

Manfred Max Bergman and
Thomas Samuel Eberle (Eds.)

Qualitative Inquiry:

Research, Archiving, and Re-use

Contributed by:

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Introduction

Thomas Samuel Eberle and Manfred Max Bergman

While qualitative inquiry is becoming increasingly important in sciences, it has not yet reached the same significance in Switzerland as it has in many other countries. The Swiss Science Policy Council, a committee of the Swiss Academy for Humanities and Social Sciences, has therefore launched an initiative to promote qualitative research in Switzerland. The goals are to build a network among qualitative researchers, to facilitate a consensus on quality standards and teaching requirements, and to explore the viability of an archive and resource center for qualitative research. As a first step, an invitational workshop was organized to learn about the experiences from our colleagues in other European countries. It was co-organized by the Swiss Information and Data Archive Service for the Social Sciences (SIDOS) and took place in Neuchâtel on 26-27 April 2002.

This book presents extended versions of most of the conference presentations. We have grouped them into two parts: first, *the why and how of qualitative methods* and, secondly, *the why and how of archiving qualitative data*.

In the first chapter, *Thomas S. Eberle* delineates the major objectives and reasons of this initiative. Herein he argues that the juxtaposition between qualitative and quantitative methods is problematic. Nevertheless, two camps have been formed within the scientific community, at times fighting each other, and at other times proclaiming that they are complementary. However, there are few scientists who are able to practice both groups of methods competently. In fact, at most Swiss universities, mandatory training in empirical methods is restricted to quantitative methods. It is therefore no surprise that we are facing a quality problem in qualitative research: non-statistical approaches are assumed to be "qualitative" by default, which is all the more problematic as qualitative methods have become quite fashionable not only in the social sciences, but also in areas related to the social sciences, including business administration, social work, and marketing. Due to the increasing popularity in academic and applied

settings in conjunction with the fuzziness of quality criteria, we must reflect more systematically about quality standards. This is a huge task, given that qualitative research encompasses a wide variety of different methods. Beyond this task, more rigorous training of our students is necessary not only in quantitative, but also in qualitative methods, as training is the most effective investment in the quality of future research. And this is what our initiative strives for.

legitimation, and institutionalization of qualitative methods. The Chicago School, using ethnographic methods, was the champion of qualitative method in the first decades of the 20th century. With Parsons' and macro-sociology's rise at Harvard, and Columbia's growing dominance in survey research and opinion polling, US sociology shifted to a quantitative paradigm. The resurgence of qualitative method was initiated by Glaser and Strauss' *Discovery of Grounded Theory* in 1967, and soon, methods were politicized with quantitative methods serving the establishment, while qualitative methods were democratically accessible, the method of the underdog. In the past 20 years, qualitative methods have been increasingly legitimized and institutionalized. Technologies, such as the audio-recorder, Internet, on-line interviewing, software to process qualitative data, have helped their legitimization, and better archival resources enable follow-up studies and provide new teaching resources. New responsibilities arise: we need to address the traditional weaknesses of qualitative research, including issues relating to validity, generalizability, and the relationship to other methods.

In chapter three, *Veronique Mottier* emphasizes that the choice of qualitative research techniques depends on the research question being asked: it is problem-driven rather than method-driven. Reviewing the field of qualitative inquiry, she identifies three major conceptual breaks: the "orthodox consensus" of positivism which conceives the social world as a collection of external facts and attempts to eliminate bias and subjectivity; post-positivist philosophy of science, which concedes that objective observation of pure data is impossible but nevertheless tries to establish criteria of "good" research practice; and the interpretive turn, which rehabilitates subjectivity and views data collection as a mutual construction

of meaning. The interpretive turn has implications for history, memory, and storage of data. The researcher is engaged in "double hermeneutics" (Giddens), or interpretations of interpretations. However, we should not overemphasize the interactionist and contextual nature of data collection as many postmodern strands of interpretive research do. We produce objectifications, and the storage of qualitative data allows for feedback and dialogue.

In the fourth chapter, *Manfred Max Bergman* and *Anthony P.M. Coxon* focus on quality concerns of qualitative inquiry. The crucial question is what interpretive limits, if any, are imposed on data. Neither positivistic and post-positivistic, nor an exaggerated subjectivist position are particularly helpful for empirical research, and the established concepts of validity and reliability cannot simply be transposed from one theoretical basis to another. Making analytical distinctions between the elaboration of a research question, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of research results, Bergman and Coxon discuss examples of quality issues in each step of the research process. In addition, they ponder how a national resource center for qualitative methods can contribute to the establishment and maintenance of certain quality standards. Although many detrimental research decisions are made long before data collection has begun, it should not interfere with a researcher's choices of meta-theory and assumptions, the research topic, the definition of the constructs and the scope of the study. However, it can assist in improving the quality of data collection. The authors make a distinction between the quality of the method of data collection and the quality of the data obtained by this instrument. Illustrated by examples of interviews and focus groups, they explore criteria such as internal consistency and credibility, and advocate research designs in which the collection of meta-data allows for an empirical assessment of the meaning construction within the immediate context by the respondents. This helps also in assessing the quality of data analysis and interpretation. A national resource center could help establish and maintain quality criteria in numerous ways, including teaching, consulting, maintaining an information base, and active research.

The second part of the book on *the why and how of archiving qualitative data* begins with the chapter by *Françoise*

Cribier who reports on the current situation in France. *Cribier* was appointed by the Ministry of research to reflect on ways of preserving biographical type qualitative data from surveys conducted during the last 40 years. Neither the universities nor the 'Centre national de la recherche scientifique' (CNRS) have systematically preserved the interviews, which is now seen as a considerable waste of source material. While the value of qualitative data was contested by quantitative researchers for

nowadays. Besides the heritage value of this material, three reasons are put forward why qualitative data should be preserved. First, fresh perspectives can be gained by asking new questions to the data analyzed in past work. Secondly, methodological groundwork can be enhanced by analyzing the practice and methods researchers apply to their data. Thirdly, qualitative data are complementary to quantitative data. The following steps were designed to build up the project: taking an inventory of existing documents as well as of all past surveys from the last 30-40 years; developing a culture of preservation; creating a single resource database which can be searched on-line via a "portal" and developing ethical principles and legal rules for its use.

While France is just starting, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) in Great Britain started a Qualitative Data Archival Resource Centre (Qualidata) at the University of Essex already in 1994 after a survey showed that most social science qualitative research material from projects funded by the ESRC was at risk or already lost. *Gill Backhouse*, in chapter six, reports on the history of this resource center and her practices and experiences in acquiring and making available qualitative data. In the early years Qualidata undertook a salvage operation to rescue the most significant material generated by research in previous years. In an initial survey, existing repositories of qualitative research material across the UK were identified and a significant amount of archived data revealed. Three more surveys were conducted by contacting researchers who had collected qualitative data, sometimes as far back as 1945. Important data could be gathered just before it was to be destroyed, and a database with thousands of records was developed. To avoid the unnecessary waste of the past, Qualidata worked with the ESRC and the ESRC

Data Archive to develop a Datasets Policy, established in 1995, which requires all award-holders to offer for deposit copies of both machine-readable quantitative data, and machine and non-machine-readable qualitative data. Depositors are advised to contact the two Resource Centers early in the research process to ensure that datasets are well-documented, free of confidentiality or license constraints, and useable for secondary analysis. Meanwhile, Qualidata has succeeded in acceptance for the deposit and re-use of qualitative data material amongst the academic community. In several tables, Backhouse gives an overview over the acquisitions of the past years. She then describes the criteria Qualidata uses in evaluating qualitative data for archiving and compares them with those of the US national qualitative data archive, closing with a summary of the main points for a successful qualitative data acquisition strategy.

In chapter seven *Diane Opitz* and *Andreas Witzel* report on the situation in Germany. Although qualitative research plays an important role in current German Social Sciences, and although the development of text analysis software nowadays allows for a systematic organization of qualitative data, hardly any qualitative data is archived in Germany. Quantitative data of funded research projects, however, must be handed in to the Central Archive for Empirical Social Research in Cologne (ZA) since 1960. The Bremen Life Course Archive is an exception: based on a recommendation from the German Research Council (DFG), the last phase of research for the Special Collaborative Center 186 "Status Passages and the Risk of Life Course" was dedicated to develop the concept and architecture of an archive of a large number of qualitative interviews which have been made anonymous and documented in a computerized format. The archive organizes approximately 700 interview texts from four different projects with a system of a text data bank especially developed for this purpose. Before creating the archive, a detailed concept of anonymity and data protection had to be developed in accordance to the German Federal Law. The data are very sensitive as most interviewees in biographical interviews give very detailed reports about their lives. On the other hand, secondary analysis of qualitative data requires information on the whole context. The authors describe the strategies of anonymization that were

finally chosen. The extension of the Life Course Archive to a nation-wide central archive is presently under consideration. A pilot study showed that more than half of the researchers expressed their willingness to make data material available for secondary analysis and comparative studies, and that the majority would (re)use data material already found in archives for their own projects. A feasibility study aims at further exploring these issues and developing an innovative concept

In the eighth chapter, *Katja Mruck* ponders the challenges and potentials of providing resources and services on-line. The Internet has become a place to exchange concepts but also to network with qualitative researchers, nationally as well as internationally. New ways have arisen to directly provide and share resources and services, and it is time to think about these issues more concretely and systematically: which kinds of resources and services should be provided for a national audience, and which of these – by means of the Internet – should be provided collaboratively by partners from different nations? Which resources and services are actually essential for the field of qualitative research? Which should be provided off-line, and which on-line? Mruck names three obvious tasks of national centers for qualitative research: data archives and support for researchers to use them, consulting services for qualitative research and teaching, and information and communication bases for qualitative researchers. She adds new tasks which pop up at the horizon, like the combination of on-line and off-line publishing, and she discusses issues with which services have to struggle, like discourse or translation problems for different audiences. Mruck proposes a general orientation which is interdisciplinary and international and suggests that we closely inform each other, share and coordinate resources and services, and delegate some parts which are too big. In order to network the networkers, she describes how one can learn from others, and she calls for a joint effort to advance and institutionalize qualitative social research.

In the following chapter, *Dominique Joye* emphasizes the complementarity and proximity of quantitative and qualitative approaches on three different levels: in data archiving, education, and research. In archiving, there are a number of

technical issues to solve as qualitative data are, compared to quantitative data, less standardized and have many formats. Archiving is more than conservation, it means distribution, that is, publication. For teaching it is important to create data sets, which can be used for secondary data analysis (which is economical). The creation of exemplary data sets is also essential for further developing methodology because research documentation constitutes, beyond ncy and reproducibility, the foundation of a “good logy” and of “standards”. Archives also allow for the study of change as they inform on former states. Joye points to the possible synergies between archiving, teaching, and research, and sees the task of a national archive and resource center to link the local with the global: to develop trust by proximity to the researcher, and to help improve methodological resources and competences in accordance with international standards.

“What does the user need?” is the guiding question of the tenth chapter. *Anthony P.M. Coxon* infers from the current user’s frustration that software and data storage should not be separated. He observes that programs developed and used for data analysis follow user-demand in many ways, but they also embody implicit preconceptions of what is “appropriate” data. In particular, they reinforce the distinction between quality and quantity by effectively dictating what is and what is not taken into consideration. Although this distinction is fairly commonplace, it refers to several levels of discourse and is therefore incoherent. Coxon stakes a claim for an integrative middle ground and shows with two examples of his own research that integrated data also have their needs. The main problem he encountered when archiving the data from the first research example was that the Archive would only accept data which could be processed by “quantitative” programs as it had no facilities for storage of the verbal materials which were analyzed by “qualitative” content analysis programs. The second research example again produced different types of data which now are stored at three different archives. Coxon concludes that if software producers keep up the qualitative and quantitative divide and archives cannot lodge different types of data, integrated data analysis and integrated styles or research will be prevented. The teaching and practice of

data collection and analysis should be restructured so that it assumes integration.

In the last chapter, *Louise Corti* shares her experiences on the user support of the Qualitative Data Service (Qualidata) and the UK Data Archive (UKDA) Users Service in Great Britain. An archive should not only store data but offer services to its users. Corti recommends widening the definition of 'users' to include all groups and individuals who have regular or

categories of users: data creators and potential depositors of data; depositors and data suppliers; those enquiring about re-using data; those who are re-using data either for research or for teaching and learning; those who have re-used data; and those who have an interest in acquiring knowledge about the workings of or procedures used by a data archive. Corti describes the services offered to each of them, the problems involved and future measures which should be taken. She concludes by advocating a user support strategy that is both reactive and proactive to a wide range of communities, from those in research, teaching and learning, to archivists and professional social researchers seeking training and advice. An Archive and Resource Center for Qualitative Research requires good leadership, management and forward-thinking to keep one step ahead of users' needs. And it is critical that staff are highly trained, can offer one-on-one support and are willing to initiate and take part in outreach and training activities. The better the support team and program of work, the more likely a culture of sharing and re-using qualitative data will spread.

As part of the initiative of the Social Science Policy Council to promote Qualitative Social Research in Switzerland, this book would not have been possible without the strong support of the former presidents, Walo Hutmacher and Ulrich Klöti, as well as the general secretary of the Swiss Academy for Humanities and Social Sciences, Markus Zürcher. We obtained additional support from Jo-Ann du Plessis who helped to put the texts of many non-native speakers into proper English, and Delphine Quadri, who transformed our texts into an adequate layout. To all of these people we express our gratitude and appreciation.

Part One:

The why and how of qualitative methods

Promoting qualitative research in Switzerland

Thomas S. Eberle

The Social Science Policy Council (SSPC), a committee of the Swiss Academy for Humanities and Social Sciences, has launched an initiative to promote qualitative research in Switzerland. Before sketching out the why and the how of this initiative, let me first provide a brief portrayal of the SSPC, its history, mission and some of its achievements.

The Social Science Policy Council: a brief portrayal

The Social Science Policy Council was founded in 1993 and grew out of the "Club SOWI". This was an informal group of presidents of four social scientific associations who launched some major initiatives to advance the social sciences in Switzerland. One of those initiatives was the foundation of the Swiss Data Archive for the Social Sciences (SIDOS) by the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences in 1992, which maintains an inventory of social science research projects and data and offers services like methodological validation and advice as well as data retrieval. A second initiative entailed the evaluation of the social sciences in Switzerland by a group of international experts, which was conducted by the Swiss Science Council in 1991. The final report of this evaluation made a number of policy recommendations for the universities as well as the national level, and suggested several institutional innovations. Many of them were realized or supported by the Priority Program "Switzerland: Toward the Future" of the Swiss National Foundation from 1996-2003, which boosted social scientific research in thematic key areas and took a number of structural measures (e.g. founding the Swiss Household Panel and organizing post-graduate methods training in an annual summer school). The Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences decided to formalize the "Club SOWI" and founded the Social Science Policy Council. The mission of this council is to represent the social sciences in Switzerland, foster transdisciplinary exchange and

cooperation, develop social science policy recommendations and sensitize political authorities and the society to specific issues in the development of the social sciences.ⁱ

Since its foundation, the Social Science Policy Council has taken significant steps forward. To name just a few: it was able to convince the Swiss National Foundation to finance post-graduate training and to oblige every funded researcher to register their research projects at SIDOS, to explore, where

motion challenged the federal census of the population, the SSPC initiated a close cooperation between the social sciences and the Swiss Federal Statistical Office, and helped to organize a symposium on "statistics serving the public" and developing an innovative charter which specifies the lines of common action between the partners, in particular in the domains of scientific exchanges, data policies, formation and public valorization. A major recent initiative concerned the National Centers of Competence in Research (NCCR) where the SSPC successfully convinced key decision-makers to avoid a competition between the natural and social sciences in the future. Another initiative explored possibilities of funding more teaching positions as the number of students per teaching person is extremely high in the social sciences. A further initiative now is to promote qualitative research.

Why promote qualitative research?

The initiative to promote qualitative research is smaller in scope but it is based on a similar observation as many of the former initiatives: that Switzerland is somewhat lagging behind. Qualitative inquiry has experienced a tremendous increase in popularity during the last two decades. The amount of qualitative studies presented at scientific conferences or published in books and journals has rapidly risen. Meanwhile, there are excellent textbooks, handbooks and readers either giving overviews of the field or in-depth explanations of one specific approach or method.ⁱⁱ This trend has been recognized in universities, government institutions and NGOs all over the world and has resulted in the creation of numerous groups, networks, and institutes solely dedicated to the support, promotion and teaching of qualitative methods. Empirical

research in Switzerland is engaged with this form of research as strongly as it is in other countries, but it is lagging behind with regard to networks and structures that could offer information, support, resources, quality control and advanced training. More specifically:

- networks between qualitative researchers in Switzerland are still weak;
- there is hardly any mandatory training in qualitative research methods at Swiss universities;
- there is no archive which is specialized to acquire and process qualitative data, and there is no resource center which offers services and advice to qualitative researchers;
- partly as a result of the above, there still exist many prejudices against qualitative research within the scientific community, and many public agencies which fund social research have no clear idea what qualitative inquiry really is.

Following the Social Science Policy Council's strong commitment towards advancing quantitative research and building adequate infrastructures, the time has come to do something for qualitative research.

Qualitative and quantitative research

The first problem to point out is the unfortunate juxtaposition of qualitative and quantitative research. It is illogical, as the distinction refers to different dimensions, and it obscures the fact that every empirical research has to deal with quality *and* quantity. Nevertheless, two camps have been formed within the scientific community under the heading of qualitative vs. quantitative research, at times fighting each other, and at other times proclaiming that they are complementary. Whatever their names, they are here to stay. And as their designations are well established, we have no choice but to use them too.ⁱⁱⁱ

Whether a qualitative or quantitative research design is more adequate, depends on the research question. For example, if we want to find out how people construct their life-histories or how meanings are constituted in interaction, we will choose a qualitative approach. If we want to investigate the extent of migration or of social inequalities in our society, we will choose a quantitative approach. There are also many

research questions which would suggest a mixed-methods approach. However, there are not many researchers who are able to apply qualitative *and* quantitative methods competently. Monocultures have been formed which give their members a specific identity and make them look suspiciously at those who venture out to make more than superficial contact with the other

designs. Quantitative researchers are usually associated with an interpretive paradigm, like phenomenology, social hermeneutics or constructivism; quantitative researchers with a positivistic or post-positivistic position (see Mottier in this volume). The distinction of qualitative vs. quantitative research is, in other words, not just concerned with methods but refers to differences in many respects: epistemology, philosophy of science, paradigms, theory, methodology, data collection and analysis. Qualitative methods are often characterized as soft, flexible, subjective, political, case study oriented, speculative and 'grounded', and quantitative methods in contrast as hard, fixed, objective, value-free, survey-oriented, hypothesis testing and abstract (Halfpenny 1979:799). As with all dichotomous distinctions which structure a complex field, these labels obscure the inherent inner diversity which exists within both camps and which stirs many debates within each family.^{iv}

Qualitative and quantitative researchers have become accustomed to their co-existence. Their relationship oscillates between mutual disrespect and ignorance on the one hand, and active collaboration on the other hand. In methodological debates, the dichotomous attributions are losing ground. In informal communications they still occur, and they are ready at hand when conflicts surface. A vivid illustration of how precarious the relationship between qualitative and quantitative researchers still is, was the recent quarrel in the German Sociological Association when the existing section 'Methods of empirical social research' fiercely tried to prevent the formation of the new section 'Methods of qualitative social research'. Such debates usually touch on 'higher values' as to who are the 'true' representatives of the 'real' science. The German Sociological Association decided, in spite of the protests, to accept the new section with the suggested name,

as the European Sociological Association had done a few years previously. It thereby acknowledged that its members adhere to different conceptions of science, theory and research methods.

With the growing institutionalization and legitimization of qualitative research (see Fielding in this volume), an increasing number of people have adopted a liberal stance and contend that qualitative and quantitative research are complementary. This means no more than conceding the right of each to the other camp. In effect they ignore what the other side is doing and continue going about their own business. Others strive for collaboration and ponder the potential of mixed-method approaches. As Flick (1995:281-284) points out, this can mean many things: different fields of application, dominance by either side, transformation of one into the other, triangulation or integration. The most sophisticated are triangulation and integration. The concrete practicalities of how these can be achieved will be the subject of many debates in the near future, and they will go beyond what has been done so far. What is already clear by now is that the outcomes will not always be complementary, they also may converge or diverge, and we have to find ways of dealing with that (Kelle 2004:174ff).^v

Reasons to promote qualitative research

If we believe in the merits of both groups of research methods and in the innovative character of mixed-method approaches, we have to require – at least in sociology and political science – a mandatory training of our students in quantitative *and* qualitative approaches. We should overcome courses and textbooks which equalize 'methods of *empirical* research' exclusively or mainly with quantitative methods, and we should abandon their standard view of a hypothetical-deductive concept of science for two reasons: first, it does not allow for induction and consequently denies the methodical character of qualitative approaches from the outset;^{vi} and second, it obscures the fact that many quantitative researchers do not adhere to this position in practice and that some consider themselves explicitly as 'interpretive' or as 'constructivists'.^{vii} In German sociology, a *two-pillar-principle* has been implemented: quantitative and qualitative research methods are considered equally important, and every student aspiring towards a

diploma must be trained in both. The same system is suggested for the planned bachelor degree in sociology. Such a structure, combined with additional measures which foster mutual exchange, could be a good investment into the future where the secluded monocultures of qualitative and quantitative research are likely to fade.

practitioners who are not at ease with demanding quantitative procedures and who expect that in qualitative research they can substitute methodological sophistication with common-sense. The more fashionable qualitative research has become in different fields, like social work, business administration, marketing and consulting, the more we face a quality problem. Any investigation which does not make use of statistical procedures is called 'qualitative' nowadays, as if this were a quality label in itself. As many have already called for: we need to define criteria by which we can distinguish 'good' from 'bad' qualitative research, be it 'validity' and 'reliability' (Silverman 2001) or other concepts like 'consistency' (Bergman and Coxon in this volume) or 'adequacy of meaning' (Eberle 1999a,b) or even others. Postmodern approaches which proclaim that 'anything goes' and which draw no distinction between social science, journalism and art, and which call the methodological practices of qualitative inquiry a 'bricolage' (Denzin and Lincoln 2000:4),^{viii} are not particularly helpful in this respect. The diverse qualitative approaches have to make explicit in what way they employ methodical procedures which can be learned and discussed or if they are an art which can only be judged by the authority of some charismatic 'master'.

Another issue is anecdotalism, the habit of many qualitative researchers to present "a few, 'telling' examples of some apparent phenomenon, without any attempt to analyze less clear (or even contradictory) data" (Silverman 2001:34). If qualitative researchers do not present their whole dataset to the public in the same way as most quantitative researchers now do, namely by way of a data archive, the reader has no possibility of ever checking if alternative selections of data or different interpretations were possible. *Developing a culture of archiving data* among qualitative researchers would

therefore also allow secondary analysis and it would foster critical debate.

How to promote qualitative research?

What are the objectives of our initiative to promote qualitative research? In an internal discussion paper, the following goals were suggested (Eberle 2002):

- create a network among Swiss researchers working with qualitative methods;
- to develop a concept for a center of competence for qualitative methods to serve the needs of the Swiss social sciences;
- to facilitate a consensus within the scientific community on quality standards for qualitative research;
- to facilitate a consensus within the scientific community on minimal requirements for the training of students in qualitative methods;
- to present the achievements of qualitative studies to a wider audience; and
- to found a center of competence for qualitative methods (if suitable).

First, we tried to identify the major qualitative researchers in Switzerland in a snow-ball procedure and invited them to participate in a workshop in order to explore the idea of an archive and resource center for qualitative research. All of them, without exception, showed great interest and most of them confirmed their participation. Then we invited key representatives of qualitative archives and similar institutions from other European countries to share their experiences with us. The goal was to cover the why and how of qualitative methods as well as the why and how of archiving qualitative data. The results are presented in this volume.

The discussions in this workshop revealed that the thought of handing over qualitative data to an archive after the termination of a project left many researchers feeling uneasy. As with quantitative researchers ten years ago, and as the history of Qualidata (the Qualitative Data Archival Resource Centre at the University of Essex) in the U.K. has proven, it takes time to develop a culture of archiving, and archives should take proactive measures in this respect. Storage prevents the data, which later may be of historical significance, from

being destroyed or getting lost, and it provides the possibility of conducting secondary data analyses. There is also a broad range of problems to be solved when acquiring and archiving qualitative data as these have manifold formats (transcripts, field notes, audio- and videotapes, pictures, and so on), and the issues of anonymization, confidentiality, and user support

At present, we are conducting a survey in order to make an inventory of the specific expertise of qualitative researchers: which methods do they teach and which do they use in their own research; what is their specialty, what is their theoretical background; and so on. The goal is to have more transparency about who does what and where, thereby preparing the floor to find new partners for research collaboration and mutual exchange.

A further workshop will take place in which we ponder the possibilities of finding a consensus on the minimal training requirements in qualitative methods which a student of our different disciplines should fulfill. This will include reflections on how we intend to set certain quality standards for qualitative research. Undoubtedly, the best investment in the quality of qualitative inquiry is a thorough training of our students. Again, we will reflect on how a resource center for qualitative research could foster this process.

In the future we intend to organize a workshop on mixed methods in which ways will be explored as to how qualitative and quantitative methods can be fruitfully combined in one research design. In our view, this is an alternative and as yet under-explored avenue for raising the profile and acceptance of qualitative inquiry in the scientific community and for presenting the potential and limits of both groups of methods to a wider audience (e.g. public funding agencies). There is still a long way to go.

Why choose the Social Science Policy Council as a platform?

It may surprise many that we did not restrict this initiative to one discipline, for example sociology, but chose the Social Science Policy Council as a platform. Indeed, the field of sociology

would have been diverse enough to justify a skeptical attitude about finding agreements on methods, quality standards or teaching requirements. How much more difficult will this be when people gather from 8-10 different disciplines? On the other hand, the traditional limits of the single disciplines have long been crossed, and many a scientist may find the work of
 "ie from another field closer to his or her own than
 of other colleagues from the same discipline. Future
 funding seems to favor transdisciplinary projects. Transdisciplinary research networks are the road to the future. It would be wise, in fact it is essential, that we begin to find out if, and what, and how much we want to deal with each other and how we can devise some basic working agreements. In my view, it is worth to try.

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Endnotes

- i For a portrait of the Swiss Academy for Humanities and Social Sciences see www.sagw.ch (German) or www.assh.ch (French). For a portrait with a mission statement and a brief history of the Social Science Policy Council (in French) see

the same website, under the heading "entreprises et commissions".

- ii On qualitative inquiry and research approaches: Denzin and Lincoln (1998a,b,c, 2000a); Silverman (1997, 2000, 2001); Flick (2004); Seale et al. (2004); May (2002); Hitzler and Honer (1997); on ethnography: Atkinson et al. (2002); on interviews: Gubrium and Holstein (2002); for current thematic discussions see *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, www.qualitative-research.net/fqs/fqs.htm; for an overview on qualitative research in Germany see Mruck and Mey (2000); Hitzler (2000).
- iii Silverman (2000; 2001), as others do, repeatedly questions this distinction but finally sticks to the terms 'qualitative research', 'qualitative methods', and 'qualitative data'.
- iv For a lively description of "family conflicts" within the interpretative scene in Germany, see Hitzler 2000.

subscribe to a hypothetical-deductive concept of science (as most textbooks on 'empirical research methods' do) inevitably argue inconsistently if they allow for qualitative research in an 'explorative phase': "on the one hand they recommend, in the context of discovery, the carrying out of qualitative preliminary studies, but on the other hand they claim that it is impossible to methodologize these, and that, for this reason, they have no confidence in the results of such studies... From the point of view of research pragmatics, however, it remains unclear why researchers should take the trouble to carry out field observation and interviews, if the only result of this is arbitrary hypotheses, and why they do not rather simply sit at their desks waiting for intuitions or pulling hypotheses out of a tombola." Indeed, when Kelle and Lüdemann (1995, 1996) proposed two qualitative research procedures for generating hypotheses, Lindenberg (1996a,b) criticized them harshly for their untenable "inductive procedure" which contradicts the 'logic of research' as formulated by Popper (1934).

- vii C.f. Kelle (1994).
- viii Denzin and Lincoln (2000:4): "The qualitative researcher may take on multiple and gendered images: scientist, naturalist, field-worker, journalist, social critic, artist, performer, jazz musician, filmmaker, quilt maker, essayist. The many methodological practices of qualitative research may be viewed as soft science, journalism, ethnography, bricolage, quilt making, or montage."
- ix A report on this workshop appeared in German in the Bulletin No. 115, July 2002, of the Swiss Sociological Association, written by Eva Nadai (www.sagw.ch/soziologie) under the headings Publications/Bulletins; retrieved June 15, 2004).