems, art, etc. Additionally, following DE CERTEAU's (1984) advice to resist the purity of a singular unity (as revealed, for instance, in EBERLE & ELLICKER, 2005), one should deliberately borrow from whatever appears inspirational (CZARNIAWSKA, 2001). Such a move could possibly bring us to the point where, as LYOTARD & THÉBAUD (1985, p.5) remind us, we might start asking: "Is there a real difference between a theory and fiction?", and to ask "Don't we have the right to present theoretical statements under the form of fictions, in the form of fictions? Not *under* the form, but *in* the form" (emphasis in original). [39]

Admittedly, we are deliberately pushing the envelope here, but this, in our assess-ment, is necessary to foster the awareness that if we sustain academic/dis-ciplinary boundaries and the prevailing understandings of qualitative research, we suppress inventive forms of knowledge creation. Yet, it appears doubtful at best that the genres, styles, tropes or more general modes of representation that have been excluded from academic discourse by means of inherited convention will be given credence as proper means for our scholarly endeavours. As a consequence, in the next section, we re-elaborate the insights derived so far in order to investigate their implications for issuing quality criteria. [40]

4.2 A plea for aesthetic knowledge

What follows most notably from the advocacy of radical pluralism, as endorsed by both LYOTARD and FEYERABEND, is that qualitative research does not lend itself to the formulation of universal quality criteria (cf. also Chapter 2). Provided that our exegesis of qualitative research as "searching closely" and "making knowledge" implies a particular sensitivity to the historical and cultural context of the respective inquiry as well as to the research question being investigated, it is beyond question that the quality criteria being employed to evaluate and judge a particular piece of research must be sufficiently receptive of its very particularities. That is, in opposition to positivist research which envisages quality criteria that arrogate transcendental practicability and thereby provide an "iron grid" which invalidates everything that escapes its very scope (cf. above), we

would like to follow PARKER's (2004, p.2) suggestion that "the criteria for good [qualitative] research are *guidelines that are closed enough to guide evaluation and open enough to enable transformation of assumptions*" (emphasis in original). [41]

PARKER's account of quality criteria thus engenders the image of a tightrope act: it requires a vigilant balancing between the two poles of "anything goes" (conceived in EBERLE's narrow sense) and "dogmatic prescription" (in the totalitarian sense of positivist science). Being resolute against the latter sort of prescriptive judgement, we also acknowledge that as research traditions multiply and researchers extend our fortified understandings of good science, we risk becoming impotent, that is, unable to judge the quality of a given piece of work. Yet, returning to LYOTARD (1992) in our quest for a "way out", we are allegorically reminded that qualitative research might in principle not be "governed by pre-established rules" and, therefore, that it should not "be judged according to a determinant judgement, by the application of given categories to this text or work" (p.15). However heterodox this statement might appear, the appeal to counteract a view of quality criteria as God-like rules actually complies well with BERGMAN and COXON (2005, par.1) who, in a previous *FQS* article, said they did "not believe that the quality of qualitative research can be encapsulated a priori within a set of rigid rules". [42]

Following SERRES (2000), we are compelled to endorse the idea that worthwhile qualitative research may be less a matter of ever more sophisticated methods than a question of imagination, whereas imagination also heralds the postmodern focus on the aesthetic (WELSCH, 1991) and affective (GROSSBERG, 1992) aspects of our research undertakings. In other words, while discussions on qualitative research have predominantly focused on its philosophical groundings, especially its "methodism" (REHN, 2002), a postmodern perspective would stress that (qualitative) research must emphasise the aesthetic aspect over the functional. Given this, we claim that the iconoclasm being implicated in FEYERABEND's rejection of the division between science and non-science could result in a creative shift from method to style. If we construe qualitative research as both a craft and an artful practice, then what renders a respective piece of qualitative research worth heeding (i.e. of high quality) is not only its capacity to present an ostensibly objective matter in a precise, mimetic way. Instead, the cornerstone of quality would be its ability to disrupt our commonsensical under-standing of the matter by means of imaginative representation and by illustrating how a respective truth claim comes into being and becomes legitimated. In consequence, if we reflect on "qualitative research" in terms of its ability to impart knowledge that induces novel understandings, that enables us to see the world in a "different light", we begin to imagine that the imperative of qualitative research would be to produce work that transforms the coordinates by which a topic is usually understood. [43]

Speaking about quality as aesthetic practice would thus lead to the question of whether or not a particular piece of qualitative research "discovers" or "constructs" something new (cf. BREUER, 2000) and whether or not it can reflexively embed its

account within and against its respective historical and cultural context. Thus, the notion of imagination, which we have employed as a meta-symbol for transgressing the "moral economy" of method and un(der)reflected quality standards, is deemed worthwhile to the extent that it emphasises that (qualitative) research must not solely be appropriated to be good but equally to excite, evoke and surprise (LACAN, 1977). What we further want to foster here is the recognition that we all too easily forget that "good" research can in fact coincide with beautiful work (cf. REICHERTZ, 2000). Importantly, such a leap would quite noticeably entail a transition from content to form. This would mean, among other things, that by virtue of new tropes and language games, our research would get to engender "imaginative play" (BRUNER, 1986, p.4). Still, we must be careful not to misinterpret such an "aesthetisation of knowledge" as an attempt to put content into oblivion. Instead, we must balance form and content so that we can facilitate new ways of knowing (episteme) while we simultaneously recruit "the reader's imagination" in order to "enlist him [or her] in the performance of meaning under the guidance of the texts" (BRUNER, 1986, p.6). [44]

Admittedly, the plea "to develop aesthetic knowledge" (GHERARDI, 2003, p.355) has a distinct (though still minor) history (e.g. KAUFMAN, 1992; SANDELOWSKI, 1995). Importantly, we see some indications that the interest in aesthetics is grounded in the Italian (cf. BRUNI & GOBO, 2005), American (GERGEN, CHRISLER & LOCICERO, 1999) Austrian (WEISKOPF, 1999) and British tradition (CLOUGH, 2004; LINSTEAD & HÖPFL, 2000), but at least to our knowledge, hardly an echo is to be heard in conjunction with Swiss or German qualitative research. This lack leads us to provide some concluding comments, especially trying to show how we personally envision the prospective agenda of "qualitative research". [45]

5. Concluding Comments

> "The question before us […] is not whether or not one closes, but of how one closes."
>
> (JONES, 2004, p.57)

Within the confines of the present paper, we have focused on developing a space where we could reflect critically on the demarcation lines that ultimately channel us in conducting our research and which determine the sort of knowledge being produced in the name of qualitative research or social science at large. Therefore we have not aimed primarily to obliterate the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research, and between (qualitative) research and non-research; instead we have tried to nurture a sensitivity towards the delimiting ramifications of those identity politics which devise qualitative research as a distinct and fixed kernel. [46]

The pivotal premise underlying our argument has been that we must acknowledge the fundamental role of binaries and the delimiting force of denotation. In particular, we tried to point out that binaries do not only function to

sustain the system (i.e. qualitative research) by virtue of marking off unities. Rather, we are equally called upon to see that binaries are always constitutive moments as they distinguish between a "this" and "not this", between the inside and the outside. Having highlighted the constitutive element of the binary and its implied hierarchy, we find COOPER's (1990) work both helpful and inspiring. In concrete terms, he reminds us that we must not necessarily think of the boundary as a strict line, as the instance that separates the two sides of the binary; rather, we should see it as a "source of paradox and contradiction" and as a "complex, ambiguous structure around which are focused both the formal and informal organizing processes of social life" (pp.168-169). By speaking of ambiguity and contradiction we see more clearly that boundaries are always the subject of negotiation and, therefore, amenable to change. [47]

Having exploited EBERLE's outline of a Swiss Center for Qualitative Research to make our point, we have shown how innovations coming from outside the ancestral tradition have often enabled the established disciplines to extend their modes of knowledge creation. Based on our deliberations, we have emphasised that relying on pre-ordained definitions of qualitative research would require many knowledgeable and valuable voices to remain unheard, with the result that only a small fraction of stakes would be satisfied. Yet, it has not been our aim to make definitive suggestions about what should prospectively count as "qualitative research", as this would simply mimic the logic of the modernist teleology. Instead we tried to destabilise EBERLE's attempt to fix the meaning of "qualitative research" and by doing so to release some centrifugal forces within our dialogue on the matter. [48]

In line with WEISKOPF (1999, p.16), we suggest that it is vital to "appreciate, and indeed learn to live with the uncertain, undetermined and undeterminable" and to "emotionally and aesthetically appreciate the unready, and indeed the "undecidable". In contrast to those who construe qualitative research as a distinct and closed homology, we opted for an imagery that hails polyphony and thrives on stylistic multiplication and therefore is inclusive of voices and representational practices which are related as much to fiction, literature, poetry, etc. as to science. [49]

The issue of quality within such a heteroglossic[12] understanding (BAKHTIN, 1981) of qualitative research was meant to embrace the question of what styles, genres, and tropes are pertinent for tackling our respective research questions and what contexts and research topics favour this over that style of representation. Arguably, the focus of such an endeavour quite noticeably stipulates a shift from seeking generalisable truth statements to discovering contextualised and locally emergent stories, that is, "small narratives" (LYOTARD, 1984). The creative and synergetic conjoining of a critical and affirmative trajectory has been most eloquently expressed in the September 2005 edition of *FQS*: "we need to know more about what is happening in the different (national, disciplinary, medial) 'peripheries' to learn about the conceptual roots of our current practices and to

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12 From Russian "raznorecie": multilanguagedness.

act in a future globalised academia, opening our minds to the fascinating diversity (and unity?) of our memories, images, styles, focus, strategies and life-worlds as qualitative researchers" (MRUCK et al., 2005, par.9). [50]

Having posited that analytic rigor cannot possibly be separated from stylistic/aesthetic effects, it is conceivable that the arguments running through this paper most notably revolve around issues of imagination and innovation. As no method, model or theory will ever be capable of devising a collective and consensual path for science, we insist upon the utility of FEYERABEND's anarchistic theory of knowledge (FEYERABEND, 1975; LAKATOS & FEYER-ABEND, 1999) since he makes it clear that we can only obtain novel ways of understanding if we give in to new or yet elided movements, that is, alternatives to the status quo. Thus, in our understanding, innovation comes to circumscribe two venues for development. The first kind of innovation proceeds by enlisting a new argument to the established order. The second, more radical, kind of innovation accords with DERRIDA's (1992) understanding of genuine invention,[13] meaning invention which transforms established rules and thereby turns the "paradoxical into the accepted" (CZARNIAWSKA, 2001, p.14). We believe both forms of invention are needed if "qualitative research" is to progress, or if we are to better imbue and revive its realm. This said, we do not intend to throw out the baby with the bath water; that is, we prefer to conceive tradition and innovation, old and new, as complementary, not exclusionary (cf. NENTWICH, 2004). Entailed through this logic of synergy and (non-hierarchical) supplementation, we envision a relationship of mutual inspiration between the approved and the minor, the beautiful and the useful, the aesthetic and the practical type of qualitative research. In such a relationship, both parts of the polarity derive their energy through their coexistence with the other. [51]

Against all odds, we would like to express our deep belief that only through an ongoing dialogue or "multilogue" (DACHLER & HOSKING, 1995) can we extend the idea of qualitative research beyond its current confines. Our understanding of such a negotiation comes closest to BAKHTIN's (1981) idea of "dialogisation", which circumscribes a conversation between oppositional views without targeting either consensus or closure. Though we must anticipate that such a conversation will be riddled with conflict and antagonism, our aim is neither to suspend EBERLE's suggestion and replace it with our own "postmodern alternative" nor to negotiate a definite agreement on quality criteria and, by extension, what is to be coined "qualitative research". Our suggestion, quite to the contrary, has been to stimulate movement or "transgression" through which we cross ostensibly stable and orchestrated boundaries and, accordingly, are called upon to open "a free space for innovation and creativity" (MARTIN, GUTMAN & HUTTON, 1988, p.163). By implication, we are curiously awaiting responses from the anonymous audience to which our plea is addressed and thus are grateful for the chance to use the *FQS* as a springboard for pursuing and intensifying future deliberations. [52]

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13 DERRIDA (1992) made a thoughtful distinction between the kind of (pseudo) invention which brings out the same, a "mimesis" so to speak (HOBSON, 2001), and the sort of invention that responds to the call from the wholly other.

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