

## The Future of Qualitative Research in Psychology

*A Discussion with Svend Brinkmann, Günter Mey, Luca Tateo, and Anete Strand*

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Carolin Demuth & Thomas Schjødt Terkildsen

The Future of Qualitative Research in Psychology - A Discussion with Svend  
Brinkmann, Günter Mey, Luca Tateo, and Anete Strand

**Abstract:** In May 2014, a workshop on "The future of qualitative research in psychology" took place at Aalborg University, Department of Communication & Psychology organized by Carolin Demuth. Participants from Aalborg University engaged in a lively exchange with the two invited discussants Svend Brinkmann (Aalborg University) and Günter Mey (Stendal University of Applied Science). The discussion started out by addressing the specifics of qualitative research in the field of psychology, its historical development and the perils of recent trends of standardization and neo-positivistic orientations. In light of the discrepancy of what could be potentially achieved with qualitative methods for psychological research and how they are actually currently applied, the need was stressed to return to an understanding of qualitative methods as a craft skill and to take into account the subjectivity of the researcher in the process of scientific knowledge production. Finally, a re-focus on experience as the genuine object of research in psychology as well as a transdisciplinary understanding of human psychological functioning within a socially co-constructed, biological, as well as material world was discussed.

**Key words:** Qualitative Methods, Psychology, Future developments, History of Psychology

On May 23, 2014, a workshop on "The future of qualitative research in psychology" took place at Aalborg University, Department of Communication & Psychology organized by Carolin Demuth. Participants from Aalborg University engaged in a lively exchange with the two invited discussants Svend Brinkmann (Aalborg University) and Günter Mey (Stendal University of Applied Science). The following is a transcription of the discussion, which will be further elaborated by the main contributors, and commented on by two additional scholars in the field in the remaining parts of this special issue.

*Carolin Demuth:* What is specific about qualitative methods in *psychology*? Methods are always rooted within methodologies, and the qualitative methods that we use in psychology draw actually on theoretical backgrounds that we borrow from other disciplines, like sociology. I would be interested in knowing what you think about what is specific about qualitative approaches in the field of psychology and whether there are any procedures derived from a theoretical background that is specific to psychology that we can use for psychological research.

*Günter Mey:* It is very interesting that we pointed out that we are qualitative researchers, and after we are pointing out why we are here it becomes very clear that qualitative research is an umbrella for a research style, an approach, but there are more differences than similarities; and it differs from discipline to discipline. I will be more or less be talking about qualitative research from the perspective of a German scientist, socialized in the German tradition and my perspective on qualitative research is based on discussions in Germany. When we look at other disciplines, in Germany, sociology is the leading discipline in qualitative research. It's quite clear that there exist different styles, but they have more or less a common ground, i.e., interpretative social science or the interpretative paradigm (see Hitzler 2007; Knoblauch 2013). Besides the existing differences they all draw on the work of Simmel, Weber, Mannheim, Mead and others; In psychology, we do not have such a "common ground" to draw from. We have, for example psychoanalysts, who are talking about qualitative research. I think Svend Brinkmann will talk a bit about the phenomenological approaches, which was important for the founding years of qualitative research; we have critical psychology (in the tradition of Holzkamp with links to Soviet psychologists of the early 1920s); and so on. But the point I want to make is that there is no qualitative research approach that is genuine to psychology. As Carolin Demuth mentioned, qualitative research is not really represented at German universities, and not really represented in this discipline (at least within so called mainstream psychology). For me it is quite clear that we do not have a common base that we could consider to be our background. In Germany, there are more

or less many many fights not only between quantitative and qualitative researchers, but also within qualitative research: Some is rooted in psychoanalysis (and the concepts of transfer-countertransfer), some in phenomenology (and the question of “Leibgebundenheit”), others came from grounded theory or discourse/narrative analysis and so on. We are not really a family (in sense of Wittgenstein—not meant in the ordinary sense of psychology/daily life) with a joint base that binds us together. Sometimes, I see more differences that actually separate us; and we need to discuss these. I do not know whether the situation is perceived similarly in other countries or if it is merely a German perspective.

*Svend Brinkmann:* I think I see it in a similar way, but for me it's a bit difficult to answer a question about qualitative research in psychology without defining what we mean by qualitative research, because in one sense, I find it hard to imagine any kind of research in any field what so ever that doesn't have a qualitative aspect. But very rarely, those people define what they do as qualitative research. You are not just interested in distributions and frequencies, you are interested in the distribution and frequency of something, and in order to know what that something is we have to describe it. We have to understand it. So what we do then is quite similar to, if not identical with, what other people would call qualitative research. So that is one point to make. In one sense all psychological and all social scientific and you could even add all natural scientific endeavors would have a qualitative aspect. But of course, this is a specialized way of talking about qualitative research (obviously). The other more common way is to say that there is this umbrella term or family of approaches and methodologies and techniques that define themselves as qualitative and I absolutely agree that there is not much else besides the term itself that unites all those things that define themselves as qualitative research. I recently wrote for a brand new handbook on qualitative research from Oxford University Press (Brinkmann, Jacobsen & Kristiansen, 2014, see also Brinkmann, 2015). It is part of a library of psychology subjects though not all authors are psychologists, but a lot of them are, and I am one of them and I was asked to write the interview chapter, and did that, and then I was also asked to write the history chapter, so as part of that I searched scientific databases for the terms “qualitative”, “qualitative analysis”, “qualitative research”, “qualitative inquiry” etc. Trying to figure out when we began talking about qualitative research, and we did so very, very late. It's not actually common to use that term “qualitative research” “qualitative analysis” until way up in the seventies and I was reading Harry Wolcott, a well-known ethnographer, and in his book on writing he explains to the reader: “When I was taught, as a graduate student, to do what we now call qualitative research, there were no

method books. I mean we read ethnographies and tried to do similar things, but there was no label called ‘qualitative research’ back in the fifties or sixties”. But in the databases the term qualitative does exist also in psychology, but typically in the beginning of the twentieth century in relation to psycho-physics – They would do qualitative analysis of the experience of tickling for example - asking people to describe what tickling feels like. In a quasi-phenomenological way, but very close to physiology actually. And in chemistry journals they would also have qualitative analysis of different compounds, and the term would still be there today also. Qualitative analysis is a huge subfield in chemistry, so they have it in the natural sciences, of course they do. I mean otherwise how would they classify “something” as “something”? So the question for me is not what qualitative research in psychology IS, because it is so many things, but why did people find a need to discuss their research practices as qualitative around the seventies. I have no obvious answer, but I think it has to do with the whole battle of positivism and what came from that, and again we should be aware of misunderstandings because positivism is most often used as a term of abuse among qualitative researchers. We say that something is positivism, and then it means we don’t like it, but I think that it is unfair to simply dismiss positivism like that, because if you look at Comte in the nineteenth century and even if you look at the Vienna Circle, positivists from the twentieth century, such as Carnap, a very good philosopher actually, and others, you find openness towards what we would call qualitative description for example – not everything can be reduced to numbers – they were perfectly aware of that. So our representation of positivism, I find, is a misrepresentation, but it was used in psychology - this positivism-thing - as a way of creating schools for and against, as a way of trying to become legitimate as a natural science – We are a science because we do what we think they do in physics and chemistry, although what they actually do in physics and chemistry is completely different than what psychologists thought they did. And then the term qualitative entered as a way of defining what we do as different from what positivists do. We understand. They explain. They count and we don’t count. We don’t count, so we didn’t count. (It’s a pun).

*Günter Mey:* Again, my line of argumentation is from a German perspective. I have outlined different phases of qualitative research in Germany (cf. Mey & Mruck 2007). After the early beginnings with psychoanalysis, phenomenology, and so on at the end of the 1960s, we started to talk about the so called rediscovery of qualitative research at the beginning of the 1970s. In Germany, they started to discover the readings of Blumer, Mead and others. This is especially interesting because of the Nazi regime: many scientists emigrated in the 30ies and after a long

detour these ideas came back. In my view, the raise of qualitative research was related to the societal changes in Germany at the time; the student's revolution of the "68 generation" was followed by initiatives that we today call action research. Besides the "Positivismusstreit" (positivism dispute) (Adorno, Dahrendorf, Pilot, Albert, Habermas & Popper (1976 [1969]) took place in Germany and the critique towards positivism referred to its reproduction of society. Qualitative research hence constituted a very promising field and the rhetoric at the time was 'we do better research than the "counting" people. So, the label qualitative research arose out of an opposition to the other label. It was only meant as a counterpart. It was a powerful word to say that we are qualitative researchers. At the first annual Berlin Meeting On Qualitative Research (Berliner Methodentreffen Qualitative Forschung, [www.berliner-methodentreffen.de](http://www.berliner-methodentreffen.de), see also Mey & Mruck, 2014) — the biggest event on qualitative social research in German speaking countries which takes place in July since 2005, many speakers said that 'qualitative research' is not a suitable term and should be changed to 'non-standardized methods', 'interpretative research' or something along these lines. So, 'qualitative' might not be a good term. As Svend Brinkmann mentioned, all research may be qualitative and sometimes all research looks like quantitative research. And so we have to live with this term, and have to define what could be relevant dimensions of qualitative research. I have outlined three principles of qualitative research (cf. Mey 2010; Flick et al 2004). The first is the *principle of openness*: how do we enter the field? Do we have pre-formulated hypothesis or categories or do we try to avoid using categories. The principle of openness applies to the entire process of qualitative research: the formulation of our research questions, the sampling strategy, the process of collecting and analyzing data. The second principle is the *principle of foreignness* which is related to understanding and construction of meaning: how is it possible for the researcher to understand something or someone? We have to avoid imposing our own preconceptions on our data, but rather stay open and ask what is going on (what is the other really trying to say), similarly to what is emphasized in field research. The third principle, in my view, is the most relevant: research is always a *co-constructed social interaction* between one person who asks and one person who responds, who understands or doesn't understand what the other person says. Taken this into account we have to talk about the (role of the) researcher. Most of the time in qualitative research we merely talk about the data and analyze data as if it were a monologue – which in fact does not exist. It is a dialogue (for further elaboration, see Mey & Ruppel, 2015). These are three general principles aiming to "define" qualitative research that might help us to organize the research process and to have a critically evaluate qualitative studies.

*Svend Brinkmann:* I would like to make an additional comment, because I found it interesting to hear from you what you work with and what kind of psychologists, because we did hear some names from the history of psychology. We heard about Vygotsky and Luria for example, and Brady (Wagoner) mentioned Heinz Werner and Bartlett and others. And we have this tradition of what we would call today qualitative inquiry / qualitative research within psychology that wasn't referred to in that way when it was conducted. Freud for example, was also a qualitative researcher who used the conversation, the therapy, the practice, not just as a method of treatment, but also always as a method of research, but he didn't refer to that practice as qualitative research. I don't think Bartlett did, and I don't think Vygotsky did and we could mention many others – Piaget etc. – many of the giants within psychology did in fact work in this way, but very few people who today identify as qualitative researchers within psychology have looked at the investigative practices of these founding fathers and unfortunately not too many others in the light of qualitative research. I think that would be because one of the questions that you came up with was: “Does qualitative research in psychology have its own theoretical roots?” and I believe it does, but we should not be led in searching for these roots by the term qualitative, because then we won't find it (for further elaboration, see Brinkmann, 2015). We should be led by a certain understanding of investigative practices, and then we find a rich history in psychology – I believe - that is worth taking seriously today and then I wouldn't worry too much about the label “Qualitative research”, but in other contexts it's wise to worry about this label. In very practical contexts when you apply for funding you want to convince the funders that it is relevant to talk with people. That it is relevant to observe what people do. That it is relevant to make people draw things that you then analyze etc. And in order to convince people from many other disciplines perhaps, who do completely different things in their research practices, it's a good idea for these practical purposes to have a label and handbooks and journals and conferences - to have a community that is internally divided but that you can refer to. But I think that's pragmatic, and perhaps not a substantial reason for talking about qualitative research in psychology, but it is not a bad reason, but it is a pragmatic one.

*Luca Tateo:* Just to summarize. What I got from this discussion is, first, are we talking about two different issues: one is what we mean by qualitative research, and what is this umbrella term. And the other one is – once we agree on the first issue, why we use qualitative methods. Methodology and what is qualitative research are two different questions. This is the first thing I realized in this discussion. To some extent the two things are related, of course. But my impression, according to the very good historical reconstruction you did I think, is that one of the risks is that to

define what we mean by qualitative research by negation – by saying what it is NOT. It's a form of differentiation, which is to some extent useful, but the problem with this kind of differentiation is that it can only be done backwards – So you can differentiate what is qualitative research only by looking at what has already been done by others - quantitative people. And there is a precise historical reason for why we are discussing this kind of issue now. I think we should come up, of course by learning and being aware of what is the story behind that, with an idea – a problematic idea of what we want to do and why and what are the research questions, or actually more than the research questions: the questions in general we have for the future and why do we think that the object of our research is such a kind that requires an interpretative approach. Why do we think that understanding and interpreting is a better way to grasp what we are looking for? So what are the questions that we are asking for the future is a kind of problematic idea, rather than trying to agreeing on where we want to go. I think this should be the objective of the discussion it (for further elaboration, see Tateo, 2015). The precise historical reason, I think, for it is worth now discussing these issues especially in social sciences in general. Because I think we are facing a historical moment, which is extremely similar to the sixties – The fifties and sixties, when exactly this kind of issues were raised for the first time. It is a very specific historical moment, which has to do for instance – just one example – with the way organizations select and treat and educate citizens. So, for instance, all the issues related to the assessment – to the PISA test – and the skills that are required to be a good citizen. These are all related to qualitative psychology in a certain sense, but these are not just quantitative versus qualitative issues. These are very relevant social issues, and I think that these kinds of issues are a challenge for psychology today just as they were a challenge back then – and the students' movement were starting exactly from very similar problems which were the process of selection and how education was a way of changing society or reproducing the social inequalities. There are many similarities and I think that's why we should talk critically about political research today.

*Anete Strand:* I would like to quote on that as well, because that is also why I am here - this interesting discussion on the future of qualitative research. I agree that it is a natural thing to look back in order to orient towards where we want to go. When I was listening to this I came to think about that a couple of weeks ago I partook in an event that our new student priest here at the university was called in to talk about some psalms. And what she did was that every time she took out one of these psalms she would discuss in which historical, economical, psychological, social circumstance this particular song was made. The latest she went back was right after the



reformation and she talked a lot about what kind of life was lived at that time, what the everyday circumstance were for people and why you would write a song like that. And in that sense it makes sense to go back to see where we come from and what are the historical roots, but also remember that these roots were of a certain time – a certain lived practice, and then shoot ahead to the now - to the future - to say: “well, what is coming? What kind of life is about to come?”. In my research group we have something we call “*samtaler fra fremtiden / talks from the future*”, where we invite people in to talk about what is emerging – what is coming up that we need to orient towards. To sort of have a balanced way of looking back and at the same time trying to figure out what is about to move. And figuring out what kind of life are we supposed to be able to understand, and in that sense, it is equally relevant to discuss what are qualitative methods or studies and what is psychology – What is the field of psychology? What is the whole idea of psychology? Where is that moving? So to me, it’s all moving and we want to help create the shapes of it, and at the same time I like your three points – being open to where it is moving. The foreignness in it, and actually inviting the foreignness in that is moving and see how we can relate to that and then the co-construction, like you said, the social interaction. The idea that we have a tendency to focus on data, what is coming out of the people we talk to, but what about us? In my own work I expand that to include what about the *space* we are in? What about all the little things we are using? How does that affect the whole thing etc.? The time of the day, the time of the month, the time of the year, the time of the career, the time of whatever - what is going on there? What can I pick up of what is moving with all these different turns that I talked about- the spatial turn, the ontological turn etc.? There are a lot of things coming in that are actually – potentially, I would say also – influencing how we need to talk about psychology for the future. There are some new turns coming that we can use to understand some of this stuff that will go into this –as you said, the co-creation or the co-construction, whatever we call it, - naughty different notions like ‘the between’, all kind of things that would call us to do reorientation. John Shotter (2013) has done a really nice article on this in his reading of for example Karen Barad (2003, 2007) saying “What is going on?”. And he is drawing on Vygotski and Bakhtin and these works. He is saying that this is not just a new theory, it is a reorientation that invites us to do a reorientation. And as I see it - it is a reorientation also within psychology.

*Günter Mey*: To add one point, let us talk about the present, and the “real” present. I do not know what happens in Scandinavian countries or in Italy or wherever. What is the state of qualitative research in psychology in Germany? They use and have an understanding of qualitative

research as tools. I therefore find it important not to talk about *tools*, we have to talk about *methodologies*. That is the first point. What methods do they use? Most of the time they use what is called “content analysis” – i.e. to have data and summarize it in a more or less simple or creative way - not interaction analysis, not reconstruction of the interaction or something like that. This is the main point (of critique). What methods do they use? Interviews. Mostly, “expert interviews” for research with medical professionals, or they call it “open interview” or “semi-structured” interviews. They do not refer to specific forms of interviews, like the one developed by Steiner Kvale (in Scandinavian countries) or the “biographical interview” (developed by Wengraf [2001] based on the German origins of Fritz Schütze and Gabriele Rosenthal), or the “Problem-centred interview” (developed by Witzel; see Witzel & Reiter 2012). But the question is not only what methods are applied. What about the research areas? Qualitative research is often considered to study non mainstream research questions and hence becomes marginalized within the field of Psychology. This is the present state of qualitative research in psychology (in Germany). From here we can discuss the future of the field.

*Carolyn Demuth:* But if I can add to that, I think one reason why that is, is also our own fault because, for instance, if we attend a congress and have a symposium on “qualitative methods” we already define ourselves as being different from other research in the field. In contrast, if we were to organize a symposium on a mainstream topic such as “identity” and simply present qualitative research we would not separate ourselves artificially from other research in psychology.

*Günter Mey:* Yes that is true.

*Svend Brinkmann:* I think it is important that you connect the history and current situation of qualitative research to the broad sense the political situation, and I think that it is absolutely true that – and I can say for a Danish context – the reason that qualitative methods have been relatively prevalent in psychology in Denmark compared to many other countries is because psychology in Denmark was, when it migrated from Copenhagen to Aarhus and later Roskilde and Aalborg etc., it was left wing psychology. All the people were Marxists, some were quite radical and the real discussion within psychology was not between qualitative and quantitative. It was between the Marxists and the Maoists. That was the reality. If you want to draw that distinction it was obvious that the Maoists were the qualitative ones – stressing humane and social practices, and the communists were quantitative ones, wanting to determine what is right and what is wrong from the top. At least that was the situation in Aarhus where I was educated. And this political agenda

has been very, very influential. This is one of the reasons we have to spend a little bit of time talking about the past – in my view – in order to be able to have reasonable ideas about the future and how to get to where we would like to go, because we are always already enmeshed in different political agendas etc. and the situation now is in some ways similar, as you said Luca, it seems we have a historical moment that is in some ways similar to the one in ‘68 to put it that way. But it is also different, because we have the whole environmental issue being very pressing in many ways, so how can qualitative research in psychology help in that regard – that would be a relevant question to ask. But I agree that the goal of this is to talk about the future of qualitative methods. I am not too fond of talking about the future. I am sort of always nostalgic and I read Simon Critchley’s nice book called “How to Stop Living and Start Worrying” – He is a philosopher from New York. Well, he is from Great Britain, but works in New York. He says the whole idea of the future is repressive and I think that is absolutely true but I don’t have time to explain.

*Luca Tateo:* I think this is a very crucial historical moment just because we are here and now. I wonder why, and that is the question I think. I wonder why for decades psychology didn’t ask these questions because of course every historical moment (even if it’s not a turn like sixties) is very// the eighties for instance were another crucial moment. So why has psychology stopped – in a sense – asking these kind of questions and avoids the fact that there is an ethical relationship to knowledge - always. I wonder why? We started asking these questions only today. I suggest an even more radical proposal: let’s stop talking about “qualitative methods”. The problem is not *methods*. The question is what idea of science or psychological science do we have. My personal view about qualitative methods is that in a sense they are very similar to the apparatus of hard sciences. In my understanding when I want to study something in hard sciences and there is no apparatus to do that – I build it. I build an experimental apparatus that allows me to study the phenomenon or to recreate the phenomenon (Tateo, 2013). So in a certain sense there is no standard method in hard sciences. Then, this apparatus can be reused by someone else who wants to replicate the experiment, but I think there is a moment when you build your own apparatus for your experiment in hard sciences. In qualitative research I think it is pretty much the same - that is why if we are talking here about qualitative *methods*. There is a contradiction in terminology because we are talking about this as a form of standardization of qualitative methods. I personally am not looking for a standardization or a quasi-standardization of qualitative methods. Rather, you build your own qualitative method according to your study. But first of all you start from your research questions. If we don’t first discuss which kind of knowledge we want to build in future

psychology, we cannot find the most suitable methods to study the phenomena we are looking for. That is – I think – a fundamental point it (for further elaboration, see Tateo, 2015).

*Günter Mey:* I think it is a shame to apply the logic of quantitative research to qualitative research. This is one of the biggest misunderstandings that exist. I know we want to talk about future but for me it is really important to keep in mind where we come from and to reconstruct what happened in the past. For me we have to talk about *subjectivity* and how we understand meaning making (s. Mruck & Mey 2010). I think it is helpful to focus on the principle of communication, i.e. to take into account that there is a process of co-construction in any research situation that we analyze. We have to ask what are the main characteristics of what we call qualitative research. For me it is quite clear that to talk about subjectivity implies that we have to talk about us as researchers. And I see the development of the performative social science (Jones et al. 2008) in this line of thinking; and also the approach called Autoethnography (Ellis, Bochner & Adams 2010). We have to take very seriously into account the position of the researcher. And we also have to keep in mind the distinction between the context of discovery and the context of justification that Reichenbach (1938) points out. Traditional science talks only about the context of justification and not about the context of discovery. It is a huge achievement of qualitative researchers after the battle of the last thirty years that we address the context of discovery in terms of real science and not merely in terms of foreplay before the “real science” starts. Maybe we have to discover the context of discovery. I think it is clear that the researcher has to talk about him or herself. Often research is similar to visiting a museum: you always forget that there was a painter who painted the picture. The photograph only exists because there was a photographer. We can’t continue to present our results like pictures: “This is a nice photograph”. In science we have to talk about the process of producing. That means we have to talk about subjectivity and interpretation – not only about the problem of standardization as we find it often today in qualitative research - largely because of the use of technologies (especially software for analyzing data) and the belief that this will make us “real” scientists. But this is a misunderstanding - the software does nothing (Konopasek 2008).

*Luca Tateo:* Your metaphor is perfect - I think – because it also describes the idea of standardization. The idea of standardization is in a certain sense that if you use the same research procedure you should get the same results and those results should be true. It is exactly where this issue reveals to be a myth because in your metaphor you can give the camera or you can give the canvas and the brushes to two different people and they will paint to different paintings or make

two different pictures. One might be a masterpiece to be put in the museum and the other one not. Qualitative approaches are closer to sciences such as evolutionary biology, anthropology and archeology than for instance experimental psychology. There is the idea that we are dealing with unique phenomena in their making or making sense of them afterwards. We are not trying to construct a phenomena by recreating it in a controlled setting. This is exactly the idea – it fits very well with your metaphor I think.

*Svend Brinkmann*: I also like the metaphor and now I don't talk about the past, but the present, then in a little while about the future. About the present situation I think your critique of the drive towards standardization is very important because it is really defining a lot of what is going on in qualitative psychology now. Qualitative psychology is being tolerated more and more, and in the American Psychological Association (APA), which is quite conservative, they tried to make a new division of qualitative research – which did not go through but became a subdivision within one of the existing divisions. It is sort of officially acknowledged now. And there is a journal simply called “Qualitative Psychology” with Ruthellen Josselson as the editor – sponsored by the APA. So it is now tolerated, but it is tolerated in a way I think that is inherently going in the direction of standardization it (for further elaboration, see Brinkmann, 2015). We have to have these almost “cookbook”-approaches and I read a nice article - from marketing research but I think it generalizes to many other areas - about the “McDonaldization” of Qualitative research borrowing from George Ritzer who postulates a McDonaldization of society thesis and there is a McDonaldization of everything in our culture: we have to do things fast, efficient, predictable and we have to be in control. And standardization is that whenever you enter a McDonalds you only have sixty seconds then you have to order and the burger you order is the same everywhere in the world no matter where you go to McDonalds. And the same “McDonaldization” is happening in qualitative research.. But the difference between – sorry a little about the past again – The difference between the situation in the mid-twentieth century when qualitative research was being marginalized and now is: back then I think it was being marginalized because of scientific arguments. Some people would say “this is not science” and others would say “yes it *is* science. It is just a different kind of science” but that was a genuine scientific discussion. Today, it's not really a scientific discussion – of course it is also that, but it is mainly a *bureaucratic* discussion about funding, about striving for evidence; efficacy, What works as research, PISA and all this arrangement of – I am a little worried about these grand sociological terms but – neoliberal ideology and accountability. So it is an economical rational or a bureaucratic rational rather than a scientific one. That is our problem now,

because scientifically I think we are tolerated but we are tolerated in a way that is driving us towards what you were calling quantitative logic, I would agree, but it is also a bureaucratic logic of predictability and control and efficiency. We could call that McDonaldization. So we have to be able to discuss not just with our fellow psychologists, but also with fellow scientists who might disagree with us. We also have to be able to discuss and persuade politicians – the people who fund us – that what we do counts even if we don't count.

*Carolyn Demuth:* The reason why we are moving towards standardization also has to do with two things that are very important and often neglected. One is, as Luca already mentioned, that before choosing a specific method or methodology, we first have to define “what is my research question?” and based on this decide which methodology we should use. The other thing that is often forgotten, is – and what I see as a problem in the present situation – procedures are always rooted in epistemologies. This is e.g. often neglected in teaching qualitative methods it (for further elaboration, see Schjødt Terkilds & xxxx, 2015). My observation during the last few years has been that there is on one hand a relative openness towards qualitative research in the sense of “open procedures” in mainstream psychology but there is actually a lot of ignorance about what qualitative research actually is. There is a lot of ignorance about the variety and the different epistemological backgrounds, so qualitative research is often only understood in terms of tools – as methods. What I see happening a lot at conferences is that people say “We use qualitative methods” but what they are actually using is some kind of open procedure - not qualitative methods. It brings us back to the question “how do we gain knowledge?” How do we gain scientific knowledge? What I see happening in mainstream psychology is that more and more people use open procedures but stay within a quantitative paradigm – stay within a quantitative logic. This is one reason why “qualitative research” is getting more and more standardized. The challenge for qualitative research is to deal with this development. How should we approach these developments - should we accept it or should we counteract (for further elaboration, see Demuth, 2015a)?

A workshop participant makes a comment about the closeness to the research participants that can be achieved through qualitative research. The comment is in line with Günter Mey's previous comment about how quantitative research seems to forget the researcher and the participants who co-construct the data that they are analyzing.

*Svend Brinkmann:* As someone who is interested in writing about qualitative research I would of course agree that many of the questions that we work with in psychology demand that

we get close to individuals and their experiences and their actions or whatever. But other questions - to defend the quantitative research a little bit - would for me of course demand distance and there can be a point about making distance to your objects in order to be able to see it on a different scale. I mean a simple thing like – It's not so simple to do, but perhaps simple to understand – epidemiology, you know, you want to know how many people suffer from something. You want to see “is the risk of suffering from depression greater if you have a lower socio-economical status then if you have a high socio-economical status. It's very difficult to do and very time consuming to do with qualitative methods. It is much better to do it with quantitative methods. I don't like these battles between quantitative and qualitative – arguing that one is better and the other is bad. Well one is better for certain purposes and the other is better for other purposes. But that is just a simple point.

*Günter Mey:* That's quite clear, I agree. But the main question “what is the topic” , is what I just mentioned by referring to Reichenbachs context of justification and context of rediscovery. There will always be people who say “This is not a good question because it is not handled with quantitative methods”. The linkage between methods and research question is quite clear. If you want to know how many people are depressive in Denmark, it does not make sense to conduct interviews. We have to define what is the research question and from there decide how we can give an answer. The other question is: are you really nearer to the individuals when we do qualitative research? It is a myth. In my opinion it is a myth. This was the argumentation in the seventies: “Oh these bad quantitative researchers, they are not so close to the individuals. In many of the texts produced by qualitative researchers any idea of the life of individuals gets completely lost. So it depends maybe a little bit on what the researcher did or did not do. This brings me back to my main topic of today – the researcher's subjectivity: how is he able to understand? And I can also refer to Popper (1972) who said that there is no knowledge without a knowing subject. So, it is a myth to say this is a reason to decide for qualitative methods. It depends on what is our understanding of understanding. For example, psychoanalysts refer to the concept of transfer and counter transfer. We have the hermeneutic cycle and others. My question is what are our methodological roots to talk about what we are doing in research – in our case doing qualitative research. Quite clearly qualitative research is not better than quantitative. Neither is qualitative research per se closer to the participant than quantitative research. All the arguments between qualitative and quantitative research that we had 25 years ago like “we are better”, “we guarantee

more complexity” or “we are creative” versus “they are stupid” etc. do not make sense; it is a battle, a fight at least; and it is boring.

*Carolyn Demuth:* I think the point is again that you always have to look at the research question. What do we want to investigate? And this decision is always connected to our epistemology - how do we gain knowledge about something. This is one of the problems that need to be addressed further in the future. What I see increasingly in the research of people who claim to use qualitative methods is that they use them as tools, as techniques without reflecting about the epistemology behind it. And I think that is a challenge for the future in my point of view. We need to make people aware that qualitative methods are not just techniques. It is not just a different method, but there is a *methodology* behind it that we have to take into account. Can I use this? Does it make sense? If this is my epistemology can I use this procedure? That makes sense I think. That is one challenge for the future.

*Luca Tateo:* The first point is – you have some epistemological assumptions you have to start with and you have some kind of questions you can ask. I think one of the problems with qualitative research – it happens also in cultural psychology – is that we have to make explicit our actions and some epistemological principles. We have to make them explicit and we have to start with them. But that is something every quantitative researcher would hate, I think. Every qualitative researcher is actually doing that, but implicitly and that is very risky. It’s tricky. For instance one action could be that psychological processes are changing throughout life. They are not the same. Or “How do we define psychological qualities?”. If we use the term “qualities”, what do we mean by this? Do we mean it in an aristotelic sense? An essence of the subject? If it is the essence of the subject we can measure it – it is never changing, it is the property of the subject. This is quantitative. It leads to quantification. If you say that psychological qualities are potential in a Vygotskyian sense it leads to qualitative research. So we have to establish actions of qualitative science. The second point is how to ask questions. You can ask how many people are depressed in Denmark and that is a quantitative question. You can ask what is depression – and this is a very tricky kind of question, because you can answer it in both way in a certain sense. You can have a qualitative answer and a quantitative answer. There is a third kind of question which is for instance how do people cope with depression, which is a qualitative kind of question. So the way of asking questions are of course what makes the difference – not the kind of methods you use.



*Carolyn Demuth:* But this is linked to the question. If I want to know how people cope with depression I can have a phenomenological approach and look at how they experience this. I can use a Grounded Theory approach to look at the subjective theories or I can look from a social constructivists perspective at how participants socially construct it in the interaction or how is it publically constructed. So this is always rooted and connected to your epistemologies.

*Luca Tateo:* Of course, but it is not the choice of method that defines the question. It's the other way round. For instance I must be able to count the coping strategies in order to better understand them, for instance. Is it now qualitative or quantitative? It is qualitative because of the question you are asking.

*Svend Brinkmann:* Just a brief remark about this theme about closeness and distance, because in one way I agree with you that on average qualitative research does not come closer to the phenomenon than any other kind of research. If you pick up a random article from a psychological journal that identifies as qualitative then there is a huge chance that it has employed interviews. And there is a huge chance that the researcher has interviewed between 10 and 15 people, perhaps. And there is a huge chance that the researcher quotes maybe 5 or 6 extracts from the interviews. So many people are not quoted and the people who are quoted are quoted according to certain themes or categorizations that the researcher has come up with. They go across these people's lives. So where are the people? We have snippets and bits and pieces that are put together in a way that creates as much distance as any questionnaire or any experiment or whatever. But maybe that is a bad example of qualitative research, I mean it is a typical example, but maybe in a normative sense it doesn't take advantage of the potentials of that kind of research. So I would insist in a way that we do have the possibility of getting closer to the phenomenon, but we often don't exploit that possibility but it is there. We can interview one person. We can live with one person for weeks or months or years and we have a vocabulary for calling that research. We call it qualitative research or biographical research or whatever we want to call it. Of course we can always argue philosophically what closeness is. But in an everyday sense of the term I think we have the potentials of getting closer to the phenomenon. That has its merits. Obviously it also has its limitations and there are research questions we cannot answer if that is our approach but there are others that we can answer. We have to distinguish between talking about qualitative research as it is currently practiced and as qualitative research in psychology COULD be if we did it properly (for further elaboration, see Brinkmann, 2015).

*Günter Mey:* I agree totally. The question I stress is more or less what is the similarity between quantitative and qualitative research. In quantitative research we used instruments like a scale for measuring depression. Then we can talk about if it is a good or a bad scale. In qualitative research we have to talk about the instruments, too—and the instrument is the researcher. The researcher asks the questions and either understands the answer or does not. If he does not understand what the person is trying to say s/he will be not able to ask the next question because s/he has no idea what s/he should ask now. After conducting the interview it is the researcher who reads the transcripts and talks about what s/he has found in the transcripts. So clearly we have many potentials, but also many limitations—depending on “our” instruments, and that means depending on us. When we talk about (the future, or present, or past of) qualitative research we have to talk about the myths and the misunderstandings that exist.

*Carolyn Demuth:* For the second part of our discussion I will briefly summarize what we have been discussing so far. We started out with the question about whether there is a general psychological approach to qualitative research and that led us to the history of qualitative research in general and where the term qualitative came from and that there was actually qualitative research before the term existed. Then the discussion was do we really need the term “qualitative methods” and whether it is a suitable term. Günter mentioned three principles: openness, foreignness and co-construction - communication. These principles could define qualitative research. We were then talking about what the present situation is for qualitative methods in psychology and that there are some misconceptions and myths about what qualitative research is. It boils down to what is my research question and what is my epistemology and what is my conviction of how we gain knowledge. We were also talking about the role of the researcher and subjectivity – The researcher as an instrument. We could use the last part of our session to discuss the future of qualitative research in psychology – What are topics? What are the urgent questions?

*Anete Strand:* I would like to invoke one of the questions that was put down for the note here of the ethnocentrism of qualitative research, and ask the question whether it is essential in the future to keep focusing on the individual and the human in psychology. Given the various turns and reorientation that are sort of moving and coming in at the moment?

*Carolyn Demuth:* I would like to add, and we already talked about this in the first part, what do we do about the increasing standardization and number of handbooks that read just like cookbooks. This has led to the idea that qualitative research is only tools or methods, without

reflecting what is the methodology behind it. Günters handbook (Mey & Mruck, 2010) is a good counterexample. It is very big but what I like very much about his handbook is that for each methodology approach it gives the epistemology behind it and this is what is missing in many English handbooks.

Workshop participant suggests adding the question of fragmentation of qualitative research.

*Anete Strand:* Perhaps also what was mentioned earlier about the ethical dimension of knowledge production in terms of the future.

*Carolyn Demuth:* Anything else? Maybe something else will come up as we discuss. Should we start with the question of ethnocentrism?

*Anete Strand:* When you were talking about what are the limitations of psychology and the idea of getting closer to the individual, you asked what happens when we look at just forty minutes of a person's life and are we really getting closer than others? It just made me wonder that behind that line of thought is this implicit axiom that it is important to know the individual and know the person. I guess it is very crucial part of psychology but at the cost of the future you might want to take these implicit axioms and sort of just hold them in your hand and play with them. You might want to keep them but it is always perhaps nice to consider what are the implications and perhaps also the ethical implications of reproducing that axiom or altering it – what are the ethical implications of doing that? So I think I would like to tie those two together – knowledge production and the ethical and then the ethnocentrism.

*Svend Brinkmann:* Just to briefly reflect upon that. For me there is no doubt that the idea that good qualitative research – good qualitative psychology – is about getting close to the individual is a historical creation. That doesn't mean that it is bad or wrong. I think it is very important but it is not universal - so tying up with the theme about ethnocentrism. Jacques Derrida would deconstruct that approach as part of the metaphysics of presence saying that we have this metaphysic implying that the real is what is there – authentically. An experience in the individual. You can easily deconstruct that. But it also has its ethical merits and ethical perils like everything. My own guide at least partly to this issue about ethnocentrism is Richard Rorty who said that “well ethnocentrism is not something we can overcome. We are ethnocentric” – He celebrated it. He said: “Well we have this liberal tradition developed in Western Europe out of humanism and solidarity

and I think this is the most marvelous set of ideas humanity has ever produced” – and he was in love with that. He fully understood its contingency – that it was just one way of articulating reality. Perhaps he wasn’t entirely wrong, just to say that ethnocentrism is not necessarily a term of abuse. It is not necessarily something we have to overcome. But perhaps it is something we should acknowledge.

*Günter Mey:* What a wonderful topic because sometimes we have to ask why on earth we always do interviews. Interviews seem to guarantee to get the person’s perspective. We construct the person as self-reflective. In Germany 90 percent of qualitative research is done with interviews. And we have to ask “why?”. From a biographical research perspective we have to understand the “whole” biography and invite people narrate their life (his)story; but sometimes we get the impression that there is a strong preference for conducting interviews (or in other words, the preference of questionnaires in quantitative research is mirrored in qualitative research by the preference of using interviews). What I have learned through working with grounded theory methodology is to find out how to give an answer to a question and this means to remain open with regard to the formulation of the research question, but also with regard to the sections of methods and the design, sampling and so on. Maybe interviews could be one access, but we have so many others, and we have to recognize the maxime of grounded theory: ”All is data”. We have to ask (and answer) what is the best way to answer the question? From my point of view it is an artifact of qualitative research to base research primarily on interviews; and it is a result of the efforts of qualitative research(ers) to standardize their research style. And we also have to reflect that biographical interviews are artificial. Nobody in everyday talks about his life for six hours, so it is a myth that interviews are nearer to real life settings. Interviewing is a method and we have to reflect why we used the methods we use, what are our basic assumptions, our world view, and our construction of human beings.

*Anete Strand:* We talked about how we should dwell with the present. And I am thinking what you just mentioned with the large use of interviews is in a way this reproductions of the metaphysics of the individuality and individualism. As if that’s a unit that sort of goes a long way. And back to one of your (Günter’s) three points where you said co-construction is that focusing in on the present and the more localized you would then be able to let go of the idea of the long perspective of the one unite - the individual - and into the co-creation – the co-construction – in the moment. So how do we focus on the whole conversation between the researcher and the person you are talking to? It is not so much about pinning down who is the individual but more of

what is being co-constructed here? That is part of what I talked about earlier with the reorientation and I think this is a crucial point in time where you can sort of stand still and sort of find out where we want to go. And what happens if we keep reproducing the metaphysics of the individuality and what happens if we enhance the other perspective that it is a co-construction – co-creation act - sort of in the present. And what will that do to the field of psychology? I think that is an interesting question. It is not whether it is right or wrong. It is a different way to go and it will definitely produce different kinds of methodologies.

*Günter Mey:* What I try to use in my own research with interviews is to try to analyze this interaction. We do what I have called the “analysis of processes” (Mey 2000), similar to the approach of “micro-genesis” introduced by Heinz Werner or developed in conversation analysis or narrative analysis (for further elaboration, see Mey & Ruppel, 2015). We have a careful look at the interaction, the question-answer-question-sequences, and this is an especially fruitful approach for research in developmental psychology.

*Luca Tateo:* In this case I can try to come up with three axiom. The first axiom would be formulated like all psychological processes are ethnocentric. They are ethnocentric in two senses. The first one is ethnocentric because they are based on an embodied perspective which is the leading perspective. The second is that they are also ethnocentric in the sense that psychological processes are always culturally mediated. So they are *egocentric* and *ethnocentric*. It implies that both the researcher and the people that are studied by the researcher are ethnocentric. As an axiom it is something that must be always taken into account. The second axiom I would say it is – I don’t know if it is an axiom, but maybe it is a methodological axiom – all data of qualitative research must be made available through open access. This is the only way to solve the problem of standardization, communication, fragmentation and replication – they must be made available through open access. So to be clearer on this, all the interview transcripts and all the videos must be made available through open access. I will come to the point about ethics also. And the third axiom for me comes from a very long tradition, at least since Francis Bacon, which is the idea that knowledge is action. It is intervention. It is power. The axiom could be that all knowledge is based on the relationship the researcher establishes with any kind of object. It’s an ethical relationship to the extent that it implies an action over the world and in opinion it is related to responsibility. You establish an ethical relationship and you get responsibility for that. I don’t know, it’s a starting point.

*Svend Brinkmann:* I think it is an interesting list but I am a little bit sceptical about the open access idea. Not because it is bad as such but in practical terms you run into the ethical problems that – I mean much of what I do in my research would be impossible because of confidentiality issues. I am following people, observing people who talk about things, do things that they wouldn't like to be identified with in the public space. But for scientific reasons I agree that it would be great with open access, but there are ethical problems.

*Günter Mey:* I would like to add something to axiom two. I agree with all what Svend Brinkmann said. I am member of the board of “QualiService” (<http://www.qualiservice.org/>), a center for qualitative research in Germany that archives data/material for “secondary analysis” (like Qualidata does in the UK; see Corti, Witzel & Bishop 2005). But ethics is one of the crucial points—we have to find a solution. Archiving and secondary analysis is a nice new development in qualitative research because instead of collecting new data (including the transcription and other time- and money consuming resources) we can use existing data. I am really sure that all the data I have analyzed are not exhaustively analyzed. I can bring my interviews to you or someone else and you will work very productively with this data. To share data would be a wonderful idea. And it is interesting that in the debate on archiving we also encounter some myths and misunderstandings about qualitative research. One of these is the myth that we can only understand interviews (or other data) if we have conducted them ourselves. In the discussion about open data – i.e. why people do not like that idea – I find it very interesting to understand what kind of constructions of what is the “good” or “right” way of doing qualitative research are produced.

*Svend Brinkmann:* But if we took your idea about the importance of subjectivity seriously – wouldn't it mean that - it is not an argument against sharing data because obviously that can be done and others can reanalyze or reinterpret the data that has been produced with me as the researcher. But from your point of view we would have to say strictly speaking that you are not working with the same data because unless we really reify and essentialize them and say that data are what they are regardless of who the interpreter is. As qualitative researchers we don't want to say that probably. We want to say that the person who was engaged with producing the data works with the data in one way. It's not the only way or the only right way, but it is one way. And you could work with the data in another way but you would have a different relationship to the data so they wouldn't be the same data as they are relationally defined in terms of who you are.

*Günter Mey:* I agree. Data is never the same; data is always co-structured during the research process of collecting and analyzing (by the persons involved in these processes). I work all the time with data that was produced by others; in most cases I was not involved in the data production process. But I have a relation to the data and I can have a look at what happens between the researcher and the researched person. It would make no sense for a secondary analysis only to replicate the research (e.g. to validate the interpretation); the potential of secondary analysis is to use this data for new insights; this is possible because qualitative data are very rich and very interesting for different kinds of research questions.

*Svend Brinkmann:* This is in a way common sense in hermeneutics and literature, you know, Gadamer. Every generation reads Homer and Dante and whoever anew – and it is not the same Dante they read because it is reconstructed all the time. For us who suffer of the metaphysics of presence we tend to think that there are these data and they are what they are regardless of who we are. Maybe that is a myth.

*Günter Mey:* It was a myth as you said. Based on these myths in qualitative research for a long time you could find the term “informant” to describe interviewees —human beings as a container of information that can be called up through good questions. This has lead to specific guidelines of how to conduct a good interview – to get access to the information (giver). This has lead to an understanding of methods as tools; it conceives of an interview as a “technique”, and underestimates that interviews are “social interactions” – or let us say an encounter of someone who wants to know something and someone who has something to say about it.

*Svend Brinkmann:* I would like to ask whether we should retain the term data, because it has such a difficult history. I mean it means “The given” in Latin and we know now that nothing is given. So why do we keep talking about data? I never talk about it actually. I always talk about materials to stress the sort of physical, like a transcript is also a physical thing; an audio recording is something in the world. It’s not just given. It’s made. It’s done. It’s a material thing.

*Luca Tateo:* This is a very interesting issue for two reasons. First, because in a certain sense even qualitative data are data in the sense that they are given. They are given in the sense that they are there. You cannot go back and redo them again, in a certain sense. So they are given and they are a result of something that happened. The idea of material is just as tricky as the term of data because the term material has the connotation that it is something you can work with to do something.

*Svend Brinkmann*: That is kind of the connotation that I like.

*Luca Tateo*: I know you like that but they both have kind of ideological implications. I personally would like to see them together, in that sense because I think they are both something that happened, something unique and they are at the same time something you work with to construct something.

*Svend Brinkmann*: But it is exactly the idea that it's something that happened – boom – that I would like to question. Two people meet and someone says something to someone else and we record it. But what really happens is that there is some kind of essence to that encounter or whatever, that is captured by the term 'data' – I don't think so. First we record aspects of it only. There are all sorts of things we don't take – I mean my hero John Dewey, he would say replace the term data because it means the given to the term taken because we are always selecting. We take based on our interests from the world. We are not given anything. We *take* it. And other social constructionists would talk about 'creata' instead of 'data' to emphasize that we create them. They are not there to be picked up. They are there because we have created situations that enable them to be taken. We translate all the time from verbal interaction to the – if we talk about interviewing – to the sound recorder; to the transcription; to the software package; to whatever. And then something ends up in a scientific article somewhere and I don't think there is an authentic place where we find 'the given'. It is just a series of translations between different kinds of materials and there are sensible ways of translating and there are bad ways of translating. I am not saying that anything goes. I am not in favor of that. I just think that for me the term data has problematic connotations.

A workshop participant comments that the etymology of the term data meaning the given is not something that is socially represented amongst the average researcher or student.

*Svend Brinkmann*: I still think it is institutionalized in the whole apparatus around research. So even if the individual researcher is not aware of it - it is sort of built into the structure of research and now that we are talking about 'sharing data'. We are talking about sharing this something and perhaps that is a bad way of talking about it. Elizabeth St. Pierre's wrote in the most recent Sage's handbook of qualitative research a chapter that I highly recommend. It's called 'post-qualitative research'. She says we will need to overcome this idea that there is even such a thing as qualitative research. She says why do we treat what our interviewees have said in one way and treat what we read in a book by Foucault or Gadamer or Husserl or whomever, Günter, in another way. I mean why distinguish? Both sources are in a way equal. But they are not if we have this idea - that I



think is institutionalized - that there is something authentically real in what our informants say and there is not in what Günter has written in a book or Foucault has written in a book. And she would like to deconstruct that whole dichotomy and say: “Well it is all on the same level in a way. They are all just voices and articulations. That we can use” but when you begin to think like this it opens up so many new interesting avenues.

Workshop participant comments if we should get rid of the term data or just call everything data.

*Svend Brinkmann*: I actually discussed this in a piece in qualitative inquiry that comes out in a special issue called “Qualitative research after coding” and it doesn’t mean what to do after we have coded – no – it means what to do if we don’t code. My piece is called “Doing without data”. I sort of posed this dilemma that either we can say that data is a given and that has all sorts of problems or we can say like Bruno Latour or others who said that ‘everything is data’. But I think both are unattractive because saying everything is data obviously means that nothing is data and then we can’t even talk about materials as I would like to. So I try to find a middle ground between those two but I don’t think the term ‘data’ is very useful in finding that middle ground.

*Luca Tateo*: But here there is also another issue: the requirements of science which has to do with control over the conditions of the production of the stuff. This is actually an issue. The fact that these data are produced under some sharper or softer conditions that the researcher is controlling even when he is not pretending to do that. But the control of the conditions of production is an issue in science. It is an issue but to what extent it is an issue in qualitative research and psychology and how do we deal with this issue? I don’t have the answer. I agree with Svend (Brinkmann) that everything is data or it is material. I totally agree with that. Definitely.

*Svend Brinkmann*: But for me this doesn’t mean that we should stop interviewing. I think interviewing can be an extremely useful way of producing interesting materials to work with.

*Luca Tateo*: But an interview can only be analyzed by the person who did it. I think that of course your analysis will be different from mine. There is no reason for me not performing an analysis. The fact itself that I didn’t participate in the control of conditions of production of the data is exactly – it’s not a point of weakness – it’s exactly what for me can create new knowledge. I am in a different position with respects to you, and that is exactly why data must be shared.

*Anete Strand:* I think this discussion here again leads me back to this point about the metaphysics of individualism and individuality because now we are talking about the stuff that we share and that we can pass on. We are still talking about it as an existing thing! And in a way I have benefited enormously from the vocabulary of Karen Barad. In one of her terms for this – what we are talking about now – she talks about it has an ‘onto-semantic’ construct. It is material. It is something but it is also semantic and this is the relational definition of the onto-semantic. It’s not about sharing or passing it on. It is just re-invoking it in a different context. The point is that in our language, in our syntax, in the way our language is constructed, our sentence structure and the grammar builds up this idea of individual things doing things to one another and having attributes of some kind. We keep reproducing that and it takes quite an effort to reflect out of that and it is the same if we keep discussing the qualitative and the quantitative or the subjective and the objective. At least for the last two it’s sort of a reproduction of this idea of a split between a physical world and then we have how we view it, whether it is data or it is the whole world. And the reorientation is sort of just to flip it open and just simply reorient – to click in a new way, like in a kaleidoscope. It’s the same pieces in there they just click in a different way and you see it totally different.

*Carolyn Demuth:* And I think that goes back exactly to the general problem in mainstream psychology that the self is conceived as an entity inside of the person.

*Anete Strand:* Yes, exactly.

*Carolyn Demuth:* That is a very dominant view. That is why I think we need a Cultural Psychology approach and a more dialogical approach (for further elaboration see Demuth, 2015b). And such an understanding of ‘self’ as dialogical needs to be reflected in the methodology. I also use interviews myself, but we need to be aware that interviewing itself is rooted in an Western modern world in which the individual is so central and that conceives of the individual as self-reflective (Taylor, 1989). If we challenge the view of an entity inside of a person and subscribe to a more dialogical approach and cultural psychology perspective shouldn’t then the methodology also reflect this? For example how is identity work done in everyday interaction (see e.g., Bamberg, 2012). How is remembering done in everyday interaction, and really apply one of the principles of qualitative research - to be as close to real everyday life as possible. Shouldn’t we then move on to see how identity and all these psychological concepts, memory and so on, are being done in everyday interaction? And apply different approaches that include aspects like materiality, as you

said, as well? Materiality is something completely excluded in research. Even if you look social interaction, the risk is to leave out materiality.

*Luca Tateo:* But this is exactly the point – this kind of reification of psychological psyche or mental processes. It is exactly the epistemological axiom of quantitative psychology because if something is or has properties then they are measurable. I would like to see this kind of connection between the epistemological principles and – in this case it is very clear - if the self is something, if intelligence is something, then you can measure it.

*Carolyn Demuth:* And in the same line of thinking language is conceived as a means to ‘retrieve’ something. But all of this is often not reflected.

*Günter Mey:* I think it is very interesting to talk about what qualitative researchers do when they are “doing qualitative research”. We have to reconstruct in detail the process of production of data in quantitative research, and what is the process of production and talking about data/material in qualitative research. Sometimes it looks like it is the same but we know that it is something very different, because of the different paradigms, or let us say the cartesian and anti-cartesian (or hermeneutic or interpretative) approach (see Soeffner 2014) to understanding the world and my understanding of psychological phenomena.

Workshop participant comments that we need to share our data because otherwise we will be unable to attune our psychological nomenclature and language, so that it can transcend cultural borders for example.

*Luca Tateo:* I think it is a very practical issue that like all the ethical and ontological issues of course they don’t have a yes or no solution. They have progressive pathways to different levels of access and different levels of protection. You immediately thought about interviews because they are considered the most private in a certain sense and because you have all this stuff about informant consent and ethical commissions and so on. The problem is from my point of view fostering the culture of sharing. So why for instance – my dissertation was about talk shows. All the studies on media for instance, a lot of the studies on computer mediated communication, a lot of ethnographic studies as well – Liberman showed for instance, a lot of videos of crossing street intersections - that kind of data is not sensitive, so they can be shared at any moment. You can do that. So if you start from that then you can go through a progressive way of sharing and finding of course the ontological solution for this particular type of data – sorry for the word – that you have.

So there is not only one solution for every kind of data, but the culture of data sharing can be fostered this way.

*Svend Brinkmann:* I totally agree with that. Another way is also to take data that are already shared, I mean data that is already out there. We can take public phenomena and as psychologists analyze them, because they are publically available in news stories or whatever. I mean I did a small piece on when Bjarne Riis a famous Danish cyclist admitted that he had used performance enhancing drugs – doping – in his career. He gave a speech and it was a public performance – It was a confession and it was transcribed by newspapers and it is out there on the internet. I can just take it and analyze it and if people don't like my analysis they can look at the data for themselves and contribute with their view points. I think we do that way too little. I mean we should instead of constructing the data – I mean huge amounts of interviews have been produced and they are just forgotten – We should work with what is already there much more.

*Günter Mey:* Yes, but I think the question of ethics it is not easy to handle. I think it is wonderful to talk about ethics in qualitative research and how some ethical concerns in research change because of changes in society. I ask (myself): Is it really okay to pick up someone's Facebook communication? Do they agree to be subject of research? We are living in a very new society with new "definitions" of what is private or public, in my point of view it is too easy for researchers to say: "These are open data," because it depends on—as in research in general—the agreement and arrangements between individuals. For example, if there is a young girl with a bulimia nervosa and she posted her story/stories on the internet she did not agree like participants of an interview agreed that they will tell me a story. Research is not a matter of doing it in this easy way only because it is possible. It's not a strict axiom. We have to discuss and we have to reconstruct and analyze what are our concerns, what is our position. This is a question of power on what happens here and we have to talk about that.

*Luca Tateo:* The third axiom.

*Anete Strand:* If it is out there it makes it an individual existing unit that you can just use but in the moment that it is made a subject of research there is a power issue. There is this ethics of mattering, what does it become? It becomes part of a scientific discourse. It becomes part of a scientific argument and it is going to be used for something and that is the ethical key point about it right? I agree what about the journalists who just uses whatever, well I think in science we have a different ethical standard that we need to keep.

*Svend Brinkmann:* But how do we find our reasons? How do we warrant that? Because I totally agree that we have to hesitate I wouldn't take some piece that some girl wrote on Facebook and just analyze it without her informed consent. I would ask her first, but why – basically – because we cannot on one hand dissolve individuality or subjectivity and say that it is just a network of relations – no one individual is responsible for anything anymore, and then say well this person – this individual – has to give consent, can we?

Workshop participants comments and asks why it is regarded as different if you go to an online social media forum or if you go to the media directly like the biker example Svend Brinkmann used earlier.

*Svend Brinkmann:* Structurally they are similar but Bjarne Riis did this in order for the journalists to write down and communicate to an audience what he said. He wanted to be exposed. So I found that it was ethically okay to take what he wanted out in the open and use it. If a girl posts something on Facebook it is sort of quasi-public. It was never intended for journalists or researchers or anyone to analyze like that. So there is a difference in intention and this goes back to my question to you (Anete Strand) because you said that and in a way that might be true. But this hesitation has to do with individuality there is still individual essence to the data. But I would say on the other hand that we need to keep a notion of individuality in order to be able to argue in favor of getting informed consent. I mean it belongs to some one! There is some person that they will have to ask.

*Anete Strand:* I don't think it needs to be either-or, because even if we don't talk about individuality as a clear cut entity –,we can still acknowledge as she or he, whatever, becomes a fragment (or part) of something. It is not about her as an absolute unit. I don't think we need to put it together like that. Because giving up on the metaphysics of individuality does not mean that we give up on the ethics. It is a different kind of construed ethics. It is ethics of fragmentation or whatever you want to call it. It is still acknowledged in various fragments and becomes part of your.... So I think it is a discussion on different levels because it goes back to what you have been saying Carolin (Demuth) about the epistemological dimension of methodologies and back to what I talked about with the ethics of mattering – The ethics has to do with what is going to be the materialized outcome of what we are doing and in that sense acknowledging her. That little bit there as something that will have a potential mattering effect on her. Not as a sole unit but exactly because she is not a sole unit but because she is “affectable” by her being a part that is co-configured through the activity and co-configuring contributor to it.

*Svend Brinkmann*: I think my point is that most of our ethical intuitions are based on the metaphysics of individuality and I don't see a difference between – I mean – you say that the metaphysics of individuality affects our views of methods, like interviews, our view of data and stuff like that. I think that is true but I find that the exact same metaphysics of individuality inscribed in our ethical demand for informed consent for example and that is one demand that I think is important. So how can we say that sometimes this metaphysics is okay and not just okay but needed for ethical reasons and sometimes it is not - Then it is wrong and we should deconstruct it but we don't want to deconstruct it always? So that is why I want to say I don't talk about individuality as such but I talk about the person as an ethical subject. I think that is to use a standardized Derridian term un-deconstructable, because it is the basis of all human interactions ethical demands etc.

*Anete Strand*: Well that is up for discussion as well.

*Svend Brinkmann*: Sure – Of course.

*Anete Strand*: It is the idea of otherness you know - what is it that we subscribe our ethical concerns to?

*Svend Brinkmann*: The person is constructed. The person is part of many processes of becoming etc. etc. etc. but it is still for me a undeconstructable unit for psychology and that is why psychology is about the individual.

*Luca Tateo*: That is why statistical studies became so popular because they had anonymity, so you don't mess with all this stuff. But I wonder if anonymity is just the opposite of what we are looking for. How can you actually consider the standpoint of the subject, both observer and participant, if you assume anonymity as a requirement for doing research (Schraube & Osterkamp, 2013).

*Anete Strand*: I would like to say just to clear something up because I would hate it if what I had argued around the metaphysics of individuality and obviously that we might want to deconstruct it would mean that nothing exists, because that is not the point! That is not the point. It's just because we want to focus on the relationality of this. In that relationality is a lot of ethics. So it is really just the same amount of ethics it's just reoriented a little bit.

*Günter Mey*: Mid of the ninetieth I visited a congress on constructivism in Heidelberg. Someone said: "It is quite clear we are all constructivists but no one of us will walk across the street

with closed eyes after the conference's closing. We know that there are cars." That is the same thing as you mentioned just now- talking about construction, talking about relation. It does not mean to say that anything goes. I am very happy about this little dispute taken place here, because it makes it very clear that all the topics we have discussed, like ethics, etc. are wonderful starting points to talk about our issue and our positioning in the field of qualitative research. For the future we have to do research on qualitative research, because it is interesting that we do research on many processes in everyday life, in different organizations, on encounters etc.; but what we have not done so far is a systematic research about us—our production of data, knowledge etc. In that case it seems that we can discuss axioms or debate a criteria catalogue (not to be misunderstood as a checklist or cookbook). What I would like to stress is that we have to reflect every single step in our research process and to "document" it; and we have to start to study our research systematically; often we write down "anecdotes", or experiences of doing qualitative research in our textbooks. What is missed is a research on the entire process in qualitative research like Knorr-Cetina (1981) did on knowledge production in the laboratories of scientists. I found this debate very interesting and I hope we will have a chance to continue our discussion another time.

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