

### The role of the researcher in qualitative psychology

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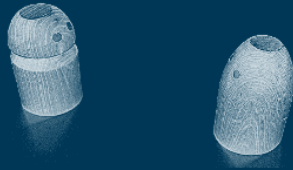
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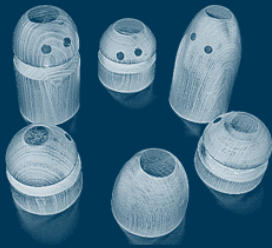
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Qualitative  
Psychology  
Nexus II



Mechthild Kiegelmann (Ed.)

The Role  
of the  
Researcher  
in  
Qualitative  
Psychology



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Verlag

Mechthild Kiegelmann (Ed.)

# The Role of the Researcher in Qualitative Psychology

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**Research relationships throughout all phases of research**

Mechthild Kiegelmann

Volume two of *Qualitative Research Nexus* focuses on the roles of qualitative researchers and their relationships within psychological studies. This book is a result of the presentations, discussions, and collaborations of participants at the second workshop "Qualitative Psychology" in October 2001 in Blaubeuren, Germany that was organized by the Center for Qualitative Psychology. The theme of the meeting was "the role of the researcher in qualitative psychology." Many fruitful, interesting, and quite diverse contributions were made during the workshop. Reading this volume of *Qualitative Research Nexus* can assist future researchers in considering the complexity of their roles as qualitative investigators<sup>1</sup>.

A model to describe different phases within the processes of research projects I use as an organizing framework for the articles in this book. This model was developed recently in the department of educational psychology of the University of Tübingen, Germany. It can provide a helpful overview for research processes. By indicating a sequence of central areas where research processes can be located we provide a non-linear guide to various tasks that are relevant in research projects. Being aware of these tasks can ease the design of scientists' studies. Our model has been inspired by Maxwell's description of tasks for designing qualitative studies (Maxwell, 1996). Having an overview of the range of activities involved in research also sheds light on which forms of research relationships might be relevant.

There are three general perspectives within research processes that can be distinguished: application, exploration, and explication. We describe them in our model in a circular process:

1. *Application*: identifying relevant areas for further research and applying results into practice,
2. *Exploration*: developing research projects and specific research questions, and
3. *Explication*: developing an empirical based theory.

These three perspectives focus on different elements of research processes. These elements overlap and are organized in a circular order. We propose that research always is grounded within a social context in which the research interests are relevant and research results are applied. Thus, application is the beginning and the end of this circular model about processes of research. The circular phases then start over again as results

are applied in practice and further relevant areas for research can be identified. In the following, I describe the model and the specific phases.

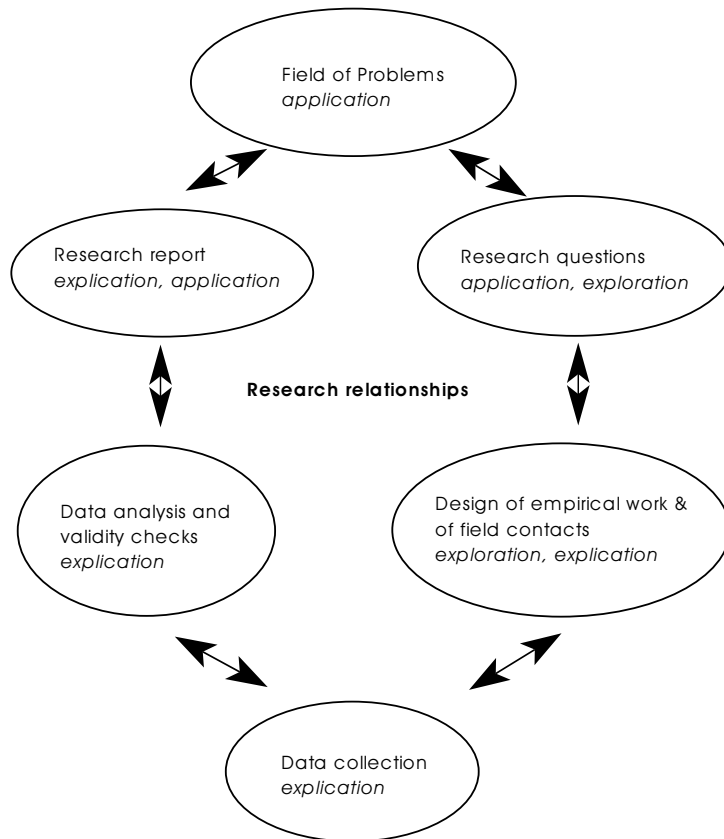


Figure 1: Model of Research Phases

Within each of these overlapping phases of application, exploration, and explication, specific research steps can be identified. The process is as follows:

*Application:*

One of the first research steps is identifying a field of problems. Developing a research interest and identifying issues that could be



investigated are activities of application. Formulating specific research questions to be investigated is an activity that also belongs to the application phase. The expected results are intended to provide valid information that is relevant to the practice and social context in which the research endeavor originated.

*Exploration:*

Deciding on the questions that guide a project is already a crucial part of the research work and thus belongs to the phase of exploration in our model. In my teaching I often remind students that defining research questions is a process of mourning ("*Trauerarbeit*"). In this process, out of the broad spectrum of potential specific studies that would be relevant to the general research interest, a limited and focused set of research questions needs to be formulated. Other potential projects that would be meaningful in this context, but not feasible at this time need to be set aside and "mourned." Previous research that is relevant to the issues in question are analyzed in this process and evaluated for the purpose of developing the specific research questions.

*Explication:*

Crafting specific research questions is one step of designing a specific course of action within an empirical project. The research questions are closely linked to the work of drafting a plan of field contacts and of the empirical work that is intended to answer the research questions. In other words, by integrating the research questions into the plan for empirical data collection and data analysis, the phase of explication has been reached. At this point, the non-linear character of the here proposed model of research phases become clear. By settling on a specific procedure of collecting and analyzing data in a certain field, the formulated research questions need to match accordingly. A loop detour might result within the process, since previously assumed feasible research questions could turn out to require a laborious search for adequate methods of empirical work. Matching research questions and research methods can be a circular process<sup>2</sup>.

The explication phase also includes carrying out the designed field work through data collection. Once again, new insights gathered while collecting data could result in a detour towards "previous" activities such as refining the research questions and procedures. Collected data then need to be analyzed and the results checked against validity threats.

*Application:*

At this point, the explication phase reaches the phase of application again, because checking the validity of results involve a consideration of the social context. Here the results are relevant both for practice as well as for relevant existing theory. Thus, the context of the starting point of the

investigations has been reached again. Formulating research reports then is a task that both sums up the relevance of the results of a study as well as posts new questions that warrant further research. Application and exploration can follow again.

The centrality of research relationships in the Model of Research Phases:

Each phase of the research process encapsulates different research relationships. Human beings are studied quite generally in social research, and psychological research handles human beings and their relationships especially. In the application phase of such research often a distinction between research participants (or research "subjects") and researchers can not always be made, since the problem to be investigated is also a part of a shared social context that affects everyone within this context. For exploration, depending on the specific approach, future research participants are more or less intensively involved in the decisions about what problems will be investigated and how the research questions are formulated. How researchers construct their roles and how they initiate research relationships has implications for the interactions with and roles of those that become research participants through this process. During explication, the connections between researchers and participants tend to be especially intense, since the data are generated in close contact with all groups of people involved. When researchers formulate their results and elaborate the relevance for application in practice, the research relationships are affected again. Here researchers have to explicitly name how their work has value for the real world problems that were identified at the beginning of the research process. Thus, at each point during the research project, the roles of the researchers are relevant in various ways. Research relationships are therefore at the center of this model.

Since research relationships are at the center of the here introduced Model of Research Phases, this model is useful in organizing the contributions to this volume along the above outlined phases of research processes. The idea of the structure of this book is supported by the ideas and outcome of one of the workgroups that met during the workshop, where participants developed their own formulation of a succession of stages that are involved in research projects (see Reinhoffer, pp. 203-206 in this volume). The task of critically discussing both descriptions of phases or stages that are involved in qualitative research is still open. The collaboration of researchers interested in qualitative methodology relevant to psychology will continue.

A third volume of *Qualitative Psychology Nexus* is planned for documenting the next step in this progress.

## Reference

Maxwell, Joseph. (1996). *Qualitative research design. An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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<sup>1</sup> Due to financial constraints of the Center of Qualitative Psychology, each author in this volume of Qualitative Research Nexus was responsible for the language editing of her or his use of English. The introduction was edited by Dorian Woods.

<sup>2</sup> How to connect research questions with appropriate research methods is a crucial aspect in methodological considerations. In order to elaborate this issue further, an upcoming workshop of the Center for Qualitative Psychology in October 2002 in Perlor, Spain, is titled "Research questions and matching methods of analysis." See

<http://www.qualitative-psychologie.de>  
for more information.



**Realism and the roles of the researcher in qualitative psychology**Joseph A. Maxwell<sup>1</sup>

The theme of the conference for which this paper was written was "the role of the researcher in qualitative psychology." I want to address two aspects of this role: the personal identity and characteristics that a researcher brings to the research, and the relationships that the researcher has with those studied. I have a plural conception of the ways in which a researcher engages with participants in a study, and thus the title of the talk emphasizes not "the" role of the researcher, but the diversity of productive roles that the researcher may play. Basically, I have two goals in this paper.

First, I want to explain contemporary philosophic realism, and argue that realism is a legitimate and productive stance for qualitative research. I will distinguish realism from positivism and empiricism (with which realism has often been confused) and contrast it with constructivism (which has been the dominant philosophical stance for qualitative research).

Second, I want to explore the implications of realism for understanding the roles of the researcher — in particular, the implications of seeing the researcher's identity, perspective, and relationships as real phenomena that influence the conduct and outcomes of the research. I will contrast this view with two competing positions: A) The view that the researcher's subjectivity and relationships are extraneous variables that need to be controlled in order to avoid biasing the research, as positivists would assume, and B), the assumption that the researcher's subjectivity and relationships are constructions that constitute the things we study, but that bear no relationship to any "reality" outside of these constructions, as many versions of constructivism would imply.

Since I am arguing that the researcher's identity, perspective, and relationship to those studied are an important influence on the results of the research, I want to present my own identity and perspective, and the background and goals that I bring to this presentation. I am an outsider to this conference in at least three ways.

First, I'm not a psychologist. My own training is in anthropology, and outside of anthropology, most of my work has been in the areas of educational research and research methodology. Although my substantive and methodological work draws widely from the social and natural sciences and from philosophy, I am not particularly knowledgeable about

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Maxwell was the key-note speaker at the workshop

qualitative research in psychology. Thus, I may miss important features of this particular field, and I have tried not to presume more knowledge of this than I possess.

Second, I am a North American, and my reading in qualitative research has been mainly from North American and British sources. I know that there is a thriving community of qualitative researchers in the rest of Europe, but I am not as familiar with this as I would like.

Third, I have not been part of the ongoing conversation that many of the contributors to this conference have been having since the first workshop on qualitative psychology one year earlier about qualitative research in psychology. During the conference, I tried to understand the other participants' perspectives, and to listen for places where my own assumptions were incorrect, but there was not really enough time to do this adequately. My relationships with most of the participants thus fall short of what I advocate in this paper.

However, I will argue below that qualitative researchers are *always* in some ways outsiders to the people they study, and that this can have benefits as well as disadvantages. What I will try to do in this paper is to use my outsider status productively to present what I hope are new ways of thinking about qualitative research. Consequently, rather than simply preparing a traditional scholarly paper, I will focus on what I believe will be most useful to the audience for this volume.

The paper is organized in four main sections. First, I will present contemporary realism as a stance for qualitative research. Second, I will discuss specifically the ways in which realists have addressed social and psychological research in general, and qualitative research in particular. Third, I will take up the roles of qualitative researchers, developing the implications of realism for understanding this issue, and describing the work of other qualitative researchers that contributes to a realist approach. Finally, I will briefly address the implications of a realist perspective for validity issues related to the roles of the researcher.

### Realism as a stance for qualitative research

I argue that contemporary philosophic realism, specifically, what is often called "critical realism," provides a coherent and practical stance for conducting qualitative research. The phrase "critical realism" is most closely associated with the work of Roy Bhaskar (1986, 1989; Archer et al., 1998); other important figures in this tradition are Rom Harre (1975), Peter Manicas (1987), and Andrew Sayer (1992, 2000). However, the version of realism that I am promoting here is drawn primarily from the work of three North Americans: the philosophers Hilary Putnam (1987, 1990, 1999) and Wesley Salmon (1984, 1989, 1998), and the linguist George Lakoff (1987; Lakoff and Johnson, 1999). I see the work of these

scholars as compatible with the critical realist tradition, but I find their formulations more congenial to my own ways of thinking about qualitative research.

Philosophic realism is defined by Phillips (1987, p. 205) as "the view that entities exist independently of being perceived, or independently of our theories about them." More specifically, Lakoff lists the following characteristics of what he terms "experiential realism": (a) a commitment to the existence of a real world, (b) a recognition that reality places constraints on concepts, (c) a conception of truth that goes beyond mere internal coherence, and (d) a commitment to the existence of stable knowledge of the world.

Such views, which during much of the twentieth century were ignored or disparaged, first by positivists and empiricists and later by constructivists and other antipositivists, have emerged, in various forms, as a major position in current philosophical discussion (Suppe, 1977; Feyerabend, 1981; Salmon, 1984, 1989, 1998; Leplin, 1984; Putnam, 1981, 1987, 1990, 1999). The idea that there is a real world with which we interact, and to which our concepts and theories refer, has proved to be a resilient and powerful one which, following the demise of positivism, has attracted an increasing amount of philosophic attention.

Realist approaches have become so prevalent in philosophy that one advocate of realist views claimed that "scientific realism is a majority position whose advocates are so divided as to appear a minority." (Leplin, 1984, p. 1). While realism is still a topic of serious debate in philosophy (cf., for example, Levine, 1993; Putnam, 1999), it is clear that realism is now a legitimate and respected stance.

There are four main features that distinguish most contemporary realist approaches from positivism and empiricism. The most important of these is that realists see theoretical terms and concepts as referring to actual features and properties of a real world, although not in the sense of corresponding to these properties in any exclusive way. Positivists, in contrast, typically saw theoretical concepts as simply useful logical constructions based on observational data, "fictions" which may be valuable in making predictions but which have no claim to any "reality." Unless a concept was fully definable in terms of observational data (what came to be called an "operational definition"), it was seen as "metaphysical" and not a valid part of science. (Feyerabend, 1981, p. 176-202; Norris, 1983; Phillips, 1987, p. 40). This view, generally termed "instrumentalism," has been largely discredited in philosophy, but is still influential in psychology and the social sciences. In fact, a major reason for the collapse of logical positivism as a philosophy of science was that natural scientists had largely abandoned the instrumentalist view of theoretical entities. Concepts referring to unobservable entities such as atoms and genes, once seen as useful theoretical instruments for dealing with observable events, but ones

which had no actual referent, are now generally understood to pertain to real entities (Salmon, 1984, p. 5-7).

Second, most contemporary realists deny that we can have any "objective" knowledge of this real world, and argue that all theories about the world are grounded in a particular perspective and world view. This is a key tenet of many contemporary authors' presentations of realism, and numerous terms have been coined to express this position: "critical" realism (Cook and Campbell, 1979; Bhaskar, 1989), "experiential" realism (Lakoff, 1987), "constructive" realism (Howard, 1991), "artful" realism (Shweder, 1991), "subtle" realism (Hammersley, 1992), and "natural" realism (Putnam, 1999). These different views all agree that there is no possibility of attaining a single, "correct" understanding of the world, what Putnam describes as the "God's eye view"; all knowledge is partial, incomplete, and fallible. Lakoff states this distinction between "objectivist" and "realist" views as follows:

Scientific objectivism claims that there is only one fully correct way in which reality can be divided up into objects, properties, and relations. . . . Scientific realism, on the other hand, assumes that "the world is the way it is," while acknowledging that there can be more than one scientifically correct way of understanding reality in terms of conceptual schemes with different objects and categories of objects. (1987, p. 265)

Third, most realists who have directly addressed the social sciences hold that mental concepts refer to real entities, and that these entities are causally relevant to explanations of individual and social phenomena. Emotions, beliefs, values, and so on are part of reality; they are not simply abstractions from behavior or epiphenomena of brain states. Realism in this sense is not identical with materialism, nor is it a cover for a reductionist agenda that would attempt to eliminate concepts referring to meaning from scientific discourse. Realists hold that "social phenomena are concept-dependent . . . What the practices, institutions, rules, roles, or relationships *are* depends on what they mean in society to its members." (Sayer, 1992, p. 30)

The incorporation of an interpretive element in realist social science is widely recognized (e.g., Sayer, 2000, pp. 17-18), but a philosophical grounding for this has been developed most clearly by the philosopher Hilary Putnam, who argues for the legitimacy of both mental and physical ways of making sense of the world (1990, 1999). I have presented elsewhere (Maxwell, 1999) the value of such an approach in understanding culture.

Fourth, most contemporary realists accept the validity of the concept of "cause" in scientific explanation, a concept that was one of the main targets of both positivism and its antipositivist critics. While many



positivists rejected causality as a metaphysical notion that should have no role in science, most realists see causality as intrinsic to either the nature of the world (Strawson 1989; Salmon 1984, 1998) or to our understanding of it (Putnam, 1990). As Putnam puts it,

whether causation "really exists" or not, it certainly exists in our "life world." What makes it real in a *phenomenological* sense is the possibility of asking "Is that really the cause?" that is, of *checking* causal statements, of bringing new data and new theories to bear on them . . . The world of ordinary language (the world in which we actually live) is full of causes and effects. It is only when we insist that the world of ordinary language (or the *Lebenswelt*) is defective . . . and look for a "true" world . . . that we end up feeling forced to choose between the picture of "a physical universe with a built-in structure" and "a physical universe with a structure imposed by the mind" (1990, p. 89; emphasis in original)

Many qualitative researchers (e.g., Lofland & Lofland, 1984, pp. 100-102; Patton, 1990, p. 424; Reis, 1983) have argued that qualitative research is incapable of addressing causal questions, while Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp. 141-151) have dismissed the entire concept of "cause" as intrinsically positivist and therefore inappropriate for qualitative research. I want to emphasize, therefore, that the view of causation and explanation taken by the realist philosophers to whom I am referring is quite different from that assumed by positivists and most quantitative researchers. The positivist conception of causality, which derives from the work of David Hume, involves comparison of situations in which the presumed cause occurred with those situations in which it did not occur. The goal of these comparisons was to find regularities, (which Hume called "constant conjunctions") that apply to general categories of events and phenomena. This view essentially sees causes as variables; it treats the actual process of causality as unobservable, a "black box," and focuses on establishing a correlation between inputs and outputs. This approach to causation has survived the collapse of logical positivism, and is dominant in current quantitative research in the social sciences.

Realists, in contrast, see causality in terms of the actual causal mechanisms that are involved in particular events and situations. This approach has been most clearly presented by Salmon (1984; 1998), who has developed a detailed alternative view of causation that gives primary importance to causal processes. Critical realists involved with the social sciences (e.g., Sayer, 2000) provide similar arguments. A strikingly parallel, but independent, analysis is presented by Mohr (1995, 1996), who distinguishes what he calls "factual" causation, associated with qualitative, variance-oriented research, from "physical" causation, characteristic of process-oriented, qualitative research. Physical causation does not rely on the comparative logic developed by Hume; it is based on a notion of a

mechanical or processual connection between a cause and its effect (1996, p. 16).

The importance of understanding causal mechanisms is emphasized by Pawson and Tilley (1997) in their realist approach to program evaluation. They state that "Realism's key feature is its stress on the mechanics of explanation" (p. 55) and argue that

When realists say that the constant conjunction view of one event producing another is inadequate, they are not attempting to bring further "intervening" variables into the picture . . . The idea is that the mechanism is responsible for the relationship itself. A mechanism is . . . not a variable but an *account* of the makeup, behaviour and interrelationship of those processes which are responsible for the regularity. (pp. 67-68)

In addition, they maintain that "the relationship between causal mechanisms and their effects is not fixed, but contingent" (p. 69); it is intrinsically dependent on the *context* within which the mechanism operates. For the social sciences, the social and cultural contexts of the phenomenon studied are crucial for understanding the operation of causal mechanisms.

I have argued elsewhere (Maxwell, 1996b) that this concept of causation is quite compatible with the way most qualitative researchers think about their work. In contrast to positivist and quantitative approaches to causation, it incorporates the distinguishing characteristics of qualitative research. First, it recognizes the reality and importance of *meaning* as well as of physical and behavioral phenomena as having explanatory significance, and the essentially *interpretive* nature of our understanding of the former. Second, it attends to the *context* of the phenomena studied, and does so in a way that does not simply reduce this context to a set of "extraneous variables." Third, it relies fundamentally on an understanding of the *processes* by which an event or situation occurs, rather than simply a comparison of situations involving the presence and absence of the presumed cause.

Thus, the versions of critical realism that I am discussing are quite compatible with the emphasis of constructivists and interpretivists on the importance of meaning and the interpretation of meaning. However, in contrast to interpretive or constructivist positions, realism supports the insights of critical theory in social and educational research regarding the relationships between actors' perspectives and their actual situations, while avoiding the epistemological objectivism associated with positivism and some forms of post-positivist empiricism. It also legitimates the use of causal inference in qualitative research, and provides a productive way of viewing the issue of validity. However, in contrast to both positivism and constructivism, critical realism is compatible with wide range of methods,

quantitative and qualitative. The methods used in a study should depend on the nature of the phenomena studied and the research questions you seek to answer, rather than on philosophical prescriptions or "cookbook" guidance; they require particular knowledge of the phenomena studied, rather than simply general methodological rules (Sayer, 2000, p. 19). I will now focus on the methodological implications of realism for qualitative research.

#### A realist approach to qualitative research

Realism has now begun to have a substantial influence on the philosophy and methodology of the social sciences (e.g., Cook and Campbell, 1979; Secord, 1986; Manicas, 1987; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff and Johnson, 1999; Hawthorn, 1987; Pateman, 1987; Campbell, 1988; Bhaskar, 1989; House, 1991; Shweder, 1991). The most detailed explorations of the implications of realism for research methods are in the work of British researchers, particularly Andrew Sayer, in two books, "Method in Social Science: A Realist Approach" (1992) and "Realism and Social Science" (2000), and Ray Pawson & Nick Tilley, in their book "Realistic Evaluation" (1997). However, none of these works addresses the consequences of realism for qualitative research methods in any detail.

The earliest explicit attention to realism in qualitative research is a paper by Michael Huberman and Matthew Miles, "Assessing Local Causality in Qualitative Research" (1985). In this paper, they seek to justify the determination of causal influence using qualitative research, and discuss the analytic strategies that qualitative researchers can use to accomplish this. The paper is in many ways a philosophical addendum to their book "Qualitative Data Analysis" (1984, 1994), which provided a detailed presentation of qualitative analysis that is grounded in a realist perspective. However, despite its clear presentation of a realist conception of causality, the paper actually advocates a "middle ground" between realism (which they equate with "neo-positivism") and idealism, and the focus is almost entirely on realism's implications for causal analysis. In their book, in contrast, the specific discussions of analysis are not explicitly connected to realist issues, and indeed it is only in the second edition of the book that the word "realism" appears at all. Similarly, the second edition of Colin Robson's textbook "Real World Research" (2002) is also explicitly realist in its approach, and devotes a substantial amount of space to qualitative methods. However, the discussion of realism is largely confined to the introductory chapters, and the specific discussions of design and methods are only implicitly realist.

There are only two works that I am aware of that provide an explicit discussion of the implications of realism in general for qualitative research. One is Martyn Hammersley's paper "Ethnography and Realism" (1992).

Hammersley argues that there is a strong realist strand within the ethnographic tradition, a view that ethnography provides a deeper and more accurate account of the beliefs and behavior of those studied than any other method. However, this is in conflict with an equally strong relativist stance in ethnography, holding that an ethnographic account is merely the constructions of the researcher, and is no more or less true than other accounts. (I recall one anthropologist, speaking on a panel discussing the Margaret Mead/Derek Freeman controversy over Samoan culture, arguing that there *was* no real Samoa.) Hammersley rejects both the simplistic realist and consistent relativist solutions to this conflict, arguing for a "subtle" realism that recognizes that all observation is theory-laden, while retaining the idea of a real world which our observation makes claims about, a world that includes the beliefs and perspectives of those studied. This view is an example of what I am calling "critical" realism.

The other work is my paper on "Understanding and Validity in Qualitative Research" (1992), which attempts to provide an account of the kinds of understanding, and validity, involved in qualitative research from a critical realist perspective. I presented five categories of understanding which qualitative research can provide: description, interpretation (in the sense of interpreting the meanings and perspectives of others), theory (I would now call this "explanation"), generalization, and evaluation. I discuss the implications of this typology for the understanding of validity in qualitative research, contrasting this with the view of validity prevalent in quantitative research.

Despite the limited attention that has been given to the implications of realism for qualitative research, this work has attracted the notice of Smith and Deemer, in their chapter in the *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (second edition) on "The Problem of Criteria in the Age of Relativism" (2000). However, Smith and Deemer have clearly come to bury realism, not to praise it, and they devote particular attention to refuting Hammersley's and my arguments for realism. They argue that the epistemology of critical realism is relativist rather than realist, in that it rejects the possibility of objective knowledge of the world and accepts the existence of multiple legitimate accounts and interpretations. They then assert that the ontological concept of a reality independent of our theories serves no useful function in proposals for a realist approach to qualitative research, since the practical significance of critical realism lies in its relativist epistemology. They conclude that "Maxwell is unable to show us how to get reality to do some serious work" (p. 883). However, I actually disagree with Smith and Deemer's claim that the concept of reality does no useful work; I believe that realism *can* do useful work in qualitative methodology and practice. So rather than take the space to rebut Smith and Deemer's philosophical arguments, I want to devote the remainder of this paper to showing that realism *does* do useful work, specifically in how

we conceptualize the role(s) and relationship(s) of the researcher in a qualitative study.

#### A realist conception of the role(s) of the researcher

The main point that I want to make about the roles of the researcher is that these are real phenomena, with complex aspects and consequences for the research. This is obviously a major consequence of a realist perspective, but it has a deeper implication: that it is critical to understand the causal mechanisms by which the researcher's roles influence both the researcher's actions and the research setting and participants. As a realist, my intent in this paper is not to make prescriptive statements about what the role of the researcher should be, based on philosophical or ethical principles, but to investigate the actual consequences of particular roles for the conduct and outcomes of the research. I do not believe that these consequences will be invariant, but that instead they will depend on the particular goals and situation of the research.

I see the role of the researcher as having two major components. The first of these is the personal properties that the researcher brings to the research — the prior experiences, beliefs, purposes, values, and subjective qualities that shape how the researcher conceptualizes the study and engages with it. There is a saying that in quantitative research, the researcher *has* instruments, but in qualitative research, the researcher *is* the instrument. While I think the latter claim is also true of quantitative research, it seems indisputable that the personal characteristics of the researcher play a major role in the conduct of a qualitative study.

The second component of the researcher's role is the researcher's relationships with those studied. This relationship is often addressed in qualitative methods books and research reports, but it has usually been reduced to narrow and oversimplified concepts such as "entry," "access," or "rapport," obscuring the complexity, fluid nature, and development of the research relationship.

This distinction between two aspects of the researcher's role is strikingly compatible with the focus of a recent book on qualitative psychology (Tolman & Brydon-Miller, 2001). The editors identify two key characteristics of the sorts of qualitative research they present, which they describe as "interpretive" and "participatory." They state that

[Interpretive and participatory] methods are relational in that they acknowledge and actively involve the relationships between researchers and participants, as well as their respective subjectivities. . . . Researchers using these methods reject the possibility of a neutral stance; thus, rather than attempting to eliminate bias, we explore and embrace the role of subjectivity . . . (p. 5)

These two components are also integral parts of my realist model of a research design (Maxwell, 1996a). The first, the researcher's identity and perspective, includes the purposes and conceptual framework of a study, implicit as well as explicit, as well as other properties that the researcher brings to the study that are not formally incorporated in this model.

The second component, the research relationship, is one part of the actual methods used in the research. Here, I use "methods" in a broad sense that includes all of the things that the researcher actually does to acquire and make sense of the data collected. By calling this a "realist" model, I mean that I see these components (as well as others not discussed here) not simply as theoretical abstraction or methodological principles, but as real phenomena, things that have a causal impact on the research, the data collected, and the results.

In the following argument, I will first discuss the researcher's own identity and subjectivity, and then turn to the researcher's relationships with participants in the study.

### Researcher subjectivity

Researchers frequently make a sharp separation between their research and the rest of their lives. This practice has usually been based, implicitly or explicitly, on the positivist ideal of the "objective" and "disinterested" scientist, in which any personal involvement has been treated as "bias." However, it is clear from autobiographies of scientists (e.g., Watson, 1968) that research decisions are often far more personal than this, and the importance of subjective motives and goals in science is supported by a great deal of historical, sociological, and philosophical work. The attempt to exclude subjective and personal concerns is not only impossible in practice, but is actually harmful to good research, in two main ways. First, it creates the illusion that research is typically guided only by rational and impersonal motives and decisions. This obscures the actual motives, assumptions, and agendas that researchers have, and leads them to ignore the influence of these on their research process and conclusions. It also leads researchers to hide their actual motives and practices when they do not conform to this ideal, and contributes to a kind of "impostor syndrome" in which each researcher feels that only he or she is failing to live up to the goal of scientific neutrality and disinterest.

Second, and even more damaging, this separation cuts the researcher off from a major source of insights, questions, and practical guidance in conducting the research and analyzing the data. Anselm Strauss argued that "[positivist] canons lead to the squashing of valuable experiential data. We say, rather, 'mine your experience, there is potential gold there!'" (Strauss, 1987, p. 11) And Alan Peshkin, discussing the role of subjectivity in the research he has done, concludes that

the subjectivity that originally I had taken as an affliction, something to bear because it could not be foregone, could, to the contrary, be taken as "virtuous." My subjectivity is *the* basis for the story that I am able to tell. It is a strength on which I build. It makes me who I am as a person *and* as a researcher, equipping me with the perspectives and insights that shape all that I do as a researcher, from the selection of topic clear through to the emphases I make in my writing. Seen as virtuous, subjectivity is something to capitalize on rather than to exorcise. (Glesne & Peshkin, 1993, p. 104)

The grain of truth in the traditional view (with which critical realists would agree) is that researchers' personal (and often unexamined) motives, beliefs, and theories have important consequences for the validity of their conclusions. If your research decisions and data analyses are based on personal desires *without* a careful assessment of the implications of these for your methods and conclusions, you are in danger of creating a flawed study or reaching incorrect conclusions. However, this does not require the *exclusion* of your subjectivity. Tolman, in discussing her research on adolescent girls' sexuality, argues that

Like a therapist, as a listener I bring myself knowingly into the process of listening, learning from my own thoughts and feelings in response to what a girl is saying in her story . . . This attention to myself increases my ability to stay clear about what my own ideas and feelings are and how they do or do not line up with a girl's words, thus avoiding "bias" or imposing my own story over the girl's. (Tolman 2001, p. 132)

Tolman's perspective, and that of many other qualitative researchers, is consistent with, and supported by, a realist analysis of the phenomenon of subjectivity. Rather than treating subjectivity as a variable to be controlled, realists see it as a component of the actual process of understanding, one which can have a variety of consequences, both good and bad. Only through a clear comprehension of this process, in the particular context in which it occurs, is it possible to identify the actual mechanisms leading to these consequences, and to adjust the research to take best advantage of the positive consequences and minimize the negative ones. Even researchers who take an interpretive or constructivist stance toward qualitative research often approach this process in ways that are quite consistent with a critical realist understanding. For example, Tappan states that "the interpreter's perspective and understanding initially shapes his interpretation of a given phenomenon, but that interpretation is open to revision and elaboration as it interacts with the phenomenon in question, and as the perspective and understanding of the interpreter,

including his biases and blind spots, are revealed and evaluated." (2001, p. 50)

Peshkin recommends that all researchers systematically monitor their subjectivity:

I see this monitoring as a necessary exercise, a workout, a tuning up of my subjectivity to get it in shape. It is a rehearsal for keeping the lines of my subjectivity open--and straight. And it is a warning to myself so that I may avoid the trap of perceiving just what my own untamed sentiments have sought out and served up as data. (Peshkin, 1991, pp. 293-294)

A great deal has been written about subjectivity as an essential constituent of understanding in qualitative research (e.g., Berg and Smith, 1988; Jansen and Peshkin, 1992). What has been less well explored is *how*, specifically, one becomes aware of this subjectivity and its consequences, and how one uses this subjectivity productively in the research. The sort of in-process monitoring described by Tolman is one way to do this, but one that is fluid, idiosyncratic, and rarely described in the sort of detail that would allow someone else to learn the technique. Tolman's strategy seems similar to the phenomenological strategy known as "bracketing" (Husserl, 1970; Heron, 1988, pp. 58-59; Hawkins, 1988, pp. 61, 70-71). Although the term is frequently used by qualitative researcher simply to refer to the process of becoming aware of one's own preconceptions, with no real explanation of how this is done, the actual skill as used by phenomenologists appears to me as rather abstruse and not easily acquired.

However, there is also a much more straightforward strategy for understanding the influence of one's beliefs and prior experiences on the research: reflective analysis and writing, or what qualitative researchers often call "memos" (Maxwell 1996a, pp. 11-13). Peshkin, in order to better understand his own subjectivity during his study of a multiethnic school and community (1991), "looked for the warm and the cool spots, the emergence of positive and negative feelings, the experiences I wanted to have more of or to avoid" (p. 287), and recorded these on 5 x 8 cards. (A diary or field journal, or a computer file of memos, would also work, but index cards allow more immediacy of recording.) In analyzing these cards, he identified six "I's", aspects of his identity, that influenced his research, and was able to better understand both the benefits and the risks of these identities.

I use a much shorter and simpler version of this technique in my qualitative methods courses, an exercise that I call a "researcher identity memo." The purpose of this memo is to help the students examine their background, purposes, assumptions, feelings, and values as they relate to their research, and to discover what resources and potential concerns their



identity and experience may create. They are asked to write about their prior connections (social and intellectual) to the topics, people, or settings they plan to study, how they think and feel about these topics, people, or settings, and the assumptions they are making, consciously or unconsciously, about these, as well as how they see these as influencing their research.

Like other memos, this is an exercise in reflection, "thinking on paper" about these issues to explore their complexities and implications. The goal is partly to "bracket" one's experiences and perspectives, seeing them more clearly and thus being better able to see past them, and partly to recognize the insights and conceptual resources that these experiences and perspectives provide. It should not be a one-time activity that is completed and then put aside, but an ongoing exploration of one's identity and perspective in relation to the research, which may change during the study. The exercise is often a powerful experience for students, enabling them to discover things about themselves that they were unaware of, and a valuable tool for understanding their own connection to their topic and setting, as well as the consequences of this for their research. For examples of such memos, see Maxwell 1996a.

### Research relationships

I now want to take up the second component of the researcher's role, the relationships that the researcher creates with the participants in the research. As with my discussion of researcher subjectivity and identity, my main point is that these relationships are real phenomena, ones that have a causal influence of the research and its results, and that their actual nature and operation need to be understood in order to use them productively. As I stated earlier, these relationships are an essential part of the design of a study; they form one component of the methods that the researcher uses to collect and analyze data (Maxwell 1996a, pp. 66-69). This is true for *all* research, not just qualitative research—see, for example, Mishler's discussion (1986) of the futility of attempting to eliminate the effect of the relationship between the interviewer and respondent in survey research. However, the relationships created during a qualitative study are typically much more complex and more directly implicated in the research process than in quantitative research. As Bosk notes, "Field work . . . is a 'body-contact' sport" (1979, p. ix), and the researcher's relationships are profoundly entangled with—indeed, they often substantially constitute—the data collection process. Hammersley & Atkinson (1983) use the term "reflexivity" to label the recognition that the researcher is inextricably part of the phenomena studied, and argue that

Once we abandon the idea that the social character of research can be standardized out or avoided by becoming a "fly on the wall" or a "full participant," the role of the researcher as active participant in the research process becomes clear. (1983, p 18)

Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, in their presentation of portraiture as a qualitative method (1997), criticize the tendency, even in qualitative research, to treat relationship as a tool or strategy for gaining access to data, rather than as a connection (p. 135). They take what they call a "revisionist" view, that "relationships that are complex, fluid, symmetric, and reciprocal—that are shaped by both researchers and actors—reflect a more responsible ethical stance *and* are likely to yield deeper data and better social science." (pp. 137-138). They emphasize the continual creation and renegotiation of trust, intimacy, and reciprocity. From a realist perspective, this involves seeing research relationships neither as variables to be controlled or manipulated, nor simply as "constructions" created by the researcher and/or participants, but as real, complex processes that have profound, and often unanticipated, consequences for the research. As Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis argue, "the relationship . . . will be shaped by both temporal and temperamental dimensions — that is, by the duration of time spent and the frequency of encounters between the researcher and the actor, as well as by their personalities and the chemistry of their interactions." (p. 138)

Conceptualizing the research relationship in terms of "rapport" (e.g., Seidman 1991, pp. 73-75) is also problematic, because it frames the relationship in terms of a single continuous variable, rather than emphasizing the *nature* of the relationship. Seidman's point that it is possible to have too much rapport, as well as too little, is valuable, but the *kind* of relationship, as well as the amount of "rapport", is critical (Maxwell, 1996a, p. 66). The attempt to generate "intimacy" in a relationship may not be the most productive strategy; in addition, it may be an exploitative or oppressive imposition on the participant. Burman (2001, p. 263) criticizes the concept of "rapport" as a commodification of relationship into manipulative strategies to promote disclosure.

Particularly insightful accounts of the process of creating relationships with participants, and the influence these had on the research, are Rabinow's analysis of his changing relationships with his informants and the influence of these on his understanding of the Moroccan community he studied (1977), Bosk's discussion of how his relationships with the surgeons he studied both facilitated and constrained his research (1979), and Eckert's description of the relationships she established in her study of social class and identity in high schools (1989). Briggs (1986) provides a detailed sociolinguistic analysis of how his relationship with his Mexicano hosts in a New Mexico village both precluded the kinds of interviews he had planned to conduct and taught him a great deal about the culturally

appropriate ways to gain information in this village, and draws important lessons for interviewing from this analysis.

As implied above, there are ethical and political issues that should inform the kinds of relationships that researchers and the participants in a study create. Many of these are addressed by the contributors to Tolman and Brydon-Miller's volume, all of whom believe that qualitative research should be "participatory" in the sense of working collaboratively with research participants to generate knowledge that is useful to the participants as well as the researcher, contributing to personal and social transformation (Tolman and Brydon-Miller, 2001, pp. 3-4). Burman (2001), however, warns that the dominant humanitarian/democratic agenda of qualitative research, as well as particular goals such as "relationship," "equality," and "participation," are easily co-opted into the perpetuation of existing power relationships, and asserts that "the progressive . . . character of research is always ultimately a matter of politics, not technique." (pp. 270-271)

A major issue in relationships is that of difference between researcher and participant. Brown and Gilligan state that "when a conversation has different meanings for the people engaged in it and especially when one of the two has the power to structure the meeting, it is important to ask whether there can be genuine dialogue." (1992, p. 25) Differences in power are seen as especially problematic for relationships. Many of the contributors to the Tolman and Brydon-Miller volume address issues of differential power, and describe participatory strategies that help to overcome or address such differences. However, there is also an often unstated assumption, implicit in the Brown and Gilligan quote above, that difference *per se* is an inherent problem for relationship and dialogue, one that must be overcome by recognizing or creating commonalities.

This view, that relationship depends on similarities--shared attributes or "common ground" — is one that I have addressed at length elsewhere. Briefly, my argument is that similarity is only one of two possible sources of solidarity in relationships, the other being actual connection and interaction between individuals, and that differences as well as similarities can contribute to solidarity (Maxwell, 1996b). I also believe that difference is a real phenomenon that is often disregarded or misrepresented by both quantitative and qualitative research methods (Maxwell, 1996c), and that there is a constant danger of mystifying one's understanding of relationship by ignoring differences, particularly relative differences in power or privilege. Researchers need to guard against romantic and illusory assumptions of equality and intimacy that distort the actual relationships they engage in, as well as to develop strategies that enable them to understand the actual nature, amount, and consequences of diversity in their relationships. However, they also need to avoid assuming that solidarity is necessarily a matter of similarity, and be prepared to

recognize the actual processes through which difference can contribute to relationship and solidarity.

One scholar in particular who has developed a view of solidarity that does not depend on similarity or consensus, a view grounded in her own experience in religious and political groups, is the feminist theologian Sharon Welch. Welch notes the "American proclivity to see pluralism and complexity as problems to be solved rather than constitutive elements of social organization." (1990, p. 35) She argues that "the intention of solidarity is potentially more inclusive and more transformative than is the goal of consensus," and that "the search for consensus is a continuation of the dream of domination." (pp. 132-133) While her focus is mainly on issues of ethics and justice rather than social theory, her concept of a feminist "epistemology of solidarity" that is based on concrete relations and material interaction, rather than universal values, is compatible with, and supports, the realist analysis I am presenting here, in that it focuses not on abstract properties of individuals but on the actual processes through which they interact.

As with the previous issue of subjectivity, there is more discussion in the qualitative literature of the importance of relationship than there is specific guidance in how to establish mutually productive and ethically acceptable research relationships. Welch's work is an important exception, as are the papers by Lykes, Chataway, and Maguire in Tolman and Brydon-Miller (2001), and the classic work on field research by Wax (1971). Somewhat broader, more philosophical advice is given by the moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre, who argues that "the understanding of others is indeed an understanding of difference" (1993, p. 5), and draws important lessons from this for research relationships.

One technique for addressing this issue of establishing mutually productive and equitable relationships is the reflective memo. In my book on qualitative research design (Maxwell, 1996a, pp. 81, 84), I present a memo exercise similar to the one on researcher identity, this one dealing with research relationships. I ask students to write a memo that addresses the following questions:

1. What kind of relationships have you established, or do you plan to establish, with the people whom you are studying? What consequences do you think these will have for your study? What alternative kinds of relationships could you create, and what advantages and disadvantages would these have?
2. How do you think you will be perceived by the people you interact with in your research? How will this affect your relations with these people? What could you do to better understand and modify this perception?
3. What explicit agreements do you plan to negotiate about how the research will be conducted and how you will report the results to the

people you are working with? What *implicit* understandings about these issues do you think these people (and you) will have? How will both the implicit and explicit terms of the study affect your research? Do any of these need to be discussed or changed?

4. What ethical issues or problems do these considerations raise? How do you plan to deal with these?

### Validity

Finally, I want to briefly address the issue of validity in qualitative research, and its relationship to the researcher's role. Issues of subjectivity and relationship are inescapably bound up with validity concerns, particularly with questions of bias and reactivity. Unlike some qualitative researchers, I do not reject these concepts, or the concept of validity itself, as incompatible with qualitative research. Instead, I believe that they can be reframed from a realist perspective in ways that are compatible with the goals and practices of most qualitative researchers (Maxwell, 1992). As discussed above, this involves treating subjectivity and relationship as real phenomena that are inextricably involved in the processes through which we gain an understanding of others, rather than simply as "threats" to be controlled by eliminating them or imposing uniformity. Certainly subjectivity and relationship *can* create threats to the validity of one's conclusions, but the solution, from both a qualitative and a realist perspective, is to attempt to identify and understand these processes so that they can either be altered or taken into account in drawing conclusions.

I have argued elsewhere that the applicability of the realist concept of validity that I have presented here "does not depend on the existence of some absolute 'truth' or 'reality' to which an account can be compared, but only on the fact that there exist ways of assessing accounts which do not depend entirely on features of the account itself, but in some way relate to those things that the account claims to be about." (Maxwell, 1992, p. 283) This cannot be accomplished by following some sort of "cookbook" or checklist of validity threats. Phillips states that "in general it must be recognized that there are *no* procedures that will regularly (or always) yield either sound data or true conclusions" (1987, p. 21). Brinberg and McGrath make a similar point: "Validity is not a commodity that can be purchased with techniques. . . Rather, validity is like integrity, character, and quality, to be assessed relative to purposes and circumstances." (1985, p. 13) Doing this requires a clear grasp of how these processes are functioning in the particular context of the study. I believe that the ideas and strategies I have proposed here can be useful in this task.

I have argued that realism is a legitimate and coherent stance for qualitative research, and that it provides valuable insights into the relation-

ships we create as researchers and the ways in which our identities and subjectivities are involved in our research. I do not assume that such insights could *only* emerge from a realist approach, but I would argue that realism can be a productive way of thinking about what we do as researchers.

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## Application

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Chapter 2

### **Listening for voice *and* discourse: The role of the researcher in qualitative psychology**

Tamara Beauboeuf

#### Abstract

In this paper, I posit that a key emancipatory role for researchers in psychology is to theorize and explore the tensions between the psyche of individuals and their social contexts. I offer a distinction between the terms discourse and voice, and maintain that socially responsible psychological research examines how the social context and its prevailing norms influence the sense-making in which individuals engage. In order to describe the importance of both concepts, I discuss the origins and design of my own investigation into a discourse of strength and its potential influence on Black women's self-concepts and elevated body weights.

#### Introduction

Much of qualitative psychology recognizes the importance of speech: we tend to use interviews to gather data and our analyses are based on what people say about a topic of interest to us. However, my feminist worldview begins with listening outside of the individual, for what society says is truthful, right, and credible about the subject at hand. This concern with collective ideas or discourses draws from my understanding that injustice and oppression are constitutive elements of our social world. The realities of inequity and privilege affect the very personal identities that we develop and assert in the world (Tatum, 1999). As a result, long before we consciously speak for ourselves, the words of other people in our social groups speak through us (Brown, 1998).

Against the backdrop of injustices based on race, class, and sex (among other social divisions), how a person speaks and what they say become interesting markers of how socialized a person is into conventional and widely shared ways of thinking and behaving (Gilligan, 1993/1982). Thus, in addition to noting what interviewees say, we can also investigate what they do not say, what they begin to say but do not finish, where they hesitate, when they speak with certainty, and how the physical properties of speech – such as intonation and pitch – change with the content of their

words (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). These alterations in the content and form of voice are a key indicator of the extent to which a person is struggling against or comfortable with the discourses available to them (Brown, 1998).

I believe that there is an important difference between speech and voice. Speech can be social as well as psychological: it can include discourses as well as personal views. I have therefore reserved the term 'voice' for the gaps between discourses and what someone is trying to convey. Given that discourses are general and describe the status quo, they often fail to capture the nuances of an individual's life. Voice, then, includes the perspectives that a person holds and defends even when they are not supported by any discourses. Voice is a person's unique expression of self that could be based on an interesting compilation of discourses as well as on an active resistance to a discourse. Voice is a person's awareness of the uses and limits of discourse as an explanatory tool and map of personal reality.

Many other social scientists use the term discourse in their work. Given the social nature of 'discourse,' it makes sense that literary critics and sociologists would refer to discourse in their work (Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Weedon, 1997). In distinction to the work of psychologists, however, I believe other social scientists fail to demonstrate in data how individuals take part in and resist discourses. Because other social scientists focus on groups, they often do not attend to how individuals vary from each other in their speech. It is my belief that as qualitative psychologists, our contribution to qualitative research in general is to demonstrate how voices (the points of view of individual people) interact with discourses (the social context). Rather than make us incapable of talking about the world in which individuals live, I believe that our traditional focus on individuals can enable us to show how they live in the world, where they struggle with the world, and the ways in which individual change and social change are related.

As a qualitative psychologist, then, I see my role as a researcher as investigating tensions between voices and discourses, between the psychological and the social. The current project in which I am employing my concerns between voice and discourse is a study of body image among Black women in the U.S. In this next part of the paper, I would like to provide some examples of how my concerns for voice and discourse have influenced the genesis and carrying out of this project.

#### Origins of the project

Over the last four years, I have taught an upper-level psychology course – African American Issues in Psychology – to juniors and seniors at an open-

admissions, urban university in the U.S. As a teacher, I became increasingly aware that many of the specific images that exist socially about Black women – that they are aggressive, loud, and sexual – all seem to take as their implicit starting point a vision of Black women as "strong," and the embodied opposites of "weaker" White women. Associations of Black women -- with nurturing, selflessly taking care of children and other adults, and carrying others' burdens as their own -- are aspects of this discourse of strength that is widespread and which commands much social power. The strength attributed to Black women is apparently what renders them capable, both physically and psychologically, of withstanding and helping others manage adversity (hooks, 1981; Painter, 1996).

When I introduced in my course the work of Black feminists (e.g., hooks, 1981; Wallace, 1990) who are critical of the presumption of "strength" made of Black women, I noticed a shift in some of our discussions. I heard some students speak not only about Black women's ability to persevere despite harrowing situations such as slavery and segregation, but also about their fears, limitations, and failures. In one particular class, a young Black woman spoke movingly about how she had gained in excess of 50 pounds over the 18 months following her graduation from high school and how no one around her – neither White nor Black – could hear her confusion and concern over what this unusually large weight gain meant. Her White friends assumed that Black women preferred themselves large and that fat was socially acceptable on them (as it is on the archetypal Black female 'Mammie' servant from slavery). Her Black friends and family harshly criticized her for 'letting herself go' but never asked how she was doing and whether she needed help rather than ridicule. As a result, a woman who sensed that her weight gain was a sign of distress had no person who could/would hear her in her own terms. Other Black female students then added stories of their own experiences of weight gain that 'just happened.' These were also women who were often single mothers, full-time students, and full-time employees, and they were responsible for meeting the emotional and physical needs of children as well as aging parents. They were superwomen dealing with difficult life circumstances. Given the high rates of overweight and obesity among African American women (50%, compared with 31% of White women; *Women of color health data book*, p. 46), at this point I began wondering if weight, in particular being overweight and obese, was a psychological and physical consequence for individual Black women of living through the discourse of strength.

## A discourse-based critique of the body image literature

A major criticism I have developed about previous research on body image and Black women is that most investigations compare Black women to White women and never recognize the discourse of strength that is implicit in such comparisons. As a result, such researchers claim that Black women do not suffer from disordered eating patterns and that even if they did, since fat is an "acceptable" trait within the Black community, it does not pose a great psychological threat to Black women (Flynn & Fitzgibbon, 1996; Hebl & Heatherton, 1998; Henriques et al, 1996; Powell & Kahn, 1995). At the same time, these and other studies point to the fact that Black women suffer and die from a range of diseases that largely result from the carrying of too much weight (Flynn & Fitzgibbon, 1996; Hughes, 2000; Siegel, 2000). Without a recognition of the discourse of strength, such researchers fail to connect these two realities – that Black women speak confidently about their weight and that they suffer high rates of weight-related and therefore preventable illnesses – in any helpful manner.

Moreover, lacking a sensitivity to the discourses of strength, these researchers are unable to recognize that many Black women have taken in the discourse as their actual personal reality. As Mitchell and Herring write (1998), "If there's one prevailing image we have of ourselves, it's that we can survive anything. We get that image from our mothers, who frequently shield us from the truth of their feelings" (p. 67). And Michelle Wallace (1990) adds, "It continues to be difficult to let the myth go. Naturally Black women want very much to believe it; in a way, it is all we have" (p. 107). Thus, in order to hear and understand "the truth of [Black women's] feelings," it becomes imperative to distinguish between aspects of their speech that confirm the discourse of strength and other parts which present alternative experiences and interpretations of their lives. As Morgan (1999) suggests, the discourse of strength compels women to engage in "endless masking" which makes crying and the revelation of 'weakness' seem like an "unnatural act" (p. 89).

### Research design: Listening for Black women's voices

My research design followed on my concerns about the relative silence of Black women's actual voices given the pervasive and socially dominant discourse of strength. After announcing the project in my classes and posting flyers outside my office at the end of the Spring 2001 semester, twelve women, all students at my institution, participated in the study. I utilized a two-meeting design, in which I interviewed participants individually first and then brought them together in small focus groups of 2-5 to discuss the interviews and their subsequent thoughts on the topics of weight and Black womanhood.

While conducting only group interviews would have been less time consuming than the individual interviews, I felt strongly that gathering women together might shape respondents' talk to speak in discourses rather than outside of them. In fact, I found that even after the individual interviews, the group dynamics of the focus groups sometimes drew on the 'strength' discourse. However, because I knew of the women's individual stories, I was often able to ask questions and receive thoughtful answers about whether the discourse was really representative of their feelings.

Outside of my concern for the domination of the strength discourse over the women's voices, I also incorporated the focus groups into the research because I felt it would be unethical for me to simply interview the women and not provide a forum for them to bring their own questions and concerns. I thought that if in fact there was a connection between weight and the discourse of strength, then my research would clearly be an intervention of sorts that could result in women questioning long-held and widely-accepted social norms. For this reason, I planned the focus groups as an opportunity for the women to meet each other and to share as much as they would like in the company of other women who were interested in issues of body image and constructions of Black womanhood.

During the interviews and focus groups, as an interviewer and facilitator, I often spoke in the discourse of strength. For example, I asked the women how they felt about the ideas that "some people believe that Black women don't care about their bodies" or that "some people see Black women as stronger than other women." By placing the discourse of strength into the interview situations, I hoped to hear to what extent the women shared and/or resisted those assessments of their lives and behaviors. I found this to be a helpful way of getting the women to share their own voices in the speech of their responses. However, to monitor my own possible influence on the voices and discourses used by the interviewees and to examine any modulations in the women's (and my own) speech and, I also videotaped the interviews and focus groups.

### Concluding thoughts

While I am far from analyzing all my data, I believe it is my awareness and critique of the discourse of strength that opened up worlds of pain, weakness, and quiet desperation that my interviewees often revealed to me, not simply about their lives but about the lives of women around them. My commitments to feminist thought have led me to see two options in conducting this project – complicity with the discursive image of Black women as 'strong' and the path I chose: actively striving to offer a different sounding board for the women's stories that includes, but is not limited to, stories of strength. I believe that my choice pertains to the idea of researcher reflexivity, particularly when we are researching members of strongly stereotyped and marginalized groups. In our roles as researchers who rely much on language (both verbal and body), are we listening to hear about our interviewees' social context (as other social scientists do) or are we listening as psychologists, who can hear and analyze how individuals speak inside and outside of normal social discourses?

I believe that our contribution as qualitative researchers in psychology is to make evident and offer explanations for individual utterances in the context of the norms of society. It is in understanding the psycho-social relationship of the individual to society that I believe we gain insight into the conditions that promote social and personal change. Such knowledge is critical at a time when injustice riddles the lives of so many. It is my hope that in my own psychological qualitative study, I will be able to gain insight into the implications for Black women of thinking and behaving in ways that are both consistent with and a challenge to the social discourse regarding their physical and psychological strength.

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## Exploration

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### Chapter 3

### **The impact of Vipassana meditation on doing research<sup>1</sup>**

Leo Gürtler

#### Introduction

Dedicating oneself to a research style inspired by ethical considerations is one of the most important issues in research and research interactions. Although there are ethical guidelines and rules established by the professional associations (e.g. APA, 2002; DGPS, 2002), psychology has not yet fully explained the processes and reasons which are the crucial parts of an ethical attitude and of ethical motivated activity. This expands to the question of how to stay detached but in touch with a given situation. How can a researcher become equanimous regardless from any experiences he or she undergoes and encounters? How is it possible to preserve control over emotions, behavior and body and still be able to act spontaneously and positively? Most psychological approaches work on the level of intellectual understanding or belief but fail to reach logical and pragmatic solutions which can also be utilized practically in daily research. Inseparable from ethical considerations resides the human tendency to center on the own ego instead of questioning the views we, as researchers, hold. In research especially, the ability to detach oneself from one's own ego has great significance and opens up many useful possibilities. It is impossible to be open-minded towards research topics and subjects without the skill to take a step beside oneself and one's own assumptions, beliefs, traditions and prejudices. If detaching is impossible, demands of quantitative psychology like objectivity may gain even more ground than they already have and neglect the positive sides of being a subject which can explicitly give subjective evaluations. A research style guided by a positive ethical attitude which influences intentionality and the activities that result from it is always deeply bound to an ability and a lifestyle of staying detached in daily life. Achieving this requires personal growth and inner development. Profound insight into our own habitual patterns, reactions of the mind and the way we interact with others are signs of progress.

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1 English editors: Philipp Winkler, Gabi Matheson

In this article, a possible solution which includes theoretical explanations as well as real practical applications for these issues will be discussed. Starting within Western psychology and existing contemporary approaches to enhance self-reflectivity and awareness as pre-requisites of an ethical attitude, the scope will be broadened towards ancient wisdom of Buddhist psychology. There, Siddhata Gotama, well known as "the Buddha" (Pali language) which means "the awakened one" developed a meditation technique through direct insight into the mind and its constituent elements. With the help of this technique called Vipassana, it is taught that one can reach the highest state of ethical activity, wisdom, insight and equanimity. After a very short introduction to Buddhism, its contributions to research will be explained. This includes a passage on how to integrate Vipassana into daily life and research.

Ethical orientation and the resulting actions are recognized and perceived as a complex system of constructive achievements that humanity centered on through history. In this article, there is no discussion of specific constituents of these ethical considerations. As they are personal as well as collective reconstructions of beliefs, experiences and compulsory values, they depend on time, place and context. Nevertheless they can be communicated, discussed and reflected in collaboration with other people. Although the constructive element in ethics is important, the author believes that people are capable to interact, change and shape their values together. Therefore, the epistemological position called radical constructivism seems not to be the proper description of this process, because in such a case communication and understanding seems to be impossible. Instead, it is postulated that every individual has to find out personal beliefs for herself or himself. But because of the human faculty to verbalize and to understand each other, a moderate constructivist position seems to be more appropriate to discuss interactions in combination with ethical considerations in research. Regardless of the influence and independent from the authenticity and necessity of personal and collective beliefs, ethical rules are not handled as timeless rules or unchangeable guidelines. Thus, it is argued that personal and collective mental structures are responsible for the elaboration of ethical guidelines. Furthermore, the choice of appropriate actions lies in the hands of every individual researcher. It is argued that an understanding of how ethical considerations and views are construed, and how they can be developed towards positivity, is needed.

In this article the term "the" will be associated with the term "Buddha." Reason is, that in some traditions of Buddhism, e.g. Mahayana, there are endless Buddhas simultaneously while in other traditions, e.g. Theravada, fully enlightened beings that are called Buddhas appear only very seldom and never simultaneously (Schumann, 2001). As this paper refers to a Theravadian tradition, "the Buddha" always points to the historical person Siddhata Gotama who lived in India 2500 years ago and is known in our

modern times as the Buddha. It is also to remark that in Buddhism "Buddha" is no name but a trait, the highest state a being can reach (Schumann, 2001, 359).

Also, this Buddhist tradition emphasizes the role of the changing nature of mind and matter to gain deep insight and liberation from the sensual world. This characteristic is called "anicca" in Palí terms and will be used as "changing" in this article.

#### Self-reflexivity and self-reflection in Western psychology

The following section reviews self-reflexivity and its role in Western psychology. This will be followed by a short discussion of ethics in psychology. As ethics and its role are also discussed in this volume, only a few remarks will be made. A comparison of these issues in Buddhist and Western psychology will follow after a section on Buddhism.

#### Psychological approaches to grow in reflexivity during research

The author of this paper holds the opinion that regardless whether a person does research or not, the basic procedures of self-reflection are the same. The difference between reflectivity in everyday life and in "official" research life is only a very small thing. Kelly (1955) introduced his concept of "man the scientist." In his theory of personal constructs, scientists and non-scientists both search for understanding of both the world and their own constituent elements and relationships. Obviously, naive as well as professional scientists use different methods and do not follow the same methodological standards. But basically, the similarities between them are greater than the differences. For this reason, the following explications are viewed as valid independent of a given research background or not. One consequence which results from this position leads to the role of self-reflexivity within research processes. It is easy to say that reflection is always needed and of eminent importance for the process as a whole as well at every stage. There is not one stage in which awareness plays a more important role than in any other. Every stage is, in its own way, demanding for the researcher, and at every stage there are many choices to be made, which in turn are all interdependent.

To go one step further, it is postulated that self-reflexivity that is based on direct experience is important to develop a positive mental attitude towards others in doing research. According to Buddhism, every action that is not based on direct experience of the nature of the mind (see below) is not accompanied by wisdom. As a consequence, to practice an ethical life requires that a person overcomes mere belief in moral norms, conventions or intellectualization of ethical considerations. Instead, it is necessary to realize directly what are the roots and the consequences of

personal behavior. This leads to the establishment of awareness. It is such that research will be improved with insight into personal mental habits that influence the whole process of doing research until the very end.

Developing insight into research processes and their human participants - research subjects and researchers - brings forth the question of changing and heightening personal consciousness. The particular terms "changing" and "awareness / consciousness" are chosen because Buddhism puts so much emphasis on changing as a topic of insight into the ultimate nature of the mind. Changing is seen as one basic characteristic of mind as well as matter. The human qualities one has to develop according to the Buddha (Sīla, Samadhi and Panna - see explanations below) strongly depend on each other. An ethical orientation which results in real activity only becomes possible through the growth of concentration and insight. Here, it is stated that insight can be reached through understanding of the changing nature of mind and matter (V.R.I., 1993; Kornfield, 1993). Psychology's contribution to a happier and more conscious life with a better attitude towards others should always consist of methods to try and learn to come to terms with life as a changing phenomenon. According to Buddhism there are two further entry points besides the changing nature of life to develop insight. The first one is called anatta which can be translated as "selflessness." This means there is no self, no I, no ego or no soul to be found within humans which remains after death. The second one is called dukkha which means misery. This points to the assumption that the sensual world is not really satisfying and every sensual experience (positive, neutral, negative) is no source of real happiness, because every sensual experience is not permanent. Although anatta and dukkha are as important as anicca, it is much easier for a beginner to start with the observation of bodily sensations that change instead of trying to experience dukkha or anatta. Thus, Vipassana meditation as taught by Mr. S.N. Goenka ([www.vri.dhamma.org](http://www.vri.dhamma.org)) works with equanimity towards the changing nature of bodily experiences.

Change becomes evident in every situation. In research, every interaction and every stage is different and requires different handling. But not only the situations differ, but inside a person (e.g. bio-chemical reactions, blood flows, digestion, etc.) everything is altered and modified as well. Gaining profound insight into the continuous changing nature of mind and matter requires intensified awareness and self-reflectivity about ourselves as persons and as a living part of our contexts and social milieus.

In psychoanalysis, all therapists have to undergo self-psychoanalysis as a necessary precondition before she or he is allowed to work as a therapist. The underlying reason for this demand is that a therapist should only work with psychic phenomena that she or he already knows for herself or himself. This demand is not limited to psychoanalysis (Stone & Stone, 2000, 185ff., Wittemann, 2000). In psychotherapy many methods and ways to develop self-reflectivity were discovered. Working areas and

targets of psychological interventions and learning facilities include most aspects that can be used to describe a person, like emotions, cognitive processes, personal beliefs, bodily feelings, and psycho-physiological correlations to psychic experiences. Ellis (1962/77), for example, worked with personal beliefs. Behavioral therapy and self-management therapy (Kanfer, 2000) work with habits and structures of contingency; Reich (1997) focused on bodily postures as a way of expressing habitual psychic states - to name only a few solutions to self-reflection and the resulting enhanced awareness. Humanistic therapies like Gestalt therapy additionally point to "the here and now" as an important factor of approaching reality and insight into habitual ways of living. Interestingly, Perls, founder of Gestalt therapy, studied ZEN Buddhism for some time (Burmester, 2002). He incorporated many ideas (e.g. the concept of awareness) from his experiences with meditation into his own therapeutic work.

The characteristics of changing can be regarded as one influential aspect: Either a situation improves or it develops into the opposite direction, towards decay and regression. Something changes and does not remain as it was before. To recognize this characteristic means to make it accessible for research. All of the aforementioned theoretical and practical orientations implement many solutions. These can be descriptions, records and categorizations of what happens and what changes during relevant events and episodes. The frequency of these events and their sequence are useful as well. Other solutions put the emphasis on feelings, world views and the subjective understanding of changed habits or the resolution of dysfunctional beliefs. In system theory, it is postulated that every action in a system leads to some change which cannot be exactly determined in advance. Some uncertainty about the effects of, for example, an intervention remains. This means that total control over desired events is impossible and in fact undesirable. Changing plays an important role and research is, in fact, research on changing, and on how it happens and can be influenced in a positive way.

Discussed from a Buddhist perspective, the second question of heightening the researcher's consciousness is strongly related to the attribute of changing, already discussed above. According to the teaching of the Buddha, right understanding of the changing nature of mind and matter results in awareness and wisdom. But how does Western psychology handle consciousness? James (1890) spoke of a stream of thoughts and a consciousness of the self which takes place continuously. Although he avoided the term "a single consciousness," James emphasized his belief in a soul, which is contrary to the Buddhist concept of anatta. In contemporary times, plans to isolate areas in the neocortex and other areas of the human brain were put into action, with the goal to find out where consciousness is located. Besides many interesting and very useful results that followed this neurological research, consciousness could not be

restricted and correlated to any isolated area. Freud (1965) stated that "wo Es war, soll Ich werden" ("where there was it, there shall become I," translated by the author), in order to illustrate and make understandable the importance of a consciousness and awareness. Only in a state of awareness, a person is capable of controlling and balancing external and internal needs and conditions in life. "It" represents the whole area of unconsciousness which influences a person twenty four hours a day. In the sixties of the twentieth century, psychedelic drugs were used to gain access to the unconscious areas of the mind, to experience concepts like god, transcendent light or to make unusual psychic experiences with, e.g., sexuality. Great parts of the so called "Flower Power Generation" believed in heightened awareness through usage of those drugs and manipulated altered states of consciousness. This led to much misuse and abuse of these drugs, and, after frequent usage, psychological problems like psychotic experiences or breakdowns followed for many users. On the other site, according to Grof (1983) and Widmer (1989), therapeutic use of psychedelic drugs under proper indication and proper application is safe. They state that these drugs act like catalysts for intra-personal dynamic patterns. Grof (1983, and 1993) calls these patterns COEX that surface from unconsciousness. There, they can be resolved, which leads to, besides other effects like resolving neurotic behavior and enhanced well-being, heightened awareness and self-reflection in his patients. After psychedelic drugs were banned by the FDA, Grof and Grof (1994) replaced drugs as catalysts with a breathing exercise called "holotropic breathing", loaned from yogi breathing exercises, which, as they claim, lead to equivalent effects. Meditation, counseling, therapy, or supervision are other, more unspectacular methods. Supervision is a means to discover what really happens in social interactions. There, external feedback is given and interactions are discussed and improved to gain more social competence. Writing diaries is also a technique which supports reflection about past events that reach back even for years. With the help of diaries, developments over long time spans can be illustrated and reproduced.

To conclude this short excursion into psychological solutions for developing reflexivity, Western psychology emphasizes the need to understand what is going on. Topics reach from neurological findings inside a person to interpretation of external situations and social interactions. Different methods are used according to the desired goal(s). These principles and their power to develop awareness and action instead of reaction will be compared to Buddhist meditation.

#### The role of ethical principles in psychology

Ethical principles in psychology and codes of conduct (APA, 2002, DGPS, 2002) are closely linked with psychological methods of research in usage. Their association is such that what can help also can destroy (see e.g. the

discussion on psychedelic drugs above). Meditation like Vipassana or concentration methods to reach samadhi states are techniques which have great benefits if used under proper conditions. On the other hand, negative side effects can occur if practiced without guidance or without properly following the instructions given. These negative consequences can even exceed those of drug abuse.

Thus, considerations on action and its consequences are not only a natural but an absolutely necessary restriction for psychological methods. Ethics in this sense limits, for example, the possibilities to compare different methods in psychotherapy under the condition that one part of the population would be without any treatment. Even if, for methodological reasons, the denial of treatment would be necessary, ethically, this cannot be justified. Other examples are often structured like this: Zimbardo (1971/1972, 1973) and Haney & Zimbardo (1976), Milgram (1963, 1974) have shown unintended effects of authority and intergroup relationships on people's behavior and obedience in uncertain, authority driven situations. In the case of Kitty Genovese (Latané & Darley, 1970) a woman was murdered brutally over a time of thirty minutes in public without intervention of anybody. It showed dramatically that even if there are bystanders present at a crime scene, often people do not react, do not help and show avoidance of being involved in the situation. Although many people in the neighborhood of Kitty Genovese hardly could overheard her screaming, nobody even called the police. This incident triggered research especially in social psychology on altruism and on people's willingness to help in critical social situations. Here, diffusion of responsibility often occurs that mostly prevents to help. To summarize, people often do not act autonomously and based on personal emancipation.

The moral principles of right and wrong have great influence on psychological research and practice. Research implicitly tries to avoid moral evaluations in order to stay objective in a scientific sense as can be seen in demands that result out of classical test theoretical assumptions. This position cannot be upheld when it comes to discussions other than for methodological reasoning, that means if explicit contents are topics in question. It seems to be an illusion to do research without actively being involved in the research process. Therefore, e.g. the research program of subjective theories includes the researcher as an explicit part of the process and demands for self-reflection and self-applicability through all process stages (Groeben, 1986b; Groeben et al., 1988). Negative examples of the abuse of science are well known before and during the second world war in Germany through Nazi scientists. However, psychology has to make a point on some important issues and special cases of its own profession. In clinical psychotherapy (e.g. working with criminals) it is sometimes more obvious to differentiate between acceptance of a person (even if it is a murderer) through the therapist and the behavior, thoughts and ideas these

people express. These ideas can be labeled as crazy or pathological, but they are socially not acceptable. However, there are even techniques to confront such behavior (Farrelly, 1988).

It can be said that ethical rules play a very predominant role in psychology. Since this is obvious, the question of how to develop an ethical world view arises. Next to it emerges the question of how to validate those methods that claim to lead to a positive mental attitude.

The following framework can guide such a process of validation: What methods and what techniques can be found in psychology, and are there any standards for comparing these different methods on a common basis? This paper is not meant to do a detailed analysis on methodology, but to provide some basic understanding of the benefits the use of the methods in question should bring. In every case, ethical thinking and the adherence to ideas will result in some kind of behavior. Action theory (Groeben 1986b) seems to be a good starting point for describing ethical action in psychological research. The following action elements can be identified to describe the process of action according to the RST model ("research program of subjective theories", Groeben et al., 1988, Scheele et. al. 1992, Scheele & Groeben, 1988):

- developing motivation to do something
- motivation transforms into volition and subjective intentions
- subjective intentions that lead to observable behavior include
- planning activity in detail and starting it
- maintaining activity
- reconsidering goals with the possibility of changing of goals and reconsidering the whole process
- ending activity and/ or repeating it, i.e. starting new activity
- meta-cognitive skills to reflect the whole process at every stage
- differentiation between action, doing, behavior depending on a person's ability to discuss and reason observable behavior, motivation and subjective intentions

What is of great influence in the RST model is people's ability to know their own subjective intentions and the way these intentions lead to observable behavior. There are three levels of activity: action, doing and behavior (Groeben, 1986b). With their help different levels of understanding and self-reflection can be identified that determine personal behavior. On the one hand the full consciousness of internal and external conditions and how they play together describes the field of action. On the other hand, behavior is controlled by external determinants that can be conceptualized in mere behavioristic terms of reaction and conditioning. It is stated here that every behavior in research has to be done with awareness of intentionality, volition, motivation, situational conditions, relationships, and further associated elements of a given situation. This



secures that research can be categorized as action according to the RST model. To decide and make choices in such a sensible area as ethics requires, first and foremost, knowledge about oneself as a researcher, as a person with feelings, emotions, thoughts and evaluations within a cultural context are necessary. These requirements have to be developed by every researcher alone. The development of this faculty with the help of Vipassana meditation will be topic of discussion in the following paragraph.

#### Introduction to Buddhism

From a constructivist point of view, the whole teaching of Buddhism has to be handled as a construct as well. This was reflected even many hundred years ago through the Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna (Schumann, 2001) who did logical analysis and self-applicability of the Buddhist teaching in reference to the original Palí texts. The teaching of the Buddha is accessible by means of practice, as will be shown, in everyday life. Since this is possible for everyone (except people with heavy mental disturbances), the constructive element loses its impact and instead, application comes into foreground. The value of Vipassana as a meditation technique has to be proven for its logical reasoning and underlying theory as well as its practicability as a measure to proof scientific characteristics of Vipassana. Founded and originated in India 2500 years ago, it is obvious that, in Vipassana, terminology is used that cannot be translated into modern languages sometimes, especially into psychological terms. Asia and Europe/ USA are also known to emphasize different values in life. It can be said that in Asia, more knowledge about dreams, extraordinary psychic powers as well as altered states of consciousness is more common and it is more researched than in the Western world. On the other hand, the Western world developed more knowledge in the natural sciences, such as physics, chemistry, or medicine or economics. However, the practice of meditation and the ways to benefit from it have survived and at least some basic principles remained the same for the last 2500 years. This will be the focus of our discussion. It makes it possible to adapt Vipassana for our contemporary Western culture by transforming it into appropriate language terms and validate these terms through means of self-practice.

In this article, all considerations and discussions about Vipassana refer to a specific Buddhist tradition. Since there are many traditions and schools to be found, like Theravada, Mahayana, Ch'an, ZEN or Tibetan Buddhism (Schuhmann, 2001), it is necessary to clarify the underlying structure. Here, the author refers to a Theravadian tradition. As there are different schools within Theravada as well (Kornfield, 1993), the author applies to the world wide Vipassana organization as taught by S. N. Goenka in the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin (1999-1). Its theoretical

background and all research is based on the Tipitaka, the three baskets of knowledge of early Buddhism (Schuhmann, 2001). The Vipassana Research Institute works with its own translation from the original Pali language. This tradition claims that Vipassana does not depend on any belief, dogma, or any other religious imagination. It is solely a technique of choice less observation of mind and matter. Vipassana does not try to convert someone from one religious belief to another one, because it sees itself as non-religious and non-sectarian. Vipassana works only with normal breathing and normal bodily sensations. This fact makes it compatible to being tried by anyone, regardless of ethnical background, sex, skin color or religious beliefs. Nevertheless, this tradition also has its rules, regulations and teachings that are laid down and originated from Tipitaka. Tipitaka, the three baskets where for the first time Buddhist wisdom was written down on palm leaves is divided into three sections. These are, after U Ko Lay (1995):

*Vinaya Pitaka:* The rules of discipline for all those who are admitted into the order of the Buddha as nuns (bhikkunis) and monks (bhikkus). They regulate verbal and physical actions, transgressions of discipline and their handling in accordance to the nature of violation and transgression.

*Suttanta Pitaka:* These are the sermons and discourses the Buddha and some of his chief disciples gave. The Buddha taught depending on the temperament and personality of his audience. Many of this discourses deal with issues of life, progress, ethical and moral development and life style. All discourses are intended to clarify teaching and practice of meditation and how to live a happy and ethical life. The Suttanta Pitaka is divided into five separate subsections (U Ko Lay, 1995).

*Abidhamma Pitaka:* The Buddha taught according to intellectual capacity and level of meditation achieved by his disciples. Many discourses are structured to suit beginners and laymen. Abidhamma represents the higher teaching which can be only understood if someone reaches very high stages in meditation. Abidhamma is a collection of doctrines that analyze all mental and material phenomena in their ultimate reality. "All relative concepts such as man, mountain, etc., are reduced to their ultimate elements which are then precisely defined, classified and systematically arranged" (U Ko Lay, 1995, 189).

#### The meditation technique of Vipassana

The historical Buddha Siddhata Gotama (Schuhmann, 1999 about the Buddha as a historical person, his life and his life circumstances) rediscovered a meditation technique called *Vipassana* which means "to see things as they are." With this technique of meditation it is taught that a person can reach a state of ultimate peace and full awareness of all aspects of mental and physical life. Originally, it was taught only for highest spiritual achievement - namely spiritual enlightenment to transcend the

field of mind and matter and enter the field of Nibbana, the peace within. In the sixties of the twentieth century, Vipassana spread and is today taught around the world also to laymen and laywoman.

At first, it is necessary to take a course of ten days to learn that technique. Afterwards, two hours a day of meditation are minimum practice to maintain the meditation practice. It is taught that this can alter deep mental habits, negativity and imbalance of the mind. The whole teaching is to develop inner happiness. It can be summarized as the "noble eightfold path." It is based on the experience of the "four noble truths" that are structured like the treatment for a disease with the following elements of diagnosis, explanation, intervention and practice of the way out of misery (Goenka, 1987, 23ff.). The truths are (1) *the truth of suffering*: There is a disease: misery (see Schumann, 1999, 153 for a discussion about the meaning of the term "misery"); (2) *the cause of suffering*: The cause of the disease is ignorance and attachment; (3) *the truth of the eradication of suffering*: There is a way out of the disease; and (4) *the truth of the way to eradicate suffering*: The path is the "noble eightfold path."

The "noble eightfold path" is divided into three divisions (Goenka, 1987, 6ff.) which will be presented in the following (Scholz, 1992, 231, translated by the author from the German original):

1. The right knowledge, the right understanding of reality as it is. 2. The right thoughts, the right intentions for activity. 3. The right speech. 4. The right action. 5. The right living. 6. The right effort, the right exercise. 7. The right awareness (of the reality of the present moment). 8. The right concentration. The sections 1-2, 3-5 and 6-8 can be summarized as Panna, Sīla and Samadhi. These are after U Ko Lay (1955, 26): "Sīla - moral purity through right conduct. Samadhi - purity of the mind through concentration. Panna - purity through insight through Vipassana meditation."

The three divisions depend on each other. They are only useful if practiced together, but then they support each other in their development and perfection. Someone who walks on the path of purification, that means a person who practices Sīla, Samadhi and Panna in the way the Buddha taught, has to practice all elements and should not neglect one part. Before the middle of the twentieth century, real practice instead of mere theoretical assumptions about Vipassana was almost totally lost in Asia and the world (Goenka, during a ten day course). If it was taught, then principally only to monks and nuns. This changed in the twentieth century.

#### Explanations on Sīla, Samadhi, Panna

The following section will discuss the practice of Sīla, Samadhi and Panna in more detail. At first, from a psychologist point of view, the connection to western psychology seems to be not obvious. But these teaching

guidelines offer a framework to develop inner wisdom, a positive ethical attitude and mental purity. These goals can also be found in many parts of psychology like psychotherapy or humanistic psychology. Vipassana meditation is a kind of in-depth self-psychotherapy. As a consequence of serious practice a person develops direct insight into the nature of the mind. This leads towards the capability to practice ethical activity that is based solely on inner personal wisdom and which is totally independent from external sources. Vipassana claims to provide a technique which can be tried by everyone; and that technique develops the necessary faculties to live a life of happiness. Thus, a detailed description of Vipassana is recommended.

It is taught in Buddhism that the practice of Vipassana generates all necessary qualities (Pali: Paramitas) that are needed to free oneself from the sensual world and to enter Nibbana. A person who "entered the stream" that means a person who experienced Nibbana for one time can not do any unethical action again. He or she is unable to hurt anybody else again. The goal of Buddhist meditation is therefor to live a life that does not hurt anybody else. The resulting awareness and wisdom that are fruits of meditation practice and living an ethical life is solely based on personal experience of the reality within oneself.

### *Sila*

According to the Buddha "mind matters most". Morality is expressed as a strong determination to live a life in which one does not kill, steal, lie, has no sexual misconduct and does not take any kind of drugs or intoxicants. Only through this life style, a person's mind can calm down to feel the subtle realities that are always there - twenty-four hours a day. Morality in this sense is an essential condition of mindful concentration. It is not based on traditional beliefs or assumptions. Everybody can examine his or her own mind, how it behaves and how it reacts and how a moral life alters concentration and meditation. This demand for morality in itself is for pragmatic reasons and not out of religious beliefs of possible results like rewards or punishment that may be - or not - the outcome, as taught by contemporary or past religions. A moral life style results from insight into the consequences of one's own actions and reactions. Only the understanding of cause and effect in life makes it possible to avoid blind reactivity. Comparing contents of Sila with Western concepts of morality like the Ten Commandments, the categoric imperative of Kant or ideals of humanism, one finds that they are almost identical in their contents. But what makes them different is the fact that in Vipassana an ethical life style can be developed systematically right from the beginning in practice. And, as one experiences insight into personal mental habits, an ethical life style develops simultaneously with purification of the mind. But the responsibility for that development lies only in the person. There are no external powers or forces that are responsible for personal behavior.

*Samadhi*

Samadhi means mastery of the mind. It is the ability to concentrate one's mind continuously on one little spot without doing anything. The object of concentration is normal breath. Concentration develops through the observation of the natural flow of respiration. But the point of this exercise is not to control the breath, which would be totally against this technique the Buddha labeled as "Anapana sati." It is awareness of the breath coming in and going out. The "hot spot" of observation is located at the entrance of the nostrils where the breath comes in and goes out. One who practices Anapana observes the breath coming in and going out without interfering. Concentration develops again after continuous practice only with the base of Sīla. In a ten day course one third - that means three days - is reserved for practice of Anapana meditation. To make proper preparations for a first attempt to experience inner wisdom and insight, the object of concentration must not be an object of craving or aversion. Neither may it be an object like an image or something connected with an organized religion and its symbols. It is also not allowed to distract the mind from observing natural respiration like counting "breath - in, breath - out." The historical Buddha gave accent on the need for an universal object of concentration: natural, unmanipulated breath. As everyone needs to breathe for all their life, observation of breath fits this necessity. The Buddha emphasized the importance of freedom from craving and aversion as the only path to live a happy, ethical and detached life. After some days of continuous practice during a ten day course, one can experience normal bodily sensations like heat, tickling, pulsation, vibration, pain etc. on this small part of the body. At this point, a so called "entrance concentration" is reached and a person is able to start practicing Vipassana.

*Panna*

The Pali term "Panna" means in its original sense "knowing" or "wisdom," specifically the right knowing/ wisdom. This means that with Panna, re-/cognizing of the world not only takes place but is accompanied by wisdom and understanding of the nature of what is re-/cognized and who recognizes. Panna is the actual practice of Vipassana. It does the work of purifying the mind. Inner wisdom, through observing reality as it is, is built up. This leads to purification of the mind from its past and present defilements. For this, the body will be scanned equanimously from top to bottom and bottom to top for normal ordinary bodily sensations (Pali language: Vedana) like heat, pain, pulsing, vibrating and so on. The Pali term Vedana has two meanings: first, a physical feeling and second, one segment of the four mental aggregates that form the illusion of a personal ego or I (Scholz, 1992, p. 283 for clarification on this issue). It is to remark that this a totally different understanding than the psychoanalytic I or ego. For clarification of the usage of Vedana, Goenkaji uses both

terms together as "feeling the sensations" (Scholz, 1992). These sensations are observed objectively without craving for pleasant or subtle sensations and without aversion against unpleasant ones. Changing is the essential keyword of this observation process, because every sensation comes and every sensation ceases away again after some time. An observer scans her or his whole body without looking for anything extraordinary or special. The task is to accept reality inside the framework of the body, which manifests itself as bodily sensations. It is an active trial to renounce evaluation of all sensual experiences and it is an observation of continuous change within oneself.

The object of observation are bodily sensations. The Buddha taught that everything that comes up in the mind, like an intention, an image or a thought, manifests itself as a bodily sensation. According to Goenka (1988), the Buddha "found that anything arising in the mind, starts flowing with the feeling of sensation in the body" - "vedana samosarana sabbe dhamma" (Anguttara Nikaya, tenth book in V.R.I., 1993, 70). Every sensation can be described with its characteristic of changing. Bodily sensations are the missing link that connects body and mind (Hart 1987, 147ff.) together. This is the real contribution the Buddha gave to the world: mind is linked to body through bodily sensations. These sensations are tools to eradicate mental defilements through observing them objectively (Goenka, at an evening talk during a Satipatthana course).

The essence of the practice of Vipassana is observation of the changing nature all of natural bodily sensations. This leads as laid down in its essence in the "Mahasatipatthana Suttam" (V.R.I. 1993), to inner wisdom and purification of the mind. This is possible because of the natural law called "Dhamma." If one observes objectively all sensations on the body (inside and outside), old habit patterns and reactions (Pali: Sankhara) of the mind that are connected with these sensations come to the surface of the mind. If one stays equanimous and does not react to them with craving or aversion, those mental reactions pass away, because they are not permanent. If equanimity is maintained, more and more mental defilements come up to the surface and pass away. What passes away is completely out of the mind of the practitioner and he or she is free from that habits. The more sankharas dissolve the more one becomes happy, because this happiness is not rooted in transient sensual experiences. As a consequence a person experiences more and more positive thoughts; and actions are more and more in line with ethical standards as stated above. But these actions are not rooted in belief in moral norms. Furthermore, they develop because of a purified mind.

To make a short summary, two factors accompany the whole process of meditation and of purifying the mind: awareness of breath and equanimity towards all bodily sensations. Both together lead to a natural state of ethical activity.

### Existing research on Vipassana in the social sciences

Research on the effectivity of Vipassana in the social sciences is not very widespread. To make a summary, existing research is not grounded on a very large data basis. But some studies can be found which focus mostly on gaining personal autonomy and freedom from drug dependency (Scholz, 1992; Studer, 1998, <http://www.startagain.ch>), against corruption in public offices (U Ba Khin, 1999-2, 28) or social rehabilitation in prisons (V.R.I., 1994, documentary movie "doing time doing Vipassana," 1997, and "changing from inside," 1998). Further approaches were done in India in schools with children (V.R.I. 1994, 23ff.). Other studies with positive results are listed in V.R.I. (1994, 1998). Fleishman (1990) and Vogd (1998) discuss the role of Vipassana meditation in healing professions. Interestingly, as learning a positive ethical life style is an important part of a ten day seminar of Vipassana meditation, all results show - sometimes even dramatically - positive changes in the attitude and the social behavior of practitioners. Vogd (1996) compares assumptions of Theravada Buddhism with those of radical Constructivism.

### Benefits of the practice of Vipassana for doing research and for the research process

Most importantly, the main goal of Vipassana is to stop people from reacting blindly to bodily sensations and from multiplying unhealthy mental habits. As a consequence of stopping these patterns, a person is freed from ignorant behavior. Vipassana is a means to develop awareness of reality and to understand the relationship of external objects and internal, unconscious reactions towards these external objects on the level of bodily sensations. According to the Buddha, the so called unconscious mind is always - twenty-four hours a day - aware of all sensations on the body and reacts to them with craving or aversion. Unconsciousness, in this sense, is an incorrect term, because the so called unconsciousness is in fact conscious, but the part of the mind which can reflect, think, act, etc. is unaware of the part that reacts even in deep sleep. The practice of Vipassana stops this chain of reactivity, because equanimous observation is the opposite of craving for pleasant sensations or aversion against unpleasant bodily sensations. The more a person changes his or her mental habits, the more awareness is attained which results in a reduction of the so called unconsciousness. The human mind works in such a way that, through practice of meditation, it becomes less and less polluted and more and more aware. This is in contrast to a behavioristic position which would state that people react to outside objects. This is also not identical with a constructivist position, because there the important role of Vedana is unknown. In Buddhist theory people

always and only react to inner sensations which, of course, mirror outside objects. To illustrate this issue, an example will be presented: From a Buddhist perspective, addiction to drugs or alcohol is not addiction to external substances like alcohol, heroin, or cocaine, but to the sensations these chemicals stimulate inside the body. Although these sensations are, of course, stimulated by outside objects, what really causes someone to become addicted to them lies in the personal reaction to them and not in the mere substance itself. That means a person is addicted to some special type of bodily sensations and not (!) to the outside stimuli. This shifts the responsibility for every case of addiction to the consumer herself or himself. Addiction, in this sense, is addiction to one's own sensations with the resulting consequences of reactions like reduced responsibilities in the community, abnormal behavior, breaking the law, and so on. Substances cannot determine mental reactions, so addiction becomes a mere mental problem.

With this technique, the role of the researcher is such that the way he or she does research is either a process of subjective reactivity, or it is not. External sensual stimuli lead to internal reactivity if the researcher is not aware of them. Internal reactions lead to verbal or nonverbal expressions and behavior. If we assume that, because there are not many enlightened persons alive, most people do not have enough awareness and equanimity most of the day, most research worldwide seems to be, even on high levels of sophistication, a process of reactivity. It is important to differentiate between high levels achieved in a particular profession (e.g. chemistry, psychology, literature, arts) and if that person also developed awareness of the nature of her or his own mind. Although on the surface, doing research seems to be guided by reflection, logic and reasoning, a lack of awareness and insight remains deep inside the mind. Thus, e.g. decision making originates not from direct insight but only from intellectualization or belief, because the depth of the mind reacts blindly and the person is unaware of that chain of blind reactions. In this sense a researcher is not really aware of how external conditions (e.g. a research situation) have influence on subjective reasoning (e.g. choosing questions in an interview), interests (e.g. why to choose that assumption and not another one), social interaction (e.g. why to interact positively with these people, but in negative ways with others), data collection, data analysis and interpretation of data, and so on.

Especially interactions are important, because interactions provide an opportunity to observe them objectively out of a subjective perspective. However, researchers will not lose sympathy and empathy for research topics and research subjects through this kind of equanimous observation. Additionally, a researcher does not become passive in his or her activities. Instead, together with an increase in awareness and equanimity as the key yardstick of development in Vipassana, a researcher achieves freedom from



contextual elements and comes nearer to real reflection during research actions.

This process can be compared with cited action model of Groeben (1986b). In the Research Program of Subjective Theories and its postulated "epistemological subject" (Groeben & Scheele, 1977), Groeben differentiates between reaction, which can be researched through behavioristic methodology, and action, which cannot be understood without including the subject and his or her own opinions and world assumptions. Action is a very high state and most people are not capable to maintain it for very long periods of time regardless to mention the time of sleeping. Between action and reaction lies "doing." Doing represents the area of being able to reflect on subjective intentions; but unknowingly, those intentions do not really lead or control behavior. Although a person can reflect, causes of observable behavior are not really identical with subjective reasons expressed.

However, a way to develop "action" is missing in most approaches like the approach of Groeben, which describes the human potential for action without showing how to develop this potential in detail. From the perspective of the author, Vipassana can fill this gap, because it only works with genuine experiences and it can explain different stages of action, doing and behavior. It is also holistic, because it works with body and mind, mediated through the level of sensations.

Benefits for researchers start with awareness of how a (research) situation has impact on the mind of the researcher. If she or he is aware and equanimous of that process, it is in every way possible for him/ her to stop sublime reactions to research subjects, past experiences, or elements of the situation. Instead, action which is free from aversion and craving will follow. Awareness cuts the chains of reactivity and positive action will automatically result. All energies can now be concentrated on the process of doing research. Less and less energy is wasted and the capacity to work without exhaustion is enhanced. Deficiencies like intra-personal problems, disturbing emotions and lack of motivation are decreased, because the awareness is established and one understands that all those phenomena are only temporary. There is no reason to react to them with craving or aversion, because all is in a flux, all is in a flow. The ability to work for longer periods of time without becoming exhausted increases, because in the state of equanimity the mind actually rests and will not get tired. Problems that arise in communication with research subjects or with other researchers can be handled carefully and transformed in constructive ways. But most importantly, one experiences and interprets the sensual experiences in realistic ways. The distortion every sensual experience undergoes, is minimized. Personal beliefs and assumptions have less influence on how to interact with other people or how to interpret data. Again, because a researcher experiences the changing nature of his bodily sensations in face of other people, he or she can differentiate more clearly

how an interaction leads to the experience of different sensations. But instead of reacting to them and in the following showing behavior which results out of reactivity, a researcher remains equanimous towards the sensations. Thus, he or she can very freely use logic, reasoning, empathy or what ever is necessary to handle the situation. But this does not mean that such a researcher is only nice, sweet and pretty. It does only mean that every action results out of a situation in which the mind is balanced and equanimous. There are certainly situations in which it is necessary to be loud, to show clear guidelines or even to take harsh action. But what differentiates such actions from real negative ones is that they are accompanied by kindness towards other people and actions are independent from the type of sensations one experiences. Actions in this sense are still motivated by a positive ethical attitude. Only the surface of an action seems to be negative, the underlying vibration is full of goodwill and love for others. These are of course seldom cases. But it should show that even in doing research there are necessities in accordance to the demands of a situation. Thus, interpersonal communication, empathy, and caring are enhanced. This benefits automatically the validity of the results of research. This new way of dealing with reality also offers an opportunity to diminish (unconscious) manipulation or misinterpretation of data that sometimes occur in research.

To summarize, the effect of Vipassana meditation on doing research is the freedom to choose action without being driven by negative (which leads to aversion) or positive (which leads to craving) sensations as a result of external objects. As a result, every action in research is accompanied by a positive mental state.

#### Integration of Vipassana meditation and Western psychological models

As it could be seen, Vipassana as well as Western psychology greatly emphasize the importance of an ethical orientation in daily (research) life. Because of that, there are guidelines how to behave in research (APA, 2002; DGPS, 2002). Vipassana provides a holistic framework as well as concrete practice for every situation in life: awareness of breath and equanimity towards bodily sensations. That is all which sounds very easy in theory, but is very hard to put into practice. The noble eightfold path and the resulting practice of *Síla*, *Samadhi*, and *Panna* explain this framework in detail. Actual meditation practice realizes all theoretical assumptions which can lead to personal validation of concepts in question. As the teaching of the Buddha demands that through real practice some, even if it is only a little, change towards a happier life must take place (Goenka during an evening discourse at a ten day course), practice validates theory. This means that Vipassana is accessible through scientific

research as it covers all fields of scientific ability like explanation, prognosis, and technology (in form of concentration, meditation and living a moral life).

Western psychology consists of different approaches to gain reflexivity and knowledge about oneself. The field seems to be more heterogenous than the Theravadian tradition of Vipassana that we focused on in this article. Although there are many explanations coming from therapy, educational psychology etc., psychology lacks of a structured and integrated system for developing an ethical life style. To bring to mind the demand of Groeben and Scheele for self-applicability in research (1988, 1986b): The same rules that apply for researchers must also apply for research subjects. If and only if this can be proven wrong, lower concepts of action like doing or behavior can (or even must) be used to describe human behavior in social and non-social situations. This is in line with humanism: it starts with the full human potential and diminishes its demands only if targets of research obviously are not able to fulfill those demands.

The Buddhist theory of Vipassana claims that Vipassana can be practiced in everyday life. Of course, there are other techniques of meditation which are not compatible with Vipassana (these issues will not be discussed here) and Vipassana is not recommended if one undertakes deep psychotherapy. As this should not always be the case for researchers, there seems to be no reason not to try and practice Vipassana and to do research at the same time. As success in Vipassana (enhanced equanimity, enhanced awareness) depends on continuous practice and application, trials of Vipassana have to be applied not only during the time of research but instead, the whole day long. According to Buddhist teaching, serious meditation covers a whole life time and even more, if the Buddhist teaching is discussed in terms of reincarnation. This will also not be discussed here, because it is another topic).

The RST model of action deals with self-reflectivity, self-application and different levels of consciousness. Concerning these issues, many parallels to Vipassana can be found. These are, e.g., the emphasis on action, the capability to explain and be aware of action or the assumption that reaction is a state of unawareness and (at least temporary) impossibility to reflect behavior. Differences between Vipassana meditation and RST point mainly to the lack of bodily sensations to mere observation in the RST model. Other differences are existent, too, but would take this article too far away from the topic of ethics.

The goal of this article was to show that the Buddhist meditation technique of Vipassana is applicable in daily (research) life. Benefits from meditation are attainable for everyone. Researchers bear additional responsibilities that exceed those of their research subjects. They also need to avoid exhaustion and burn-out, they have to make clear choices and they must be able to handle social interaction with participants of research

carefully, and so on. Research should be able to gain many benefits through this meditation practice. Vipassana is exclusive in its applicability as a meditation technique. Everyone is warned not to mix different techniques of meditation (Goenka, during a ten day evening discourse). However, it is fully compatible with science and its methodology as could be seen in drug rehabilitation program called *START AGAIN* (Scholz, 1992; Studer, 1998).

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**Participants' expectations in research relationships<sup>1</sup>**

Mechthild Kiegelmann

When researchers plan and design a study, much thought is given to the purpose of their project in general, and the research questions specifically (Maxwell, 1996). Study participants, however, decide to enter research relationships without such planning. This paper looks at the variety of expectations from both participants and researchers about the research process and why it is a worthwhile endeavor. In this article, I briefly introduce a study of mine that illustrates expectations of research participants. Then I discuss three important areas of research relationships where unanticipated expectations could harm participants or damage the research. I also suggest ways to avoid these pitfalls. In order to avoid disappointments on both sides it is useful to consider a range of potential reasons for entering research relationships.

In a recent study I conducted with adolescents in Germany about their views on Nazi-history, I collected some data relevant to the participants' expectation towards the study. The whole data set is a body of rich psychological information about these young people's thoughts and feelings towards history, their teachers, and especially towards each other and their experiences with discrimination because of xenophobia (Kiegelmann, 2000). I conducted eleven qualitative interviews. As a first step I asked the interviewees "Why did you agree to the interview?" In describing the decision to participate, information about the expectations are often provided. I am aware that not all expectations and disappointments might be addressed directly within an interview and thus I am not fully able to understand all the expectations involved in this study. For example, after the tape recorder was turned off, one of the participants told me that getting time off from work was an incentive for participation. Within this limited scope, the answers to this question help to show a range of possible expectations for entering a research relationship and this angle will be discussed in this article. The interviews were voluntarily, lasted for approximately 20 to 30 minutes during the regular work hours of the apprentices. The research relation ship remained limited to a one time contact and remained distant. Because the research topic was how these young people relate to a visit in a memorial site that commemorates a concentration camp, the content of what was discussed was a highly emotional topic.

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<sup>1</sup> Edited by Dorian Woods.

Using a strategy of categorizing the content of the statements about expectations, the following range of categories emerged (see Mayring, 2000 for information about content analysis).

Table 1: Responses to question about reasons for participation (Kiegelmann, 2000)

Quotes from the interviews (translated by M.K.)	Categories (expectation of what opportunity the interview has to offer)
<p><i>I am interested</i>  <i>I am interested. I do like to talk about this, it is nice to talk about it</i>  <i>It is good to talk about it, with friends, too.</i>  <i>We sometimes make fun of it, it is fun to talk about it</i>  <i>I do not know. I am a little bit interested in this. I am interested in it.</i></p>	<p>Discuss a topic that is interesting</p>
<p><i>I want to bring those to reason who are speaking and acting against foreigners...</i>  <i>I am more interested in it than everyone else who came to your interview. Others want to forget about concentration camps</i>  <i>I wanted to say what I have to say. I wanted to tell how I really think about it. I do not know if you had Turkish people among the interviewees.</i></p>	<p>Make an opinion known, advertise a point of view</p>
<p><i>You did not really ask direct questions, is more like a conversation. Is o.k..</i>  <i>My friends do not want to listen.</i></p>	<p>Meet someone who listens</p>
<p><i>Wanted to talk about it with someone like you. You know what did happen, you are from the university</i>            (At another part of the interview:) <i>Well, what do you think about memorial monuments ? I mean not so large areas, but just so about those memorial-stones.)</i></p>	<p>Get further information from an expert</p>
<p><i>I know surveys, and I first wanted to see how it went before allowing my tape to be used</i></p>	<p>Test the interviewer</p>

<i>I do not know, decided spontaneously this morning. First, did not want to come. Was afraid that I would not know what to say. Your questions helped me to be able to talk. I do not know. It is just a little unfamiliar</i>	Uncomfortable Situation
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When designing my study, I reflected on my own expectations for the study. On the one hand, my expectations were linked to my research interest, i.e. I expected that the adolescents would provide me with narrations about their experiences with education about Nazi history and about the meaning this history had for them. On the other hand, when planning the study, I thought in advance of the kind of relationships that I would form with the adolescents. I was aware of the power differential inherent in my request for interviews, because of my background as an academic and the fact that I was approaching them with this study. I had prepared my statement about my study in which I stressed that I was interested in learning from their experiences and insights. In sum, when designing the study, my expectations for the interviews were that I would

- hear narrations about the interviewees experiences;
- hear narrations about the meaning of NS-history for them;
- talk within a context of a power differential due to different access to education and authority; and
- learn from the interviewees experiences and insights.

When I compare what the study participants said about their expectations with my own expectations, I find both congruent points as well as some aspects of their expectations that surprised me.

The following perspectives towards the research relationships I see as matching my expectations:

<b>Participants:</b>	<b>researcher and interviewer (me):</b>
Meet someone who listens	Hear narrations about the interviewees experiences, hear narrations about the meaning of NS-history for them.
Uncomfortable Situation, test the interviewer	Talk within a context of a power differential due to different access to education and authority, learn from the interviewees experiences and insights

Even though I did not find a conflict of interest or contradictions in how the research relationship was seen, some answers of the participants surprised me. These answers revealed that the participants were expecting to:

- Make an opinion known,
- advertise a point of view, and
- get further information from an expert.

What was surprising to me was the direction of the interests, e.g. that some of the young people reacted to my offer of being listened to with a strong sense of wanting to spread their point of view. While I appreciated the strong interest in the topic, I had not anticipated the sense of wanting their opinion to be known as if no one else were listening to them, or worse, as if there were no opportunity elsewhere for them to talk about this topic generally. Also, I came as a researcher interested in gathering information about the meaning of German history and was surprised when a young man asked me for advice in a current dilemma he was facing with a friend. Thus, while I had anticipated that the adolescents would benefit from the interview because of the intensive attention I gave them, I was surprised when I was faced with the expectation to provide further information and advice. Here, the one-sidedness of my interview design became clear: I wanted to collect data from the interviewees and did not think of the possibility that they might be interested in getting information from me as well.

The reason why I started this paper with an example from my own research was to show that even in research relationships that are limited to distant one-time interviews, there can be surprises for the researcher about why someone volunteered to participate. Such surprises can affect the research. The expectations can be numerous, depending on the reasons why an individual agreed to participate. By expectations I mean the interests involved in engaging and sustaining research relationships and anticipations about what will actually happen during and as a result of the research. Indeed, I found that in studies with a more intensive and longer contact, the question of expectations in research relationships can play a very serious role and perhaps make the research more difficult for the researcher.

Having started my paper with discussing research participants' views of research relationships, in the rest of my paper I will focus on the perspective of researchers. It is the responsibility of the researchers to consider potential misunderstandings when designing and engaging in research relationships – not only to improve their studies and consider threats to validity, but also to avoid misunderstandings, conflicts, and harm. Research relationships can be entered and pursued in a variety of settings. Researchers and research participants will most certainly have

more than one expectation. Being aware of variations and potential conflicts of interest can help psychologists to design studies in which the relational nature of the investigation will be thoughtfully attended to.

I comment here on three aspects that could be of concern in research relationships: 1) Dual relationships, 2) potential harm for participants, and 3) conflicts over data analysis when reporting research results back to participants. This, of course, is not an exhaustive list of potential problems in research relationships, where expectations on both sides of the relationship could go misunderstood. However, the three areas are important because they illustrate clearly where expectations might be misread by the researcher, causing research participants to be misled or harmed, and data to be misinterpreted.

The first issue, *dual relationships* is discussed in methodological literature about potential harm. Dual relationships means that in addition to the professional relationship another relationship exists or is formed. For example, a participant and a researcher also are husband and wife. Beth Bourdeau (2000) points to central issues that provide risk of harm in dual relationships, i.e. power imbalances, intensive and extended contact, and no clear end of the professional contact. She compares these risks in studies with those that occur in psychotherapy. Thus, avoiding dual relationships in research seems to be a useful rule of thumb. In addition to potential harm to participants, prior information or attitudes about the research participants could effect a researcher bias. This can especially be the case when intensive contact is a predecessor of field contact. By changing a previous relationship through adding a research component, there is also a question if researchers and participants are constructing similar expectations about the research. Similarly, continuing a different form of contact after the research has been terminated can become problematic because of the problem of power differentials. Again, Bourdeau (2000, paragraph 17) warns about dual relationships: "The more the relationships falls into the intense realms (high power differential, long duration, and indefinite termination) the greater the potential for harm and therefore a non-professional relationship should be ruled out." The social context of hierarchy and power differential present within research relationships can make research participants especially vulnerable when engaging in dual relationships. The hierarchy remains present, even when researchers do not intend to abuse their power, as Marecek, Fine, & Kidder (1997) stress: "However, to deny the biases inherent in the privileged position of a researcher does not negate them." Thus, researchers need to be aware that harm can be inflicted unintentionally.

Not only in the context of dual relationships, but generally the problem of *potential harm* for participants occurs in research relationships. In order to clarify the research interests and openly acknowledge which kind of encounter a potential participant can expect, informed consent forms can be used. An underlying assumption of this practice is that

information about risks involved in the research relationship can be predicted and formulated into a contract. Furthermore, the idea of informed consent assumes that participants can make free and informed decisions about placing themselves at those risks. Yet, there are unresolved issues in the practice of using informed consent, e.g. not all "side effects" can be predicted (or controlled), in advance. Also, the researcher usually is not able to control all possible harm. In some studies, spontaneity that is needed in data could be reduced by a lengthy process of establishing written consent. Even if a potential participant signs to accept risks, not all "rights" for protection can be waived by a contract – because of potential power differences, it remains questionable, if true volunteering is always possible. As Manning (1997) formulates: "Despite the best of intentions, the most carefully negotiated informed consent cannot assure that the researcher and respondents fully appreciate the implications of the research activity." To know about different expectations can be important for researchers in designing their studies, because potential risks are likely derived from unrealistic expectations or from conflicting interests.

Not only can expectations be considered at the beginning of field work by means of informed consent. There is also the practice of *reporting data and research results back to participants*, once data analysis has been completed. This practice seems helpful for enhancing the validity of a qualitative study. Yet, there are also potential problems involved here.

As an example of such problems, Wiesenfeld (2000, paragraph 38) illuminates potential problems in different aspects of expected outcomes by researchers:

On the one hand, there is the hope that the research will generate changes in the discursive constructions and/or actions of the informants, that it will foster liberating transformations; on the other, the researcher is expected to generate a theoretical product he/she aspires to publish in specialized publications far removed from the participants who made it possible, in terms of the technical language employed and the type of publication in which the research will appear.

Thus, when publications about research results are written in a language inaccessible to participants, adequate form of communicating the findings are necessary. Yet, when processes of "liberating transformations" are intended for participants, conflicts might occur because of static nature of written texts about the findings that have authority because of the university affiliation of the researchers.

Miscommunications when reporting data and research results back to participants can occur already by reading transcripts, not only sharing interpretations of data. Experienced researchers can easily forget that reading one's spoken language in form of a written transcript is somewhat

disconcerting. For example, in my own research, I once showed a draft of a research report to a participant of a study in which I used a quote of hers. In response to reading the draft, the participant objected to the written out dialect that I had quoted. While I meant to honor the dialect as an indication for using an authentic voice, the participant read the interview quote as offensive, feeling that I was making fun of her. On those grounds, she withdrew herself from the study. Once again, the perspectives and idiosyncratic meaning associated with what goes on in a research project is of utmost importance.

By drawing attention to a range of expectations towards research relationships of both research and participants, I argue for careful considerations about the planned research relationships involved in qualitative psychological studies. In order to avoid misunderstandings or conflicts, careful thoughts can be given to the issues of problems with dual relationships, anticipation of potential harm, and implications of reporting results back to participants. Designing research relationships needs more attention than just a brief introduction at the start of field contact.

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**The role of the researcher in action-oriented studies**

Hannu Soini, Leena Kultalahti, Terhi Jokelainen and Marianne Tensing

## Introduction

What is the role of the researcher and how does the role change during the research process? How should this be taken into account from the methodological point of view? The classical criteria of objectivity rest on the assumption that the knower and the known are independent of each other. The requirement of objectivity means that the researcher concentrates on making observations and tries to disturb the object of inquiry as little as possible. The qualitative approach, however, is based on the idea that the researcher is always present and actively shapes and constitutes the object of inquiry. In order to demonstrate the objectivity of the study, every piece of research has to answer the following four questions, regardless of the chosen methodological orientation (Lincoln & Guba 1985, 290):

How can one establish confidence in the “truth“ of the findings (truth value)?

How can one determine the extent to which the findings of the study have applicability in other contexts or with other subjects (applicability)?

How can one determine whether the findings of an inquiry would be repeated if it were replicated with a similar context (consistency)?

How one can establish the degree to which the findings of the study are determined by the subjects and not by the biases of the researcher (neutrality)?

In qualitative research, the researcher is a participating subject that tries to ensure and promote the objectivity of the research in a way that differs from that of a quantitative researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This means that there are different views about the experienced reality. In qualitative study, the indicators of objectivity have to be replaced by indicators applicable to its theoretical basis (Henwood & Pidgeon 1992). Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose the following criterion areas as appropriate alternatives for qualitative inquiry to replace the conventional positivist indicators of the objectivity of the study: Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability ( seeTable 1.)

Table 1: The questions concerning the trustworthiness of the study in conventional and naturalistic research.

Trustworthiness of the study	rational criteria	naturalistic criteria
Truth value	Internal validity	Credibility
Applicability	External validity	Transferability
Consistency	Reliability	Dependability
Neutrality	Objectivity	Confirmability

*Credibility* in qualitative research is a substitute for the term internal validity. The activities which increase the probability that credible findings will be produced are prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation. Prolonged engagement requires that researchers are involved with a site sufficiently long. In a traditional sense, *transferability* refers to applying the findings of a study in contexts similar to the contexts in which they were first derived. In other words, this issue answers the question of the external validity of the study. That is, to what extent the results of our study can be said to have a more general significance. *Dependability* refers to the concept of reliability in quantitative research. In qualitative research there is no need to demonstrate dependability separately, if we are able to show that the study has the quality of credibility. *Confirmability* refers to the objectivity of the research results. The major techniques for establishing confirmability are triangulation, the keeping of a reflexive journal and the confirmability audit. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maykutt & Morehouse, 1994.)

#### The historical changes in the role of action researchers

When we describe the role of the researcher, we have to look at the process from two different perspectives: the micro and macro level. The macro perspective (Table 2) means that there has been a continuous and gradual change in the role of researcher in the history of action-oriented study (Kuula, 1999). According to the principles of the positivist paradigm, the role of researcher was that of an outsider observer. Gradually the theoretical orientation has developed and the role of researcher has

changed towards a more active and flexible partaker into the lives and situations of the subjects. Interestingly, in psychology, empathical reasoning has usually been accepted as an essential part of the role of a good practitioner. However, in academic psychology, it has been seen rather as a source of error for the study than as an essential phenomenon which should be better understood and taken into account by the researcher.

Table 2: The changing role of the researcher in the history of action-oriented studies.

<b>The role of researcher</b>	<b>main task</b>
Passive observer	Measurement and testing
Cool Counsellor	Adviser, expert in working methods and theory
Active co-developer	Do it yourself- expert, Expert in activation
Empathetic partner	Expert in dialogical cooperation

#### The role of the action-researcher in a single study

During an individual research process, the researcher has to function in different roles, trying to fulfil the criteria of neutrality and consistency which are the basic aims of science. The different roles emerge from the problems met by the researcher in the various stages of action research. Typical problems in action research are:

The problem of participation:

The problem faced by the action researcher is his double role: s/he is both the promoter of change and the researcher. The action researcher is not satisfied with being only an external observer, as he tries to accomplish changes in the object of his/her research through his own participation. The problem of participation lies in the extent to which the researcher can avoid participating or disturbing the object of his/her research. In other

words, the question is not whether the researcher participates or not, but how he participates in the production acquired through the research, regardless of the research method (Soini, 1999). It is essential from the viewpoint of the trustworthiness of the study that the researcher is well aware of the different roles that he has and their effects on the object of the research.

#### The balance between control and chaos

The researcher is working in the "zone of uncertainty" (Kuula, 1999; Crouzier & Friedberg, 1980) during the actual research process. The nature of data collection in qualitative action research is different from traditional empirico-analytical research. In research based on the empirico-analytical paradigm, the researcher tries to capture the situation in advance by, for instance, structuring in detail a questionnaire. This kind of situation leads to the illusion that the researcher is a neutral or objective observer, and that the data collection is controlled tightly by him. In a way, the researcher has made interpretations in advance. Meanwhile in the collection of qualitative data, the researcher must tolerate the feeling that the situation is not fully under her/his control: interviews are not pre-constrained test settings. In other words, the researcher does not know what issues will come up in the interview. (Kvale, 1994; Soini, 2001)

#### The psychological skills needed during the study process

The interaction between the researchers and their subjects formed in action research requires special psychological skills from the researcher. An interview is always "inter views" (Kvale, 1994). In other words, an interview is a situation of interaction between two or more people, in which both the parties contribute to whatever information the interview produces. On the other hand, in an interview the researcher needs to be able to grasp the contents that the subjects wish to describe to the researcher. The researcher needs to know how to listen, be empathetic, encourage the subjects to talk, but s/he must also allow silence. A good action researcher will do all the things mentioned above with good grounds and with proper attention to the basic aims of science.

An interview can, for instance, include situations where the discussion will not start or proceed. In such a situation, the researcher should know how to elicit responses from the subjects. This is connected very essentially with the researcher's role and skills as a researcher. It is a matter of balancing between neutrality and being a subjective co-experiencer. It is therefore important what kind of a psychological atmosphere the researcher is able to establish in a research situation.

#### Conclusions

For qualitative action research to succeed, the researcher is expected to follow working methods that were previously considered unscientific or at least undesirable. Empathetic participation is necessary in action research, but that alone is not enough. The researcher should also be an observer, instructor and activator. Although the purpose is to make the subjects talk about things as openly as possible, the researcher should accept the fact that the subjects will remain silent when certain questions are asked. A sensitive researcher realises and knows how to be careful when it is time to stop "breaking the wall of silence." It is necessary to simply accept the reticence because the research might include something that would be harmful to the subject if it were revealed. Therefore it is not necessarily possible in a group interview, for instance, to discuss all issues together. The incompleteness of interviews, and thus of interpretations as well, must be identified and accepted as a part of any research process.

We have been describing in this article how the researcher moves from one role to another during a single study. We have wanted to point out the meaning of these different roles in the research process and how the basic aims of science are taken into account. Our view is that the researcher is like a spirit level, balancing between the different roles, but also rocking the balance if need be. Action research is about the dynamics of participation and withdrawal.

The changes in the role of the researcher should be evaluated from the point of view of the historical process. That is, the role of a researcher in a single study includes all the roles which have been described in table 2. It is important that the researcher is able to empathetic dialogue with his or her subjects. A confidential relationship between researchers and subjects encourages workers to describe more profoundly their ideas, fears and assumptions, which are important for the understanding of the process. In action research, it is important that researchers are sometimes able to advise and guide their subjects in different working methods or encourage them to be responsible and active in their action. However, it is also necessary that the researcher is able to step back from the data and evaluate it critically.

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## Explication

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### Chapter 6

### **Qualitative approaches in learning research: Learning diaries and the role of the researcher<sup>1</sup>**

Michaela Gläser-Zikuda

#### Introduction

Diaries have a long tradition in psychology and education. They fulfill diverse functions. As a place for recording and reflecting individual experiences diaries enable self-communication. As a research instrument diaries are used for documentation, description, and analysis of diverse processes. In developmental psychology, for example, the analysis of teenagers' diaries has a long tradition (Wallace et al., 1994). In clinical psychology, researchers apply diaries to investigate illness and convalescence processes (Wilz & Brähler, 1997). In pedagogy, teachers' diaries have been successfully applied to reflect on instructional aspects (Fischer, 1997). Likewise, but as a research instrument, diaries help to document and to analyze pedagogical processes within action research (Elliott, 1993).

In the last five years diaries have conquered new application fields. In educational psychology, diaries serve as research instruments for the analysis of learning processes and especially learning strategies. In a more pedagogical sense, the diary may also serve as a learning aid.

In research on learning and especially on learning strategies some shortcomings with respect to the lack of consideration of contextual conditions of learning and methodological aspects of analyzing learning strategies have been reported. The potential contribution of qualitative research is to use learning diaries as a research instrument to investigate learning strategies in specific situations. This approach requires a special role of the researcher which is different from the one generally described in qualitative research. This is illustrated here by a qualitative study with learning diaries.

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<sup>1</sup> Words of thanks to Dr. Roger Gläser who reviewed the article in respect to English language.

### Qualitative research and the role of the researcher

Qualitative Research is generally subject related and tries to describe behavior, opinions, attitudes etc. of persons in every-day life with the aim of understanding (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). This also means that the role of the researcher in this tradition is considerable.

As qualitative research lays importance on subject-orientation and openness, the researcher himself or herself becomes a research instrument, which plays an important role. The researcher gets into a close contact with the participants and this has an influence on investigation and interpretation of the data. This is especially true for implementation of interviews. The pre-comprehension of the researcher, cognitive and emotional attitudes towards the research subject have an effect on the communication during the interview. Furthermore, the interpretation of data may be strained by emotional engagement or precipitate conclusion, for example by stereotypes or simple analogy.

These considerations should be accounted for when analyzing learning processes of children as in the present study. Beside the aspects already mentioned, one important thought should be considered: The social relation between researcher and students can be compared with that of a teacher's relation to students, because the intention of both is similar. Teacher and researcher want to know more about the learning processes of students. The other point is that teachers evaluate learning and achievement of the students. When coming in contact with the researcher, students possibly assume that they will be assessed as well. This certainly has an influence on the relation between the students and the researcher.

The mentioned considerations should be taken into account with respect to qualitative standards of quality. Beside other basic quality standards in qualitative research, especially in that case it is important to account for criteria of quality such as explication of pre-comprehension, reproduction or communicative validation (Mayring, 1996; Kirk & Miller, 1986). When analyzing learning diaries of students the researcher should reflect especially on his or her individual pre-comprehension of learning, learning styles and strategies and assessment.

### Learning and learning strategies

Learning traditionally and particularly at school is understood as a cognitive process, concerning assimilation and transfer of knowledge. Cognitive psychology increasingly unveiled a better understanding of how information is processed and which kind of specific learning strategies might occur (Schmeck, 1988). Cognitive and constructivist theories underpin the importance of information processing. Learning is currently viewed as a reflexive process where the learner with self responsibility



actively regulates the interaction between learning activities, learning subject, learning goals and personal preconditions like knowledge and motivation. It is now accepted that students have a more self-directed active role in constructing their knowledge (Boekarts et al., 2000; Zimmermann, 1995).

With the theoretical model of expert learning the active role of the learner is underlined. Learning strategies became increasingly important in numerous studies in the last years, especially in training studies (Friedrich & Mandl, 1992; Weinstein & Mayer, 1986). Although many different definitions can be found in the literature, learning strategies are understood as behavior and also as cognitions. Learners use these intentionally to influence and to regulate their aquirement of knowledge. The purpose of learning strategies on the one hand may be regulation of motivation and emotions of the learner, and on the other hand a way of choosing, acquiring, organizing and integrating information.

In the research on learning strategies two main research approaches exist. First, the concept of "Approaches to Learning" (surface approach and deep approach; Biggs, 1985; Entwistle, 1988) emphasizing learning orientations and motives which are influenced and consolidated by school socialisation processes. Secondly, learning strategy concepts which are based on cognitive psychology referring to information processes in the human brain and procedures of problem solving (Schnotz, 1994).

Although numerous important studies were already conducted to analyze learning strategies (cf. Wild, 2000) and their relations to other learning variables, for example self-concept or motivation, the results achieved so far are not very satisfying (Mayring, 1999). Reasons for that may be found in contextual and methodological conditions.

1. Most of the studies on learning strategies disregard the specific learning context. Strategies are usually analyzed on a very general level. Students have to think of learning behavior in general and not of learning situations in specific subjects. But learning is related to specific subjects, learning topic and situations influenced by many different factors. Intrapersonal factors, e.g. motivation, concentration, pre-knowledge play an important role as well as resources, e.g. media, time, aid. For instance, in motivation research contextual aspects of learning were recently integrated in theoretical and methodological considerations (Volet & Järvelä, 2001).
2. Almost all studies use questionnaires with very complex items (e.g. LASSI, Weinstein, 1987). When answering these items, students have to think of more than one certain activity when learning and they have to decide to which single aspect of the item they answer. But because of the complexity of the items, it is hard to judge on the specific aspect referred to by the students.

In qualitative research, these two shortcomings can be avoided. This research tradition based on the single case approach is subject-oriented

and emphasizes the dependence of human's behavior in respect to the specific context and the individual history (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Mayring, 1996). As learning is understood as an individual interactive process of motivational and cognitive regulation, personal goals and subject-specific contents, especially one qualitative approach, the biographical method, seems to be appropriate for analyzing learning strategies of students.

#### Diaries in psychology and pedagogy

The biographical research often uses the single case approach. In this method personal documents (letters, diaries, autobiography etc.) are analyzed (Fuchs, 1984; Jüttemann & Thomae, 1999) giving insight to motivation and attitudes of persons. Biography is particularly related to interpretation of course of individual life. Different reasons for keeping a diary can be distinguished. First of all, it is a place to write down and reflect on personal experiences, moods and problems in every-day life. Especially for teenagers the diary is a medium for knowledge of their self. It helps young people to obtain a view of themselves, their life and goals. The main criteria of a diary are its actual and its collection character. By that, biographical research offers a insight into the behavior of individual persons, also into learning activities.

Furthermore, diaries allow process oriented research. Generally allotments in social sciences are carried out within a limited time frame. It is often insufficiently considered that certain variables are strongly time dependent (Sang et al., 1994). This is especially true for learning strategies, which can vary from situation and context. This may lead to undue falsifications. A diary, therefore, rather reflects a time-constrained snapshot of individual strategies than a complete picture of the students' activities and seems to be more appropriate in this context.

Diaries have a long tradition in psychology, as content of research or as a research instrument. The use of diaries reaches back to the Antique and the Middle Age where they served as reports of historical and chronological events. From Renaissance on diaries started to be a medium for self-observation and reflection in that activities, moods and thoughts were written down. Most well known are, of course, diaries of literates and poets. More from the perspective of observation, in the 18th and 19th century diaries were used for documentation of childrens' development (Wallace et al., 1994). This research tradition was mainly influenced by the studies of Jean Piaget and Charlotte Bühler.

In the research field of development of teenagers Charlotte Bühler is generally mentioned as the founder. She analyzed diaries of young boys and girls with respect to puberty. In this tradition, Seiffge-Krenke (1985) and Winterhager-Schmid (1992) emphasize that besides the fact that much

more girls than boys are writing a diary there are gender differences regarding the contents. While the diary stories of boys deal more with activities and adventures, those of girls tend to reflect more on problems and feelings.

Looking at the diary as a research instrument, it is often used, for example, in therapeutical research (cf. Wilz & Brähler, 1997), where the procedural aspect plays an important role. Many studies in this field, for example research on pain or depression, make use of different kinds of diaries, ranging from common paper based to electronic diaries (Lewis et al., 1995).

The application of diaries has also been established in other areas, especially in research on learning. Hofmann (1997) gathered data about learning of students with diaries which are structured as questionnaires. By that, procedural data were gained on learning strategies and accompanying aspects, like for example learning emotions.

Describing learning processes in our studies, qualitative diaries are used basing on the single case approach (Mayring, 1995; Gläser-Zikuda, 2001). The main focus is to get specific information with half-structured diaries about how learners act, think and reflect their learning processes.

In education mainly diaries of teachers are well-known (cf. Fischer, 1997). In this context, the diary serves as an observation medium for pedagogical reflection of teachers concerning their students' behavior, learning and performance and, of course, instructional considerations. By that, pedagogical diaries are an appropriate and versatile instrument for observation and documentation in school related context. For some time in teachers' education and school development it plays an important role (Friebertshäuser & Prengel, 1997).

But not only from own observations teachers gain information on learning processes, but rather from students' diaries. As already mentioned above, learning today is regarded as an active and self-regulated process in which motivation and learning strategies play an important role. Based on this cognitive learning approach, many instructional concepts arised that emphasize the individual learning processes of students, for example self-directed learning and open instruction. To promote students' learning, diaries are a promising medium, because they enable documentation and reflection about thoughts, ideas, learning steps and learning emotions. Examples in different school subjects from pedagogical praxis were already described in the last years (Popp, 1997; Gläser-Zikuda, 2001b).

Fundamental steps in the field of self-reflexive descriptions in the German speaking area were done by Gallin and Ruf (1997). A so called "journey diary" served in a teaching unit in mathematics as exercise book where students noticed all they were doing or dealing with, for example, exercises, observations as well as small investigations and their thoughts about it. The students read each others diaries and discussed the contents.

Teacher gave responses from time to time to each student and provided advice for further learning steps.

Which processes occur when students think about their learning? In table 1 functions of a diary in learning contexts are described. These functions make clear that the diary is both, an important aid for students' self-regulated learning and a source of information for teachers with respect to a suitable advice and review.

In a more research-oriented manner, diaries are used in action research which originally started in pedagogy (Altrichter, 1993; Elliott, 1993). Teachers investigate their teaching and school development with the help of researchers using research diaries to document problems, ideas and solutions. Action research is a qualitative approach like the biographical method.

Table 1: Functions of a diary in the learning context (cf. Gläser-Zikuda, 2001b)

<b>Reflection</b>	<p><b>Meta-Level:</b> observing process in classroom, observing and judging on own learning activities.</p> <p><b>Questions:</b> How am I learning? What am I doing exactly? Do I have problems? Which ones? How can I solve my problems?</p>
<b>Association</b>	Collecting ideas, feelings, questions, judgements etc. about the new topic
<b>Assimilation</b>	Elaboration of thoughts, ideas and ways of problem solving in own words. By that, students deal with the topic intensively.
<b>Self-observation and self-control</b>	Students regulate and recapitulate their learning independently and with self-responsibility.
<b>Information for the teacher</b>	The teacher gets detailed information about learning problems and can help in detail.

As described above, many approaches in education and psychology make use of diaries. On the one hand, they are used in different theoretical areas, on the other hand they are used with different methodological intentions. Strongly connected to the research intention is the role and the task of the researcher.

To demonstrate and to explain the special role of the researcher and to show the special demands when investigating learning processes of students with learning diaries, in the following two qualitative studies based on learning diaries are presented.

#### Two qualitative studies with learning diaries

The main focus of both studies was to describe and analyze learning strategies in every-day life situations at school and at home as detailed as possible. This was done methodologically based on the single case approach with half-structured diaries and interviews. In the first study, six female 8<sup>th</sup> grade students from a secondary level school kept a learning diary in the subject "English language" for six weeks and were interviewed at the end of the diary period (cf. Mayring, 1995). In the second study, 24 8<sup>th</sup> grade students stratified in respect to gender, subject ("German language" and "physics") and school type kept a revised version of the learning diary and were interviewed in the beginning and at the end of the research project (Gläser-Zikuda, 2001c).

The relation of the researcher and the students was very intensive for a period of about two months. The researcher visited the students repeatedly, got information about their school life and, particularly, about their family life. Researcher and students discussed questions or considerations with respect to students' learning and the diary. By that, the researcher was a sort of learning supervisor.

The researcher had contact to the teenagers visiting them after school lessons, talking with them about the diary and their learning. There were several situations where students asked the researcher for advice, as showed in the following by some quotes from interviews:

*"I think I know all for the test and therefore I won't look in my exercise book but I should, right?"*

*"Today I didn't understand all the teacher said in physics. Can you explain it to me?"*

*"I wrote in my diary that I listened to my cassette recorder and by that I wrote a dictation. Is this a good strategy to learn the correct spelling?"*

*"I wrote this (he shows me the diary) in today. Is it right? Did I understand it?"*

*"We learned "simple past" today. Is this sentence correct? Am I a good student?"*

These examples underline the special role of the researcher in that context. When doing qualitative research on learning with students the researcher is not only the person who observes, reflects and interprets (Dachler, 2000; Welzer, 1990). Besides the fact that in qualitative research there is always a closer relation between researcher and participants than in quantitative approach in this special case the researcher becomes also a learning supervisor, a sort of a teacher. Indicators for that are the cited examples where advice and review are expected from students. These two functions a teachers has certainly to fulfill.

The questions in the diary log referred to the learning topic, the learning techniques and the learning emotions. The students were instructed to keep the diary for one subject, German, English language, respectively or physics. They were instructed to write down every day how they learned and which feelings they experienced.

The learning strategies reported by these students were on a very specific, simple and more superficial level than usually expected from theoretical considerations. Besides several metacognitive strategies, first of all superficial learning strategies as, for example, looking at something or memorizing were reported very often in the diaries. These results are important for considerations with respect to employment of questionnaires. As mentioned above, one major problem is that the items in questionnaires about learning strategies generally are not related to a certain subject or context and furthermore formulated on a very complex level.

Another important result of the qualitative study are the thoughts, considerations, and learning processes of the students which were initiated by conducting the diary and talks with the researcher. Not only in the half-structured interviews, but also in spontaneous conversations on the school corridor or during the interviews, students mentioned the positive influence of the diaries on their learning and well-being. To illustrate such learning processes, in the following two excerpts of interviews are presented with respect to several effects on learning. Each example represents remarks of one single student.

#### Example 1

*I want to keep the diary because I learned to reflect on myself. Furthermore you can use it as a reference book to look something up, especially before tests. And it's also possible to discuss with others what they think about topics and what they write down.*

The student in example 1 emphasizes the function of the diary as a medium for self-reflection. Own learning processes may be observed and

controlled consciously. Furthermore, the content of the diary is helpful for the preparation of a test at school using it as a reminder. Above that, it may be used for discussions with other students, for exchange of ideas, thoughts and explanations.

#### Example 2

*I like writing the learning diary because it makes fun to see what I did two weeks before and how I felt about it. Sometimes, I really like physics. I didn't think about that before.*

The student in example 2 experiences positive feelings when keeping the diary, because it functions as a reminder, especially of positive situations. Interesting is that the diary exerts a positive influence on the attitude towards a subject, here physics.

The interviews show that by keeping the learning diary learning processes were consciously noticed, observed and reflected. Metacognitive processes such as controlling and planning were initiated for test preparation as one important factor at school. Additionally, communication between learners is promoted with respect to exchange of ideas, thoughts as well as discussion and solution of problems. By positive emotional experiences, the diary was attributed in a positive way with regard to meaningful use for learning and with an effect on content or subject related preferences. In this sense, the diary serves as a medium for the improvement of individual learning.

#### Discussion and consequences

The purpose of this article was to show the special role of the researcher in the context of learning and achievement, to document some theoretical and methodological shortcomings in the research on learning strategies and to emphasize the strength of diaries as qualitative research instruments in learning research. Several positive aspects can be stressed. First, within qualitative research the role of the researcher is a special one. In this study, the relation of the researcher and the participants (students) is characterized not only by personal contact and communication, but also by supervision and review of learning processes. The qualitative researcher is in this special case confronted with some tasks teachers have at school - giving advice, supervising learning processes and reviewing performance.

Second, a qualitative approach seems to be appropriate in the field of learning research and especially in research on learning strategies. Because of the theoretical and methodological considerations with respect to some

shortcomings mentioned before, qualitative research mainly gives attention to contextual and individual aspects of learning in every-day life, in this study students' learning processes at school and at home.

Third, the use of the diary as a qualitative instrument enables a concrete and longitudinal analysis of learning strategies. Processes of learning can be described, changes of habits and special events are considered. By that, relations between learning and other variables, as for example motivation, are accessible. Consequences for further research can be derived.

Fourth, students are able to think over their learning steps in one special situation and subject. The half-structured diary allows to answer directly and in detail. Problems with too complex items or multiple aspects in one question do not occur. Therefore their answers may be more realistic.

Fifth, the diary in the presented study initiates self-reflexive processes in the students, such as self-observation, planning and control. The learning diary does not only have the function of a research instrument, but rather it serves in a more pedagogical sense as a learning aid as well.

Experiences from this study lead to some important implications for qualitative research. Three aspects are in my opinion noticeable. Qualitative research is from its understanding directly related to every-day life and therefore problem-oriented. It is a fruitful approach for investigation of students' learning behavior as showed in this study. Learning is a phenomena which has relevance for every-day life. Students have to go to school every day and experience many various learning situations. Consequently, school and instruction are a not negligible part of their life.

The diary as a research instrument has several advantages. It is always related to every-day life and therefore it enables process analysis, avoids problems of misunderstanding, such as those, caused for instance, by a complexity of items. It also offers the participants the opportunity to openly communicate their thoughts and feelings.

In this context, especially the role of researcher should be reflected. As described before, the focus of the qualitative researcher is not only to gain and to analyze data, but also to get in contact with the participants and, if desired, to help and to give advice. It should be considered that the role of the researcher may also include some problems such as an appropriate balance between participation and distance.

It is therefore very important to consider criteria of quality. It is necessary to explicate pre-understanding, to document research processes and registration of data. This is even more relevant when instruments like the diary influence the process of analysis in a manner that changes in thinking or behavior of the individual can be recognized. To explain and understand these effects, a strict documentation is indispensable. Criteria



as a rule guided procedure and check of intercoder-reliability are becoming a self-evident standard in qualitative research.

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**The role of the researcher in group-based dialogic introspection<sup>1</sup>**

Thomas Burkart

Group-based dialogic introspection has been developed by psychologists and social scientists at the University of Hamburg. The method uses groups to facilitate the exploration of the experience with introspection. The test design is characterized by a combination of (classical) individual introspection and (Würzburg-type) introspection by subjects (for a detailed description on classical and Würzburg-type introspection see Kleining & Mayer, 2002, pp. 99-108 in this volume). This is achieved by changing social roles of the researchers and the subjects and changing mental activities of participants in their active and receptive attitudes towards themselves and towards other members in the group, both seen as dialogic processes and legitimated as attempts to improve the validity of introspection under the rules of an explorative (*heuristic*) methodology.

## The research design

The research is done in a group of four to nine researchers, who alternate between the role of the researcher and the role of the researched subject (for a detailed description see Kleining, 2002, pp. 207-212 in this volume). The research process starts with a preliminary definition of the research topic.

It may be anything that can be experienced ("erlebt") in one or another way and therefore is accessible to introspection. Topics in our workshop, among others, are media reception, problem solving, game-playing, experience of emotions, of space, and time. As a rule, the topics are discussed and agreed upon within the group—unless a "surprising" experience should be investigated. Depending on topic, the procedure of data collection will be discussed within the group or delegated to one or several participants.

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In a second step, the participants will be confronted with the topic (for an example of the test procedure see Kleining, 2002, pp. 207-212 in this volume). Their role is to observe attentively what is in or comes to their minds. Introspection is either performed within the group (e.g. reception of a movie, viewed together) or by each participant individually (e.g. introspection of a momentary anger). If possible, participants take short notes during introspection. In any case, later they take down longer descriptions of what they have experienced.

After that period – in most cases up to ten minutes – participants report their self-observation to the group verbally, one after the other, clockwise or counter-clockwise, using or not using their notes, respecting their feelings on what they want to communicate and how. The other participants listen – there will be no questions, evaluations, or discussions. There is no time limit for the individual presentation, and it also will be accepted, if a participant does not want to say anything about a certain subject or experience.

A second round follows, providing the opportunity to supplement reports. After a person has listened to other members' experience he or she may be stimulated to reflect on his or her own experience again and to consider, if his or her first introspection report is actually complete. We are aware that this may influence judgments but participants insist that mentioning a certain aspect by another person only introduces a question to them, not the answer. Frequently after listening to another report, members of the group remember details, which otherwise they would have forgotten or regarded as unimportant.

Finally and separately, the data will be analyzed. Basis are transcribed recordings of the verbal presentations. In some cases, we supplement the data by transcriptions of respondent's notes or memos about their experience established retrospectively. The analysis is not done within the group but by one person individually outside of the group according to the procedures of heuristic research. Validation is internal, all aspects of the protocols fitting to each other (Kleining, 1995, pp. 273-277; Kleining, 1982/2001, chap. V). There is no consensual or communicative validity (e.g. agreement of the members of the group).

The research design calls for collecting both individual data and those of other participants. There is a change of social roles (researcher and subject), of social behavior (listening to other people and reporting to them), and of internal attitudes (listening to the self and asking questions to the self), which stimulates the development of an inner dialogue and the exploration of one's own experience (*Erleben*).

### Methodological requirements and desiderata

The methodological basis for group-based dialogical introspection is the heuristic methodology documented elsewhere (Kleining, 1982/2001, 1994, 1995; Kleining & Witt, 2001; applied to introspection: Kleining & Burkart, 2001; Kleining & Witt, 2000). The main characteristics of the methodology are:

- Openness of the research person, who should be prepared to change his or her preconception of the topic in case of its disagreement with the data.
- Openness of the research topic, which might change during explorative research and is only fully known after the research was finished.
- Maximal structural variation of perspectives during the phase of data collection. The topic should be seen from as many different sides as necessary.
- Analysis of data in the direction of common patterns or similarities to discover the structure integrating all data.

The research process is seen as a mental dialogue between the researcher(s) and the topic of research, which is put into a process by asking questions to the topic and receiving its "answers," leading to new questions and answers etc. until no new information can be gained.

Basic methods are observation and experiments (in qualitative research, qualitative observations and qualitative experiments). Introspection also has an active, "experimental" part (e.g. asking questions to one's experience) and a receptive, "observational" part or period (e.g., to only record the experience).

Introspection, as all other research techniques, has its basis in everyday life. People reflect upon their experience for example in talking about it with other persons, writing a diary or letters. Dialogic introspection overcomes the shortcomings of the everyday situation, which is often selective, unsystematic, and one-sided, but saves its heuristic potential as a direct, natural, and productive path to one's own experience. This is achieved by:

- a systematic and varied documentation of experience,
- the division of self-observation and analysis,
- a combination of individual introspection and introspection by other members of the group, which stimulates inner dialogue and dialogue with outside phenomena, and
- the control of undesired group processes.

The observed inner and transient experience must be documented. This may happen through talking, writing, or nonverbal communications. Documentation is often incomplete and sometimes perspective representation of observed experiences. Therefore, we use as a rule at least three different forms of documentation: notes during, and directly

after the self-observation, which may also include drawings, as well as an oral introspection report in the group.

To prevent a blending of self-observation, evaluation, and interpretation, which is typical for everyday introspection, self-observation and analysis are strictly separated in dialogic introspection. The analysis always takes place with written documentation (the transcription of the tape recorded introspection reports, sometimes additionally the notes of the participants). The analysis, which is often time-consuming, is not made in the group but by one single person separately, also to avoid group influences.

The combination between individual introspection and introspection by other group members stimulates multifaceted dialogues, which facilitates the exploration of experience. In self-dialogues, everyone is engaged with his or her experience and with putting down notes and reports on that. The participant can ask himself or herself, whether the documentation of his or her self-observations is adequate or requires completion. The social dialogues, in which the participants report on their self-observations to the group, contrast the introspection reports of the others to the own experience. The individual person can remember aspects of his or her own experience through the reports of the others, which he or she had forgotten, found unimportant or too difficult for an oral presentation.

In order to prevent unwanted group dynamic processes and to reduce the risk of conformity, introspection groups have to be controlled carefully, which might be ascribed to a certain participant. Undesired are critical or evaluative comments, particularly those that devalue respondents, direct their attention into a "desired" direction or clear a particular aspect (which in general is a problem of the interrogator, not the respondent). As little as possible, the group should have a hierarchical structure. Reduction of hierarchies is encouraged if all members of the group are allowed to report fully without interruption and questioning of any information presented. Contrary to Ach's (1905/1999) procedure we do not control the individual but try to free it from repressive influences. Dialogical introspection groups also are different from *focus groups* in the sense that we do not allow discussion, which may tend to establish collective evaluations of or within the group. Members of introspective groups should not feel that they are in a competitive situation. Minority opinions and views are encouraged. Important is a positive group climate, tolerant of all kinds of reports about personal experiences.

Data analysis is an open and dialogic process of searching for patterns, which the the data have in common. Analysis is not an interpretative (hermeneutic) but a heuristic procedure, a process of discovery. Not helpful is the preformulation of hypotheses or the establishment of categorization schemes (Kleining, 1995). The process of



data analysis in explorative research is neither "inductive" (or "abductive") nor "deductive" but dialectic in the sense that it uses a question-and-answer process to find out in which way the data are organized.

For more information on the research approach of the Hamburg group, see our homepage: [www.introspektion.net](http://www.introspektion.net) (please observe the German "k" instead of "c" in "introspektion").

#### The role of the researcher in group-based dialogic introspection

Explorative or heuristic research requires openness of the researcher towards the topic of research. Openness within the qualitative-heuristic methodology is not at choice or associative but methodologically controlled. Group-based dialogic introspection implies *self-openness*, *openness of social roles*, *openness toward the topic of research* and *openness of methods*.

In spite of the general subject's dependence of cognition, many methods in psychology and sociology—not psychoanalysis—aim to minimize or exclude the subjective influences, in order to reach "objectivity." Therefore, a strict distinction between the researcher and the researched is made. It is assumed, that the researcher is only important as a scientific expert. As a person and in his relation to the topic of research he/she is regarded however as not relevant. Contrary to this strategy, researchers in group-based dialogic introspection are their own research subjects and open for their own psychic processes, their subjectivity. The self-openness acknowledges the self-reference of the research topic, because the researcher has also a psyche and is part of societal patterns.

Instead of the normal fixed role-separation between the researcher and the researched, group-based dialogic introspection has a concept of openness of the social role. The researchers alternate between the role of the researcher and the role of the researched subject. At the beginning, they are in a pure researcher role, when defining the preliminary topic of research and the procedure of data collection. In the data collection, they are in a role of the researched subject, observing their own experiences, whereas they examine their first description of their experience in a dialogic process through varied documentations and through the introspection reports of the other group members. The analysis of the transcribed introspective reports requires once more a researcher role.

The flexibility of roles during the research process is a synthesis of Wundt's or Brentano's unity of the researcher and the object/subject of research in introspective research in classical psychology on the one hand, and the research procedure in introspective research of the Würzburg psychologist on the other hand with a separation of the researcher and the subject of research (for a description on classical and

Würzburg-type introspection see Kleining & Mayer, 2002, pp. 99-108 in this volume). It keeps the advantages of both (the necessary distance for scientific analysis, the acceptance of self-reference) but tries to avoid their disadvantages (artificial distance between the researcher and the subject in a hierarchical social setting, problematic methodological restrictions, e.g. Wundt's concept of the experiment).

The researchers regard their topic as preliminary and only completely known after finishing the research. They want to learn new aspects of their topic and are prepared to adapt their preconception about it, as far as it does not correspond to the data.

This openness towards the topic of research has consequences for the data collection, the data analysis, and the attitude towards the researched subject:

- As for the data collection this means, that neither introspection itself nor the introspective report will be restricted by predefined categories or questions.
- The data analysis will also be practiced in an open dialogic process and not with a predefined categorization scheme. The analysis however is not open to interpretations of the data. The structure of the topic will be discovered through the analysis of common patterns of the data.
- The subject will be respected in his subjectivity without any restrictions. This means, that disadvantages of subjectivity such as the holding back of information or the one-sidedness of a single introspection have to be accepted. Each member of the introspection group decides, how and how much he or she will report about his or her experience. The one-sidedness of a single introspection as consequence of a conscious or unconscious selection of contents of experience can be compensated with the introspections of the other members of the group.

The method, which has been developed through our practice of research, is regarded as open for change and adjustment. Changes may be indicated by the introspective research on the method's experiencing.

#### Experiencing the method

Group-based dialogic introspection is a method, which is experienced as positive, interesting, and productive. The group situation is regarded as helpful and stimulating though sometimes participants have to get accustomed to its rules. Despite its positive characteristics, there may be some difficulties associated with heuristic research (see also Kleining, 1995, pp. 231-249).

Problematic for researchers engaged in explorative research may be the abandonment of those ("pet"-) ideas, which are not in line with the data. Also problematic can be the acceptance of the fact that the topic of

research may change during the research process. This is contradicting the deductive-nomological paradigm that the topic of the investigation has to be well defined before starting the research and should be fixed until the end. Stability of the research topic might offer a feeling of security to the research person, which an explorative researcher has to miss. Also structural variation of perspectives may be experienced as difficult or seen as unnecessary. Analysis of similarities in general is the most difficult step because similarities and patterns are relations we are not trained to observe.

The introspective setting in particular may open a too direct contact to one's own experiences and emotions at least for some participants and some topics or some state of minds—this is a reason to deal sensibly with introspective material. Moreover, there may be blocking expectations (e.g. "I want to observe something interesting."), which can alter the experience. Our observation suggests however that insecurities of this sort are reduced by continuing systematic introspection under rules, which are known to the participants and accepted by them. The group situation on the other hand may motivate and encourage systematic self-observation and of course finding something new or solving an old problem is gratifying in itself.

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**Roles of researchers in historical introspective psychology<sup>1</sup>**

Gerhard Kleining and Peter Mayer

Why are we interested in historical research?

The paper presents various methodological approaches involving different roles of the research person, the topic of research, and its social environment in introspective research in classical psychology and the Würzburg School. Introspection has been the main method of classical psychology and the preferred method of the Würzburg School. Systematic application of introspection ended after a change of the concept of psychology and the role of researchers. Earmarks were continuous attacks by "objective" psychology of the nineteenth century, the verdict against introspection by Behaviorism and a widely accepted deductive paradigm in academic psychological research since the middle of last century.

The Hamburg group of psychologists and social scientists is trying to reestablish the method of introspection as a qualitative tool based on an explorative or heuristic methodology and a new "dialogic" research technique. Our attempt is to improve the usefulness and validity of the application of the introspective method in the history of psychology by moving from the classical (individualistic) and the Würzburg (test-person-centered) research to a new form of research design by introducing dialogic concepts. This involves the elimination of a fixed hierarchical role differentiation between the researcher and the subjects contributing data by introducing a role-changing and dialogic process between them and the stimulation of an inner dialogue. Researchers as well as "testees" should be treated as equally competent subjects, capable of reflection, observation, and communication. In this way, subjectivity in a controlled way should be brought back into introspective research.

For more detailed information on the method and the research role see Burkart (2002, pp. 91-98) and on data collection Kleining (2002, pp. 207-212), both in this volume. For information on the Hamburg research approach visit our homepage: [www.introspektion.net](http://www.introspektion.net) (please observe the German k instead of c in "introspektion").

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<sup>1</sup> We thank Thomas Burkart for comments.

## Introspective research in classical psychology: The self-experiencing individual

Introspection in classical psychology – circa 1880-1920 – was either experimental, e.g. "reaction" research with partly considerable technical devices, large series of tests and quantification (Wundt, Titchener) or phenomenological (Brentano, Husserl) with some variations in between.

Wilhelm Wundt defined psychology as the science of "direct experience" ("unmittelbare Erfahrung"), which sees inner and outer experience as only different points of view (Wundt, 1896, p. 9). The methods of the sciences ("Naturwissenschaften"), experiment and observation, are also applicable to psychology. "Pure observation" (Wundt, 1896, p. 28), however, as well as self-observation (p. 10), is not regarded as possible within empirical psychology due to the process character of psychic experience. Wundt (1874) transferred the method of the experiment from the sciences, in particular from physiology, into psychology, which enables the researcher to investigate psychic processes by intentionally creating certain sensations within the individual at a desired moment. The second method of the sciences, observation, he suggested, should be restricted to the study of general and rather stable mental products, as language, myths, or modes of behavior.

Psychology therefore has two exact methods corresponding to those of the sciences: the method of the experiment serves to analyze simple psychic procedures and the method of observation is used to investigate higher psychic processes and developments (Wundt, 1896, p. 29). Wundt originated a division of psychology into two fields, Experimental Psychology and "Völkerpsychologie" (which nowadays would be named "Cultural Psychology"), each using one of the two exact methods.

For Franz Brentano psychology was "*the science of psychic phenomena*" (Brentano, 1874/1973, p. 27) dealing with the "most dependent and complicated phenomena" (p. 39). Source of knowledge in psychology predominantly is "*inner perception* of one's own psychic phenomena" ("*innere Wahrnehmung*," p. 40). (Brentano's italics).

We would never know what a perceptual image is, a judgment, what joy and harm are, desire and disgust, hope and fear, courage and despair, what a decision and an intention of will would be, if not inner perception of our own phenomena would show it to us. (p. 40)

Brentano stressed "*Inner perception*, not inner *observation*" (p. 40, Brentano's italics). Inner perception never could become inner observation, which is restricted to the outside world. It is impossible to "observe" inner psychic phenomena the moment they occur, as rage. To

"observe" one's own rage would already have cooled it off. To overcome this disadvantage of inner perception Brentano suggested to use additional sources: previous experience stored in our memory, which can be observed and the *representation* of the psychic life of other people which "enlarges the specific facts for psychology a thousand times" (p. 61).

The obvious differences between Wundt's and Brentano's concepts of psychology – and the role of the psychologist in empirical research – should not obscure their *similarities*. Both believed that the contributions to psychological knowledge required the *personal experience* of the psychologist, which reflects a concept of individuality, reflexive individualism and potential potency of the researcher, to be an expert in his own right. It was the ideal of a self-experiencing and self-centered individual who is his own observer or recipient of his own inner images, his own data collector, protocol recorder, analyst, and informant. In this respect, his role of a researcher can be called highly autonomous and even solipsistic. (Note: philosophers in those days did not differentiate between men and women psychologists as all academics were men. We would relate their statements also to women of course).

The *differences* between both highly influential figures are equally visible. Wundt divided the field of psychology into simple and higher processes, ascribing different methods to the study of each—experiment and observation. Though the introduction of the experiment into psychology was a very important step forward methodologically, at the same time he narrowed the researcher's potential roles by restricting experiments to the study of only simple processes as sensations and to a quantification of the results. Wundt would not accept experiments with phenomena of higher complexity. He also would not apply the method of observation to the self. Brentano in contrast to him, thinking about complex everyday psychic phenomena suggested to listen to the inner self introspectively, to use memory and the representation of psychic processes communicated by other people as well. It is clear that Brentano's "everyday" and "phenomenological" concept was more attractive for the Würzburg explorative psychologists. It happened that Karl Bühler at the Würzburg institute got into a sharp controversy with Wundt on the role of the experiment (and the experimenter) in psychological research.

Introspective research at the Würzburg School: Introducing the testee as a source of knowledge

The Würzburg Psychological Institute under the direction of Oswald Külpe between 1896 and 1909 produced a number of empirical studies which were of high importance not only for the development of

introspective research but for qualitative psychology in general. The "school" was united by the topic–mental processes as thinking, judgment, and will—and not by a well-defined methodology, though all researchers used empirical research and the method of the experiment. The important difference to the role of the researcher in Wundt's laboratory was the particular use of testees in introspective research, first documented by Karl Marbe: the separation of researcher and data production.

Karl Marbe has been working at the Würzburg Institute since its foundation and became his associate director. The director was Oswald Külpe, a former student of Wundt, who had founded the Institute and certainly created the atmosphere, which encouraged his young students to explore various new methodologies and test approaches. Külpe did not publish a piece of research under his own name but participated as a contributor of data to his student's work.

Marbe's publication can be regarded as a door opener to explorative introspective research (Marbe, 1901, pp. 1-24, pp. 43-48; also in Ziche, 1999, pp. 78-97). Seen from Wundt's concept of empirical psychological research there were several important improvements opening up new opportunities for explorative research.

- He studied everyday and complex psychic processes ("Erleben," the word emphasizes the emotional factor in an experience): how judgments are formed and experienced. Everyday expressions as "we were at home yesterday" or "we will be at the railroad station tomorrow" are judgments or phrases to be regarded as "right" or "wrong."
- Though the research was performed within the Institute, the test situation was quite "natural": The researcher took notes on how the respondent reacted to the tasks and recorded whatever he said to the researcher (only men participated). Instruments as in Wundt's laboratory were not applied.
- Marbe used different respondent's introspection (his professors', colleagues', and students', seven in all—but not his own) and a large number of areas in which everyday judgments occur. He looked for a common pattern ("Übereinstimmung") in his "partly very different tests" (Marbe, 1901 in Ziche, 1999, p. 95) – a methodology of variation of data and analysis of similarities, which is an explorative or heuristic device.
- He freed methods from Wundt's restrictions: accepting inner "perception" as well as the general use of experiments—qualitative as well as quantitative. He seems to be the first to name and describe *qualitative experiments* in a psychological publication (1901, in Ziche, 1999, p. 83).



Marbe's results were correcting the leading theories of his time, including Wundt's: Judgments were not logical procedures based on division or combination of elements connected by associations, but psychic phenomena relating intended similarities or dissimilarities to existing mental images.

Seen from Marbe's methodological achievements the study of Narziss Ach on will and thinking is a step back (Ach, 1905). His own role as a researcher can be seen as that of a "controller." He developed a method of "Systematic Experimental Self-Observation" (Ach, 1905 in Ziche, 1999, p. 104) using various forms of safeguarding:

- The restriction of thinking to association, e.g. to senseless syllables,
- a particular "unnatural" setting in a test room filled with instruments (nine in all)—similar to Wundt's laboratory, (including chronoscope for measuring reaction time, morse pushbutton, ampère meter, electro resistor, card changer, sound producer, pendulum) and
- elaborated control of the testee's answers (called "Versuchsperson", also "Reagent" – reacting person p. 115). Answers were subjected to intensive interrogation by the "Versuchsleiter" (director or examiner, Ach himself) to find out whether or not the respondent reported what actually was in his mind.

However there was detailed recording of the respondent's answers—in one case as voluminous "as a book." Ach also noticed that repeating the tests with different persons and under varied circumstances could eliminate individual deceptions (p. 113).

Despite the rather authoritarian social setting an important result emerged: the proof of the existence of "determining tendencies," reported during a retrospection period after the actual test, showing intentional directions of the thinking process. The existence of "determination tendencies" also could be proven as existent after they had been induced by hypnosis. The machinery in the test room did not seem to contribute to any of the results.

Karl Bühler followed Marbe in his methodological openness and achieved the role of a discoverer. His translation of "eureka" ("Aha-Erlebnis") is well known. His methodology in his research on the psychology of thinking (Bühler, 1907, pp. 297-365; also in Ziche, 1999, pp. 157-209) and his role of a researcher is characterized by the following:

- Bühler studied everyday and complex thinking processes—which were far away from Wundt's "reaction" experiments or Ach's associations to senseless syllables. Examples are:  
"Can we comprehend the essence of thinking by thinking?" (Bühler, 1907 in Ziche, 1999, p.163). "Can you calculate the speed of a free

falling body? " (p.163). "Is the sentence correct: The future is in the same way conditioned by the present as is the past? " (p. 173)

- The respondents (Külpe and another university professor) were asked those questions, responded with a quick answer "yes" or "no" and then described more in detail what came to their minds in finding and formulating the response. Answers were given in several sentences and written down by the researcher. The setting seems to have been quite "natural" (for a university institute).
- There was a variation of testees and tasks – 352 individual tests of introspection.
- The tests were "qualitative experiments" in Marbe's sense—without using his phrase.
- The different segments of data were analyzed to show the "whole by a synthesis of them" (p. 183).

Results were manifold. Bühler found three different ways the mind deals with—or analyses—thoughts: dividing them into parts, following the genesis of them and destroying their complexity by memory which tends to keep only the key information of them, e. g. "description of an opposition" (pp. 182-184). His experiments showed many examples of "unanschauliches Denken" (thinking without concrete images) that many scientists in those days doubted to exist at all. His method (and results) were so different from the standard of experimental psychological research, established by the Wundt laboratory, that Wundt attacked his "Ausfrageexperimente" ("sound-out-experiments") fiercely which he returned by defending his methodology (Bühler, 1908).

#### The changing role of the researcher in introspective research

A change in the researcher's role from classical psychology to the Würzburg approach can be seen as follows:

- from simple to complex topics,
- from laboratory situations to a more natural setting,
- from reporting self-experience of an individual researcher to collecting data from a sample of respondents,
- from one-sided tests with large series of the same kind of tests (Wundt's laboratory) to a multitude of variations of tests and tasks centered around one particular psychological problem,
- from a simple quantification (Wundt's laboratory) to the use of qualitative verbal data (Marbe, Bühler), Wundt's "Völkerpsychologie" and Brentano's phenomenology however being "qualitative" from the beginning,

- from a "closed" methodology representing deductive rules to an "open" methodology to explore certain topics.

In sum: The role of the researcher in classical psychology was that of an "expert" in his own right. In Wundt's case, he was either in the field of experimentation or observation. As an experimentalist, he was working in a laboratory setting, full of machinery, collecting masses of data of a few particular kinds for measurement, applying strong and restrictive rules of testing. Results were gained by rigorous testing simple mental processes. In the case of Brentano, the role of the researcher was that of an expert philosopher who understood that the "empirical point of view" of psychology was his own ability to explore his inner life by being perceptive of it. Results in his method were gained by individual inner perception.

In contrast to both the role of the researcher in the Würzburg-type psychology was that of an organizer of research. They were collecting complex introspective data about everyday psychic processes from cooperating colleagues in a more natural social setting and probably a friendly and co-operative atmosphere under the direction of Oswald Külpe. The researchers were aware of the importance of a research methodology, which they developed and applied in a more or less "open" and explorative way.

*The means to achieve psychological knowledge was transferred from the individual expert to a more general methodology actively involving several cooperating persons in a social setting.*

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Chapter 9:

## **Collective memory work: The informant as peer-researcher<sup>1</sup>**

Ulrike Behrens

### Introduction

This article focuses on the methodological aspect of a research project<sup>2</sup>, which was carried out between 1999 and 2001 at the University of Hildesheim, Germany. Thematically, the project dealt with the subjective constructions and meanings which learning has for the individual learner, as well as with the question, to what extent these images of own learning can themselves be decoded as impeding or conducive conditions of learning processes (cf. Behrens, 2000; 2002). It was presumed that the configuration and thematic compositions in which learners arrange their learning, might differ from the scientific psychological or educational view of learning. Therefore a method was required which could support an open-ended and explorative research process. For this purpose, the method of Collective Memory Work, developed by Frigga Haug (1990) and others, was chosen. Beside the desired criteria, this method features a special research relationship, which tends to result in the suspension of the gap between researchers and researched. This new definition of the research relationship and therefore of the scientist's role along with its theoretical basis and methodological basics is to be discussed in this article.

### Goals of the project

The underlying research project intended results on two levels. Both levels are separate, but naturally interwoven at the same time: On the level of learning theory new insights were to be gained about the way learners construct learning as an aspect of their entire life activity and how they attach meaning to it.

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to David Whybra for his translation support.

<sup>2</sup> "Lernen im subjektiven Begründungszusammenhang statt Begabung als Erklärungskonstrukt für Leistung" ("Learning in the context of subjective justifications instead of giftedness as an explanation concept for achievement")

On the methodological level, a transfer of Collective Memory Work into working with seven to twelve grade students was to be tested and evaluated, whereby, however, the substantial characteristics of the method were to be maintained. Those characteristics are based on the theoretical framework and scientific categories of German Critical Psychology (cf. Holzkamp, 1983; Kruse & Ramme, 1988).

In the following, these substantial characteristics are to be pointed out in particular consideration of the researcher's role in Collective Memory Work. For this, there are five important theoretical basics to be briefly specified:

- Critical Psychology assumes a specifically human relationship between society and nature: As Klaus Holzkamp points out in his summary of categorical analysis results (Holzkamp, 1983), humans are the only animals who have developed a societal style of life-building in the evolution process. In other words: sociability is part of the human nature. Therefore, critical psychologists talk about the "societal nature of humans," transcending the well-known gap between nature and culture towards a new anthropological position.
- This societal style of life-building loosens the connection between an individual's activities, and its own survival, so that people may only have a *potential relationship* towards the world and their own action possibilities. This causes – briefly – the special human capability of freely deciding between different action opportunities which is, in turn, a serious problem for traditional social sciences with their condition-oriented methodologies, for it is not possible to find any conditions which really *cause* a specific human behavior. Instead of *conditions*, social science is confronted with people having subjective *reasons* for their behavior (Holzkamp, 1991, p. 6).
- Reasons are, as Holzkamp (1991, p. 6) pointed out, always "in person" – there is no way to find out subjective reasons using a methodological approach which ignores the individual's subjectivity. The only way of gaining valid results in social sciences is therefore to take up the subject's position. Thus, Critical Psychology lays a firm claim to being a "psychology from the subject's viewpoint," and so, to indicate this approach, the term "subject science" has lately won recognition.
- The claim of being a psychology from the subject's viewpoint, of course, requires a method different from traditional approaches, a method being capable of including the subject's viewpoint in all its richness. The methodological approach of Collective Memory Work meets this requirement.
- Also, this method is based on the subject-scientific assumption, that the act of socialization is not a passive imprinting procedure, but an active assimilation of the circumstances people come upon. In order



to distinguish both meanings of the term "socialization," Critical Psychology uses "Vergesellschaftung" (as the process of active production and re-production of society) instead of "Sozialisation" (as the one-way impact of society on individual development). While socializing in this *active* meaning of "Vergesellschaftung," people have to master the split between the maximum extension of their own capacity to act ("Handlungsfähigkeit") on the one hand and the avoidance of social restrictions on the other. This split can not pass off frictionless. However, at the same time, people are interested in seeing themselves as consistently acting persons; therefore they hide the various cross-purposes and compromises they had to integrate within themselves during the process of their socialization. Thus, people are usually not clear, what their own activities while installing themselves into society actually were. In other words: people don't know how and where it happened that they agreed to the restriction of their possibilities. Collective Memory Work is a method for recovering this hidden knowledge.

In the next paragraph, I will first roughly sketch the procedure in Collective Memory Work before going over to a discussion of the roles of group members and professional researchers within the research process.

#### The method of Collective Memory Work

When describing the *modus operandi* in research with Collective Memory Work, it is required to indicate that the methodical guideline is not bound to a standardized research program, but rather to the idea of a process, which is why the individual steps of the method can hardly be portrayed in detail. The most detailed and actual description can be found in Haug's "Duke lectures" (1999, pp. 199 ff., see also Behrens 2002, pp. 72 ff.).

The main idea of Collective Memory Work is that humans permanently (re-)construct and stabilize their societal and cultural conditions in their life activity. This takes place in a lifelong individual process of active socialization as developed above.

But, assuming that this affirmation to social circumstances is done in an active process as a kind of "voluntary acceptance" this also means that this acceptance (and therefore the rejection of the resistant alternative) becomes part of people's selves; it is blended with the self-concept, attached with importance, and connected to emotions. Even if realizing how people's own actions keep them in a state of subjection, it won't be easy to change their behavior, as it is too tightly interwoven with what is experienced as "identity."

Therefore, Collective Memory Work aims to analyze not only the social circumstances and restrictions which built the framework for active socialization, but it takes a close look at the everyday re-construction of those circumstances in individual acting. By going down to very short everyday scenes, it also views the net of emotions and meaning, importance, interconnections, and separations of the topic.

In the research process, this knowledge is used for the benefit of a more conscious handling of the given circumstances as well as of own wishes, motives, goals etc., in short: for liberation. The memories themselves are the material which is dissected and de-constructed in order to see behind the curtain of unquestioned implicitness.

This is done by surveying, analyzing, and dissecting self-written memory scenes. As people tend to smooth out their contradictions by the construction of their own persons and biographies, the procedure is also to find these smoothing-out within the written scenes. They appear – logically spoken – as strange breaks, inconsistencies, causal attributions, blind spots, and – linguistically spoken – as cants, flowery phrases etc. In a linguistic effort the scenes are mutually de-constructed in order to reveal the "surprises behind the comprehensibility."

Collective Memory Work's original research questions dealt with the way *women* actively integrated and daily integrate into a patriarchal society, stabilizing societal conditions, thereby taking part in the maintenance of their own suppression. The scientific challenge consists in the fact that by actively acquiring suppressing structures, those structures also become part of the person in the described way. Therefore, women can not identify and specify this process by just facing their own socialization process. In fact, it is likely that persons are not aware of important aspects of this factual self-hostility.

Concerning the topic of learning, a similar process can be assumed: Despite (or: due to) its fundamental function of expanding human's capacity to act, learning is very likely to be contradictory in terms of meaning, processes, experiences and function for individuals. Therefore, Collective Memory Work was chosen to survey the ways in which the meaning people attach to their own learning can be one reason for actual problems with learning.

#### Steps in the research process

The research with Memory Work is done by a collective, a research group, beginning with a shared question. Although Collective Memory Work basically works with the banal memories of the group members, it is no work without theory. Theories are always present, occupying the perception, representation and structuring of a topic in the social discourse. In people's minds, scientific concepts live in peaceful

coexistence with common traditional interpretations of reality, and inspire, inseminate and influence one another. In order to see by whom and in which way the field has already been occupied, and also in order to possibly find first answers for the own research question, relevant theories are studied. In this process it is possible to discover helpful traces, to identify the origins of one's own opinions and assumptions, and to formulate discomfort with improper descriptions and conceptualizations of the topic. The theoretical query work possibly meets the specification of the research question. In an open research process, it will hardly ever be completed, but its importance will later step back behind the work with the self-produced research material, which is the core of the method.

In the study, there were nine student groups aged 13 to 18, who worked on different aspects of learning, such as "learning and emotions," "learning targets," "role of the teacher" and so forth.

Matching with the chosen research question the group will agree upon a common title, under which every group member writes down a memory scene, describing an important incident, an experience associated with the chosen topic and scene title. The scenes ought to be as detailed as possible. They are written third-person in order to support an outside view on the writer's own experiences.

In the following common analysis of the first scene the text will be systematically de-constructed, which means, it is separated into its lingual constituents. The de-construction basically aims at revealing the implicitness and reality interpretations used by the author in order to make their own activities in the narrated situation comprehensible.

The strangeness of a de-constructed scene helps it to be looked at with an "outsider's view" and therefore to identify weird constructions and links, which would be understandingly accepted while reading the complete text, e.g. a diary. By this means it is possible to recognize the (logical and emotional) wrenches by which people worked themselves into contradictory circumstances.

As a next step, more scenes can be analyzed similarly in order to get richer results. Alternatively, variations of this proceeding come into consideration, for example by using the findings from the first scene analysis for the handling of further texts in terms of a focus of interest or a more special research question. Or the acting opportunities of individuals in given circumstances are focused upon by asking the authors to give their scenes a new end in which different actions and their differing outcomes can be imagined. Numerous additional possibilities of creative work with the material are imaginable and have partly been tested in projects (see e.g. Haug, 1983; Haug & Wollmann, 1993; Haug & Hipfl, 1995; Haug & Wittich-Neven, 1997).

After this short overview of the procedure in Collective Memory Work, I take a closer look at the roles of the group and the researchers, resp. the researched in this work process.

#### Roles of the group and the researchers

Looking at this kind of procedure one will find that Collective Memory Work is definitely a method of *qualitative* research, as the research groups analyze *qualitative* data material in a *qualitative* way. However, there are at least two important differences to traditional qualitative methods (such as narrative interviews, group discussions, content analysis of different kinds of texts etc.; cf. Flick, 1995; Lamnek, 1993; 1995) due to the claim of research from the subject's viewpoint. The first difference is the fusion of the researcher's role and the role of the researched; in other words: the researched and the researchers are the same persons. The second important difference is, that, because of this role fusion there is no personalized privilege of defining research topics and questions. These are usually developed by the group at the beginning and during the research process.

As already mentioned, Collective Memory Work takes place in groups which are established to work with a certain research subject. Of course, the group members can all be professional researchers, but they are more likely to be a group of amateur researchers, supported by one or two professional scientists. The basic function of the group is to make sure that the researchers do not get entangled with their own logical constructions and implicit assumptions.

This is a problem which is traditionally discussed under the keyword of "validity of self-reports" (cf. Stone, 2000). Actually, the research groups themselves even analyze their self-written data. Looking at the scientific discussion, one finds that supporters for the involvement of self-reports into social science – in agreement with the subject-scientific viewpoint – basically put forward the argument that without this approach it is impossible to gain insight into main aspects of human life activity. Opponents, on the other hand, argue that self-reports of informants can not be trusted. Obviously, the problem can not strictly be solved under the classical paradigm of psychology. Thus, del Boca and Noll (2000, p. 347) come to the conclusion that "self-report procedures can provide useful estimates (...) when conditions are designed to maximize response accuracy."

From the viewpoint of the above-developed term of subjectivity there are principally two reasons to be given for the problem's constancy: Firstly, with most of the research instruments researchers set an important predisposition by deciding on which questions can possibly be of interest in a specific thematic context. This includes instruments, in

which the questions are put in an open way, i.e. without specification of response options. Secondly, most of the instruments (especially multiple-choice-questionnaires) do give a number of response options. Though subjects have under these circumstances, for instance, the possibility to agree to given statements or to reject them on a multilevel scale, they can not influence or doubt the selection of possible statements itself.

In so far, the relative suspicion towards self-reports is absolutely justifiable. It is further supported by the fact that a research instrument can ignore the level of subjective reasons, but can not eliminate it. More biases might therefore be consisted in the subjects' attempts to respond in terms of social desirability, but also in their reflecting the purpose of the questions and trying to react in terms of a preferred outcome of the study. Finally, subjects could mainly concentrate on showing the most consistent and uniform picture possible of the own self.

As a fundamental consequence for the methodological approach to subjective construction and meanings of learning the following conclusion has to be drawn: All efforts of forcing subjects' to make "honest" or "true" statements or show "honest" or "true" reactions must fail more or less as long as their interests and motives for action are not given any consideration in the conception of the instrument.

For the sphere of experimental research, Bungard (1987, p. 378; transl. UB) comes – even more distinctly – to the conclusion, that "the elimination of biases is impossible, as the subjective interpretations of situations and the subjective motivations represent the constitutive conditions of any experimentation. (...) Also, the motivations, seldom mentioned in the category of 'artifact control,' can not be 'controlled away' but have also to be accepted as a genuine part of laboratory studies."

By showing the impossibility of artifact control, as Bungard argues, artifact research has accomplished its function and has become dispensable. The conclusion that has to be drawn from this direction refers to the fact "that in the course of empirical studies in many cases a reduced image of human beings with dubious anthropological presumptions is assumed. Therefore, the method should not be blamed for problems which are due to failings of the theoretical conception." (1987, p. 379; transl. UB)

Basing on the methodological requirements of Critical Psychology, Collective Memory Work takes a more radical path to solve this problem of the informants' credibility: as the individuals in the research group are informants as well as researchers who define the research questions and also develop the research process on their own, they are supposed to be personally interested in the better understanding of whatever topic they are dealing with. Therefore – as the research is also a matter of emancipation – nobody is considered to be interested in less than optimal results. Still, as the rich experience with subjects' reactions in research

settings shows, people are always in danger of interpreting situations and constellations according to their subjective view of the world. This is why Memory Work is done collectively not only as a usual practice, but as a characteristic requirement of the method. The group is the guarantor for the maintenance of an "outsider's view" as research attitude, which is substantial for Collective Memory Work. As Frigga Haug (1999, p. 200; transl. UB) points out,

"working with memories needs a collective, a group, because otherwise neither the ruling common sense, nor the critical objection, nor the consensus of reasoning, nor contradictory experiences, and also not the necessary fantasy could be mobilized. Although the method counts on the individual and implies an evolved individual development, it transcends the enclosure of the isolated individual towards an association of researchers."

In this view the group itself becomes the pre-condition for quality and validity of the research outcomes.

Looking at the role of the professional researcher within this kind of group work it shows that he or she is not necessarily needed to make a research process possible. On the other hand, looking at the real organizational circumstances, it is very likely that he or she is the person to be the most experienced in the practical implementation of the method. Therefore, in the course of the actual research process, the professional researcher acts as a facilitator in this literal sense: to be a facilitator means to make things easier for a group in every respect. It also means that the support given can vary from providing a room up to qualifying the group for using the method.

#### Informants as peer researchers

Including "informants" in the research process in this radical way means, of course, that there is a qualification requirement even for them: As they are seen as peer researchers in the context of Collective Memory Work, they need a substantial interest in the topic and have to engage voluntarily and actively in the research process. The more they are, in addition, experienced in using the method, the more far-reaching the results will be.

In the above mentioned Hildesheim study, the peer researchers were school students from different secondary schools. Working with this audience the project deviated from the previous practice of this methodical approach. Even if it was never only realized by groups of professional scientists, one can assume that it were mainly academics who learned Collective Memory Work during their university education

and introduced it to their later professional life spheres. In so far, it was a methodological risk to try the realization of this approach with students (the youngest were about 13 or 14 years old). Variations of the usual procedure were necessary in order to adapt it to the audience and the organizational conditions (cf. Behrens, 2002, p. 73 ff.).

As a result of the project experience, it can firstly be stated that Collective Memory Work is altogether suitable for working with school students. One vital requirement is the most possible voluntariness for their joining the process. For this, it makes sense to leave the school environment and to look for cooperation with institutions out of school (e.g. youth centers, clubs etc.), if possible.

For the theoretical work, including the acquisition of the methodical basics as well as of scientific works relevant for the research question, the project only created rudimental ideas. The theoretical work can not just aim at the teaching of already available knowledge, but targets the research groups' critical discussion of current theories starting from their specific research interest, without subjecting their own results to these theories. Therefore, this can only happen in a process of successive qualification in the progression of which the peer researchers become more and more versed in dealing with texts in general. However, this requires the possibility of leaving the end of the research process open, in order to be able to follow interesting findings and to allow a gradual qualification process of the peer researchers. Substantially, however, it is important that the timing suits the personal, organizational, and institutional conditions – and even under limited circumstances, interesting results are possible, which was shown in the Hildesheim project.

#### Answers to problems of qualitative methodology

In its radical way of re-uniting the researchers and the researched into one group of equal *peer-researchers*, the approach of Collective Memory Work provides an answer to some problems in qualitative methodology, resp. scientific methodology in general. These answers shall be demonstrated with respect to the experiences from the research activities with school students in our project on learning.

Firstly, Collective Memory Work is a way of dealing with the problem of ignoring the informants' subjectivity in qualitative research. Qualitative researchers have sometimes tried to give their results back to their informants in feedback communications after finishing the analysis of the data (e.g. Bär, 2000). A synopsis of experiences with this special social situation within the research process including an analysis of their implications for the research relationship has yet to be made. Also, unpleasant experiences are usually not published. However, it is very

likely that such feedbacks do not only lead to new insights, as reported by Bär (2000, Appendix 1), but also bother the informants, as they could feel the professional researcher had changed the intended sense of the given information (cf. Flick, 1995, p. 170). This effect does not depend on the researcher's accuracy in the material's analysis – even a mere transcription which changes the spoken word into a written document can cause feelings of strangeness which might activate severe defense towards the research project as people could feel betrayed by the researcher.

Using Collective Memory Work explicitly as a subject-scientific research method in the Hildesheim project on learning, the participating students were involved in every step of the process. To clarify the importance of this involvement: It took about a quarter of the time to approach the research question from the viewpoint of the participating researchers. In order to make sure to really work on relevant questions it was necessary to start with involving the participants in the formulation of the questions. That means, that there was no research question (except for the overall topic of learning) which was pre-formulated by the group facilitator. Also, as a next step, it is particularly important for the research group to agree on a common title for the memory scenes to be written in order to make sure that every group member can come to a suitable experience to write down.

Secondly, Collective Memory Work comments on the postulate of value neutrality as, for instance, addressed by Groeben & Scheele (2001). Haug's subject scientific approach, as well as Groeben's "Research Program Subjective Theories" comes to the methodological conclusion "that the change of subject (for the 'better') caused by the process of research within the RPST [Research Program Subjective Theories ; UB] is not seen as a mistake that is brought about by the method, but as an explicit ideal goal which is to be aimed at and defended." (Groeben & Scheele, 2001, p. 9)

Consequently, empirical results of Collective Memory Work as well as of subject scientific approaches in general, can not be regarded as finally valid until the practical realization of its implications in the peer researchers' real lives prove the adequacy of the theoretical analysis (cf. Markard, 1993, p. 46 ff.). According to the short-term style of the research work in Hildesheim it was not possible to mutually develop practical steps for the participants in order to check the adequacy of the analysis results. However, slight changes of the individual approach to learning situations are possible and would be attended and evaluated in a longer-lasting research process.

Therefore, finally, Collective Memory Work also stands for an emancipatory effect of social sciences in terms of the subject-scientific model of the human being. According to the objection, the method could unsettle the peer researchers who start reviewing their lives and active



socialization from a scientific viewpoint, Frigga Haug (1999, p. 222; transl. UB) reacts:

"- there is a justified concern that by thinking about and working on oneself, one could become unsettled. But without unsettlement there is no growth. Additionally, the wish of living without unsettlement is mistaken.

- it is not the purpose of Memory Work to provide therapy for afflicted persons. (...) But, if the increasing awareness of oneself, knowledge about socialization processes, competence about language and meaning, critique of theories are seen as basics and preconditions of growing acting capacity, Memory Work will aim at such impacts."

Of course, the identification of researched and researchers also causes problems in real research processes. Taking one's own life and action as a research field is much more difficult than taking up the well-defined position either as the informant or as the researcher – in other words: as either the object or the subject of cognition. Also, Collective Memory Work, as qualitative methods in general, requires a lot of experience for all persons included in the process to come to satisfying results. And finally, really perfect conditions for a concentrated, long-term research process are seldom found. But, on the other hand, there might be no other way to come to relevant results. If this is the case, social scientists should rather accept these limitations as developmental necessities than dealing with a lot of well-known problems of theory and methodology induced by the negation of the subject's viewpoint.

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**"From the field - into the field – outside the field"**  
**Proximity and distance of the instrument researcher in**  
**half structured interviews<sup>1</sup>**

Bernd Reinhoffer

Proximity and distance in quantitative-oriented research

We find elements of proximity and distance in all stages of the empirical research process (Lenzen 1989, 618), starting with the formulation of the research questions, composing and elaborating the research instruments, then collecting and organizing data, and finally in the stage of interpreting them. In quantitative-oriented research the implementation of distance between researchers and research field, or rather the members of the research field, is regarded as characteristic of research work. Scientists are expected to remain in their system of categories. They have to look at the research field from a distance, to gather data, to look for variables and correlations and to check all research processes.

Concentration on the various tasks of the research process might well decrease, if the researchers take over the world views, the standards and the models of behavior of their interview partners. No identification with interviewees! No "going native!" (e.g., in Atteslander, 2000; Konrad, 1999; Kromrey, 1998). Each interviewee has to be confronted with exactly the same questions in exactly the same words. The interviewers are trained to give only short explanations. In principle we are dealing with a multiple-choice method, challenging responses and arranging them.

Proximity and distance in qualitative-oriented research

In contrast to this the representatives of qualitative-oriented research regard the proximity to the research field and its members as one of the typical features of qualitative oriented research (e.g., Flick, 1998; Glaser, 1992; Mayring, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1991; Patton, 1990). Understanding implies taking over the the points of view of the interview partners and looking at the world through their eyes. Identification with the members of the research field serves for instance to reduce prejudice,

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<sup>1</sup> Edited by Jennifer Medford

to create awareness of and sympathy for the "worlds" other people live in. Thus the researchers improve their perception of the "reality" other people create. Nevertheless the necessity remains to collect data, to organize it, to work on it and to present interpretations (Flick, 1995; Oswald, 1997).

Fieldwork is a central activity of qualitative methods. "Going into the field" means having direct and personal contact with people in their private or professional environments. There is a clear contrast between close-ended questionnaires in quantitative-oriented research and open-ended interviews in qualitative-oriented research. "A structured, multiple-choice questionnaire requires a deductive approach because items must be predetermined based on some criteria about what is important to measure. An open-ended interview, by way of contrast, permits the respondent to describe what is meaningful and salient without being pigeonholed into standardized categories." (Patton, 1987, p. 15)

The polarity between distance and proximity, between the perspective from outside and the identification with interviewees still remains, however, no matter whether a research team prefers quantitative or qualitative orientation in research processes. Lamnek (1995) speaks in favor of "temporary giving up of distance" (p. 235): "Not the distinction between distance and identification is the central point, but rather the ability to deal with one or the other as circumstances and situations require" (translation by B. R.). The decision between distance and proximity thus has to be made at different times and at different stages in research processes.

#### A teaching research project

##### Research questions and the research process

I will clarify this now using examples from a teaching research project. In this teaching research project, with its main emphasis on qualitative orientation, I have tried to fulfill Lamnek's demand.

What do teachers say about their attitudes towards teaching subjects in the first two grades of German primary school? Do they give priority to what is often called "culture technology" (Kulturtechniken), that is reading, writing, arithmetic? Or do they proceed from the situation of the class or the pupils and deal with commonplace themes, into which they integrate courses of instruction in the culture technology? Are they able to put their attitudes into practice without any loss at all? To what extent do ideals correspond to everyday work in the classroom? And how do teachers react if faced with differences between ideals and practice? I decided to focus on elementary science (Reinhoffer, 2000; Reinhoffer, 2001). Elementary science is the translation of the German

primary school's subject "Sachunterricht." It contains elements not only of natural and technical science but also of social studies and enables children to cope with their local environment on all levels.

In order to find out about the attitudes of teachers to elementary science, colleagues of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, the elementary instruction ("Anfangsunterricht"), were interviewed in an empirical pilot study. An interview guide gave orientation in half structured interviews (problem-centered interviews according to Witzel, 1985) for the progress of the conversation. But the teachers could also narrate and express themselves openly. An opportunity of which 29 teachers of public primary schools in big and small towns and villages in Baden-Württemberg availed themselves extensively. They presented a lot of information about their personal attitudes towards elementary science and their daily practice in planning and holding lessons. With astonishing insights into their daily working life!

Temporarily giving up the distance

How did we try to fulfill Lamnek's demand? For instance by following our motto "Researchers – coming from the research field! - Researchers – going into the research field! - Researchers – leaving the field!" I will choose several points to demonstrate.

#### *Defining research questions and hypothesis*

I come from the research field myself. As a teacher I worked for years in primary schools in Baden-Württemberg. It is not only this professional experience that I share with the colleagues in the research team, but also many dialogues and conversations with teachers helped us to get an inside view, to define aims, questions and theses. Back at the university we had to decide from a distance whether they had to be revised to suit our research design.

#### *Collecting data*

##### Defining impulses for half-structured interviews

The proximity we gained to the field led us to withdraw the multiple-choice questionnaire we had worked out. In the pretest teachers gave signals that the questionnaire could not capture the complex processes of everyday teaching. A qualitative approach, however, offers the possibility to get close to the people in order to understand personally the realities and minutiae of daily life. So we decided to go into the research field to search for more proximity and collect data using open half structured interviews and to leave the field in order to reflect on and interpret the data mainly using qualitative data analysis according to Mayring (2000).

### Finding interviewees

Merkens (1997) warns there could be "gate keepers" blocking access to the research field. These contact persons could prevent further advance into the field. But if we strive for proximity we can counteract any such tendencies. As I come from the field, an approach was easier for me. I speak the same language as the interviewees. I know conditions of everyday work and I can react to impulses. But distance remains necessary. An examination of the contact from a distance is required to recognize blockades and distortions and to assess the quality of statements.

### Shaping interviews

It was no problem to contact teachers, pupils and principals. Being acquainted with the institution school and its processes I was able to get on well with the interview situations. In face-to-face interaction Interviewees didn't remain in distant positions, interruptions caused by everyday procedures in school could be easily managed. It was possible to get data at close range, thus promoting the openness of the interviewees. Some extractions from interviews may illustrate how interviewees express this openness (translation by B. R.):

I1= Interviewer  
T= Teacher

Interview 12, line 200-205:

I1: To what extent do you follow the themes of the curriculum?

T: Honestly, not that much, I have to tell you [Interviewee laughs]

Interview 27, line 298-300

T: Tell me, if I talk too much!

I1: No, not at all!

Interview 28, line 580-583, 585-595

T: And math, that's something [moves her hand like throwing something away]

[Interviewer laughs].

Shut down that thing, so nobody can listen

[Interviewer laughs]

Wow!

I1: Ha, it'll be anonymous.

T: [Interviewee laughs]

Nobody will recognize me, yes.

Math

[with a derogatory tone]

### Coding in qualitative data analysis (Mayring 2000)

If the researchers are acquainted with the research field, more proximity and identification becomes possible. The members of the interpretation



team then know the field from experience, from an inside view. They are acquainted with its situations and with the language teachers are speaking. In the discussions about interpretations of statements it is important to keep proximity to the field - in combination with critical consideration and observation from a distance. Thus each member of the coding team can be granted the right to put a veto on each coding decision.

## Conclusions

"From the field - into the field – outside the field"

We understand our motto "Researchers – coming from the research field! - Researchers – going into the research field! - Researchers – leaving the field!" in different ways: At least a few of the researchers or members of the interpretation team should come from the field itself (e.g., some of us have worked for years at school) - or go into the field to get acquainted with it, to acquire an inside view. Thus the researchers know the field, its conditions, situations and its language. "Researchers leaving the field!" looks also for distance in the research process. The researchers can improve their interpretations by leaving the field and taking a look from the outside.

In half structured interviews the interviewees respond in their own words to express their own personal perspectives. Half-structured interviews allow the interviewer and the coding team to enter another person's world, to understand that person's perspective (Witzel 1985; Fontana & Frey 1994). The turn from proximity to distance and from distance to proximity remains an act of balance. What are the characteristics of a successful act of balance? Methodological discussion is still in the beginning stages and we are just now starting to look for criteria!

## Advantages - a story

A few weeks ago, at the meeting of the Working Group for Empirical Educational Research (Arbeitsgruppe für Empirische Pädagogische Forschung =AEPF), I met some colleagues dealing with PIRLS/ IGLU (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study/ Internationale-Grundschul-Lese-Untersuchung), an international research project of the IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement). Their survey deals with the ability of pupils to read. They decided to give feedback to the teachers of the classes involved. However only a few answered. Why? "We are scientists - not teachers, we don't know!" they told me. I think if they had actually involved teachers in the research process or if they had gone into the field to get acquainted with

it, thus gaining more proximity to the research field, they perhaps(!) could have given feedback which matches with the interests of teachers.

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**The researcher is the instrument**

Stephan Marks and Heidi Mönnich-Marks

## Purpose and description of the study

The research project 'Geschichte und Erinnerung' (History and Memory) aims to gain insights in the origins of national socialism and its psychological and social dynamics: How could national socialism happen? How could (can?) Hitler and the Nazi movement win the 'hearts' of millions of people? We try to find answers to this question by interviewing men and women who, at that time, had not opposed, but rather accepted, agreed and committed themselves to Hitler and national socialism ('bystanders' and 'perpetrators') - for example as members of NSDAP, SA, SS or other Nazi organizations.

The interviewees all belong to the so called 'second generation' (we chose the unprecise, even dubious term 'generation' in order to express the transgenerational quality of the matters addressed in this article (Eckstaedt, 1992; Epstein, 1987; Grünberg, 1987; Kittler, 1999, Mas-sing & Beushausen, 1986, Moser, 1996; Westernhagen, 1987). In order to compare and control our findings, additional interviews are being conducted by students (i.e. members of the 'third generation') as well as several intergenerational sharing groups. The members of the research-project undergo professional 'supervision' through external 'supervisors' ('supervisors' in the sense of psychoanalytical Balint-groups or counselling). In addition, after each interview a 'peer-supervision' (i.e. supervision among colleagues) is held.

The interviews are being analysed using social scientific and linguistic methods as well as 'depth hermeneutic' group discussions (the term 'depth hermeneutic' translates the German 'tiefenhermeneutisch,' Lorenzer, 1986, a blending of depth psychology and hermeneutic). In doing so, we pursue the following questions:

- a) What motives and reasons are expressed in the interviews? What made the Nazi movement attractive to the interviewees?
- b) In what way is the experience of the Nazi years still present, cognitively and emotionally, in the interviewees today? What do they remember and how do they narrate this?
- c) What happens when members of the 'first' and following generations communicate about national socialism? What 'disturbances,' misunderstandings, transferences and counter-transferences occur? What is the structure of reciprocal misunderstanding? What are the dynamics of relationship and conversation?

The research findings will be applied (through affiliated sub-projects) in the relevant fields of practice, particularly in: a) school teaching on the subject of national socialism and its prevention and b) geriatrics, gerontopsychotherapy, social work and social education, hospice and pastoral care (Marks, 1991a, b; 1999; 2000).

## Findings

The following three examples are taken from different interviews. In the *first example*, the interviewer asked for the interviewee's involvement in the "BDM" (a Nazi youth organisation for girls):

"You said, you were an excited 'BDM' leader. Can you remember what was so exciting?"

Mrs. A.: "- Yes. - Sports and games with children. Just the way I had experienced it in the Christian youth group, this is what I carried on."

Readers of this section of the transcript may get the impression that Mrs. A. equates Christian and Nazi youth groups since both kinds of groups carried out the same kind of activities. However, this impression changes once we listen to her voice. Her excitement becomes audible just for a split second in the way she says "yes," framed by a little pause before and after. Following the "yes," she seems to censor herself and continues to speak with a 'normal,' non-excited tone about her involvement in the "BDM." So once we listen not only to *what* the interviewee says, but also to *the way* she narrates, it becomes evident that both kind of groups were *not* equal, they differ by quality.

*Second example:* Mr. K. frankly narrates numerous occurrences during the Nazi years. Grown up in poverty, he was patronized by the Nazis and educated in an elite Nazi school. Impatiently he awaited the day to get old enough to voluntarily join the war. The last months of the war, during the withdrawal of the German troops, he was part of a pioneer unit that had "the order to destroy everything." Mr. K. illustrates these activities with a story, when he and his companions blew up a grand piano in a theatre of a Belo Russian town.

It looks like Mr. K. has well dealt with and reflected his Nazi years. The interviewer is impressed by the interviewee's "authenticity" and "credibility" and pleased to have such abundance of stories on tape - "even though Mr. K. incessantly narrated very much and it wasn't easy to get to ask him a question." The peer-supervision is filled with the interviewer re-narrating Mr. K.'s narrations, which at one point annoys one of the group members.

Later on, Mr. K. joins one of our sharing groups. He ruthlessly dominates the group, doing to death all questions and all contributions

of other group members with his stories. The interventions of the group's moderator, trying to limit Mr. K.'s monologues, are overrun by him as well: he just keeps talking. More and more members leave the group; the third meeting is the last one since all but two members had staid away. In our reading of these no-shows, Mr. K. still repeats "the order to destroy everything," now using his narration as a weapon: to kill all living thing, all relation, all communication, all question, all sharing. To kill the group.

At this point the brief moment of annoyance during the peer-supervision begins to make sense; it could be interpreted as follows: The annoyance might have been a reaction to the counter-transference that the interviewer had been caught in, since he was repeating the interviewee's monologueing in the peer-supervision. It had been the first clue to Mr. K's destructive dynamics, that fully became visible in the sharing group. Ignoring these signals and relying solely on the tape or transcript would have lead to misunderstand Mr. K. in an important aspect.

*Third example* (from an interview conducted by a student):

Student: „Have you ever seen Hitler?"

Mrs. L.: "Once in R. I have seen him. He had put up at a hotel in town, at the market place. And the crowd was standing at the market place when he appeared on the balcony. And something so fascinating was emanating from him, one cannot describe that. (...) This fascination, I don't know, whether this was something demonic, I – I've decided, not to analyse this situation any more because I don't understand it. You won't believe, what one swallowed out of discipline later on. (...) Imagine the masses of unemployed with no social security whatsoever – desperate – one cannot imagine. Now imagine somebody comes, promises jobs and bread – and makes it come true! That was like blood, suddenly rushing through a paralysed organism. Into the very rear end. The youth, who had seen no perspective, was spell-bound the most (...) We were all interwoven so much."

Mrs. L. describes her relation to Hitler and national socialism with words like "fascination" and "spell;" other interviewees talk about "excitement" and the like. Terms like these can be found in social science literature on national socialism as well, however mostly understood as 'strong agreement' to the Nazi's political program. This may be a *qualitative* underestimation of national socialism and its effect on people – as we learnt, when we analysed the interview as a whole, including its effect (counter transference) on the interviewing student:

The student described his encounter with Mrs. L. with shining eyes and terms like "fascinating." For two hours they had been sitting face to faced, intensely looking into each others eyes. After the interview, the student walked away in an animated way – and the next day he "had to"

return to Mrs. K. for a second conversation. Later on he refused to listen to the evaluation of his interview in the college seminar group: "I don't want to hear that (...) I want to keep it in my memory the way it is, simple-mindedly ("unbedarft"), without any judgements or anything. (...) I don't want to tear it apart."

Obviously, the interviewer is identified with the interviewee and 'infected' by her fascination, including her refusal to reflect about the Hitler's fascination ("I don't understand it" / "I don't want to tear it apart"). Also, for the student the interview is still present ("I want to keep it in my memory the way it is") – just as national socialism is still present in most of our interviewees (even those, who cognitively distance themselves from Hitler and national socialism).

Fascination, spell, timelessness, refusal to reflect cognitively, interconnectedness (identification) – these are all aspects of a *magic* structure of consciousness, as we learned from interviews like this. Therefore we assume, that national socialism had an effect on a number of people not primarily on a *cognitive* level of consciousness (cognitive knowledge of and 'agreement' to their program). Rather in a subtle, unconscious ways as excitement, 'spell', identification, fascination, or unconscious 'infection' (i.e. counter-transference). Notice the linguistic connection between the words 'fascination' and 'fascism' (Marks, 2001).

### Methodological consequences

In order to analyze an interview, it may, depending on the purpose of the study, suffice to look at its transcript. In other cases, this may not do, for example if the interview deals:

- with issues that are connected with unpleasant (pain- or shameful) emotions,
- with issues that are repressed or denied by the interviewee,
- with influences on the interviewee that he or she had never been conscious of (for example political propaganda or 'seduction'),
- with issues that are 'taboo' (i.e. that shall not be touched or talked about (Freud, 1953a).

Interviewees may not be ready or able to talk about these issues. This does not necessarily mean they are 'telling lies.' Considering the way the brain and the memory work, there may be physiological reasons why they do not talk about certain aspects of their lives (Schacter, 2001; Markowitsch, 2000). They may not be aware of them, not 'have' them at their conscious avail. So these contents may not be expressed in the *manifest* text.

However, this is not to conclude, that these contents do not exist. Rather, there are hints at them: a) in the *latent*, unconscious text of the interview, b) in the interaction between interviewer and interviewee, c) in



the counter-transference. In detail: in addition to the manifest text, additional, latent information may be found:

a) 'between the lines' of the interview, for example in the way, certain remarks are said (change of voice, its loudness, speed, intonations); in slips of the tongue (Freud 1960), corrections, dislocations, pauses, breaking off of narration, empty words; the context of a phrase, contradictions, in the relation between answer and question; nonverbal signals (knocking on the table) etc. (Deppermann, 1999) - as in the first example.

b) in the interaction between interviewer and interviewee as well as in 'scenic information'(Lorenzer, 1986): For example in the way the communication is organised (monologue or dialogue?). In the way the interview is arranged (as a Kaffeeklatsch? alcohol?), its specific atmosphere. Through 'disturbances' or 'misunderstandings' during the interview etc. In his essay 'Remembering, Repeating and Working Through' Freud had described the unconscious dimension of memory and the power of its effects. The patient reproduces the forgotten "not as a memory, but as an act, he repeats it, without of course knowing that he is repeating it" (Freud, 1953b; Jureit, 2000). As in the second example mentioned before.

c) in the effects of the interview(ee) on the interviewer (counter-transference): Emotions, that the interviewee has not to his or her conscious avail, are not somewhat locked and 'contained' in his or her psyche. Rather, they are projected (Carl Jung had even concluded, that all of the unconscious is projected; Jung, 1953). They may exceed such power, that the interviewer is forced to feel them (in psychoanalysis this mechanism is described as projective identification). Therefore, the interviewer becomes the 'container' of the interviewees unconscious emotions (as the analyst does for the client's unconscious emotions in psychoanalysis). As in the third example presented before.

In some ways the development of depth psychology and qualitative research may be paralleled: In the beginning Freud, coming from a natural scientific point of view, had claimed, the analyst should be like a surgeon, aseptic, unbiased and objectively observing and mirroring what's going on in the client. He was shocked to learn, that clients did shake his own emotional balance, that he did get involved, did have reactions. So in the beginning counter-transferences were regarded as stain and all his efforts concerned the question how to get rid of them. Decades later, modern psychoanalysis has learned not only to accept counter-transferences (as 'something that happens'). Rather, counter-transferences are valued as tools of immense value to understand the clients' unconscious (Gysling, 1995).

Ethnologist and psychoanalyst Georges Devereux transfers these insights in behavioural sciences: counter-transferences offer the most significant information about the object. Their analysis represents the

"king's way" of scientific research, especially if the research object arouses fear (Devereux, 1967; Mruck & Mey, 1997; Schneider, Stillke & Leineweber, 1996). Certainly, national socialism is an object that does arouse fear.

## Conclusion

Depending on the purpose of the study, it may be necessary to combine the analysis of the manifest interview text with an analysis of its latent text, the interview-interaction and counter-transference. Doing so we may gain additional insights in the interviewee that allow us to double-check or deepen our theory.

In order to gain insights in the latent text, the research team experienced to be helpful: a) to base the evaluations primarily on the voice, not on the transcript of an interview, and b) to evaluate the interview situation, its scenic information, interaction and counter transferences through supervision and peer-supervision as well as depth hermeneutic group discussions. We learned to be attentive to our reactions and emotions during and after interviews, peer supervision, supervision, and evaluation sessions. We experienced that 'disturbances' and reactions, even if they appear minor, may hint at important aspects that may be hard to find in the manifest text. We learned that the researcher is the instrument.

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**Qualitative content analysis – research instrument or mode of interpretation?**

Phillipp Mayring

The paper discusses the procedures of Qualitative Content Analysis, developed within a interview study with unemployed teachers in the early eighties (Mayring, 1983; Ulich, Hausser, Mayring, Strehmel, Kandler & Degenhardt, 1985), to compare them with other qualitative oriented procedures and to determine the role of researcher between the poles of technician and interpreter. Even though this approach of text analysis has strict rules, clear procedures and the demand of strong reliability, my argument is that the procedure of assigning categories to text within qualitative content analysis remains a process of interpretation. This is shown with an example of coding an open-ended interview. But first I want to characterize and categorize qualitative content analysis.

## Trends in qualitative research in psychology

Qualitative approaches within psychology have strong roots, reaching back to Aristoteles or Dilthey. Especially within the first generation of modern psychology (e.g., Wilhelm Wundt, William James, Sigmund Freud, Jean Piaget) the methodological orientation was widely qualitative. The dominant role of behaviorism in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and furthermore the phase of professionalization of psychology after 1950 led to a drift towards quantitative methods, especially experimental designs and complex statistical procedures of analysis. Only in the eighties qualitative approaches reawakened within psychology (sociology and educational science remained much more open for qualitative approaches) (see Mayring, 1987; 1989).

But academic psychology especially in Germany had great problems accepting open ended research strategies, free interpretations, and neglecting classical research criteria like objectivity, reliability and validity.

Qualitative Content Analysis (Mayring, 2000a) on the other hand was able to establish itself within research methods, because of its systematic ongoing and integrative demand (cf. Mruck, 2000).

## Foundations of Qualitative Content Analysis

Qualitative Content Analysis tries to use the methodological strength of content analysis, established in communication research (Krippendorff, 1980), for systematic analysis of even huge amounts of textual material. But it rejects simplifying quantifications of classical content analysis and tries to elaborate the qualitative steps of analysis. These are some central points of the procedures of Qualitative Content Analysis (cf. Mayring, 2000a; b):

- Fitting the material into a model of communication: It should be determined on what part of the communication inferences shall be made: on aspects of the communicator (his or her experiences, opinions, feelings), on the situation of text production, on the socio-cultural background, on the text itself or on the effect of the message.
- Rules of analysis: The material is to be analyzed step by step, following rules of procedure, devising the material into content analytical units.
- Categories in the center of analysis: The aspects of text interpretation, following the research questions, are assigned to categories, which were carefully founded and revised within the process of analysis (feedback loops).
- Criteria of reliability and validity: The procedure requires to be inter-subjectively comprehensible, to compare the results with other studies in the sense of triangulation and to carry out checks for reliability. For estimating the inter-coder reliability we use in qualitative content analysis (in contrary to quantitative content analysis) only trained members of the project team and we reduce the standard of coder agreement.

The main procedures of qualitative content analysis are inductive category formation and deductive category application. In inductive category formation the categories are developed and formulated out of the material. The deductive procedure has formulated the categories prior to the analysis, following the research question and tries to assign those categories to textual material. The following model demonstrates the analytical steps of both processes:

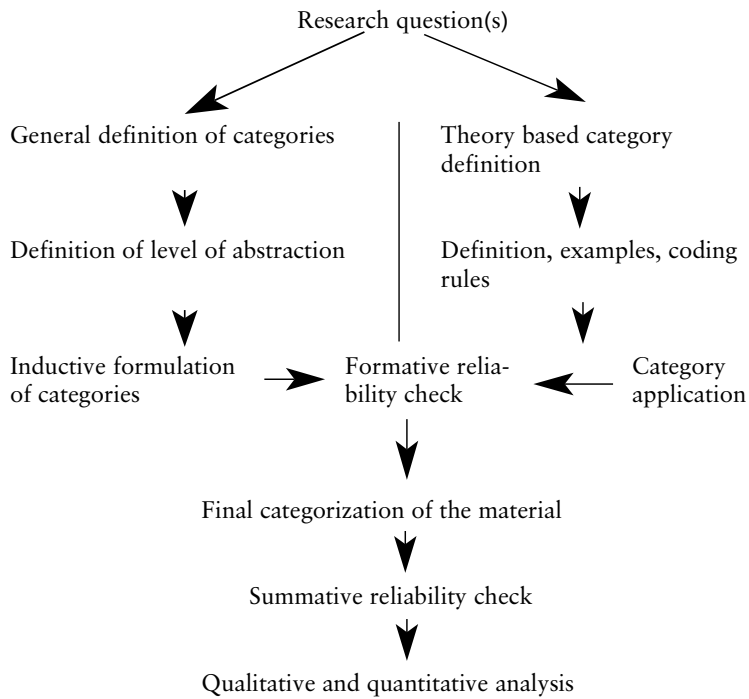


Fig. 1: Step by step model of qualitative content analysis

Within the inductive procedure (left wing in the model) there is only a general definition of categories as a selection criterion and a determination of the level of abstraction of the categories, done before text analysis. Then the material is worked through, line by line, formulating categories according to those two rules as close as possible to the text. The deductive procedure (right wing of the model, fig. 1) is recommended if there is sufficient theoretical preknowledge about the research topic and if the research question is sufficient precise to preformulate categories before the concrete text analysis. The main procedural step here is the theory based development of a coding agenda, containing definitions, examples and coding rules for each category. Using this coding agenda the material is worked through, looking for passages corresponding to the categories. For both procedures a formative reliability check consists in a discussion of the categories and their adequacy to the material within the research team. Normally a reformulation or revision of categories or rules of analysis is the result of this discussion. After the final

categorization of the material a summative reliability check tries to estimate the agreement of coding between different content analysts (inter-coder reliability). Then different qualitative and quantitative analyses of those categorizations are possible.

#### Examples of studies

To demonstrate the procedures of Qualitative Content Analysis and to discuss the role of the researcher, some examples from ongoing studies are presented. Material from two own studies are introduced: First, an analysis of interviews and learning diaries of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students (cf. Laukenmann, Bleicher, Fuss, Glaeser-Zikuda, Mayring, Rhoeneck, 2000; Glaeser-Zikuda, 2000) and second, an analysis of open ended interviews with unemployed teachers after the breakdown of German Democratic Republic (Mayring, Koenig, Birk & Hurst, 2000).

The first study gives an example for inductive category formation. In open-ended half-structured learning and emotion diaries the students had noted their learning efforts and learning emotions. Twenty-five 8<sup>th</sup> grade students from different achievement levels and different school courses took part in the study over a period of six weeks. The first step of qualitative content analysis was the extraction of positive learning emotion categories. According to the coding rules (definition of categories; level of abstraction) categories had been formulated like:

- Cat. 1: Happy to master the subject
- Cat. 2: Fun in the lesson today, how good we learned
- Cat. 3: Happy about positive feedback
- Cat. 4: Funny texts in the language course
- Cat. 5: Fun hearing and interpreting poems
- Cat. 6: Amazing and impressive experiments in the physic course

The next step is to summary those categories to main categories. This process of grouping categories is an act of interpretation, depends on the analyst's preknowledge and the theoretical background of the study. By no means it is an automatic process. The solution found in this example had been to assign two main categories: Fun about the learning process (cat. 1 to cat. 3) and fun about the learning subject (cat. 4 to cat. 6). The background idea for this further categorization had been to determine, what on a more general level was considered as positive in those learning emotions. This was an important differentiation, because we found that the first main category occurred more often than the second. The conclusion was, that it is more important in school to support joy and fun in learning processes than only to create positive feelings. Of course other solutions of finding main categories would be



possible, depending on other research questions and other theoretical considerations.

Another example for this theory driven way of building main categories within inductive category formation is taken from the same research project. We tried to find categories for concrete learning activities within the learning and emotion diaries and formulated them on an abstraction level of subject indifferent, basic activities. The most frequent occurring categories had been (cf. Glaeser-Zikuda, 2000):

- Cat. 1: to read in a book
- Cat. 2: to copy something
- Cat. 3: to read other types of texts
- Cat. 4: to recognize what we learned
- Cat. 5: to pay attention to something
- Cat. 6: to think about something
- Cat. 7: to look something up in a reference book
- Cat. 8: to memorize something
- Cat. 9: to look at an exercise book

Because the field of learning research is well elaborated and there are a lot of theoretical approaches to learning strategies (cf. Weinstein 1987; Schmeck, 1988), the main categories were developed corresponding to theory based learning strategies. The three main categories had been:

- Rehearsal: cat. 2, cat. 8 and cat. 9
- Elaboration: cat. 1, cat. 3 and cat. 6
- Metacognition: cat. 4, cat. 5 and cat. 7

Those categories are developed in a much stronger interpretive way, in a strict correspondence to previous research and theoretical considerations.

In general we can say that the inductive category formation never is a theory free, automatic procedure. Theoretical considerations, processes of interpretation are a necessary component. "Creating categories is both a conceptual and empirical challenge; categories must be 'grounded' conceptually and empirically. That means they must relate to an appropriate analytic context, and be rooted in relevant empirical material." (Dey, 1993, p. 96)

The second fundamental procedure of qualitative content analysis is deductive category application. Here the categories are developed in advance, in respect to the theoretical background of the study. A coding agenda for each category contains theory based definitions and coding rules. Let us have a look at the concrete process of applying those deductive categories on the text. This example comes from a study on

psycho-social consequences of unemployment (Mayring, Koenig, Hurst & Birk, 2000). Fifty teachers getting unemployed in consequence of the German unification after 1990 took part in open-ended interviews. The material was transcribed and analyzed by qualitative content analysis. One step of analysis was to apply categories in a deductive way to the text. So we tried to appraise the degree of stress of the interviewed persons, working with three deductive categories: no stress, little stress, and high stress.

The Coding Agenda contained definitions and coding rules like the following:

Category	Definitions	Coding Rules
no stress	no negative aspects; only subjectively unimportant stress; whole situation positive	coping efforts not necessary
low stress	single negative factors for the subject; pos. and negative aspects in the situation	coping possibilities seem to be clear
high stress	overall negative situation; some severe bad aspects, depressed, insecure	no coping possibilities are seen

Tab. 1: Part of the coding agenda for stress categories

The purpose of those content analytical rules is to make the process of category application as controlled as possible. Let us now look at one of the interviews:

CASE A

I: Is it a stressing situation for You now?

- ... (reflecting) ... Well, that's a difficult question. Until now, I have to say, I'm not through with this, because it had been so disappointing. You got your next job, you had to fight for it, and now I'm employed for a probationary period at the youth hostel, I hope to get the job in June, and to bring in my experiences as teacher, I think it's a big challenge.  
... But sometimes I'm feeling depressed, for example if you don't know how to manage a situation in the new job. But I hope things will come to a good end.

After the first sentence of the answer we think the teacher is highly stressed, because he is troubling with the situation, the situation is unclear, is disappointing. In the next sentence he tells us, that he has managed the situation perfectly. He speaks about a new challenging job, about hope. No unemployment stress would be the right coding. But then he tells us something about feelings of depression and the impossibility to cope the situation, a sign for a high stress coding. A clear decision, what category would be adequate is only possible on the background of the whole interview and is not an automatic process of coding rule application.

A second text example from another interview out of this study may underline this point:

#### CASE B

I: Well how is the situation in the moment, is it stressing?

- Yes, well I think that one is not able to cope with this, that they simply push you aside.

I: And what is the central problem for you?

- Well, the injustice. That they took things into account for their decision which are not right.

I: Are there any positive aspects in your situation now?

- Well, I would say, I'm not bad in my new job selling contracts for the building society, I got used to it very well, I'm one of the best. That's always with me, to be better than the others. But, well, it's a job I haven't chosen by myself. And if you are looking at the employed teachers, this is hard. But on the other hand I'm glad that I don't have to work in this educational system any more.

Here again the decision for a category swings from sentence to sentence. He shows us a hopeless situation with no possibilities to cope. But he as well has found a new job and is very motivated in it. Perhaps as a form of defense he tells us that he is glad to be out of his former teacher job. Here we understand that we need to have background material to understand his situation (development of the educational system after the German reunion). Again we do not see a simple automatic coding process. Even if the coding agenda is more elaborated, containing further coding rules and text examples for clarification, the coding remains a complex act of interpretation.

#### The role of the researcher in Qualitative Content Analysis

On this background I try to discuss the role of researcher within the content analytical work. The two poles of orientation are:

- The researcher as strictly applying content analytical rules in a mechanical, automatic way, trying to be constant, observable, intersubjective understandable and able to be checked by inter coder reliability tests;
- The researcher as being a free interpreter of the material, having content analytical steps and rules only as orientation, establishing a subjective relation to the material.

We tried to argue that qualitative content analysis remains interpretation. The central step of relying categories and parts of the text material is not an automatic technique but a reflective act of interpreting meanings in the text. So the procedures of quantitative (e.g. computerized) content analysis are fundamentally different. The content analyst has to put all his or her competencies, preknowledge and empathic abilities into the process of analysis. But he or she has to do this within the framework of content analytical rules.

Even in research projects which try to mix or combine qualitative and quantitative approaches (which is a special possibility and concern within Qualitative Content Analysis, cf. Mayring 2001), the researcher should not jump between different roles but follow the above outlined model of competent, empathic and responsible interpreter working within the framework of rules of analysis.

Within this context the role of theory is very important. This is discussed by Hammersley & Atkinson (1995) when they reject the positions of naive positivism and pure naturalism as philosophical background for qualitative research. They argue that reflexivity is a better concept which forces the interpreter to give reasons for his or her interpretations and to take into account the whole background. Silverman (2001) is another advocate for a strong theoretical basis for qualitative research. The theory based reflection of each act of data analysis instead of unreflected, automatic, technical procedures, is maybe the main advantage of qualitative oriented data analysis.

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## Application

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Chapter 13

### **The significance of ethnic and national identity of female researchers in practice with young migrant women: Experiences of allochthonous and autochthonous researchers<sup>1</sup>**

Christine Riegel and Asiye Kaya

The current paper concerns the relationship between researchers and their subjects. Specifically, we address the question: What is the significance of the national or ethnic origin or group identity of female researchers for qualitative research with migrant populations in general and with young migrant women in particular?

The theme is approached from the perspective of two female researchers who are currently participating in a qualitative study of young female migrants. Despite similarities in our ways of questioning and our methodology generally, we differ in one point which we would like to place in the center of the current discussion: Our origin or migrational context. Asiye Kaya is herself a migrant with, like her young female subjects or their families, origins in Turkey and current residence in Germany. Christine Riegel, in contrast, has no migrational background and belongs to the majority of the German society. In spite of our differing research projects, we both employed the socio-biographical method and conducted one-on-one narrative biographical interviews with young immigrant women living in Germany.

To differentiate our backgrounds, we have used the terms *allochthonous* (differing from the majority culture) and *autochthonous* (member of the majority culture). If one assumes that subjects' statements must be understood as context- and situation-related it seems plain that the national or ethnic origin of the interviewer could influence the course of an interview, especially when questions raised concern the experience of migration, inter-ethnic relations, and related discrimination and racism. This aspect should be considered when evaluating subjects' statements.

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<sup>1</sup>We would like to thank the Hans Böckler Foundation for its financial and conceptual support of our doctoral research. In addition, we thank Nell Zink for her translation.

The question of whether research with minority group members should be conducted only by members of the respective minority, or whether such research is qualitatively better, has been a topic of discussion in Germany since the 1980s, and not exclusively in women's studies (cf. Mecheril, 1999). The discussion follows the questions raised by women of color and women with migrant backgrounds regarding the largely white and middle-class nature of the women's movement and women's studies. Among other points, critics charged that white women's research and writing reproduced current social inequalities -- that they made their subjects into objects, ultimately using them to assure their own dominant positions in the research world and in society as a whole. Such charges resulted in demands for increased minority participation in research, at least where research on minorities was concerned (cf. Davis, 1982; Hooks, 1981; Schultz, 1990). From a political point of view, the demands are entirely justified. Nonetheless, today's researchers do not assume a postulate of affectedness (cf. the methodical postulates to women's studies of Maria Mies, 1978)'. That is to say, they would not immediately draw conclusions about the quality of the research. Helma Lutz, an experienced and thoughtful migration researcher, assumes "that the 'affectedness principle' does not by itself guarantee better research" and disagrees with "the opposite assumption, that 'non-affected' persons cannot conduct personally involved research on ethnic minorities" (Lutz, 1991, p. 64). However, Lutz significantly adds, any inequality present must be taken into account throughout the research process.

In the following report on our experiences as female researchers with and without migrational context, we would like to examine the question of how this aspect, whether the researcher belongs to the same minority group as the subject or to the dominant majority, affects the research situation. What opportunities and what difficulties for the course and analysis of the interview are associated with each contrasting situation?

In our partially shared assessment of the interviews, differences and distinguishing features became apparent. We would like to present these using examples, first from the point of view of the researcher whose origins are shared with the women questioned, and then from the perspective of the autochthonous researcher.

Shared first language between researcher and subject - diversity in communication

In qualitative research, language is the main tool through which we seek to understand the subject's world. Immigration creates an opportunity to communicate in several languages on a daily basis. Language develop-



ment is influenced by lifestyle, and languages often have differing priorities in different media in accordance with whether the message has emotional or professional/institutional content. Each language inevitably carries cultural aspects of the respective country -- style, expression and usage vary inter-culturally -- so that verbal communication in interactive situations must be decoded in a culture-specific manner.

As a researcher who speaks both languages, German and Turkish, I allowed interview subjects (young ethnically Turkish women in Berlin and their mothers) free choice of interview language. Without exception, the mothers chose Turkish. With their daughters, my experiences varied. Even where both languages were used in the interview, most of the young women used one more intensively. Like my interview partners, I used both languages alternately. With attention to the situation and interview partner, I switched languages when, for example, I noticed that certain concepts were not well understood in one language or the other, or whenever difficulties in mutual understanding arose. I would like to illustrate this with an example.

Before beginning the interview, I spoke with Meral (all names of subjects have been changed) in Turkish about my request. In conclusion I did not present her with a classical invitation to relate her story (cf. Schütze, 1987; Rosenthal, 1995), but only a brief question indicating that she was now free to begin.

A: ... and what has your life been like up to now?

M: In what regard? (laughs quietly)

A: As a "Lebensgeschichte" [life story] in every regard. How your life has gone from your birth until today, what you've lived through, what your "Lebenserfahrung" [life experience] is, I'd like to ask you to tell me about it.

We both spoke in Turkish, except for the terms *Lebensgeschichte* and *Lebenserfahrung* which I formulated in German. From the first moment, I regarded Meral's question as a request for clarification, and therefore included the German words for "life story" and "life experience" in my extended invitation in order to clarify my interests. Here I assume, as an interviewer, that in certain thematic contexts the young women are more familiar with German than with their own native language. The switch between the two languages proved in many cases to ease communication. The flexibility makes it possible for both interviewer and subject to employ a multifaceted verbal communication that is further enhanced by a paraverbal cultural component. One-to-one translation of the responses presents difficulties that will not be discussed at this point.

As a result, all subjects who were fluent in both languages employed them both in the interview situation, if to differing degrees. This

switching between languages will be demonstrated with the example of Hasret, 20, a native of Berlin. Before the passage that follows, she related how her parents came to Berlin from Turkey. In the passage, she speaks of her social contacts to other Turkish women in Berlin. She begins in German:

*"For that reason we have a lot where we could go, but with my grandmothers and so on, they weren't here either. They were all back there. Of course that was not so nice. [brief, soft, nervous laughter and change into Turkish] That's the reason my mother named me Hasret ["longing"]. [smiling] She longed for her mother and for the others, yes."*

In this passage, which concerns the family's separation due to its partial immigration, she appears emotionally moved. In the moment when she begins to speak of her mother's longing as symbolized by her own name, she becomes especially emotional and switches to Turkish. For this switch, two aspects play a role. Firstly, she heard this background information originally from her mother in Turkish. Secondly, the passage concerns an emotionally loaded theme, her mother's experience of separation. Especially in a biographical study concerning questions of identity and the positioning of an immigrant woman in German society, languages preferences in the interview situation can give us important clues for our analysis.

#### The researcher as (un-) categorizable insider

In almost every interview, the subjects volunteered unsolicited information on the theme of different ethnic and religious groups among people of Turkish origin. I was occasionally asked explicitly about my ethnic origins. In response, criticism of one group or another might be manifested more strongly or softened for my benefit.

Gülnoz, an Alevi Moslem mother who is also involved in an Alevi organization, has trouble explaining to her two daughters that in her childhood she suffered under the necessity of hiding her Alevi identity from fundamentalist Sunni Moslems. For this reason, she would not like her daughters to marry Sunni men.

*G: So, I'm afraid, I would not like him [a future husband] to be a Sunni. I'd rather they married Germans, but I would never wish for a Sunni. I don't know if you're Sunni or Alevi?*

*A: Alevi.*

*G. You're an Alevi. Sorry, but even if you were Sunni, I would have said the same thing.*

Due to her experience, Gülnaz has a distanced if not negative relationship to Turkish Sunni Moslems. Even as husbands for her daughters, she would prefer a German to a Turkish Sunni. In this case, the differences and difficulties with the "other" within the group of supposed compatriots comes to the foreground, de-emphasizing differences with the majority German society. We assume that these differences are more likely to be explored in the presence of a researcher from the same culture because the subject can then assume that the researcher understands the socio-cultural context.

Beyond the examples given, I often found that my Turkish origins had advantages and disadvantages for the openness of interview subjects. Daughters' loyalty to their parents was expressed clearly in nearly every interview. Here the fact that I come from the same cultural background presented a moral obstacle to the daughters' expressing criticism or disloyalty. However, when the discussion involved the social and moral values of the majority society, I was treated as an ally.

In general, communication was greatly helped by my possession of the same socio-cultural background knowledge as my interview partners and by my ability to choose a language to fit the respective situation.

#### The autochthonous researcher as "outsider"

Autochthonous researchers normally have less access to the aforementioned contextual knowledge and linguistic competencies, at least when they work, as I do, with women from several different countries of origin. This was clearly the assumption of my subjects as well. I got the impression that they were more hesitant to speak of certain aspects of their lives, those which they see not only as private but also as culturally specific (e.g., certain celebrations, family traditions, and even daily family life), especially at the beginning of the interview. When they did so, I clearly held the position of an outsider to whom much must be explained. Such passages were introduced in the interview situation with the words, "You know, for us it's like this ...." The task of familiarizing a stranger with a situation that to oneself appears perfectly normal can lead to new insights on the part of the subjects, since the limited perspective allows them to see themselves and their way of life from a novel point of view. Here, the fact that a German researcher is interviewing migrant women and thus making the experience of "difference" and "foreignness" even stronger can help both researcher and subject to gain insight. Maja Nadig (1992) shows how the methods of ethno-psychoanalysis can make the asymmetric relationship between researcher and informant in the research process conscious or open and thus provide the analysis constructive access to the "mutual perception of foreignness" (Nadig, 1992, p. 152).

For many young women, an initially hesitant attitude towards me was joined by skepticism regarding my knowledge and true interests. Sepide, for example, was at first quite skeptical with regard to my competence and my attitude as an autochthonous researcher. This was expressed, for example, in her observing carefully whether I wrote her name correctly, and correcting me immediately. In the interview as well, where she spoke otherwise very openly about her life and its difficulties, it again became clear on account of her name that she had no great faith in my knowledge and interest in her. When I asked for a moment to formulate a question, the following misunderstanding took place:

C: *Umm, yes, wait a second [German "wart mal"]*

S: *My name isn't Fatma! [firmly, quickly]*

C. *[laughs] I said, 'wart mal,' not 'Fatma.' [with emphasis] Wart mal.*

S: *[laughs] Oh!*

She seems to assume that I cannot remember her name and am familiar only with a less complicated and more frequently encountered name, Fatma. Possibly her skeptical attitude towards me implies a fear that I see her only as an (exotic) scientific subject and am not interested in her personally -- not even in knowing her name.

The cautious and mistrusting attitude of Sepide makes clear that our relationship is not characterized only by (value-neutral or -equivalent) differences between our social starting points, but that these differences reflect an unequal power-relationship which is manifested in part in the relationship between autochthonous and allochthonous populations. This was also expressed in the interview situation and cannot, despite possible and in this case successful attempts to close the gap on a personal level, be completely alleviated.

The outsider position of the autochthonous researcher can also encourage openness in the conversation. We found that subjects were willing to address certain topics, e.g., the relationship with the country of origin or with religion, with fewer inhibitions than in conversation with a member of their "own group." With me, an outsider, the young women did not enter into a conflict of loyalty. Mihriban told me that where her critical views regarding Turkey or Islam are concerned, she has repeatedly come into conflict with other young Turkish people and on that account has stopped addressing these themes in their presence. In our interview, however, she spoke at length about her political orientation and used the interview situation to present her opinion which differs >from that of the majority of ethnic community. She knows that she is free to do so within the interview framework without encountering resistance or disagreement. Informants might also tell me as a merely uninformed or tolerant outsider -- however they assess me -- quite a bit

without encountering contradiction. This possibility of uninhibited self-expression (cf. Lutz, 1991, p. 70) is used by the young women with regard to values and norms of behavior such as body presentation, sexuality, relations with boys and men, and conflicts with parents.

#### The researcher as representative of the majority society

The outlook is quite different when the discussion turns to relations within Germany. Here, certain expectations of me and my attitudes and way of thinking as a German are ever-present in our communication. As an autochthonous researcher, I am always a representative of the German majority society. In part, the interview with me presented a platform for the subjects to engage the dominant discourses in German society. This especially affected discourses in which young migrant women are seen primarily as oppressed, dependent, and backward. The young women are certainly aware of these discourses and are constantly confronted with them in their daily lives. They sought in the interviews to correct these images. This sometimes happened only indirectly, as for example in the answer of Roula to my question about past experiences of difficulty and conflict in her life: "I have to disappoint you. I was, well, I've never actually been in a really difficult position."

With her first reaction to my question, it becomes clear that she assumes that I expect her and her life situation to demonstrate problems and deficits as predicted by the dominant social discourse, and that I want her to confirm my expectations. She hesitates to accept the image which puts her into the role of victim, since she sees herself as an active and successful young woman.

Other young women used the interview with me as a member of the German majority as a possibility to explicitly undermine these images, as for example Mihriban, who spoke at length about existing stereotypes of young Turkish women. Her way of dealing with these stereotypes is to convince others that there are differences between Turkish women and that she herself does not conform to these images. She says:

*"... and when people think, oh, that's a Turkish woman and everybody knows what Turkish people are like, then I want, when I plan something in my future, I want to prove that the exact opposite is true of the prejudices people have, and the negative things. And I already try to prove that, when people meet me or at work and they see ... , I already try to prove it to them, that it's really not that way."*

One can assume that in her statement she is not only addressing me as an interviewer but also the majority society as a whole, as represented by me in my capacity as interviewer and researcher. Mihriban would like

in general to present an image that contradicts the picture of the "typical Turkish woman," and she uses her participation in the interview to do so. Through previous research relationships with me, she knows that through the context of our research her statements may reach a broader public. Possibly she understands my work as a sort of mouthpiece thought which she can present her opinion to the broader German society to which she hopes to prove herself.

In summary we can determine that the research situation in which I act as an autochthonous researcher with young allochthonous women carries certain difficulties inherent in our unequal social position, and that these difficulties affect the interview situation and are difficult to overcome. Great sensitivity is required on my part as a researcher, as well as a critical consciousness of my socially privileged position, both in my contact with the interview partner and in my assessment of the interview itself. Yet the meeting of two different (not only ethnically) contexts presents valuable opportunities for mutual recognition and learning.

## **Conclusion**

It became clear that the women questioned used the interview situation quite differently depending on the ethnic and national origin of the researcher. We were able to distinguish differences in the selection of themes, which due to the narrative construction of the interviews was left up to the women questioned, as well as in the way in which certain themes were addressed or avoided. In the interviews conducted by the autochthonous researcher, the young women take off thematically from differences between Germany and their country of origin; in the interviews conducted by the allochthonous researcher, they chose to emphasize differences between ethnic groups and religions within a single country.

Furthermore, it was shown in this context that broad socio-cultural contextual knowledge and linguistic abilities of researchers increase the possibilities for communication and the exchange of information. These competencies are more often displayed by researchers from the same socio-cultural background than by researchers whose origins differ from those of their subjects. The openness of the subjects toward the researchers varies, as we showed, from theme to theme. The migrational context or minority group membership of a researcher can be in one case helpful for communication and in another inhibiting. In the last analysis, a relationship of trust is always necessary for communication, and this is not dependent only on the ethnic background of the interview partners.

However, it can be assumed that the women questioned categorize the researchers, and not only according to their ethnic background. It

was demonstrated that subjects know how to instrumentalize the interview situation and indeed, the researcher -- the autochthonous differently from the allochthonous -- for their own ends. The researcher here played the role -- depending on the themes addressed and on the group membership of the subject -- of ally, neutral outsider, potential adversary, or extension of the women questioned.

In conclusion, we found that neither interview situation was "better" or "worse," but that both combinations carry risks and opportunities for communication and for the enabling of mutual insight.

In conducting interviews as well as in their analysis, it is nonetheless imperative that this aspect of the interaction -- whether the researcher is conducting research with members of the "own" group or a "foreign" group -- be considered. Furthermore, implicit inequalities which affect the respective positions of the researcher and the subject must be addressed. In this case it is to be assumed that the life situation of the researcher and subject can be clearly distinguished (e.g., in class origin, education, age) even when they belong to the same ethnic or national group, and that the research relationship is informed by diverse asymmetries (cf. Lutz, 1991; Nadig, 1992.) Especially on the part of the autochthonous researcher, great sensitivity and knowledge of the unequal social starting positions of herself and her subjects are desirable.

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**Research on interpersonal violence - a constant balancing act<sup>1</sup>**

Silke-Birgitta Gahleitner

"Sexual abuse, because of the shame and secrecy that surrounds it, is not an easy problem to study ...." (Finkelhor, 1986, p. 199)

## Introduction

Interpersonal violence is an area of research which touches on highly intimate and painful spheres and experiences. In the attempt to establish relationships between the individual biography, abuse experiences, the traumatic sequelae and their integration researchers are confronted with special ethical problems which need to be reflected upon and addressed in a balanced manner. I shall illustrate these problems with examples from my doctoral thesis and make some suggestions as to how they can be solved. Without making any claims to presenting a complete picture. After briefly presenting my own study I would like to start by talking about the balancing act between demonstrating solidarity as a researcher while on the other hand subjecting my data to a scientifically 'neutral' analysis. I shall then go on to explain in somewhat more detail some specific aspects of the context of data collection, taking the interview situation as an example. In conclusion, I shall point to some ethical aspects of the context of data analysis in research on interpersonal violence.

Brief presentation of a study on gender-specific ways of coming to terms with sexual abuse

In my work as a social worker and psychotherapist I have been confronted with the question as to whether there is a difference between the ways boys and girls deal with experiences of sexual abuse over the course of their development. If we had a greater knowledge of how boys and girls come to terms with the experience of sexual violence this might give us a deeper insight into the problems involved and provide new ideas for the development of differential approaches in the counseling

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<sup>1</sup> translated from German by Deirdre Winter, B.A./Britannien, Dipl. Psych.

and psychotherapy of survivors of sexual abuse. On the basis of a previous exploratory study in which I interviewed experts on the subject I have developed a multi phase study design that incorporates both qualitative and quantitative procedures and focuses on the coping strategies of men and women and their immediate significance for the practice of counseling and therapy. In addition to difficulties in doing justice to the complexity of a research issue that is so practice-oriented (cf. Gahleitner, 2001) I was confronted in particular by ethical exigencies arising in the research context which I would like to discuss in more detail in connection with the qualitative part of my study.

#### Between solidarity and 'scientific neutrality'

Research on interpersonal violence should take a stance for ethical reasons. This requirement of partiality with research participants is not new in psychological research, and particularly not in research on power relations, as was reflected in the opening statements of last year's conference in Blaubeuren (Bergold, 2000). But how can this stance be reconciled with the conventional requirement of scientific objectivity? In his important work "*Anxiety and Method in the Behavioral Sciences*" (1992) Georges Devereux demonstrated the psychodynamics of defense operative in apparently objectifying methods. He points towards an inevitable 'emotional involvement' of the researcher with her or his material, especially in the social sciences, which can lead to anxiety and must therefore be reflected upon. The critical question as to whether "...objectivity is possible, or even ethical, when researchers study oppression" (Thompson, 1995) is also posed in feminist and inter cultural research. As researchers we are strongly influenced by social conditions, including their inherent power relations, and they must be reflected upon if they are not to be reproduced yet again. If we acknowledge this mutual dependency between researchers and research participants, the position that the research process is a 'passive, objective process' must called into question.

In order to be able to "*capture the phenomenon*" (Denzin, 1989) when it comes to ways of experiencing and perceiving social reality (Bohnsack, 1999; Mayring, 1991) it is thus helpful not only to objectify one's data in a process of abstraction, but to allow oneself to become involved in an interaction with the research participants to be receptive to "*the actor's point of view*" (Witzel, 1982, S. 38), in other words, to acknowledge them as experts on their own situation. In the field of sexual abuse, in particular, with informants who have experienced being degraded to the status of objects, this would also seem an ethical exigency. It is, for example, the only way to gain access to the abused subjects' own views of their specific modes of experiencing and per-

ceiving the coping process. However, this requires that they actively collaborate in the research process and that researchers maintain an open attitude, reflecting upon their own position (Stanko, 1997; Volmerg, 1988, p. 201f.; Becker-Schmidt & Bilden, 1991).

Thus, when investigating interpersonal violence one's own female or male life circumstances is always implicated. The location of and reflection upon these relationships constitutes the first important step in achieving understanding, and at the same time makes it possible to regain a certain distance from the subject one's research. Dan Bar-On (1996), who emphasized in connection with his research on the Holocaust the necessity for self-reflection, said when looking back on one of his most difficult research projects: "*Had I not considered my own needs, I am not sure I would have been able to listen to those of my interviewees.*" (S. 13).

It would thus seem desirable in the research situation to open oneself empathically and in solidarity for the participants' viewpoints, but at the same time to subject these viewpoints to a scientifically adequate analysis (cf. also Devereux, 1992; Thürmer-Rohr, cited in Koch & Ritter, Egartner & Holzbauer, 1994; Stanko, 1997): "*Reflective distance, as opposed to a simply defensive distance, means ... the ability ... to give up distance as required by the situation, i.e. contributes to a better understanding of the process*" (Birgit Volmerg, 1998 p. 136; translated by the translator of the present article).

#### Oscillating between a data collection and a counseling situation

The interview situation is not an every-day situation. It rests on a hierarchical relationship and is usually far from the ideal of balanced reciprocal communication. Not only do the partners have different interests as regards the scientific aspects, but they also derive different levels of 'benefit' from the situation. Feelings of hurt resulting from different expectations of the situation often lead to confusion (Flick, 1999). These power structures are inherent in all research situations. However, in connection with experiences of violence and abuse of power they play an important role. In the field of interpersonal violence the interview should therefore be planned and conducted with particular care.

Even if they are willing to talk, people who have been through traumatic experiences differ widely in their need and ability to communicate what they have experienced (Cirrie & McLean, 1997). For survivors of sexual abuse it is often particularly difficult to verbalize their experiences and talk clearly about their traumatic injuries. In addition to the difficulties involved in putting their experiences into words, trust also plays an important role. Survivors' capacity to trust may be considerably impaired as a result of the traumatization. The interview should

therefore be conducted with care and flexibility and focus either more on narration or more on supportive dialogical inquiry, depending on the situation and the interviewees' linguistic abilities. In any event, the limits of the interviewees' willingness to talk should be respected.

Stretches of narrative talk tend to be particularly rich in emotional content in terms of the criteria of richness of content, specificity and depth (Mey, 2000). However, if such content is included there is no small risk that this will trigger spontaneous re-experiencing of the traumatic material. On the other hand, avoiding or rebuffing such narratives can also lead to ruptures that subsequently substantially impair the openness and quality of the interview. Thus, conducting interviews in the field of interpersonal violence can be likened to walking a tight-rope. In some cases it can be helpful to clarify in advance or at the beginning of the interview how stable the interviewee currently is. Overall, the initial sequence can provide numerous opportunities to ensure that the interview takes a positive course (Thompson, 1995).

In my study I found it a great challenge to try on the one hand to avoid losing sight of the interviewees' central themes, i.e. to follow the narrative they develop and the opportunities they offer for further inquiry, and on the other hand constantly to make decisions as to when to ask questions that go deeper in order to develop the theme and obtain sufficient material for the process of understanding - and still at the same time to keep an eye open for possible risks for the interviewee. While some of my interviewees produced tape after tape without any extra effort on my part, with others I repeatedly had to use narrative prompts and from time to time even personal contributions<sup>2</sup> in a cautious attempt to encourage them to talking about their experiences at all.

Following the above-mentioned requirement of self-reflexivity the researcher should, however, also see her-/himself as part of the research situation. Hunches, doubts, conjectures, appraisals of the situation, observations of special circumstances surrounding the interview and nonverbal elements all have an effect on the context and the course of the interview but are only incompletely expressed in the interview script, or not at all. *"In certain cases writing a so-called post-communication description (abbr.: post-script) after each interview ... can provide the interpreter with important data which can help to understand individual*

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<sup>2</sup> Researcher self-disclosure, when carefully and appropriately offered, initiates authentic dialogue. It is a way of sharing the self of the researcher, exposing beliefs and feelings, and contributing to the construction of the research narrative. (Arvay, 1998; cf. also Thompson, 1995).

*passages of the interview better and to complete the overall picture of the problems in terms of content* (Witzel, 1982, p. 92; translated by the

translator of this article). In the field of interpersonal violence these notes made spontaneously immediately after the interview can prove to be particularly useful for data evaluation (Thompson, 1995).

In light of the above it is evident that not only methodological, but also trauma-specific aspects must be taken into consideration in a process of careful, context-sensitive structuring of the interview. Thus, the fact that interview situations in which traumatic material is addressed may come close in character to a counseling session is not only a risk - there is now a consensus that counseling and therapeutic qualities are an important prerequisite if research in this field is to be conducted satisfactorily.

The therapeutic relationship is also an inter-subjective, dialogical process. In successful cases it can be described as an understanding in mutual empathy and is associated with similar problems to the interview situation. What Ferenczi attempted to solve with his basic attitude of mutuality has been further developed into concepts such as 'partial commitment' and 'selective disclosure' in humanistic forms of therapy. The therapist is expected to migrate along a continuum between rigid abstinence and limitless openness in dependence on the situation and the indication, in order to find a shared form of relating with the patient in which clear, reciprocal perceptions are possible in personal integrity (Petzold, 1996): *"The partners to the dialogue are con-sorts. This is a characteristic of the therapeutic relationship .... which holds within it the potential for genuine understanding, a certain sharing of each other."* (loc. cit., 1996, p. 334; translated by the translator of this article).

And it is here that we find the interface between research-driven and therapeutic interaction, that is, in the attempt to understand from the position of the outsider, to gain empathic insight into the personal world of another individual. In such delicate areas this undertaking must be associated with the assumption of responsibility. Trauma researchers advocate regular research supervision and training for this purpose<sup>3</sup> (Skinner, 1998; Rosenbaum, 1988; Stanko, 1997). However, it remains a challenge to the researcher to draw the limits at the right place, in particular since there are no rules or agreements to guide one. *"Especially within biographical research, it seems less like a formal research set of priori rules and more like an intervention without the clear*

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<sup>3</sup> A methods workshop led by Ingrid Mieth, which was held once every three months and designed to fit my specific requirements, was particularly helpful for my research process and data analysis phase. This workshop is run by the Alice Salomon Doctoral Program for Students as an adjunct to the regular supervision of doctoral theses.

*boundaries or a contract that a clinical intervention contains as a given"* (Bar-On, 1996, p. 9).

### Between genuine understanding and interpretative autonomy

The interpretative power inherent in the research process does not exclude the possibility of misinterpretations in the phase of data analysis. In conclusion I would therefore like to talk about some specifics of the context of data analysis in research on interpersonal violence.

In such a complex and potentially stressful interview situation as described above the question of the validity of the interviewees' accounts inevitably arises. Here again, in research on trauma many opportunities and dangers are inherent in this phase of the work, which must be investigated and weighed up in order to avoid bringing more uncertainty into the interview and the interpretation of the data. The false-memory debate in the US, and also in Germany, can be cited as an example of the potential dangers. In this debate, it is claimed that the amnesia of victims of sexual abuse for their experiences in fact merely act as a substitute for completely different problems in life and that their experiences of violence are thought up and constructed. Despite intensive efforts to clarify the situation, the results of research on this issue remain unclear. Both amnesia and false memories are possible after trauma<sup>4</sup>.

The debate thus creates numerous uncertainties which can have a strong negative effect on the course of the interview. I therefore consider it indispensable to lay down criteria for the selection of the sample which will remove the strain in regard to the issue of establishing the truth in the actual interview situation.<sup>5</sup>

In areas in which participants can be assumed to have experienced abuse of power and betrayed trust the documentation of the research process also take on special significance. It not only ensures the transparency of the procedures for scientific purposes, but also provides the participants with an important means of control over the process to

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<sup>4</sup> Most of this discussion can now be followed on the internet (Hopper, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Many of my interviewees had also had to struggle with amnesia or partial amnesia in the course of coming to terms with their experiences. As the study progressed I sometimes had to abandon the question as to what exactly happened and to what extent, and content myself with the simple knowledge that sexual violations - with physical contact - had taken place. Many participants also talked of losing sight of their knowledge in the course of childhood and adolescence, even those who had "concrete evidence" such as reports, files, etc. to validate their experiences.

which their information is subjected. After the repeated experience of loss of control, which is typical for victims of trauma, this transparency

enables participants to approach the work with a genuine willingness to co-operate, both in the preliminary stages and after the interview.

Interviewees can also be requested to give their consent to parts of the analyzed data in communicative validation processes, so that misunderstandings can be avoided as far as possible. Despite numerous warnings, my experience with this constant involvement of research participants has been positive and I have received valuable corrections and suggestions for the analysis of my data.

The validity of the interpretations must also be supported by laying them open to the critical appraisal of a research group and constant exchange with practising professionals in order to ensure that they are comprehensible to others: *"In such cases it is always helpful when there is someone around to make me alert, to rethink my moves, and to examine my ethical decisions."* (Bar-On, 1996, S. 20). Nonetheless, research in such delicate areas remains a constant balancing act between our interpretations and the perceptive worlds of our interviewees, right up to the last steps of the data analysis. *"There's no way to make complete justice to your interviewees"*, says Dan Bar-On, looking back over his long experience as a researcher and psychotherapist in the field of trauma. *"... once the narrative has been analyzed, it's actually your text as well as theirs ..."* (Bar-On, 1996, p. 19).

#### Final considerations

As we begin to address delicate areas of research such as discrimination, interpersonal violence and other forms of traumatization with the flexible methodological approaches of qualitative research we are confronted with new ethical issues and challenges that have previously received little attention.

Demands for a closer orientation of research to the subject, for capturing the subjects' own frame of reference and for constant reflection and introspection during the research process are, in the last analysis, important quality criteria of qualitative research as a whole. Thus, starting from practical problems, making one's own prior understanding transparent, viewing the research process as an interaction, including introspective material in the analysis (Mayring, 1993) and carrying out communicative validation and validation in practice (Köckeis-Stangl, 1980) are practices that not only meet the ethical requirements for delicate areas of research, but also serve to substantiate qualitative research in general.

However, in domains of research which are concerned with interpersonal violence and other traumatic experiences, in particular, self-awareness is, in my opinion, a vital aspect of maintaining ethical standards. The psychodynamics of traumatic experiences can have the

effect of a kind of parallel process, an experience that therapists and witnesses also have in contact with trauma victims and which is termed 'secondary' or 'vicarious traumatization' (Behar, 1996; Arvay, 1998). We should therefore follow Dan Bar-On's suggestion and take care to be sufficiently aware of our ourselves in the research process, so as to avoid risking that "some of the psychological dynamics associated with trauma may parallel the consequences of studying it" (Thompson, 1995, S. 6).

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**The methodological complementariness of biograms, in-depth interviews, and discussion groups**

Antonio Medina Rivilla, Tiberio Feliz Murias, M<sup>o</sup> Concepción Domínguez Garrido and Ramón Pérez Pérez

Our contribution tries to deepen and to submit to critic the benefits and limits of three research techniques applied to teachers' professional development. These three approaches are at the same time complementary and independent. We can use them together or not; we could combine them with other techniques; and some researchers could also create new modalities, modifying them and generating combinations. These are three important techniques in the qualitative approach: biograms, in-depth interviews, and discussion groups.

The biogram is a biographical technique that allows research on the personal or professional life; the in-depth interviews permit a profound and rigorous dialogue between two persons; and the discussion groups create an interactive and dynamic situation to exchange, to contrast, to argue, and to enrich different points of view. All the chosen techniques are usual but not exclusive in the qualitative approach. Furthermore, every technique admits several goals. We are aware that these techniques are complex, variable, changing, and amendable according to the contexts, the researches, the researchers, the means, the focused population, etc. They have common points and differences. That is why we use them in some studies at the same time. We think the biograms, the in-depth interviews, and the discussion groups are complementary techniques that improve the whole research.

Starting from our experience about professional development programs, we have to adapt and to integrate them in the own training process, basing it on participative orientations. By this way, we get researchers and participants of the training programs involved in the same strategy. When the teachers' professionalism construction is a relevant goal, all these strategies are important (Pérez Pérez, 1994). For us, the best way is the shared reflection and the collaborative dialogue, trying to question and to improve permanently the own training program. We have to assume that this kind of researcher is acting with an emphatic attitude and needs of special orientations (Wellington & Austin, 1996). He/she believes on the responsibility and engagement of researchers as the main factor and constructor of their own continuing professional training.

To explain our point of view, we are trying to make clear the goals of the researches applying these complementary techniques and when we think the use of these techniques is interesting or is not. We are

recommending the research organization to get the best results and to avoid interferences. We are explaining the helpfulness of software applying to analyze the obtained data. We are also reviewing the difficulties of the triangulation of these techniques in the qualitative approach and we are giving some advices to get the best benefits, to implement the triangulation, and to improve the technique.

What is the complementary methodological process?

Some techniques or proceedings are complementary when their application is helpful for the research improvement. In a qualitative approach, that means every technique is contributing significantly to the goals achievement and to the results elaboration. There is not an only way to develop a complementary process.

Firstly, we can focus on three possible moments:

1. The data collection: the techniques or proceedings can allow the data collection from diverse sources, of different nature, or in singular moments.
2. The development process: the techniques or proceedings can permit several ways to achieve the same goals.
3. The data analysis: the techniques or proceedings can enable different analyses or different kind of analyses of the data.

To do practicable this perspective, we usually begin by the construction of a question database about our research field according to the object, the problem, and the goals. Some research team's members usually develop this process. This set of basic questions helps us to understand the process depth and reveals new possibilities we can study to develop the research. We "decant" this general question set by means of some participants – teachers, students, persons in charge, and so on – depending on the research purposes. Therefore, we search the best inquiring way according to goals, the participants, and the research object-problem. Finally, we decide the research design – the most adequate means, techniques, or proceedings – and we distribute the questions for every technique.

The biograms

Biograms are biographical descriptions of the personal or professional lives. The life stories, the biographies, or the autobiographies are adequate sources of sequential data on the time line and can be useful for many purposes in the educational research field (Huberman, 1993; López Barajas, 1996; Lewin, 2001). These data can be more or less systematic, rigorous, sequential, organized, or episodic, for a long or for

a short time, but they ever collect events, scenes, persons, contexts, etc. related with us in a specific moment of our life or throughout our whole life.

The goals of the biogram focus the time elements. Perhaps you want to know events or their components (persons, happenings, incidents, contexts, or other details). Perhaps, you are more interested on the connection of several events, with other data, or among their characteristics (see graphic 1). It is important to stimulate the evocation – for instance, with a question list, an indicator inventory, or an orienting scheme – and to organize means to assure more rigor or to enrich the data, for instance contrasting with other biographies, collecting objective data, or repeating the process in successive moments.

Biograms offer new possibilities to involve the participants in their own training program starting from the self-reflection. It is an advisable way to create a self-growing field, a personal advance, and the professional identity development. These aspects represent an adequate scenario for the self-improvement and the self-knowledge. So, we can expect

- to promote the self-critic, the deep knowledge of ourselves and our tasks, the training ecosystems where we felt fulfilled, and the limiting experiences that we have to overcome and to analyze collaboratively.
- to find some of our identity signs, that are more creative and training, and that are basing our future.
- to base the collected data by means of other techniques, contrasting and overcoming the limits, developing the most adequate training processes for the self-analysis and the collaborative practice.

The biogram is rooted in the biography but tries to improve the self-reflection on it, the self-analysis, and the elaborated knowledge as a complex mirror of our professional life. It is not only what we perceive, but also what has influenced us as creative and historical beings.

However, we do not recommend biograms

- to promote generalization and to decide on a general training program by these only means, unless we complement it with other techniques to surpass the excessively schematic image that some biograms can generate.
- to be taken as definitive, because they may represent a too favorable and idyllic vision, or a too deformed conception of the biographic knowledge.
- to base the design and development of a training program by a reproductive mechanism without the needed analysis and reflection.

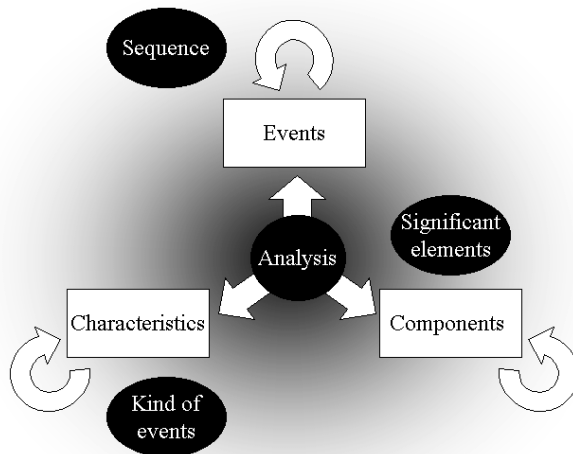


Figure 1: The analytical possibilities of biograms

### In-depth interviews

These interviews are very popular means for very diverse goals, activities, and jobs. In educational contexts, we use it with research and evaluation purposes (Medina, 1991). An interview is a technique to collect directly information from a person or group of persons. It can be more or less organized, foreseen, or unexpectedly developed, but there is always someone asking, and some other one answering. Usually, there also means to record it. When specifying in-depth interviews, we want to express a kind of interview that is more extensive, better thought, well foreseen, and leisurely elaborated.

When applying this technique, we intend not only to collect data but also to deepen the information, to interact with the interviewees, to try to clarify any doubts, to ask for details, etc. If not, you could do it in writing, that is to say, without interaction. The in-depth interview allows you to use a more or less open framework – a very structured question list or not – but the researcher has to try to get the most precise data, extensive if wanted, and well expressed. In the means list of an in-depth interview, it is necessary a questionnaire that will guide the process. Its flexibility using and enunciation precision depends on the research goals and design (see fig. 2). According to his/her ethic code, the interviewer has also to communicate to the participant the rules for the interview developing and the information using he/she is doing.

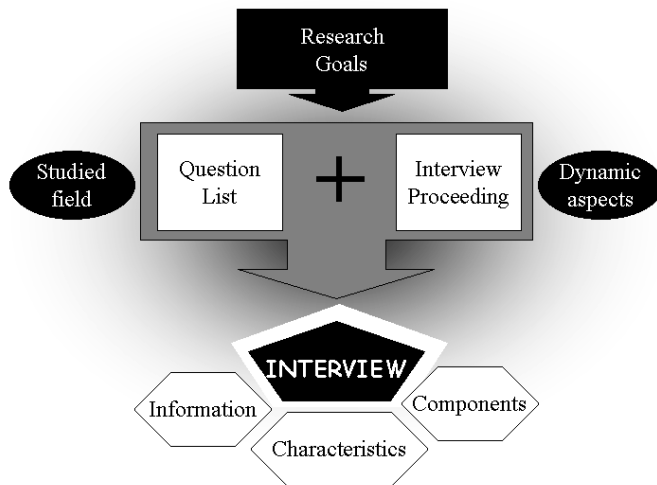


Figure 2: The in-depth interview process

That is an essential opportunity to know the expectation, interests, and acting ways of every participant. It is very useful to emerge the most personal and valued data about the training and interventions. By means of the in-depth interview, we achieve a deep knowledge about the personal details, experience, and thinking. We obtain rigorous and well founded data, helping the interviewees with a freedom context and evocating questions that allows us to enlarge the information and models he/she considers as the ones.

We get information that is difficult to obtain by means of other ways. The in-depth interview is useful

- to consolidate and to implement the training model and/or activity.
- to know really the actual ideas, perceptions, and valuations of the interviewed person about the training model.
- to contrast the reality and the wishes, opening new possibilities for the continuing training.
- to criticize directly and immediately the developed processes, the design, and the purposed changes.
- to share evaluations of the process and its results during the training.

## Discussion groups

The discussion group is a technique to obtain opinions, perspectives, experiences, data, points of view, and so on from different sources by means of an interactive way, exchanging, contrasting, comparing, etc. the discussion group can be used for many purposes and in very different contexts. Usually, it is necessary a group of persons that is discussing or talking about a topic, a coordinator, and any means to record the discussion.

The discussion group goals focus personal or professional elements that can be shared and questioned by other people. We usually use a question list to guide the process but you could develop it with other means: pictures, videos, texts, and so on. Before beginning, it is important to agree with the participants the rules for the discussion developing and the information use (see figure 3).

The discussion group allows generating complex situations where several points of view, experiences, thinking ways, or status can interact and facilitates contrasted pinions and discussions. Medina and collaborators (2001, p. 160) use it as a "triangular perspective to understand the reality." In the research process we met students, teachers, and persons in charge to discuss their experiences, analyses, and wishes about the practice training. We think that the different kind of persons (because of their age, their job, their experiences, etc.) offer different feelings, roles, trainings, aims, etc. Therefore, their analyses, their asseverations, their contributions, and their evaluations have to be probably different, perhaps complementary, and sometimes opposite. At times, they are also agreeing and it is so interesting to analyze. We also try "to reveal not only the textual sense, but also the subtextual meaning, that is to say, their affective, cognitive, relational, procedimental universe." (Op. cit., 160).

This plural and dynamic situation offers better possibilities to preview the different options when preparing a training program. As we can collect at the same time the conceptions of different participants, we can contrast and complement them, generating a whole vision of the studied topic but also knowing the specific point of view of each one. Therefore, this technique generates a collaborative knowledge and facilitates

- the knowledge of the discussed/dialogued perception about the possibilities and limits of the training model, the methodology, the activities and means, and specially the evaluation pertinence.
- the emergence of new aspects and opinions, due to the participants' interaction.
- the better knowledge of other persons and the development of relationships.



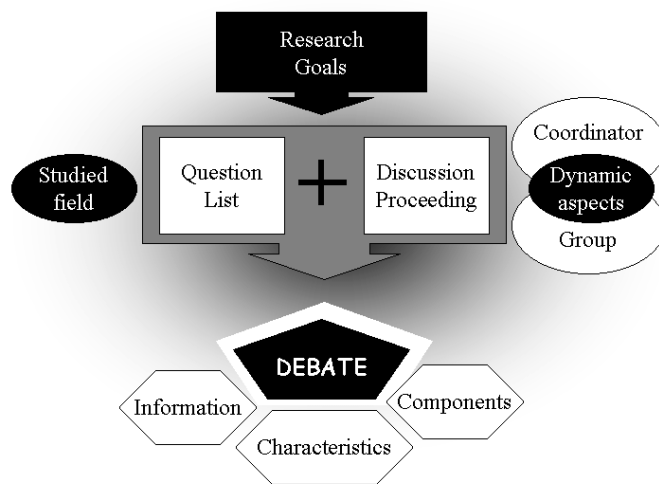


Figure 3: The discussion group process

- the different perceptions before, during, or after a teacher training program, basing them on the dialogue situation and the possibilities of the contrasting and exchanging.
- the immediate opportunity to take advantage of our colleagues' perspectives, deepening in their arguments.
- best options to enlarge or argue about the suggestions, because the data are immediate.

The more important limitations are the group's pressure that difficult the emergence of new ideas, the personal experience expression, or the defense of divergent points of view. As several persons have to meet, the discussion group is more difficult to organize than an individual interview and the recording could be also more imperfect.

#### Comparison of these techniques

We are describing the common and different points of these techniques. This analysis is allowing us to understand better the complementary possibilities of these techniques. Starting from our experience about their application, we are explaining our point of view about the proceedings they permit, the contents we obtain, the discourse characteristics, and the roles of the participant(s) and the researcher(s). The following table gives an overview:

ASPECT	BIOGRAMS	IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW	DISCUSSION GROUP
<i>Proceedings</i>			
Organization	Sequential	Focused	Focused
Required time	Participant	Participant and researcher	Participants and researcher
External feedback	Unique and later on	Unique and immediate	Plural and immediate
Interactivity	None	More or less	More
Self-revising	Possible at any time	Possible if immediate	Not possible
Precision	More	More or less	Less
Genesis	Remembering, introspection	Answering to questions, personal elaboration	Answering to questions or other affirmations, interacting
Means of support	Questionnaire Framework Indicators Other sources Illustrations Documents	Questionnaire Indicators Documents	Questionnaire Indicators Documents
Ethic and proceeding protocol	Yes	Yes	Yes
Explaining the research goals and design	Yes	Yes	Yes
Recording	Best	Well, depending on the means	Well, depending on the means and the group behavior
<i>Contents</i>			
Kind of information	Biographical, personal perspective based on events	Personal perspective but not documented	Personal, not documented, but variable
Data characteristics	Global Experience Living Sequential	Focused Living Interpretative Deep	Focused Living Interpretative Argued Exhaustive Interactive Heterogeneous
Subjectivity control	Moderate	Moderate	Small
Data identification	Easy	Easy	Sometimes it is difficult

Attribution	Total	Total	Not ever possible
Reactivity to other data	Small	Small, depending on the interviewer interaction	Important
Organized results	Good	Quite good	Quite diffused
<i>Discourse</i>			
Characteristics	Synthetic, elaborated, organized	Narrative, explaining, expositive	Arguing, interactive
Syntax	Telegraphic and graphic	Personal style, more or less speech style	More speech style, more synthetic
Meanings	Personal, contextual, and clarified <i>a posteriori</i>	Personal, univocal, and clarified immediately	Contextual, connected, and complex
<i>Participants</i>			
Individual/group task	Individual	Individual	Group
Background dependence	Low	Middle	High
Individual representation	Best	Best	Moderate
Self-esteem	Reinforcing	Depending on the interviewer feed-back	Depending on the coordinator and group feed-back
<i>Researcher</i>			
Present contact	No	Yes	Yes
Direct intervention	None	Yes	Moderate
Possible influence	Minimum	Important	Moderate

The complementary process with these three techniques

The previous table helps us to understand these techniques have common elements and differences. This allows the complementary process: a common base and specific contributions.

For a more general approach to this suggestion, see the figure 4. The biogram is a technique to focus the personal history: perhaps the life story or the professional trajectory. This technique allows us to deepen in the biographic profile and to explain the origin of our present profile.

The in-depth interview focuses the personal point of view. By means of it, we describe and characterize the present profile of the participants, deepening in the most interesting aspects of the research.

Finally, the discussion group allows contrasting the point of view of everyone with each other. It is a dynamic profile that analyses the reactivity, that is to say, your reaction before other points of view, and the consistence or variability of our ideas when agreeing or when differing from others.

The three techniques are different approach, but they are not incompatible. The data collected by every means complete the others. Evidently, we could choose other combination; and we do it. But this article focuses specifically this approach, starting from our experience in the permanent teachers' training and their professional development.

As are going to see, the organization of the three techniques is different depending on the field, the object, the goals, and the means we can use in our research.

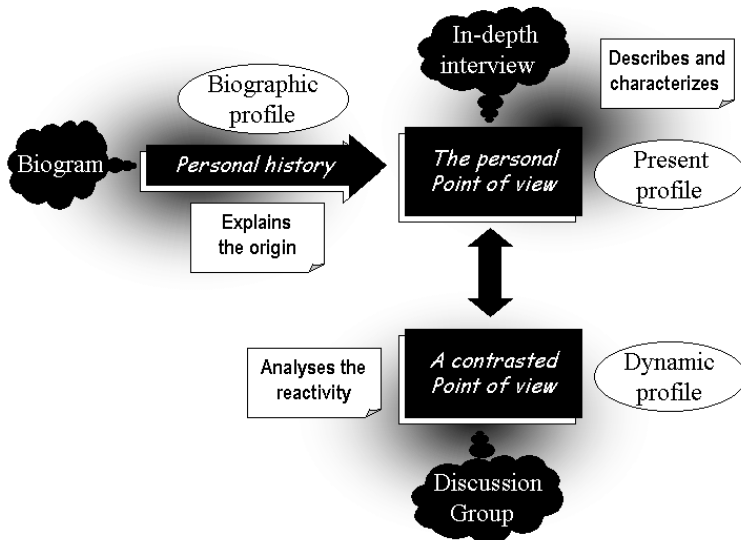
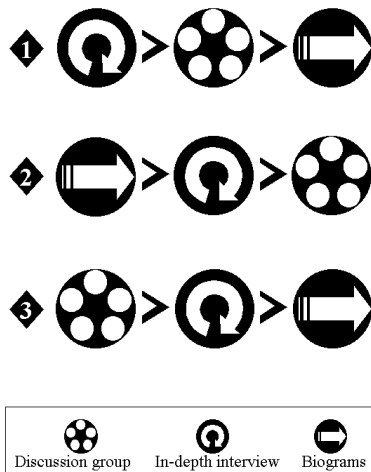


Figure 4: The complementary process of biograms, in-depth interviews, and discussion groups

Different ways to combine these techniques

The complementary combination of these techniques is very flexible. You can imagine several possible organizations. We are only discussing the order of the combination of the techniques, but you can change many

details in the design, the development, and the evaluation of the research process. Figure 5 presents three examples of possible combinations:



Graphic 5: Some examples of complementary combinations

1. We begin the research by in-depth interviews, then we organize discussion groups, and you finish with biograms:

This procedure allows to obtain detailed information about a possible origin of these data (experiences, training, etc.). Therefore, this organization permits knowing personal opinions, contrasting them, and inquiring in their possible origin. This strategy is interesting if the confidence is not a problem – for instance, because you know the participants – and you can select the sample by any other way. Therefore, you can organize the discussion group, knowing quite well the relevant information you are interested in about each participant.

2. The second option starts with biograms; afterwards we do do in-depth interviewing, finally we organize discussion groups.

This strategy is interesting if the biographic aspects are relevant for your research. So, the first step allows knowing some relevant aspects of the participants' life you can deep in by means of the in-depth interview. The discussion groups allow to contrast, to discuss differences, or to stimulate other memories. By this way, you can deep progressively in the personal recall, increasing the confidence and the relationship. It could be advised in orientation processes.

### 3. The biogram.

With this strategy, we begin with an open technique. Therefore, we can know the participants or detect experiences, data, thinking, etc. that are especially relevant for our research. With the in-depth interview, we deep in some topics or data with a selected sample of participants. At last, we propose a biogram to complete the deepening process with this sample. Therefore, this sequence facilitates a progressive knowing and deepening, starting from an open situation, defining more and more the information.

When do we think the combination of techniques is interesting?

Every research design is oriented to achieve the goals we have proposed. The three examples we have described represent a very reduced sample of the possibilities we could imagine. And we are combining only three techniques! In fact, we chose them because they join characteristics that we can organize by several ways, combining or modifying them. In this presentation, we have been careful to preserve the profile of every technique, but we admit we could change or mold them with a great flexibility.

Therefore, we have to argue about the reasons to apply them, not because we think they are better but because they are – as other ones – useful. The most important bases to use this combination have to consider the three essential perspectives,

- a temporal, biographic perspective,
- a personal, individual perspective, and
- a person-in-group and a group perspective.

This combination of different perspectives facilitates several issues as we have seen in the previous examples. We can summarize them in essential goals:

- To detect. Sometimes, the data occurrence is not high but we are surprised by the only presence of some few details or perhaps by an alone detail. When researching in educational problems, we can be surprised by unexpected asseverations about the childhood or pedagogical methods – maybe good, maybe bad –. Although they are not frequent, we are collecting and emphasizing them.
- To contrast. We can compare data obtained by different ways and from diverse sources. That is the basis of the triangulation process in action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). Contrasted data can confirm themselves – when completing or coincide – or can cancel when there are contradictions or incompatibilities. For instance, if a person changes his opinion, analysis, or valuation about a topic when discussing it in a discussion group, we have to

assume his first point of view – during the alone interview – was not enough consistent.

- To complement. This is the basis of a theory construction. The techniques enlarge our perspective and allow a more complete point of view. This horizontal extension can also facilitate directly or alternatively a vertical increase, deepening in the topics. The new theory will be consistent if new data or details can be integrated and assumed by it. When a piece of information contradicts the theory frame, we have to propose its review. If we cannot mold and adapt it, we could have to propose a new model.
- To check connections or regularities. By the content analysis procedure, we can find connections, that is to say, associations of events, characteristics, or speakers' profiles. We could also discover regularities, events, situations, or elements that we locate frequently. The connections could allow discovering causes, or effects. When an event is frequently connected with another, we can inquire about a possible cause-effect relation. When a characteristics set is appearing frequently, we can advance a hypothesis about a possible type of event or profile.

The helpfulness of software applying to analyze the obtained data

Educational researchers cannot be considered independently of the technological context and the local environments (Medina & Domínguez, 1989; Medina, 1999; Medina & Domínguez, 2000). All the possibilities of these techniques are better developed by means of help. That is a good reason for a research team, but not the essential one! But also in this case, we can improve our analyses and rigor if using content analysis software. Our team usually uses AQUAD (Huber, 1997; 2001). That allows coding more surely, detecting errors and improving the method. The software permits also the easy location, retrieving segments, grouping, occurrences analyses, regularities search, etc.

In this context, all the collected data can be verbalized and can be submitted to verbal data analysis (Huber, 1994). Then we can work directly with them on the screen. This possibility is more laborious initially but becomes beneficial as we collect more data or we want to deep better in them. The transcription needs some cautions and requires a lot of time, but the possibilities of the retrieving process advise to do it.

Finally, some advices

To get the best benefits of each technique, we can reinforce the own perspective of each of them

- to deepen our knowledge more and more by means of the in-depth interview:
  - Repeat the question, expressing it with other words or after other questions.
  - Organize the questions from more general to more concrete questions. Sometimes you have to break down them as you go along.
  - Enlarge the question perspective. A well-known method is the w-question use.
  - Perhaps you can suggest alternative issues or solutions if you think it can help the fluency.
  - Sometimes, you can take up again some previous ideas or asseverations and deep in them.
- to increase the discussion group interaction:
  - Take part to break off when some participants speak too much.
  - Invite the shyer persons to answer and to speak about themselves or their experiences.
  - Suggest or take up again some previous ideas or asseverations.
  - Introduce new questions to deep and to enlarge the perspective.
  - Orient the dialogue when it changes direction and we speak about other topics out of our goals.
- to get rigorous biograms:
  - Analyze repetitions, mistakes, overloads, lags, etc.
  - Assure the coherence, precision, and required components (dates, events, details, etc.).
  - Review the arguments about the relevance, effects, consequences, etc.
  - Try to make possible the feedback to clarify the misunderstood aspects.

For the improvement of the research design, development, and evaluation, we recommend:

- The training and assessment of researchers.
- A good coordination.
- A progressive development.
- An assured feed-back.
- Sharing the researchers' roles.

When combining techniques, we have to assume permanently the specific characteristics of each one according to the framework of our research design. To elude interferences, we can recommend:

- Structure and organize the whole research and every part.
- Define and delimit the goals, field, and object of every technique.
- Explicit what you are waiting from each technique.
- Consider the real need to use each one.
- Value the relation between the effort and the results of everyone.
- Learn from your own experience and from others.



- Promote the feed-back to implement and introduce changes in the models.

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**Biographic self-reflection as basis of the researcher's development**

Antonio Medina Rivilla, M<sup>o</sup> Concepción Domínguez Garrido, Ramón Pérez Pérez and Tiberio Feliz Murias

The researcher establishes his/her researching vision according to the theoretical framework, the relevance of the researching problem, and the precision of the multi-approach methodology used. In the educational researching field, the construction of the inter-collaborative thinking has a special priority for the teachers' self and co-reflection. This is the kernel of the qualitative perspective.

Self-reflection is the inquiring, understanding activity teachers carry out on their significant experience and their ways to develop the teaching. We understand it as a transforming, implicating, involving activity. To obtain a permanent and fertile improvement, we require an adequate attitude and researching methodology, according to the studied object.

What is self-reflection?

It is the creative activity of professional learning and continuous improvement of practical knowledge. It is a personal and rigorous effort to interpret the most representative training feelings and realities of the educational task. It is understood as a specific modality to comprehend the whole complexity of the possibilities and limitations of the educational theory and practice we fulfill by means of searching and self-knowledge of teaching actions.

Several authors support reflection starting from different bases and principles (Chamberlin.& Villance, 1991; Wellington & Austin, 1996, Clarke & Chambers, 1998). Self-reflection becomes a methodology and a way to create knowledge and to generate a style of rigorous searching of new interpretations about the training reality. It offers continuous finding and approach of the professional development process.

The qualitative researcher needs to understand him/herself in the researching field he/she is studying and needs also to know the persons with whom he/she is sharing this new researching approach. It has to be a natural, open way and has to permanently create new ways to understand themselves from the plurality of opinions, behaviors, needs, and engagement of teachers.

Self-reflection is based on different methodological principles and options to create knowledge and to get an epistemological coherence. It

permits to offer new bases for the researchers, to strengthen their perspective and to validate their findings. Among these clarifying principles of knowledge, a relevant one is the autobiography. The most adequate methods and means are the narrative, the biograms, the self-analysis, and the self-evaluation.

#### The qualitative researcher's role in self-analysis of teaching practice

Our last years' researches (Medina & Domínguez, 1988, 1989, 1995, 1996, and 1999) show the researcher's rigorous knowledge of his/her own knowledge construction process is already fundamental. His/her self-analysis and the shared search – with inquiring teachers and experienced qualitative researchers – are essential to give a meaning and an answer to the own researching object-field, if we want to progress in a grounded way in this ambitious field.

The contribution of the qualitative researcher is a new meaning and specific creation of the teaching practice. Through self-analysis, he/she creates a new discourse and keys to understand it and to deepen in the researching object, until it becomes a dialogued feeling with the set of educational behavior. The educator's behavior are the object of this rigorous analysis by means of the practice reconstruction and the deep search of the interdependence of the practice self-analysis ability and the practice deep understanding. As well, the researcher is searching the feasible incidence on the self-knowledge and professional improvement. We need to understand the bounded, inter-subjective practice in all the dimensions. We have to stimulate the emerging inquiring of the self-knowledge in the educational reality, by means of a continuous effort and motivation.

#### The researcher's role in the biographic research framework

We explain self-reflection as a team. We base it on the own naturalistic goal of the micro-group and on the numerous contributions of the last five years (Medina & Domínguez, op.cit.). We have developed it in the doctorate training programs about the *Research of the Teachers' Professional Development*. We are also explaining it as a synthesis of a meta-autobiographic shared reflection. By means of the narrative and the conceptual maps about the professional development experience, that has influenced much more their teaching conception and their teachers' personality, the researchers-teachers' autobiographic self-reflection process became a grounded researching perspective. Lewin (2001) illustrates an example of the organization of longitudinal case study for analyzing lives of teachers.

Applying self-evaluation and the collaborative dialogue with discussion groups to the developed narrative, we can conclude with some general ideas:

- The doctoral student discovers a new approach for the professional advance, a new style and vision that is very adequate to prepare him/her as trainer of other trainers.
- He/she finds a very satisfactory methodological option for the professional self-knowledge and a sincere and rigorous way for training self-knowledge.
- He/she stands out the potentiality to know his/her professional development line, synthesizing his/her reflection and reorganizing his/her own conceptual map.
- He/she recovers valuable details about his/her professional trajectory that was forgotten and his/her self-knowledge becomes more exhaustive and coherent.
- He/she feels a growing effect of self-valuing when remembering the whole professional line and giving it a new technical and personal meaning and sense.

Essential questions to guide the discovering of self-reflection

An organizing research possibility is asking some research questions that are guiding the research process, facilitating the data collection and the level of generality (Kiegelmann, 2001; see graphic 1). We prefer the analysis of maps and mental models guided methodologically (Carley & Palmquist, 1992; Carley, 1993). This narrative proposal on self-reflection is guided by some questions of a self-proposed, emergent life story:

- Where was this experience developed? Institution, context, ecosystem, environment, background, general identification of the involving reality...
- What training areas and aspects were implicated?
- Who and with whom did you develop it? Colleagues, students, teachers, ...
- How was it developed? With which methodology?
- When was it? What moment of your professional career was it? Which period of your personal life was it?
- What effects and values did you feel when developing it?
- What aspects did it influence most?
- Why has it such an special impact on your training as trainer?
- How much and how long were you involved in it?

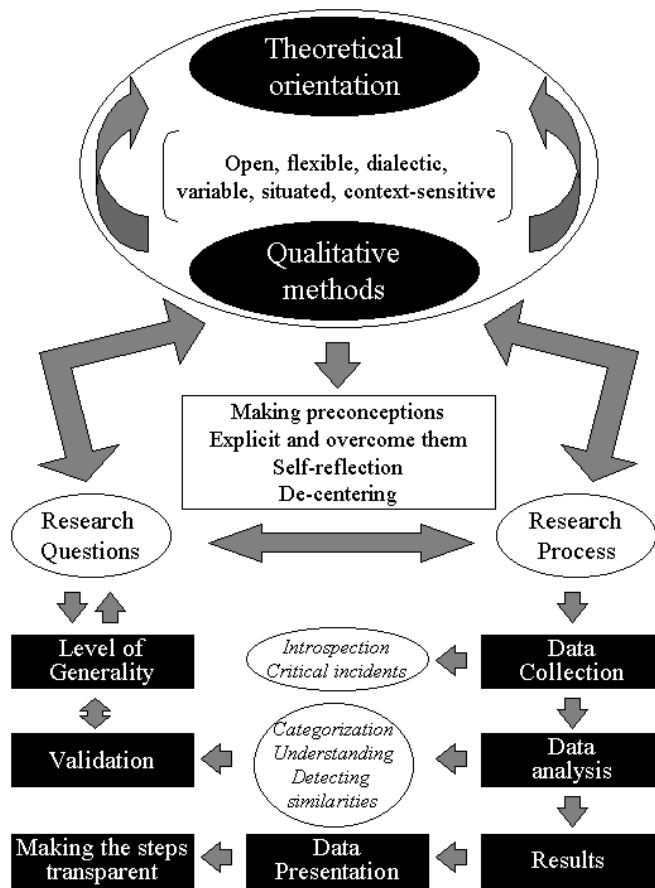


Figure 1: The qualitative organization process

These are some of the possible questions we have to consider and pursue in this reflection. Without this process, we lose the possibility to achieve a solid referent to identify the aspects that have trained us better, that have sprung more significantly, and that explains our professional style and motivations better. The questions help us to evoke the events, to value their real importance, and to locate them in our life conceptual map (see figure 2).

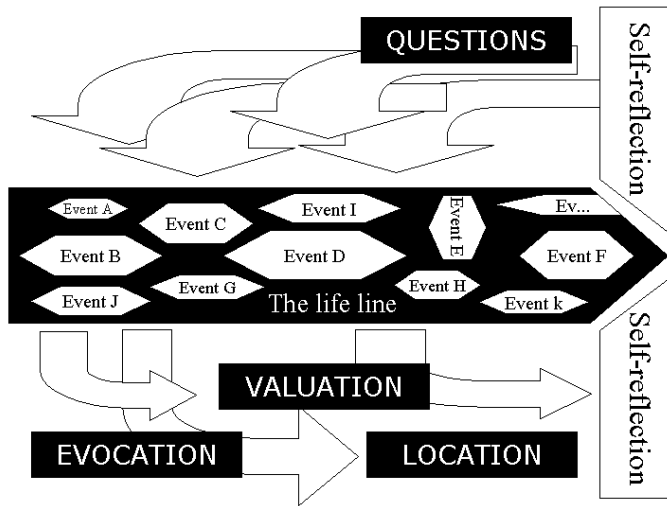


Figure 2: The self-reflection process, guided by a question list

#### The meta-self-reflection: a new way for the qualitative researcher

The kernel of this paper focuses on the meta-self-reflection process of the researching team and the analysis of more than a hundred autobiographies – narrative biograms – we have obtained through these last years. In the genesis of this perspective (Medina, 1991), we justified this professional development line which was needed for the trainers' training and to generate a rigorous dialogue about the training keys and modalities of his/her own story and approach of the professional construction.

The meta-evaluating option has to be understood as the rigorous role the qualitative researcher assumes. Therefore, his/her autobiographic self-reflection becomes an explicit discovery, a shared engagement, and an inquiring, transforming responsibility.

We propose a new narrative, autobiographic reference for the role, meaning, and value of the own researching of the fulfilled practice of the shared reflection. It involves the researcher's role, the autobiographic research object, and the self-reflection methodology. We describe it in the table below. There, the meta-self-reflection is the kernel for this purpose (see figure 3).

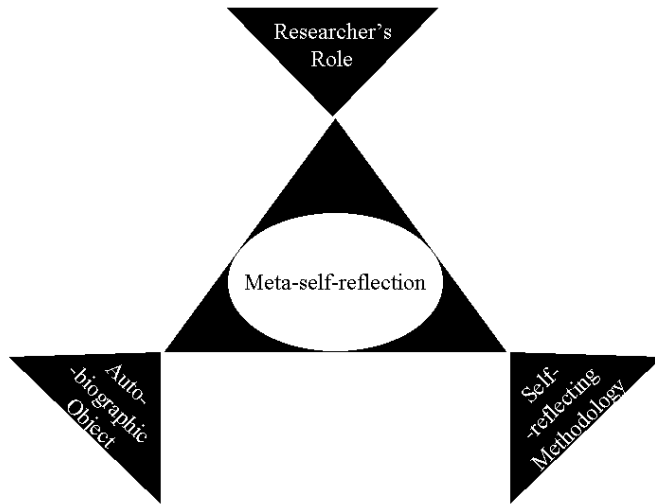


Figure 3: The meta-self-reflection

Researcher's Role	Autobiographic Research Object	Meta-self-reflection Methodology
Inquirer Colleague Shared reflecting Critical-transformer Support Generator of innovating models	Discover the most impacting and representative training experiences; Trainer's self-knowledge; Internalizing a new perspective; Rigorous support	Narrative rigorousness; Consolidation of a synthesized conceptual map of the experience; Domain of a new methodology; Collaborative meta-reflection

As biographic researchers, this approach discusses our role in the training research and the potentiality and the impact it has for us. This approach discusses our main activities that we are describing now:

- The value of the biographic self-reflection and the development of this researching line: What is the reason to use this approach for the teachers' training? What capacity has it to enlarge the professional knowledge of the trainers and teachers? What impact has it on the professional self-development? What are the bases and the rigor of this epistemological principle to prepare the teachers? Do these questions discuss our researcher's role? What effect can it have on the teaching researchers' training?



- Without self-reflection, we assume the framework to consolidate the knowledge is very limited and so are the inquiring possibilities. However, we observe the university teacher discovers a new role: generating rigorous self-knowledge processes and guidelines, involving professionally the implicated people, and continuously emerging discoveries.

All this allows the trainers to give a meaning and identity to their training keys and to begin a new professional development way through the inquiring self-reflection. We discover the narration fertility and biography critic analysis we complete knowing other biographies. Therefore, we have to agree with new ideas if we want:

- To assume the explicit role, creating models, processes, approaches, methods, and activities that could locate the qualitative research and the self-reflection as the basis of the new trainer.
- To enlarge the research object, the meaning and possibilities of the autobiography as an indispensable base of self-knowledge and consolidation of an own professional style with a specific identity, a solid self-responsibility, and a sincere self-evaluation.
- To advance in the perspectives and foundations of the narrative-biographic methods that could facilitate data over the simple technique of the deferred remembering. We could use documents from several sources, discussion groups, and shared biographic debate.

How can a research team overcome the limitations?

We observe that subjectivity can produce biographies that are amenable, deformed, or illusive. These deviations can invalidate our effort to discover the background of the professional development and the training guidelines. We must make an effort to polish these inconvenient tendencies. The most quantitative and most external evaluative approaches can be used as referents or as self-critic. We can review different points of view about the rigorous models of needs analysis or the training models based on explicit achievements. We cannot be satisfied by keeping our subjectivities and we have to advance in the rigor and the search of inter-subjectivities that offer continuous discoveries and contrasts, as for the trainers' community, as for the researchers' one.

The researcher's task has to focus a most rigorous narration, contrasting sources and discussing with other partners about the most significant training experience. Therefore, we have to persevere in the reflection and the self-reflection with the required enlargement and intensity we do not normally do. We have to search the most intensive and authentic data about the narrated situations and scenarios of training. We have to require parameters of credibility and transference

for this training approach. We have to promote more evident aspects to explain the self-reflection process. We have to complete these research demands by means of study matrices applied to some biographies. For this purpose, we could use narrations (narrated stories), biograms (organized graphic diagrams), conceptual maps (training experiential synthesis), keys of training improvement (significant indicators detection), and general techniques to collect data as the doctoral students' portfolios. With them, we guarantee more rigor in the collected data, the developed process, and the achieved results. Therefore, we give back to the trainers and beginning researchers the essential elements for the whole self-reflection, their growing as researchers, and the emergence of a new researching way based on the biographies. The doctorate students are then developing an unknown virtual potentiality for them.

#### A self-reflective process for the researcher's self-development in teacher training

In this shared research approach, the qualitative researcher's role is to design inquiring models and practical tasks, oriented to the collaborative inter-thinking with the trainers, advancing toward a shared and self-training.

Our essential role is the promotion of the training and our shared training with the participants in the training program, deepening in the professional knowledge, and in the methodology domain. This methodology has to be shared reflectively, structuring the knowledge and creating new bases for the inquiring training action.

The research is per se the permanent object of training, improvement, and transformation for the teacher's students and for the professional development models that we apply in the different levels and stages of the educational system. Therefore, we advance in the consolidation of researcher teams related to the educational practice.

The creating-knowledge self-reflection is the principal training goal and the base from where the students discover the training meaning, their identity level with it, and the kind of experiences that justify the self and the shared training. This is the kernel of the teacher's professional development, forming the way and the perspective of several generations of trainers. Therefore, we have to answer to three general questions:

- Object and substantive elements of the training as a transforming practice.
- The research goal: creation of teams and modalities for the personal and professional improvement.
- Consolidation of the qualitative inquiring methodology, based on the shared and self-reflection, opened to the permanent contribution of knowledge and ways for professional progress.

We have given feedback of the own improvement to every trainer. We have also to insist on our institutional-global engagement, to stimulate the teachers' further training, through their practice analysis and the institution global development. The institution is understood as an innovating and axiological cultural ecosystem that is projected in the educational and socio-geographic community where it interacts (citizenship, district, region, etc.). New cross-cultural and socio-occupational spaces are then opened, contributing with ideas to undertaking and management and community transformation.

We have to permanently discuss the understanding and reflecting style of the culture, as well the training engagements of the institutions and communities. They are emergent ecosystems and their global improvement is needed for the participants' development. At the same time, the personal and team self-development of every teacher is the best guaranty for the whole progress of the institutions and communities. We think the qualitative researcher's task is the shared inquiring and learning. By their means, he/she facilitates the trainers with own researching representation and gives their own researching image back to them. He/she involves them in the application of the researching and training model. Altogether, they configure their own model based on the self-evaluation and biography, the shared biographic dialogue, and the selective analysis of one of the most consolidated teachers' training models. We select this option among several perspectives, valuing the alternatives and justifying the new inquiring-training vision for the professional updating of the teachers. The option we are developing focus the self-reflection as a substantive inquiring modality that facilitates to the participants a specific way advance and improve.

Meta-reflection: Kernel for the improvement of qualitative researchers

Meta-reflection is the qualitative researcher main contribution to the knowledge advance. Therefore, we are reviewing some of the biographies, focusing the analysis axes or unities:

	Units of analysis	Synthesis of fifteen analyzed contributions
<b>General aspects</b>	Object of autobiography: a significant experience	Written biographies related to reflecting projects that are shared in micro-groups, influencing the classrooms, schools, and educational communities.
	Essential goal of the experiential self-reflection	Emerging the most adequate processes, modalities, and ecosystems for the self-reflective advance, achieving the whole personal and professional advance

	Explicit narrative	Writing at least 15 sheets about the genesis, consolidation, and improvement of the professional role and image
Auto-biography components	Context	Centers, communities, and institutions that are usually engaged in the educational innovation
	Training goals	Securing a creative style, with new ideas and open to the continuous personal and community improvement
	Didactic methods	Professional innovating project, related to the improvement of an educational level, a training center, or an educational community, searching the greatest autonomy and engagement of all the participants
	Participants	Schoolteachers' team or groups in specific contexts, focusing experiences related to the whole improvement and transformation of the communities.
	Projection	Important impact on the school, the teachers' team, or the community
Synthesis maps	Goal	By way of a personal and coherent portfolio, to represent his/her own conceptual map of the teaching and training model that emerges from the described autobiographic experiences
	Structure	Generally, coherent and interdependent, open to the further improvement. Most experiences describe their professional reality, based on the shared reflexive analysis with their colleagues
	Components	Teaching model, ecosystem where the experience was developed, participants, and specific training and projection activities
	Interdependence	They explicit the experience elements and they interrelate them with the kernel or central idea that is the transforming feeling and the improvement process of all the participants, with the special protagonism of the author
	Process	They describe the development of the experience and the implications. The most valued processes have a relevant self-implication, collaboration, or community projection

	Model	The most appreciated models coincide in the trainer as a creator of active knowledge from his/her practice, but most biographies do not explicit it enough
	Training method	The most accepted method is the reflective innovating project with a great incidence in the community and also the collaboration and team construction of innovation processes

The conceptual map is explained by the trainers. It is an explicit graphic representation of the self-training reality and its implication for the teachers, students, and researchers. The graphic representation is ever complex and fertile.

Why is self and meta-reflection an essential component of inquiry training?

The understanding and interpreting tasks of the researching practice and life events require permanent improvement of the transforming capacity and some complementary decisions. This involves the research object, the goals, and the meta-methodological task. The qualitative researcher has to develop and generate a specific attitude, a sensitive concern, and an uncertainty margin before the great complexity of the researched processes. This uncertainty comes from the subjectivity of the documents and narrations that emerge from the biographies. This limitations demands the enlargement and contrast with other documented sources we could obtain by means of in-depth interviews or discussion groups.

The meta-reflection requires the fertile discussion and the update of the research object. Our object is triple: the training modality and the teachers' professional development, the inquiring training of the trainers' trainers, and the advance deepening of the qualitative knowledge. We assume self-reflection as a practical approach by means of the most significant training experiences.

We have taken self-reflection and narrative as new training objects. It will facilitate our essential goal: to prepare the doctorate students to know their own autobiographic reflection, trying to train themselves in this research approach, starting from the narrative analysis and explaining about their own training experiences.

The final task, we share as a research object, is to check the aim of our rigor and if our teaching has become an inquiring research approach. We have to check our advances in the narrative methodology, our

knowledge of content analysis, and the guidelines we are following to reach a fertile capacity and deep search. In every doctoral course, our advance has to be valued and contrasted, applying the trainers' trainers autobiographic approach for the research, the training, and the professional development.

The research object has a triple dimension: the training model, the autobiographic knowledge, and the research methodology. That is the reason we have to generate an adequate climate of search and engagement for all the participants. The methodology is then the kernel of the training and professional update, considering it in a double perspective: didactic and heuristic (Huber, 1993).

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## **Impressions of the conference "The Role of the Researcher" 2001 in Blaubeuren**

Leo Gürtler

At the end of this conference documentation an outlook will be given on roundtables and the results that were accomplished during the conference. This perspective will be enriched by some short essays resulting from these roundtables.

The main topic of this year's conference was "the role of the researcher." Dr. Joseph Maxwell from the George Mason University (USA) talked as the keynote speaker about this topic. Coming from a background of anthropology and field work with "Eskimos," he portrayed in a convincing manner the role of the researcher in theoretical as well as practical aspects. He presented a position called "Critical Realism" as a practical way of doing qualitative research. In his speech he discussed this position in contrast to Positivism and Constructivism. Characteristics of his perspective are the assumption of a reality that exists independent of the observer. Simultaneously, the observer knows and reflects that this external reality cannot be fully understood or researched. Consequently, the role of the researcher is such that under the demand of self-application he or she is highly involved in the process of doing research. Maxwell explicated this as "the researcher is the instrument". The interaction with research objects is not only a matter of research design or research methods, but of ethics (a topic that will be discussed in one of the two essays). But this does not mean that the unequivocal relationship between research subject and research object has to be evaluated only in negative terms. Instead, the difference between researcher and researched can be a starting point to use identity, perspective and research approaches to the research field in a constructive and positive way. This view can be expanded and applicated not only towards research methods but also to analysis and interpretation of data. Reflection on these eminent issues offers the opportunity to be open. Subsequent evaluation of research can make use of multiple perspectives on data. Because of that reason, the position of Critical Realism implements the subjective nature of previous findings and interpretations of the researcher. The position also considers the potential failures one can make in interaction, decision making and choice of researchers. It tries to transform the situation towards positive self-criticism and self-reflection. On practical aspects, Maxwell spoke from his experiences as a teacher at the university about helping tools like writing memos or research diaries to integrate the demands he had explicated.

After this keynote speech, the working groups started their work. Groups were formed according to their contents around the main topic "the role of the researcher in qualitative psychology". This led to fruitful discussions. The groups were:

1. Workgroup 1: The researcher as the instrument
2. Workgroup 2: Researcher's interest and interaction in research processes
3. Workgroup 3: Research(er) ethics and emancipatory research
4. Workgroup 4: Self-reflectivity in the process of research

Group 1 developed a diagram about the different roles of the researchers. The following structural elements were identified: topic, research design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of data and application of the results. In each division there are different tasks and problems to solve. However, all elements depend to some part on each other and the output of one part of the process is needed as a necessary input for the following parts. This supports a dialectical relationship between these phases of the research process. However, contents and implications of the different parts were handled and conceptualized in different manners from the participants.

Group 3 focused after a short introduction of the personal works of the participants on two main points of discussion: "How do we deal with our multiple roles?" and "Ethics: theory, guiding questions: use of results." This served as an input of a fruitful discussion and different viewpoints. One position stated that through the labeling of research partners as research "object," the question of ethical behavior arises immediately. Consequently, equality would be impossible between research subject and research object. This dilemma may be partly resolved through reflection on respect and transparency in the work with research partners. On the other hand, the clear distinction between both parties facilitates the actual work and makes hierarchies transparent and open to discussion.

Group 4 focused at first on the personal work of participants. All topics focused on the interaction between research subjects and research objects as well on the reflection on this process of interactivity. This led beginning from inter-cultural interaction in research even to the integration of Buddhist meditation as a means to develop an open and reflected style of doing research. The second part of the group work was led by Breuer and Bergold. Both guided a family sculpturing process in accordance to system therapy. The method was chosen to visualize different possibilities, problems and opportunities in the field of research. Different demands and pressures could be experienced and understood besides mere cognition. In addition, the method of sculpturing offered

various ways of problem solving that emerge from emotions, feelings and intuition.

The plenum served as a platform to discuss the different results of the four groups. Each group presented their work. The topic "ethics" became an important issue. This discussion was explicated in another roundtable and in the essay of Gahleitner.

The second day started with roundtables coming from different fields of research. Kleining et al. guided an experiment on introspection. Each individual added personal views coming from personal history and experiences to the understanding of the conception "blackboard." "Constructivism" was the leading topic of the roundtable of Nentwich. Various approaches related to Constructivism were discussed in terms of possibilities and deficits. Personal experiences in the fields showed practical aspects on how to transfer theoretical knowledge into practical wisdom. "Ethics" as an important fact led to the discussion about the relationship between qualitative psychology and objectivity in the work with research subjects. Ethical behavior was regarded as flexible and sensitive in each single case. Ethics therefore is no dogma, but a basic style of research. It is also independent from the phase of research one is involved. Mayring und Gläser-Zikuda discussed qualitative content analysis and categorical analysis. Benefits and problems were discussed with concrete examples of research projects. Other topics of roundtables were "Funding in the European Community" (Medina) or "The teaching of computer supported qualitative analysis" (Huber).

The completion of this documentation is laid down in the following essays by Gahleitner, Kleining and Mayring.



Workgroup

## The researcher as the instrument

Bernd Reinhoffer

*"Es ist sehr viel leichter, eine Sache prinzipiell als in konkreter Verantwortung durchzuhalten."*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906 - 1945)

("It is much more easier to proclaim ideals than to realize them." Translation by B.R.)

The following diagram was developed by participants of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Workshop by the Center of Qualitative Psychology in Blaubeuren in the workgroup 1: "The Researcher as the Instrument." We were discussing the role of researchers in qualitative psychology, assuming that researchers are research instruments or part of these instruments. The research process is not regarded as a linear process, but as a process with loopy lines and reciprocal influences. The whole process is circular involving the possibility of redefinition and change in all its phases including the topic of the research and its methods. We came to full agreement concerning certain stages of the research process: topic and research questions, research design, data collection and final results. Depending on our different research fields and research interests we disagreed concerning data analysis and application (see below).

Topic

Research Questions: The researcher has to define topic and research questions.

Research Design

The researcher aims at intersubjectivity of subjective data vs repression of subjectivity.

Data Collection

The researcher looks for controlled flexibility. He or she has to balance at least

- proximity and distance
- activity and receptivity
- different structural variations
- consideration of his or her own interests and the interests of participants

- professional ethics in concrete situations and search for many and profound data
- tolerance of openness, uncertainty, chaos and installing structure (methodological control)

#### Data Analysis

In this point we had different points of view, mainly depending on our special research interests. Members of our workgroup doing research with a more heuristic interest are emphasizing the creation or improvement of theoretical structures. Their interest focuses on descriptions, new ideas or even correlations. Members of our workgroup doing research with a more pragmatic interest want to help practioners. They are e.g. looking for participants in trainings or for involving members of the field in analyzing data or in discussing results. There is a close (dialectic?) relationship between theory and practical application and one cannot be handled without the other.

What we share are the following characteristics of the research process:

- The researcher analyzes data and comes to
- chaos and structure
- tolerance of uncertainty
- ups and downs
- analytic assistance (cooperation)
- intermediate results
- discovery of structure
- search for validation or trustworthiness

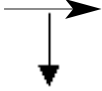

#### Final Results (All clear ☺)

The researcher describes final results.

#### Application

The researcher publishes results, perhaps supporting improvements in the research field.

Tab. 1: Roles of the researcher in qualitative research (Peter Mayer and Bernd Reinhoffer)

Topic	Research Design	Data Collection	Data Analysis	Final Results
<b>Research Question</b>  <b>Procedure is circular:</b> 	Aims at Inter-subjectivity of Subjective Data  versus  Repression of Subjectivity	Controlled flexibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proximity – Distance</li> <li>• Active – Receptive</li> <li>• Maximal Structural Variation</li> <li>• Interests of Researchers – Research Partners</li> <li>• Professional Ethics in concrete Situations</li> <li>• Tolerance of Openness/ Uncertainty/ Chaos</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From Chaos to Structure</li> <li>• Tolerance of Uncertainty</li> <li>• Ups and Downs</li> <li>• Analytic Assistance</li> <li>• Intermediate Results</li> <li>• Discovery of Structure</li> <li>• Search for Validation or Trustworthiness</li> </ul>	<b>All Clear</b>    <b>Application</b>

## Participants

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Workgroup:

### **An experiment demonstrating group-based dialogic introspection**

Gerhard Kleining

During the Blaubeuren workshop 2001, the Hamburg group of psychologists and social scientists, working on the reestablishment of the method of introspection, directed an experiment to show the potentials of the method of dialogic introspection for data collection. The experiment was "qualitative," aiming at the exploration of a concept rather than testing a hypothesis about it. The method of the qualitative experiment was well known to Gestalt psychologists, for a description of its history and character see Kleining (1986). The procedure of dialogic introspection combines individual introspection with a mental (inner) dialogue between the individual's cognitive and emotional psychic qualities, between present and past experiences (introspective and retrospective) and between what the individual felt himself/herself and learned from reports of other respondents. The methodology of the approach is heuristic (Kleining, 1982/2001; Cox, 1995; Kleining & Witt, 2000, 2001; Burkart, 2002, pp. 91-98 in this volume).

About 15 researchers from different countries and native languages participated, men and women, all attendants of the workshop organized by the Center of Qualitative Psychology Tübingen and experts in qualitative psychological research. They were placed at a "round table" facing each other. The person directing the research (G. K.) informed the participants about the procedure:

- They were requested to be attentive to feelings, thoughts, and experiences which came to their minds after hearing a certain concept (to be named later), to introspect about it by listening to their own emotions, thoughts, associations, and whatever happened to them in reaction to the concept under study.
- They could make notes whenever they felt like it. The notes would stay private.
- After a while, they would be asked to report their experience using or not using their notes. This would be done clockwise.
- Everybody should listen to what other people said and take it as stimulation for their own introspection.
- The most important communicative rule would be: no comments on other participant's information should be given, neither positive nor negative.

- A second round would allow the participants to add comments to their previous reports.
- All verbal information would be tape-recorded (this was not done during this particular test as it was intended for information of researchers only).
- As for the participants, it was the first test of this sort their active cooperation was requested and it was stated that its outcome would totally rely on them.

The function of the person directing the test was the following:

- To inform about the procedure, establish and keep a friendly and communicative atmosphere.
- To present the stimulus, concept, or topic for the introspection.
- To ask all participants to start their introspection, allow for the necessary time and then ask each participant to offer his or her thoughts (if not, to accept it without comments). Also to thank each participant for his or her information.
- If necessary during the reporting, to make sure that there were *no comments* on reports of other participants, neither critical nor positive.
- The directing person would accept every report positively but also would refrain from any evaluation of it.

The topic in our research demonstration was "*a blackboard*" pointing at one standing next to the group but with a comment that the topic could be understood more concrete or more general or in any other way.

The test proceeded as described above. The period of silent individual introspection lasted about five minutes until everybody had stopped to take notes. One person then volunteered to start the reporting and after that, the reporting continued clockwise. All participants gave information. The first reports were rather short and factual but later ones became more personal and included stories. There was spontaneous (non-verbal) agreement and laughing after one participant reported the terrible feeling caused by chalks scratching the blackboard. There was attentive listening and a general interest in other respondent's reports. The second round was used by most participants for additions to their previous information. The test overall lasted about one hour in total.

Though there was no verbal recording and analysis, some information can be given about the kind of data produced by this procedure. The following aspects were mentioned and/or described:

- The name: "blackboard" vs. "whiteboard" vs. "green board" (the one standing next to the group was green). Differences in the meaning of the word in Finnish, German, and English were indicated<sup>1</sup>.
- The physical components of a blackboard and its phenomenological appearance.
- The personal experience with a particular blackboard, e.g. writing on it, feeling the sound, scratching on it.
- The place of a blackboard in one's own biography when he/she was a pupil.
- The role of a blackboard when he or she was teaching.
- The function of blackboards at school in general and within the institutions of education.

In sum, the experiment produced lively comments and stories on different aspects of the topic. They were

- factual (e. g. the description of the material),
- personal (e. g. emotional and cognitive reactions, present and past),
- social (e. g. the function within a class),
- institutional (e. g. the function at school),
- cultural (e. g. etymology and different meaning of the name in different languages).

Evaluating the procedure of dialogic introspection, it can be stated that the test produced a number of different though related aspects opening up the frame of the concept for an explorative analysis. What had seemed to be a rather simple and banal "word" thus turned out to be a concept with many facets.

If the analysis of the (recorded) data would follow the heuristic methodology, we would try to find common patterns or similarities within the data to discover the overall structure of the experience based on this particular test that would give hints to related concepts and their range of validity.

It also became obvious that there are a number of *advantages* of this particular method.

- Varied qualitative data can be produced in a rather short time and rather economically, which in some research projects is an important point (vs. individual qualitative interviews, vs. individual introspection in classical test design, e.g. the one by Wundt or the Würzburg school and vs. collecting individual therapeutic reports from clients).
- Individual concepts can be maintained despite a group-approach (vs. group discussions or focus groups which tend to reduce varieties as

an effect of group dynamics and are not suitable for the purpose discussed here).

- Data of high complexity can be achieved as different persons respond and open answers and descriptions are requested and accepted.
- The group stimulates those areas of responses, which were not in the foregrounds of the minds of individuals in the first place but were recalled after listening to reports of other members (vs. individual testing and/or private introspection e. g. in personal diaries).

The discussion of the procedure after the end of the data collection pointed to *ways of analysis* of the information gained:

- Analysis can follow different intentions and methodologies. The type of analysis the Hamburg group uses is that of searching for similarities applying a question-and-answer ("dialogic") procedure (see also references).
- Analysis can group gender reactions to show differences (and similarities). It also can compare early and later responses as first and second responses to study their dynamics. In addition, national differences could be investigated.

There are also *limitations* of this particular method. As all single methods dialogic introspection is not "the" but only "one" method among others and should be combined with other approaches which also is suggested by the heuristic methodology ("variation"). The limitations of each method, as well as its advantages, should be explored and taken into account in each research design.

- Limitations may be *personal*. (a) A person might not be willing to give his/her answer to a certain topic. This would be accepted without discussion and without an indication of any negative evaluation. We do not question that a person might have good reasons for his/her behavior. (b) A person may be regarded to talk too much and switch from one theme to another. In this case, the person directing the research should accept that there is no "too much" in data collection in introspective research (we have techniques to handle large masses of qualitative data). (c) A person might give what seem to be irrelevant answers. Our response to that is that in this sort of qualitative research, there are "no irrelevant answers."
- Limitation also may be caused by *social conditions*: As the test collects verbal data about the self some people may not be used to present their personal stories to other people in a group. They also might not feel comfortable to put their ideas and feelings into words. This might exclude them as a possible source of information in this sort of research.

- There also may be *anthropological/cultural* restrictions. One expert mentioned that it was uncommon with certain Eskimo (Inuit) families to inquire about the feelings of family members.
- The kind of *sample* of the persons participating certainly will produce limitations. A sample theory is necessary to deal with this factor. The answer of the heuristic methodology is a "maximal structural variation of perspectives" saying that the samples should be able to describe the topic from as many different sides as necessary which will become clear during the research itself. In our example, additional samples of pupils and of respondents of different social levels and of different educational systems could be suggested.

Finally, it was suggested that researchers interested in this particular method would be requested to test it and/or include it into their projects. It would be helpful if any observation and evaluation could be given to the author under [kleining@sozialwiss.uni-hamburg.de](mailto:kleining@sozialwiss.uni-hamburg.de). Further information will be available under our website: [www.introspektion.net](http://www.introspektion.net) (observe the German k in "introspektion").

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<sup>1</sup> In Finish "blackboard" would be "taulu," which also indicates art paintings, at school the name is "liitutaulo" (chalkboard). In German the translation is "Tafel" meaning also "table" from Latin "tavola" and art paintings on a wooden plate – "Tafelmalerei." At school the name is "Schultafel." (Information was collected after the test).

Roundtable:

### **Joint data analysis: Qualitative content analysis in action**

Philipp Mayring and Michaela Gläser-Zikuda

The aim of the roundtable was to discuss the process of data analysis within a qualitative content analysis framework.

First we introduced the specific approach of qualitative content analysis (cf., Mayring, 2000). A central step in this context would be the working with categories. Categories as aspects of data analysis have to be formulated out of the material inductively and/or deductively applied to the material. Qualitative content analysis tries to control those procedures by content analytical rules and reliability checks. Other qualitative approaches hold those steps of analysis more open and flexible. Qualitative content analysis can handle huge amounts of textual data. The advantages and problems of qualitative data analysis were discussed following concrete examples of research projects. The Voice-approach (Kiegelmann) and the possibilities of computer support in qualitative data analysis (Huber) had been further topics in the discussion.

A report on two Workshops on Qualitative Content Analysis (in 1999 and in 2001) at the University of Education in Ludwigsburg/Germany (see [www.ph-ludwigsburg.de/paedpsysoz/mayring.htm](http://www.ph-ludwigsburg.de/paedpsysoz/mayring.htm)) was given. Different research projects in the fields of education and psychology discussed their methodological ongoing of data analysis; a publication (edited by Mayring & Glaeser-Zikuda) is in preparation.

The last topic of the roundtable had been the planning of research projects working with different procedures of qualitative data analysis in respect to the same textual material. This led to a concise comparison of the different procedures and to an evaluation of the results of the data analysis. One idea was to try such a comparison on the next workshop of the Center for Qualitative Psychology in 2002 (Spain), working with a common text (Don Quijote by Cervantes). It would be fine to receive papers working with different approaches like qualitative content analysis, discourse analysis, psychoanalytic text analysis, objective hermeneutic or metaphor analysis. A comparison of qualitative and quantitative data analysis would also be possible and fruitful.

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Roundtable:

### **Ethics in qualitative research - not an issue?**

Silke Gahleitner

Reflections on the role of the researcher in qualitative research inevitably raise ethical issues. This was one unanimous conclusion drawn during the plenary session on the first day of the workshop. What, however, is the concrete significance of ethics in the different phases of research and in what form do they play a role in the context of qualitative research? These were the initial questions for our roundtable discussion.

Like reflections on the role of the researcher, ethics play a decisive role in the entire qualitative research process. Whereas in quantitative research, as a result of the greater distance to the "object" of research and a more rigid procedural structure, dimensions such as self-reflexivity and flexibility are not accorded much importance in the research process, in qualitative research processes we are constantly confronted with responsibilities. The subject- and process-oriented procedure and the flexibility required to handle the tools of research repeatedly present the researcher with new decision processes that also have ethical dimensions. The ethics inherent in the basic attitude towards the research influence the entire project, from the general approach to research and the subsequent choice of subject to the formulation of the research question and establishment of the study design. In the course of the research process, ethical issues and the basic stance of the researcher continue to be important in the phases of data collection and analysis. Thus, the dimensions of ethics in the qualitative research process can be developed in a bottom-up process on the basis of concrete research projects, for example on interpersonal violence or in intercultural contexts.

After discussing a few initial considerations we therefore started to develop a matrix structure based on the stages of the research process and various aspects of ethics relevant to research. The idea was that this could be filled with content and added to by reference to work on concrete projects.

For instance, in the data collection situation, which is always associated with a power gap (researcher as expert vs. the research participant as a layperson) the question arises as to what unexpected processes the researcher could give rise to during her/his presence in the field. In the field of trauma research, for example, narrative processes are associated with a risk of reactivating the trauma. Researchers must therefore responsibly establish what areas require attention to and what they need to provide in advance before embarking on their research, so that they will be in a position to handle any reactions they may induce in an ethical manner.

In the data analysis phase the our power of interpretation as researchers once more confronts us with ethical issues related to the significance that our interpretations could potentially have for our research partners or other target groups of the research project. While it cannot be our aim to orient our research towards the wishes of the target group, interpretations should be checked for errors and confirmed by communicative validation or suitable third persons. Or should exactly this be avoided if the converse is the case?

A further ethical responsibility is associated with the question as to how the researcher is to handle problematic relational information obtained in the field in the course of the qualitative research process. Is there, for example, a way to transpose such information during the research process onto a structural level on which it can lead to useful results?

What kind of ethical problems await us when we publish our research results? Can it, for example, sometimes prove necessary, as a result of differences with the organizations or bodies having commissioned the research or owing to ethical reservations pertaining to a particular target group, to delay publishing the results for several years? And what kind of presentation is required to facilitate constructive discussions on the research results?

	Selection of the subject, the specific research issue and the design	Ethical dimensions of data collection	Ethical dimensions of data analysis	Ethical dimensions of the use /exploitation of the research results
responsibility	triggering of unexpected/undesired processes	How do I handle the processes I have initiated if it proves impossible to avoid them?	How do I ensure that I interpret the data correctly (as required for validity, communicative validity) Here the question arises, in contrast to the next column, as to the extent to which the researcher can misuse the data her-/himself.	Do any third parties do anything with my results which would not be compatible with my research question (i.e. in terms of re-interpretation or decontextualization)? Is the result of such a delicate nature that it could be used to the detriment of the research participants?

Solidarity	How identified with/influenced by solidarity towards the research subjects am I and what consequences can this have?			
Power relations	Is it necessary to re-formulate the research question in language that is comprehensible to the research subjects? The question of the use of the data must also be considered here!			As researcher I can decide what it is to be done with the data. Power over the data can then be understood as power over the research subjects!
Respect/ recognition				
Relationship between researcher and research partners	responsibility for the development of a relationship: not a therapeutic one, but still close enough for a process to take place (in fact, this difficulty must be negotiated before going into the field).	Setting limits, e.g. protecting the integrity of the research participants, anonymity.		

Ethical issues in qualitative research can also be reflected upon from other perspectives. What is it that makes the subject so important to us? Questions arising from the research process? Questions arising from practice? The all too forlorn hope of being able to keep control over the research results and protect them from abuse? Or the wish to achieve certain common standards in the domain of qualitative research, despite the methodological flexibility and variety to which we lay claim? - Whatever our motivations, we look forward to some fruitful cooperation and intelligent additions at the next or subsequent conferences. The roundtable has agreed to continue working on this matrix together, filling it step by step with content and concrete aspects of ethics in qualitative research.

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