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REGULAR ARTICLE

Perils and Potentials in Qualitative Psychology

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Abstract Famously, Ebbinghaus declared that psychology has a long past, but only a short history. Psychology, as something implicit to human conduct, is as old as the human race, but the science, as an explicit investigative reflection upon that conduct, is a recent invention. Within the short history of psychology, we find an even shorter history of qualitative psychology specifically. Although most founding fathers (Freud, Piaget, Bartlett etc.) worked as "qualitative psychologists", they found no need to thematize their methods of inquiry in this manner. Since around 1980, however, a field has established itself that can be called qualitative psychology. In this paper, I discuss how this field can move sensibly into the future, and I highlight two perils and two potentials. The perils stem from neo-positivism and a threatening "McDonaldization" of qualitative research, while the potentials are related to proliferation of new forms of inquiry and a transcending of disciplinary boundaries.

Keywords Qualitative psychology · History · McDonaldization · Neo-positivism · Transdisciplinarity

Introduction

Famously, Ebbinghaus declared that psychology has a long past, but only a short history. Psychology, as something implicit to human conduct, is likely as old as the human race, but the science, as an explicit investigative reflection upon that conduct, is a recent invention. People had to become individuals (in a modern sense), before it made sense to construct a science of the individual mind. Within the short history of psychology, we find an even shorter history of qualitative psychology specifically. Although most founding fathers (Freud, Piaget, Bartlett etc.) worked as "qualitative psychologists", they found no need to thematize their methods of inquiry in this manner (Brinkmann et al. 2014). Prior to the 1980s, there are literally no hits for "qualitative research" in psychology journals (Wertz 2014). Since around 1980, however, a field

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has gradually established itself that can be called qualitative psychology. Although qualitative psychology is still marginalized in some psychology departments (particularly in the US, but also in many European countries), it is growing around the world, and now has its own journals (*Qualitative Research in Psychology* and *Qualitative Psychology*), handbooks, and research centers.

In this paper, I discuss how this field can move sensibly into the future, and I highlight two perils and two potentials. The perils stem from neo-positivism and a threatening "McDonaldization" of qualitative research, while the potentials are related to a promising proliferation of new forms of inquiry and a transcendence of disciplinary boundaries. This special issue in itself testifies to the two potentials that I shall highlight: First, *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science* is an interdisciplinary journal with a strong theoretical emphasis. Both interdisciplinarity and a theoretical orientation are needed for qualitative psychology in the future: We must move beyond what Steinar Kvale often referred to as "qualitative positivism", the belief that we can use specific methods to move directly from qualitative "data" to psychological insights about human life without the need for theory. The critique of positivist philosophy of science ought to have made it clear that "data" cannot speak for themselves, but are always selected and ordered according to theoretical ideas. There are no theory-free data to be unearthed without theory. Moreover, we must also acknowledge *as* qualitative psychologists that insights appear in biology and sociology, neuroscience and anthropology, which are useful for qualitative psychology. There is no opposition between qualitative inquiry and the natural sciences, and we should be careful not to construct one (think of the ways in which great natural scientists such as Darwin worked that can only be described as qualitative – carefully describing the qualities of the natural world and invoking theory as generalizing tools). Second, the form of this special issue – with an initial multivoiced dialogue, transcribed from an active and creative discussion, and followed by individual reflections – does not only *tell* readers how to engage in a creative textual practice, but demonstrates its feasibility by *showing* how it can be done. Showing rather than simply telling should be an important ideal for qualitative psychologists, and working in this specific way has been a new experience for me; I have previously made various experiments with qualitative writing (dialogical, autoethnographical, fiction etc.), but I have never written an enlarged commentary on a dialogue in which I was one of the participants. This, however, is an interesting exercise that gives one the chance to expand one's ideas individually that were first developed collectively.

Neo-Positivism

The first problem that appears for qualitative psychology today is what I shall refer to as neo-positivism. As I read the history of positivism, it has gone through three phases, which I shall refer to as classical positivism (represented most famously by its founder, Auguste Comte, 1798–1857), logical positivism (from the early 20th century, as developed by members of the Wiener Kreis), and finally contemporary neo-positivism. Although many qualitative researchers believe that the first two phases of positivism represented serious threats to qualitative inquiry, I actually believe that this is an illusion. As Joel Michell (2003) has argued, there was in fact very little (if anything)

in the writings of Comte, Schlick, or Carnap (e.g., 1966) (the latter two being leading exponents of logical positivism) that can be pitted against qualitative research in general or qualitative studies in psychology in particular. Before explaining what I mean by neo-positivism – which *is* a real peril for qualitative psychologists – I shall briefly articulate some main tenets of past positivisms in order to demonstrate that these may in fact be surprising allies rather than enemies of qualitative psychology now and in the future.

Historically, the original positivist philosophy made a significant contribution to the social sciences and also to the arts: Comte (e.g., 1975) founded both positivist philosophy and the science of sociology (the following is adapted from Brinkmann and Kvale 2015). Comte's positivist philosophy was quite progressive and reacted strongly against religious dogma and metaphysical speculation and advocated a return to observable data. Positivist science was to provide determinate laws of the social with the possibility of socially engineering society. Obviously, this goal is debatable, but the influence of positivist sociology can be clearly seen in the work of Emile Durkheim and his penetrating qualitative (!) analyses of social phenomena, e.g., his interpretations of suicides in relation to religiosity. Positivism also had an extended influence on the arts of the 19th century, inspiring a move from mythological and aristocratic themes to a new realism, depicting in detail the lives of workers and the bourgeoisie (for some of this history, particularly in the British context, see Dale 1989). In the history of music, Bizet's opera Carmen, featuring the lives of cigarette smugglers and toreadors, can be depicted as inspired by positivism, and Flaubert's realistic descriptions of the life of his heroine in Madame Bovary qualify as positivist, just as impressionist paintings, sticking to the immediate sense impressions, in particular the sense data of pointillism, also drew inspiration from positivism. Early positivism was also a political inspiration for feminism, and it was the feminist Harriet Martineau who translated Comte's *Positive Philosophy* into English. In philosophy, the founder of phenomenological philosophy, Husserl, even stated that if positivism means being faithful to the phenomena, then we, the phenomenologists, are the true positivists!

Why do I mention all this? First, to debunk the myth that positivism (and a natural scientific ideal) is necessarily antithetical to qualitative research, and second to emphasize that qualitative psychologists have much to gain from going back in history and finding inspiration for current research practices. Positivism flourished not just as a philosophy, but also as a broader cultural movement with literary, artistic, and political aspects. However, the open approach of classical positivism was somewhat lost in the logical positivism of the Vienna circle in the 1920s, whose members included the philosophers Schlick, Carnap, and Neurath. Its strict focus on the logic and validity of scientific statements contributed to what Kvale (2008) baptized "a methodological bureaucracy" of social science research, particularly in the mid-century United States. Bureaucracy is characterized by standardized procedures and methods, regularity, formal rules of decision and impersonal impartiality, written communication, and quantification, and these became scientific rules for logical positivists. They advocated a "unity of science", where scientific research was based on a common method, independent of the subject matter investigated. In this kind of methodological positivism, scientific knowledge was to be found by following general methodological rules that were largely independent of the content and context of the investigation. Scientific facts were to be unambiguous, intra-subjectively and inter-

subjectively reproducible, objective, and quantifiable. Scientific statements ought to be value neutral, facts were to be distinguished from values, and science from ethics and politics. Any influence of the subjectivity of the researcher should be eliminated or minimized by using alleged neutral methods. Obviously, this is problematic for qualitative psychology, since subjectivity (as it is sometimes put) *is* here the research instrument. But all this could be discussed as a genuinely *scientific question*, and it certainly was, particularly in the *Positivismusstreit* (positivism dispute) in the 1960s with Habermas and Adorno as the two most significant critics of positivism in the social sciences.

Today, however, especially in psychology, but also elsewhere, we see a resurgence of positivism, but this time not as a theory of science that can be rationally discussed with philosophical arguments, but rather as a bureaucratic approach to research funding and publication, related to an emerging global audit culture. This is neo-positivism – not really a philosophical position, but rather an economic or political one, which Foucault might refer to with the term governmentality (see Dean 1999). Unlike in the times of classical positivism, there is now a much more powerful exclusion of qualitative research, for example with reference to evidence hierarchies, "what works" research, and quantitative meta-analyses. With a background in biomedicine, the Cochrane movement has developed an evidence hierarchy, which has placed meta-analyses and randomized controlled experiments as "the gold standard", and expert opinion, as well as qualitative research, at the bottom level of evidence. With inspiration from health research and in particular the testing of new medicines (comparing an active drug and a placebo), the goal becomes isolating a single causal factor that brings about a specific result. These strict criteria of evidence may be adequate for some parts of biomedical research. However, when they are extrapolated to other forms of research such as psychology, they too often result in a "politics of evidence" (Morse 2006), where qualitative research in general becomes marginalized. The explorative, iterative, and case-based approach of qualitative inquiry does not fit the logic of randomized controlled trials. The effect of the evidence-based movement on qualitative research has largely been to discredit qualitative research, hindering the acceptance of qualitative research proposals and the funding of qualitative research.

I have only here provided a hint of what I mean by neo-positivism and why it threatens qualitative psychology today. The latter focuses on "what there is" or "what might become" (i.e., favors descriptive, e.g., phenomenological, and process oriented approaches) and not on "what works", which is what is sought by the evidence movement. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with studying "what works", of course, but the problem arises when this question is taken as leading the way to the "gold standard", thus marginalizing other kinds of questions (which, in fact, might be more fundamental in a scientific sense). Qualitative psychologists need to know their way about in the audit culture of which they are a part, and they need to be able to explain why what they do is relevant – not just in a philosophical sense, but also in a sense that speaks to funding agencies etc. To borrow the words of Julianne Cheek (2006), we need to work "within these spaces rather than being worked over by them" and this should be a collective effort.

The McDonaldization of Qualitative Research

Sociologist George Ritzer (2008) is famous for having coined the term McDonaldization to describe an array of significant aspects of modern consumer society (the following expands on Brinkmann 2012a). This is the second major peril that I shall address. Ritzer continues the classical work of Max Weber, who depicted the "rationalization" of society as a bureaucratic "iron cage", famously portrayed in the novels of Franz Kafka. Moving from industrial to consumer society means moving from the iron cage and into fast food restaurants such as McDonalds. In a recent analysis, Clive Nancarrow and co-workers (2005) have addressed qualitative marketing research specifically and argued that this kind of research has undergone a process of McDonaldization. I believe that qualitative psychology stands in exactly the same danger of falling into McDonaldization, when it becomes an industry that affects and is affected by consumer society. In his books on McDonaldization, Ritzer highlights four primary components that have been perfected at McDonald's restaurants, but which have spread throughout consumer society. In my view, they also form something like a problematic trend in contemporary qualitative psychology:

The first component is *efficiency*, which means employing the best and least wasteful route toward one's goal. The current emphasis on *methods* in qualitative psychology, which can sometimes even be characterised as methodolatry, or a worship of methods, is in line with the call for efficiency, and the term 'method' originally comes from Greek and meant "a way to a goal". Methods are supposed to get us from A to B as fast and efficient as possible. Nancarrow et al. (2005) argue in their article on the McDonaldization of market research that focus groups are employed to an increasing extent, because they are a fast and efficient way to obtain data. The problem with efficiency, however, is that imaginative and penetrating research demands time and patience. We cannot demand, when we do research, that everything should be geared toward minimising time. Proper field work may take months or even years, which is not unusual in social anthropology, and analysing and interpreting the materials may take even longer. If you want to know and understand other people, you need to spend time with them, but today it is the case that we, as qualitative researchers, are rather like Zygmunt Bauman's (1996) tourists, who visit others for a brief period of time (maybe just for one hour in an interview), take our snapshots (i.e., record the conversations), and then leave for the next destination. Interviewing has become the preferred choice in qualitative psychology, not because it is always the optimal way to answer one's research question, I believe, but because it appears to be less time consuming than ethnographic fieldwork, for example. If qualitative market research is leading the way for us, we may conjecture that even the individual interview will become less widely used in comparison with focus groups, as these are often even less expensive and a faster means of data collection.

The second component is *calculability*, signalling what I called the audit culture above as part of McDonaldization. Initially, calculability sounds like it should be far away from qualitative concerns. However, anyone who has read qualitative research proposals will recognize this trope, for example when it is stated that "30 people will be interviewed, 15 men and 15 women" and the like. Why 30? Why not 4 or 300? How can we know in advance how many participants we need? Such questions are often bypassed when qualitative researchers emulate the kind of calculability that may be a

virtue in quantitative research. The problem with calculability is first and foremost the fact that it sits uneasily with the emergent and imaginative processes of qualitative psychology. In general, when the goal is to know and understand other people, calculability will restrain the potentials of qualitative research.

The next component is *predictability*, defined by Ritzer as uniformity across settings and times. "Predictability" means that people will everywhere receive the same service and product every time they interact with McDonalds. Like calculability, predictability often goes directly against the promises of qualitative psychology to be inductive and flexible. The virtue of predictability is "no surprises!", but granting that this can be seen as a virtue in the fast food industry, it is more like a vice in qualitative research. As researchers, we *like* surprises – creating opportunities for being surprised is in a way the very *raison d'être* for any research project. Qualitative psychology is increasingly becoming standardised, however, witnessed for example in the enormous amount of technical "how to" books that tells you what to do, regardless of the subject matter, context and basic philosophical approach. Just as a Big Mac is the same all over the planet, interviewing others is often supposed to be a process that can be standardised, whether the interviewee is a single mother in Ghana or a senior citizen in Denmark. The main problem of predictability is that qualitative research, which is interested in contextual experience and emergent meaning making, simply cannot be rendered predictable. We need qualitative psychology exactly when we *cannot* keep controlled factors constant (as this would destroy the processes that we are interested in).

The final component is *control*, which, for Ritzer, refers to the non-human technology that speeds the operation, or, to put it in more negative terms, takes skills away from people. In qualitative psychology, there has been a growth in the number of research projects that employ CAQDAS – computer assisted qualitative data analysis software. It is almost becoming a *sine qua non*. This may increase the feeling of control when dealing with very large amounts of data, but there are also dangers associated with the outsourcing of central aspects of analysis to computer programs. I should say that CAQDAS was not developed as a means to do analysis as such (but to help organize large qualitative data sets), but it is often, yet erroneously, given this role. The problem of control by taking skills away from people concerns the fact that existing computer programs are well-adapted for coding strategies, for examples, whereas the many other forms of analysis, such as narrative and discursive analyses, figure less in the computer-assisted programs for textual analysis. There is thus a danger that the ready availability of computer programs for coding can have the effect that coding becomes a preferred short-cut to analysis, at the expense of a rich variety of other modes of analyses.

Nancarrow and co-workers conclude about the impact of McDonaldization on qualitative research, and this may sum up the risk of McDonaldization of qualitative psychology as well:

> Just as McWorld creates 'a common world taste around common logos, advertising slogans, stars, songs, brand names, jingles and trademarks' […], the qualitative research world also seems to be moving towards a common world taste for an instantly recognisable and acceptable research method that can be deployed fast. (Nancarrow et al. 2005, p. 297).

Instead of McDonaldization, we should as qualitative psychologists aim to develop the *craft* of qualitative inquiry. Unlike industrial production, a craft is based on tradition and habitual practice (which, of course, can and should be developed creatively) rather than rules and procedures that can be made completely explicit and transparent (such as in method books). I do not have space to unfold a philosophy of craftsmanship as related to the practice of research here (but see Brinkmann and Kvale 2015), but will end with C. Wright Mills' helpful words to the (qualitative) researcher:

> Be a good craftsman: Avoid any rigid set of procedures. Above all, seek to develop and to use the sociological imagination. Avoid the fetishism of method and technique. Urge the rehabilitation of the unpretentious intellectual craftsman, and try to become such a craftsman yourself. Let every man be his own methodologist; let every man be his own theorist; let theory and method again become part of the practice of a craft. (Mills 1959, p. 224)

Proliferation of new Forms of Inquiry

However threatening the streams of neo-positivism and McDonaldization may be, there are fortunately also significant promises in contemporary qualitative psychology. I have already mentioned how qualitative psychology is now being institutionalized in centers, journals and handbooks around the world. This institutionalization has arrived very late in psychology, compared to how qualitative inquiry has lived in neighboring disciplines such as education and anthropology. These disciplines have for long welcomed qualitative research (and social anthropology can even be said to be constituted around the key method of fieldwork or participant observation), and in the past psychologists have had to publish their qualitative studies in the journals of education, anthropology, or sociology. Only in 2004, with *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, did the discipline obtain its own qualitative journal, which was followed up in 2014 with the launch of the APA journal *Qualitative Psychology*. Psychologists had to wait until 2003 before the most powerful psychological organization, the APA, published a textbook on qualitative research in psychology (Camic et al. 2003). Of course, as I have already argued, qualitative research was alive in psychology well before this, and it probably could not be otherwise, since it seems impossible to conceive of any psychological study that does not take an interest in the qualities of the phenomena under scrutiny. If so, as Harré has argued, qualitative psychology should be thought of as the fundamental kind of psychological inquiry with quantitative approaches as auxiliary. In other words, a basic scientific psychology is a qualitative psychology (Harré 2004). This explains why the modern founders of the discipline (Wundt, Freud, James, Vygotsky, and Piaget to name just a few) as a matter of course engaged in inquiry that can only be described (although they did not do this themselves) as qualitative.

Although the institutionalization of qualitative psychology is by and large a good and helpful thing, it also involves the risk that the field becomes enclosed upon itself and develops new rigid standards for how to do research (akin to the kind of McDonaldization addressed above). So what I here call a proliferation of new forms of inquiry is an interesting development that goes against the tendency to

McDonaldization and standardization. The point is that the subject matters studied by qualitative psychologists, which are polyvocal, multimodal and often multi-sited, cannot be fully captured if one only approaches them with, say, interviewing or observations. Qualitative interviewing and observation are indeed important and necessary investigative practices, but the same can be said of many other methods of inquiry that are now emerging. A new handbook of qualitative research from the Oxford Library of Psychology provides an overview of some of the new approaches. In addition to established forms of inquiry (such as interviewing, focus groups, grounded theory and ethnography) we find chapters on feminist, critical, and decolonizing approaches; on authoethnography and oral history; and on photography and arts-based research practices, for example (Leavy 2014). It is noteworthy that methods appear that are not just meant to capture linguistic interaction or human behaviors, but also cultural products such as pictures and other artistic creations are included. What is exciting about the new forms of inquiry is that they both enable researchers to address phenomenological aspects, discursive aspects, and material aspects of the sociocultural worlds in which people live (Brinkmann 2012b). There is reason to think that psychological reality cannot be reduced to people's experiences of it (phenomenology), to how they talk about it (discourse) or to pure material matters (as seen, for example, in some approaches to Actor-Network-Theory), because the human world is comprised by all these aspects. If so, we need to develop investigative practices that enable us to address these different aspects, and I believe that this is exactly what is happening now. The challenge, of course, is to keep the possibility of communicating across different qualitative traditions intact. It would be a shame if grounded theorists only communicated with other grounded theorists, or if phenomenologists only communicated with other phenomenologists. If my argument here (which I have only sketched all too briefly) is valid, psychological phenomena have quite different aspects and we should therefore embrace the new forms of inquiry that allow us to respect and study all of them.

Transcending Disciplinary Boundaries

The final point that I shall here address concerns the need to transcend disciplinary boundaries. I see this need as a potential for qualitative psychology, rather than a peril. It is not just existing disciplinary boundaries between, say, biology and sociology, or neuroscience and anthropology, that should be transcended. I believe that it is the whole fundamental division of the world into nature/culture or biology/sociality that should be rethought. And this division *is* being rethought in contemporary scholarly work. We have a host of "material-semiotic" approaches now, which reject dividing the world into meaningless matter on the one hand (a brute physical world), and a world of matterless meaning on the other (a hermeneutic world of discourses or something similar). Examples include the work of physicist-feminist Karen Barad (2007), sociologist-philosopher (and much more) Bruno Latour (2005) and anthropologist Tim Ingold (2011). Some of these scholars tackle the dichotomy of matter and meaning head on, and Ingold writes tellingly about the two histories – of nature and society – as basically being aspects of the same life process: "there is not so much an interplay between two kinds of history – the upper case History of humanity on the plane of society and the

lower case history of nature – as a history comprised by the interplay of diverse humans and non-humans in their mutual involvement.” (p. 9). He goes on to say that there “are human becomings, animal becomings, plant becomings and so on” (p. 9), the paths of which may interweave to form a kind of tapestry, but everything is part and parcel of the same evolving world. So social scientists are rightly rediscovering natural science, witnessed for example in the recent work of Nikolas Rose (whose educational background is an interesting mix of psychology, biology, and sociology) where he not just stands at a distance from biomedicine (Rose 2007) and the neurosciences (Rose and Abi-Rached 2013) to deconstruct them or demonstrate that they are “social constructions”. Rather, he takes them very seriously as complexes of knowledge in practice, and he is calling for new forms of collaboration between natural and social scientists, because the world is not nicely divided into nature and society. Likewise, natural scientists are increasingly taking human and social science seriously again, e.g., when biologists turn to semiotics (Hoffmeyer 2008), or when neuroscientists are seeking the help of phenomenologists to understand human experience (Andrieu 2006). The list could go on and on. The point is that more and more people are now seeing a need to develop integrative approaches, also in psychology, which will enable researchers to understand the human being as a cerebral, embodied, symbolic, social and technology-using creature *at the same time*, because these aspects are deeply related. Perhaps the solution is something like a hybrid psychology of neuropsychology and discursive psychology (Harré 2002), or maybe there is a need to rethink the entire endeavor anew?

I shall not attempt to settle this challenging question here, but I will rather emphasize how this whole development can in fact be seen as an argument for qualitative psychology. The obvious reason is that qualitative psychology is uniquely capable of addressing a whole phenomenon, in its entire complexity, without reducing it to discrete variables that should allegedly be controlled or kept constant. Of course, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with quantitative, variable centered psychology – when it makes sense – but there are probably not that many psychological phenomena that lend themselves to this kind of approach (Harré 2004). Human thinking, feeling, and acting – as a developmental process – can rarely be neatly divided into categories such as culture or biology. To quote Margaret Lock and Vinh-Kim Nguyen (2010), who have done remarkable studies in medical anthropology, “culture, history, politics, and biology (environmental and individual), are inextricably entangled and subject to never-ending transformations […] Our position is that biological and social life are mutually constitutive” (p. 1). As cultural psychologists have argued for long, we cannot sensibly approach “culture” as a variable and ask how much of human behavior is “caused” by this alleged variable, for culture as such is a process (and not an entity), and has no causal powers (Valsiner 2014). Rather, we should study how humans, through collective efforts and involving all sorts of materials, have come to transform their surroundings and practices, and we should talk about *these* aspects of the world as culture. But this is not to set up a shadowy world of culture against nature. Rather it is to see the whole complexity as aspects of an evolving life process. My argument is that qualitative psychology is needed exactly to deal with this kind of complexity as it enables the researcher to inquire into human experience, situated interaction, discursive communication, material culture and everything that goes into constituting human lives.

In my own ongoing qualitative research project on what we call “diagnostic culture” (www.dc.aau.dk), we are interested in how psychiatric categories (we look in particular

at depression and ADHD) have an impact on individuals and societal institutions and practices [1]. Although we are interested in psychiatric diagnoses as discursive categories, and thus delve into what can be called discourse analysis, we also study how people experience the process of being diagnosed and the biographical changes that sometimes ensue. This, in a way, is to combine a discursive approach with a phenomenological one, and – to make matters worse (or better!) – we also look at materials and artefacts related to the psychiatric diagnoses (pills, diagnostic manuals, self-help books etc.) and the social practices in which the diagnostic process occurs (meetings with psychiatrists and social workers and also support groups of different kinds). All in all, we believe that this approach, partly inspired by situational analysis (Clarke 2005), and of course ethnography, enables us to acquire a deep and comprehensive understanding of how the phenomena depression and ADHD are constituted (Packer 2010). They are constituted not just by processes in people's brains and bodies or by processes of social construction; not just by individuals' experiences or by discursive categories, but by all these things in complex and intertwined ways. A qualitative psychology that is open to research made in other disciplines, and which is willing to use a wide variety of methodological approaches, is needed to study these kinds of complex processes.

Conclusions

There is much to be optimistic about in contemporary qualitative psychology. The field has now firmly established itself, and today's students can learn how to conduct interviews, participant observation, or employ other qualitative approaches, in many psychology departments. Paradoxically, however, this institutionalization also brings certain perils with it: First, because it may lead to standardization and McDonaldization, which is a shame, because the phenomena studied by qualitative psychologists are normally not suitable for standardized approaches. Instead, we should look to the new visual, artistic and other generally experimental methodologies that are emerging in other disciplines and use these as supplements to more traditional forms of qualitative inquiry. And second, there is a peril because qualitative psychology risks becoming something "in itself", detached from the rest of psychology and also from what goes on in other disciplines. Perhaps the dream scenario for the future would be to return to what was previously the case: That psychologists could ask any relevant research question, and use any methodology and technique that was needed in order to adequately address their research question, without much thought as to whether this was a qualitative or a quantitative approach. Hopefully, the situation when there is a dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative – and a felt need to develop distinct professional identities around these terms – is one that is limited in time and might come to an end. Perhaps the future should be one of "post qualitative research" (St. Pierre 2011)? Not because psychologists stop doing interviews, fieldwork, or other kinds of qualitative work (I certainly hope not!), but because they stop defining their research endeavors in terms of a method.

[1] The members of the research group include Anders Petersen, Mette Rønberg, Mikka Nielsen, and Ester Holte Kofod in addition to myself. The members' backgrounds are in psychology, sociology, and social anthropology.

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