

Qualitative Research and the Analysis of Processes. Considerations Towards a "Qualitative Developmental Psychology"

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Key words:
qualitative
research,
microgenesis,
developmental
psychology,
narrative
psychology,
analysis of
processes

Abstract: This contribution begins with a brief description of the three phases of developmental psychology in regards to their predominant methodical orientations. The use and analysis of qualitative documents as a characteristic research strategy could only be discovered in the first phase.

Following this introduction is a brief summary of some new directions connected to the early phase of developmental psychology, which are based on the analyses of para-literal documents, observations and interviews. In closing, a plea for a stronger and more equal use of a qualitative research perspective, necessary to reflect the genuine subject of developmental psychology—processes and transformation—in a more adequate way, is outlined.

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1. Preface

The designation "qualitative developmental psychology" does not direct at a new program for a (sub-) discipline; this would be doubtful also for qualitative research in view of the reproach of "method inversion"—the a priori decision for a method before any elaboration of contents—addressed by Gerd JUETTEMANN (1983) to quantitative psychology. Rather it is intended to point out some potentials of qualitative research within developmental psychology. Because even if (not only in the German-speaking countries) the frontiers between a so-called quantitative and a so-called qualitative research orientation may no longer be as rigid as

decades ago—e.g. Jaan VALSINER (2000) writes that his consideration to create a "Journal for Qualitative Developmental Psychology" in 1980 encountered refusal because of the term "qualitative"—it can be held nevertheless for the German-language developmental psychology, which is primarily regarded here, that a kind of "qualitative thinking" is recognizable only in beginnings in this field of activity (for the Anglo-American developmental psychology see SMITH & DANWORTH 2000/in preparation). The very promising starts of such an orientation in the early period of developmental psychology were not consistently pursued, and until today they are neglected to a large extent. Thus, the representation of qualitative procedures is omitted in the relevant textbooks and manuals, and the "Tagung Entwicklungspsychologie [Conference Developmental Psychology]", taking place in the rotation of two years, still is dominated by the presentation of questionnaire studies and experimental investigations. [1]

This proves true although the predominant number of representatives of the discipline meanwhile are voting for a method pluralism. But nevertheless, research orientations aligned with the qualitative paradigm still seem to have a difficult position: They often are regarded as "soft" (instead of: based upon "hard"/"exact" data) and "inaccurate" (instead of depending on "accurate" measurements). If textual material (interviews, essays, observation logs etc.) forms the data base, it is often used in a way that quantification is possible in order to fulfill the demands of quantitative research towards validity, reliability and objectivity, which are accepted within (developmental) psychology to a large extent. A genuine qualitative research orientation and the use of qualitative procedures still are lacking, even if it is pleaded—partly by prominent developmental psychologists—to consider again the variety of "qualitative documents" in developmental studies. [2]

This contribution will first describe, in general terms, different phases of developmental research regarding methodical orientations and the (non) acknowledgment of a "qualitative thinking" appearing therein (Chapter 2). Subsequently, some perspectives of a qualitative-oriented developmental psychology are pointed out, referring to actual efforts towards a stronger reliance on qualitative documents (Chapter 3). Finally, some possibilities to link process analysis and qualitative research logic for future work are sketched, resulting from the reflection of the co-constructive character of the research process (Chapter 4). [3]

2. A Brief Description of Methodical Orientations in Developmental Psychology

2.1 First phase: Forerunner of a qualitative developmental psychology

The beginning of developmental psychology at the end of the 19th and during the first decades of the 20th century was characterized by detailed observation and diary studies. I like to recall for instance the recordings of William PREYER (1882/1923), who observed his child, or the utmost careful descriptions of the married couple Clara and William STERN (1907/1965) upon the development of

their children within their research diaries (the work of the STERNS is shortly described by BEHRENS and DEUTSCH 1991; Siegfried HOPPE-GRAFF 1989 provides a more general overview). Also worth mentioning are the analyses of adolescents' diaries done by Charlotte BUEHLER (1929) and Siegfried BERNFELD (1931/1978). BERNFELD, who still is unmentioned most of the time within developmental psychology, tried to analyze diaries using a hermeneutic approach and psychoanalytical methods, and he also included socio-historical considerations into his research. Beside these authors, who gave important insights into child and juvenile biographies, Jean PIAGET should be mentioned, the probably most prominent developmental psychologist for this early 20th century, who—apart from many observations—also interviewed children by means of a procedure he developed, somewhat misleadingly called "Clinical Method". [4]

These and other pioneers of developmental research yet not mentioned surely can be pointed out as "forerunners" of a qualitative developmental psychology. Nevertheless, their self-description was occasionally quite another one: Thus, for instance, PIAGET understood his original "Clinical Method" and its revised version to be "experimental", although by the special procedure—only the opening question was standardized, following questions were formulated upon the answers of the children—he hoped to prevent "some 'systematical' errors" that often accompany the work of a "pure experimenter" (PIAGET 1926/1978, p.18). [5]

Despite this self-attribution—and although the accentuation of universalistic ways of thinking and mature-oriented explanations of development were very prominent—in this first phase procedures were adjusted to the specific research interest or they were specifically developed: As PIAGET with his method tried gradually "causing" (knowledge-) changes, using diaries as a scientific instrument was justified by the specific topic—the "Seelenleben [emotional life]" of adolescents during a transitory phase of their individual life careers. According to these pioneers diary analysis allows to illustrate the uniqueness of this life phase appropriately, while experimental procedures—so the view at that time—appeared only limited suitable in this research field. [6]

2.2 Second phase: The methodological turn

After the break by German fascism, these early research efforts no longer met with approval during the second phase of developmental psychology. As for the whole discipline, qualitative approaches were repressed as well through the orientation towards North American psychology and by the expansion and establishment of quantitative methods: In almost all relevant developmental textbooks and manuals research strategies like observation, diaries etc. became attributed as "anecdotic" and "unscientific" or defined as "old-fashioned". (Auto-) Biographical descriptions (from diaries or interviews) and observation studies of infants and adolescents—characteristic for the early developmental psychology—lost "reputation, because they no longer fit a changing idea of acceptable data" [HOPPE-GRAFF 1998, p.262; my translation; G.M.]. Apart from occasional

efforts, e.g. from Hans THOMAE (1956, 1959), who tried to establish biographical research within German psychology and to establish biographic methods with equal rights to other procedures used in developmental psychology, qualitative research approaches disappeared to a large extent. Still today an understanding of qualitative research as only a preparatory step in the research process prevails in far sections of psychology (and is not limited to this discipline), most times accompanied by the opinion that qualitative procedures could receive a scientific status only by additional quantitative analyses. For the sake of completeness, it should be mentioned that: a similar position was characteristic for a considerable number of the representatives of the early phase, so for instance for Charlotte BUEHLER or for her student Paul LAZARFELD. [7]

2.3 Third phase: New programs, old methods

A predominantly quantitative orientation continued despite the programs formulated during the third phase of developmental psychology: So since the mid sixties for instance the "Life-span developmental psychology" was conceptualized (for a summary see BALTES 1979), which included the methodological challenge to address the respective (life-) period adequately within developmental investigation designs. Representatives of the so-called "Differential developmental psychology" additionally demanded the rejection of universalistic thinking. Regardless of these programmatic innovations and despite the (compared with the founder years: increasing) variety of topics, research fields and theoretical references (a fact which all relevant textbooks and manuals are endeavored to stress) the methodical attention above all was drawn to the development of research designs, adequate (= quantifiable) for developmental studies. Within these methodological debates, the fact that a renaissance of qualitative methodologies was observable since the seventies and eighties also in the German-language psychology (see KLEINING 1991, MAYRING 1993) was entirely neglected (the phases of qualitative research in Germany are described by LUEDERS & REICHERTZ 1986, for the American social research see DENZIN 1999). [8]

Compared to this all dominating debate about investigation plans, other methodical questions seemed subordinate or pre-determined. This is particularly amazing considering that the criticism expressed three decades ago by prominent representatives of the discipline (some of them even became prominent because of their criticism), who drew the attention to the boundaries of the experimental paradigm. For instance Joachim F. WOHLWILL (1973/1977) criticized developmental research typical up until the seventies violently (among other things because development—due to the impossibility of an experimental manipulation of age variables—cannot be examined appropriately within an experimental design). Urie BRONFENBRENNER (1977/1978) argued against the boundaries of laboratory psychology with his meanwhile often quoted criticism, "that the present developmental psychology to a large extent seems to be the science of strange behavior of children in strange situations with strange adults, analyzed within time periods as short as possible" (BRONFENBRENNER 1977/1978, p.33; my translation; G.M.). Due to ecological validity

BRONFENBRENNER pleaded not to use experiments, as was typical for hypothesis testing, but "only for heuristic purposes" (ibid., p.40; my translation; G.M.). [9]

2.4 First conclusion: Missing references to qualitative research

Along the history of developmental psychology—in this contribution only sketched in rough stages—for the bulk of researchers there are hardly any references to a qualitative methodology (with the exception of the early phase), although there are interesting points of contact between some premises of qualitative research (such as an holistic view or the assumption of historicity) and some guiding principles of developmental psychology, according to the revisions carried out toward an ecological and contextual viewpoint of development. [10]

This ignorance towards qualitative approaches is rather obvious for instance in the contribution "What will become of developmental psychology" by Rainer SILBEREISEN (1996) or in the standard textbook of German developmental psychology, edited by Rolf OERTER and Leo MONTADA in its fourth edition of 1998 with more than 1000 pages: Qualitative positions remain unmentioned in both publications, and a methodical perspective is seen exclusively in complex mathematical procedures—in particular "Structural equation models"—whose expansion is welcomed and forced. Both tendencies (the exclusion of a qualitative perspective and the simultaneous preference for statistical procedures), which are characteristic for current developmental psychology, are surprising, since, especially towards structural equation models, the criticism is increasing towards an "uncritical transfer of methods used in other areas of psychology" (KELLER 1989, p.229; my translation; G.M.), and also a growing number of researchers are complaining that developmental psychology continues to miss its genuine subject—transformation and processes. Even when the "optimal road" for developmental research is taken and longitudinal studies are conducted for investigating intra-individual changes, most times development is not conceptualized as a process: Mostly development is investigated as the (non) change of attributes between two (or several) points of measurement whereby these (non) changes are correlated with assumed processes without however making these processes themselves subject of an empirical investigation (and—due to the methodical procedure—they cannot become subject of investigation, a position stressed e.g. by Jaan VALSINER 1987 and 1997, who for about two decades did not become tired of reminding others to conduct developmental psychology instead of non-developmental psychology). Accordingly, demands to design studies in such a way that changes (and the developmental processes they are resulting from) are accessible for analysis are increasing (see for instance the synoptically arranged criticism Ingrid JOSEPHS 1997 published in the "Newsletter Entwicklungspsychologie", the "organ" of the Fachgruppe [disciplinary group] Developmental Psychology in the "Deutsche Gesellschaft für Psychologie"). [11]

3. New Beginnings for "Qualitative Developmental Psychology"

Recalling the critical voices that call to conduct developmental psychology again in its most characteristic and literal sense, in addition to the still dominating research perspective described in the preceding chapter there are occasional indications of a distancing from "the (scientific) ideal of strictly controlled and standardized research conditions" (HOPPE-GRAFF 1998, p.268; my translation; G.M.). Especially the own disciplinary tradition seems to be an outstanding starting point for such a methodological reorientation. [12]

The necessity to turn back to the early phase of developmental psychology (without however only copying the past research work), is currently being discussed under two points of view. On the one hand, it is reminded that "grandparents of the today's developmental psychology already had their own research methods" (KELLER 1989, p.229; my translation; G.M.), on the other hand, the changes to initiate some corrections within developmental research are stressed: Against the "modern" (variable-oriented instead of person-oriented) developmental psychology with its focus on observable (measurable) behavior and on coping and its neglect of the "inner side" of human development and of the "emotional life", again a perspective of the early developmental psychology is re-discovered which—according to Helmut FEND (1990, p.8)—was concerned with the "reorganization of the 'whole child' and the 'whole adolescent'" [my translation; G.M.], an objective to a large extent lost with the turn to the "modern" developmental psychology. In the course of this reorientation also qualitative documents—diaries, observation studies, and interviews—received a growing attention. And some researchers started developmental researching under a qualitative perspective (without necessarily using this term), although—as in the following will be shown—occasionally too carefully. [13]

3.1 Qualitative documents: Poems and diaries

After many methodological objections were brought forward against diary analyses for a long time (see the summary of FUCHS-HEINRITZ 1993, pp.263f for the field of youth research in the social sciences), some researchers today again regard this access—which carried the first bloom of developmental psychology—as an important source for the study of adolescents' self and world views (and without limiting diary analyses exclusively to this research field). One example of this reorientation is the longitudinal study "Developmental psychology of the adolescence in modern times" Helmut FEND conducted: After his first purely quantitative research, FEND consulted a growing number of qualitative documents, and he justified this with the fact that "phenomenological materials [give] ... an indispensable basis for a naturalistic analysis of adolescence, which dislikes bare speculation from the desk" (1994, pp.19f; my translation; G.M.). Recalling the narrowness of trying to "measure" juvenile thinking, he considered more closely the classical tradition of the founder years of adolescent research a la BUEHLER for reconstructing the interior worlds of the adolescents: "we must open up sources of thinking and we must stimulate spontaneous expressions for

getting insights into the self referential thinking in the early and middle adolescence" (ibid., p.31; my translation; G.M.). [14]

Despite FEND's appeal on researchers of the early phase, in his concrete empirical procedure he concentrated after some content-analytic views—similar to Marianne SOFF (1989) in her work "Youth in the diary"—on the quantitative analysis of the diaries and to the major part he ends up with the pure mentioning of frequencies for the respective topics. To that extent the methodical extension is limited to a more open organization of data collection, an observation also true for the work of the probably most important representative of the biographic method in German psychology, Hans THOMAE: Whereas analysis is concerned—so Wolfgang HEGENER (1998, p.93) during his review of the third edition of THOMAE's volume "The individual and his world" —"old customs are retained: Only the 'exact methods' are 'permitted and sacrosanct" [my translation; G.M.]. So beside all good intentions such a research practice is in danger to remain locked the variety of psychological contents and forms, as the internal processes are left "on the surface", instead of being illuminated in depth. In solving this problem, possibly a re-orientation towards Siegfried BERNFELD could help, who not only demanded (and practiced) an interpretive access to the data, but also stressed the necessity for *understanding* juvenile styles by using an access regarded as legitimate at the beginning of the 20th century and yet winning successively attention in qualitative research: the introspection (see JOURNAL FUER PSYCHOLOGIE 1999a; KLEINING & WITT 2000). According to BERNFELD introspection is

"the only procedure, which allows direct experiences of the psychological life ... Without introspective memory every scientific observation of the child and the young person remains in the long run incomprehensible, or we are in danger to understand it in the sense of the adult emotional life. This may be prevented by using a faithfully retained memory of the own youth and childhood" (BERNFELD 1922, p.5; cit. according to ERDHEIM 1988, p.220; my translation; G.M.). [15]

Even if BERNFELD's euphoria for introspection may cover some problematic implications about the process of retrospection—so e.g. the question of "Nachtraeglichkeit" [deferred action], i.e. the (re-) evaluation of past events due to the respective "Aktualgeschichte" [actual situation, concepts of a person, etc.] (see MEY 1999, pp.88ff.)—this should not tempt to neglect the potentials of this approach, too (towards some difficulties the recuperation of introspection as a independent method has to face see BREUER 1999). [16]

3.2 Observations and diary studies

Siegfried HOPPE-GRAFF (1989) also refers to early developmental psychology, and he does great efforts to free studies a la STERN and STERN or PIAGET from the malus attributed to them over decades. HOPPE-GRAFF pleads to recover the diary recordings as a genuine longitudinal data collection strategy, and he submitted first methodological suggestions in order to prepare a "Methodology of diary recording". Even if it seems to be his most urgent request

to prove the "indispensableness of diary recordings" in the context of theory-testing studies, at the same time he reminds not to neglect their "heuristic value during the theory formation and during the generation of hypothesis" [HOPPE-GRAFF 1989, p.251; my translation; G.M.]. In this regard also the longitudinal research of Lothar KRAPPMANN and Hans OSWALD should be mentioned. Within their study "The everyday life of school children", which lasted for many years, among others they used (participant) observation and open, not standardized interviews (they called them "semi-structured"). With the requirement to analyze the interaction processes between the children these researchers take off explicitly on a qualitative research methodology:

"We were interested in working out the forces of socialization determining the child world, therefore we wanted to keep track of the hardly investigated subtle processes of action tuning. In such a research situation, it is obvious that qualitative methods must be selected, because these enable to discover new and unexpected phenomena and connections and to develop concepts from the data" (KRAPPMANN & OSWALD 1995, p.25; my translation; G.M.). [17]

Although, as the two examples may clarify, a reorientation respectively a re-evaluation of the founder years' research approaches—(long-term-) observations, individual case studies, etc.—partly started, a more consistent relating the "thickness" of observation and the stressing of the uniqueness of the subject of developmental psychology, characterizing the early works (instead of closely circumscribed foci usual today) with similar qualitative research premises is still missing. This however appears necessary as e.g. the differentiation into functional or age-areas within developmental psychology only forms an analytic aid and as the inspection of isolated variables and their relations with other (isolated) variables seems only partially suited for recording the embedding of experience and action into the stream of the emotional experience. [18]

Besides, with a stronger focus also upon individual case studies (instead of the usual desire to realize large samples) the deliberation of some methodological implications of participant observation would become necessary, for instance the idea of "interpretation authority" (HOPPE-GRAFF 1998, p.271), instead of straining "Going native" as a disadvantage time and again. According to a genuine qualitative research program, it also would be necessary to include the concepts and actions of the researchers into the analysis (more clearly than in the work of the founder years). Here the demand of Franz BREUER appears stringent, to recognize researchers and their position as "constituent of the field of investigation" and "as constituent of the theory" (BERGOLD & BREUER 1992, p.26; my translation; G.M.). Such an accentuation however means to take up qualitative-interpretive methodologies which offer "thick descriptions" (GEERTZ 1973/1991) instead of today's observation studies primarily leaning on quantitative analysis. [19]

3.3 Interviews

Against the almost complete neglect of (para-) literary documents and diary studies, interviews are more typical within developmental research. Particularly on the basis of PIAGET's considerations, interviews are used for inquiring individual structures, knowledge and argumentation, and the "Clinical method" is applied within structure-genetic investigations (also frequently labeled as "half"- or "semi-structured" or "partially standardized"). Likewise, the "Structure dilemma interview" seems worth mentioning, which has been developed by Lawrence KOHLBERG in the context of studies upon moral development. In this interview, a story (dilemma) is introduced and the interviewees are asked to solve the dilemma and to justify their response (e.g. Rolf OERTER applied structure dilemma interviews in several studies; see OERTER 1999 for a summary). Also within other fields of developmental psychology specific procedures had been developed and established, for instance the "Adult attachment interview" or the "Identity status interview", developed by James MARCIA and meanwhile established in parts of identity research. [20]

The growing acceptance of interviews by developmental researchers becomes visible also by the fact that interviews are used today in many studies quite naturally as a possible data access, often combining qualitative and quantitative procedures and completing interviews by questionnaires. Nevertheless the bulk of developmental psychologists is limited to the use of "semi-structured" interviews and towards data analysis—as already mentioned for the use of qualitative methods in general—an attitude and practice is prevailing to organize the research process in such a way that at the end a quantification can be carried out. Accordingly procedures dominate, which allow—by using manuals with guidelines, definitions and anchor examples—a classification into theoretically derived (or justified) "statuses" (stages, phases, levels etc.) in order to describe the "development course". [21]

Resulting from this limitation upon semi-structured interviews and standardized analysis procedures there is hardly any reference to methods, developed in other (sub-) disciplines and genuinely obliged to a qualitative research perspective, as for instance the "Narrative biographical interview" developed by the sociologist Fritz SCHUETZE (1983)—which however is more frequently used in other subsections of psychology—or the "Problem-centered interview" of Andreas WITZEL (1982, 1985, 2000), which especially accentuates dialogical and discursive aspects of interviewing. Both kinds of interviews offer interesting perspectives, not at least since their theoretical and methodological foundation is rather elaborated compared to the semi-structured interviews usually conducted in developmental studies (for a more detailed comparison of both interview forms see MEY 1999, pp.138ff.). Besides, detailed descriptions for the data analysis are available for both interviews. In the case of the narrative interview in supplement of the procedure of SCHUETZE (1983), suggestions on text analysis were submitted particularly by the working group around Ulrich OEVERMANN, who developed the "Objective hermeneutics" (here in particular the sequence analysis, in which each datum is evaluated and interpreted in succession

according to interpretation rules; see ROSENTHAL 1987 and for the "Objective Hermeneutics" also BOHNSACK 1993, REICHERTZ 1997). The "Analysis of problem-centered interviews" (WITZEL 1996) among other things refers to the research style of "Grounded theory", developed by Barney GLASER and Anselm STRAUSS (see also GLASER & STRAUSS 1967/1998, STRAUSS 1987/1991, GLASER 1998, STRAUSS & CORBIN 1990/1996). The procedures suggested within grounded theory not only allow an analysis which tries to "retain the 'structure of contents' of the phenomena as for a long time as possible" (FEND 1994, p.19; my translation; G.M.), but also to examine the data "microscopically" (STRAUSS 1987/1991, p.61). Finally, the grounded theory approach enables to include the researcher and his or her intuition into the research process, like Franz BREUER (1996) and co-authors pointed out by combining elements of grounded theory with considerations of Georges DEVEREUX (1967/1973) about the self reflexivity of researchers. [22]

3.4 Second conclusion: Qualitative research—quantitative logic

As a provisional diagnosis can be held that the budding of qualitative research—its broader reception as well as its increasing application compared with preceding decades—not necessarily means an equal acceptance in the developmental landscape. Also an understanding of the specific logic of qualitative research can only partially be presupposed. This not only proves true for the quantitative mainstream, dominating the discipline, but also, in addition, for a considerable number of qualitative researchers (and this is not limited to developmental psychology): It still seems characteristic also within qualitative research, as for instance Werner FUCHS-HEINRITZ complains, that "an uncertain, an unnecessarily reverential relation to the unbeloved quantitative methods" (1993, p.254; my translation; G.M.) prevails. According to FUCHS-HEINRITZ this tendency e.g. becomes obvious during "the implicit (sometimes also explicit) observance to a quantitative logic of analysis" (ibid., p.255; my translation; G.M.), especially if—despite small sample sizes—illegitimate conclusions are drawn, probably in order to reject (the real or anticipated) "'reproach' the submitted results could be valid only for the analyzed individual cases" (ibid.; my translation; G.M.). Thus it is argued with frequency again and again, what due to the uncertain database has a kind of dubious breeze. The tendency to fulfill the requirements of a desired and possibly misunderstood idea of generalizing also leads to running for "big numbers". (Only marginally I like to mention that many authors—probably due to their unquestioned acceptance of quantitative research—do use the term "probands", thus test persons, and in this way—against their postulated epistemological attitude—"the reflexive subject" becomes devaluated as a kind of "container of attributes".) Following the idea of a "large N" uncritically the researcher at the same time is led to give away "a substantial part of additional knowledge" (ibid.; my translation; G.M.). According to this strategy, usually a decision for a theme-focused comparative methodology is made instead of analyzing internal sequences, and most times also the reflection of the interaction between researcher and research participant is omitted. Towards the concrete handling of the data the custom is predominant "to intersperse textual passages into the result representation as a kind of voucher

for generalization" (ibid.; my translation; G.M.) without considering the contextual constitution/production of the data. Besides, in such a voucher-citation-mode "the passages ... usually are only thoroughly interpreted" and "the spectrum of possible versions is hardly presented" (ibid.; my translation; G.M.). [23]

For developmental research, it is especially problematic that the ever concrete references in the data very frequently are not recognized. The responses are studied (and arranged) towards their formal organization, the concrete contents are almost treated like annoying (narrative) accessories for a research approach interested in developmental structures only, an approach always in danger to produce "nonperson persons" (see e.g. Bettina KOBUECK [2000/in press] towards some inadequate reductions by using the method of "Formal concept analysis", originally developed by mathematicians). [24]

4. Perspectives of a "Qualitative Developmental Psychology"

The points of criticism gathered until here will now be used to outline some perspectives and potentials of a qualitative developmental psychology more clearly than this was excursively made so far. In particular, I would like to stress the considerations within different qualitative approaches towards the process character of research and to relate them to the concept of development as a transformation process. This suggested linkage of process analysis and qualitative research refers particularly to one guideline important for the latter: that each datum is the result of a common production process/the interaction of all persons participating in the respective situation. Within qualitative research ("caused") statements and actions are not regarded as static re-presentations. Instead of this the assumption that any measurement means an intervention and thus a modification for the subject under research implies that also the subjectivity of researchers is not handled as an "interfering variable". Attempts to control or eliminate subjectivity through measurement tools or even the idea that this could be realized are rejected as methodologically inadequate (towards the "phantom of reactivity-free research settings", characteristic for most quantitative research approaches and often inherent also qualitative research *practices*, see MRUCK & MEY 1996 more detailed). [25]

The assumption of the "co-construction character" of data production also exists within developmental research and especially in that field of work following the tradition of Lev WYGOTSKI (1985, 1987), the founder of the culture-historical school (for the productively turned use of the term "co-construction" see e.g. VALSINER 1998). Nevertheless direct references to qualitative research are omitted; partially the own methodical position is defined as "a not dogmatic qualitative approach" (HUNGERIGE & JOSEPHS 1997). In this field of work— frequently referring to WYGOTSKI's "zone of proximal development", partially also based upon Urie BRONFENBRENNER's considerations about transformation experiments and on his guiding principle: "Should you like to understand something, try to modify it" (BRONFENBRENNER 1979/1981, p.58; my translation; G.M.)—it is stressed that each investigation (regardless of the concretely used methods) at the same time is a co-construction process (see

VALSINER 2000): Due to this perspective researchers not only are "assistants" during the development of (new) structures, but they also influence the analysis of data, an influence which accordingly must be considered (see also OERTER 1999, who focuses the pre- and re-construction done by researchers, and who discusses possible precautions as argumentative and consensus validation). [26]

The concept of the co-constructive character of data and of the context-embeddedness of any investigation (thus the concrete interactions taking place in a concrete investigation unit), and the realization of this concept within the research practice appears—apart from other points of contact to a qualitative orientation already noted—the pivot fruitful for a qualitative developmental psychology. [27]

Firstly the assumption that the situation of collecting data is a unique (and thus not repeatable) interaction happening between researchers and research participants has great importance for a developmental perspective, if one understands this situation not as a single unit/event, but as a chain of events—even if only one time of measurement takes place. In view of the temporality of development—whether experiences, actions, concepts, motives etc. are studied—the focused phenomena are no isolated and punctual events, but rather a temporally structured ensemble (see Juergen STRAUB 1989, pp.115ff. for similar considerations towards biographical research). In this sense, the consecutively occurring (inter-) acts within the situation of data collection may be regarded as a (intermediate) product-product-sequence process, in which a phenomenon is transformed from one "status" (probably more correct: one process) to another "status" (another process). Up from this point there is a chance that process analyses (with an exact view upon the constitution process of the phenomenon under interest) can make the process perspective in developmental research accessible again—instead of a (shoot forward) synopsis limited to (callable) results of investigation (= regarded as a single unit). [28]

Thereby an access towards the inquiry of developmental processes would be uncovered again, which the forgotten and neglected theoretical and methodological approaches of early developmental psychology understood as a genuine developmental point of view: the "Aktualgenese" (in the terminology of Friedrich SANDER 1927, 1932) or the "microgenesis" (in terms of Heinz WERNER 1926, 1937). With these approaches a re-evaluation of the (investigation) situation seems possible by regarding it as an analysis unit itself, in which development occurs—even if Ingrid JOSEPHS (1997) probably is correct when she holds that naturally "micro-genetic approaches are no universal remedy, as the question remains in which way microgenesis and ontogenesis are connected together ... But at least the process analysis and thus the explicit developmental perspective are on their program". [29]

A possible innovative point of reference for conceptualizing the connection between microgenetic and ontogenetic changes could spring from the ever prospering research field of "Narrative psychology", where the basic assumption—that persons change during the process of narration—is grounded by

theoretical considerations about the connection between life career/biography and "Aktualgeschichte". The attempt to relate experienced and told life history and thus the time horizons of past, present and future concerns the contents and the temporal structure of phenomena, whereby neither the contents nor the form of narrations are interpreted independently, but only in their co-ordination. Referring to narrative psychology also allows a reconceptualization of the experimental orientation of many microgenetic studies (and in this way would help to reflect on the criticism of BRONFENBRENNER of experimental designs I mentioned in paragraph 9). Above all, however, the role of the researcher as an "accomplice" during the data-construction process could be considered appropriately and his or her (active and shared) participation as a co-constructor could be made empirically usable. [30]

The target and starting point of such a procedure is the sequential analysis of the (textual) material, along which it is tried to understand, how persons—course around course, inter-act for inter-act—develop their responses, embed them continually into the narration, and do (not) take up possible interventions (within interviews thus the questions, comments, remarks of the interviewers). This temporary activity on the one hand means embedding actual narration into ones own biography, on the other hand at the same time biography (or parts of it) is embedded into the actual situation, whereby past experiences are re-adjusted into the respective context. The chains of narrations, representations and argumentation recognizable in such sequences some times contain changed narrations, representations and argumentation, compared to other sequences (or times of measurement). Analyzing these sequences against the background of the whole sequence/interview may help to understand the single sequences in their respective contextuality and to reconstruct the arrangement of different (possibly nested and next to each other running) topics over the investigation time. Besides, attention is directed towards the narration as a product *and* a process, inasmuch the concrete situation forms the recursive point of reference and thus a first possibility of validating. (A detailed description of how microgenesis and interaction between researchers and research participants are merged into the context of the whole interview and how practices of narration correspond with the narrative contents is offered in MEY 1999, using case studies of adolescents who were interviewed twice in the course of one year. Towards narrative approaches see e.g. BRUNER 1990/1997, POLKINGHORNE 1988 or the collected contributions in the special issue "Discourse and narration" in the JOURNAL FUER PSYCHOLOGIE 1999b, edited by Peter MATTES and Jens BROCKMEIER. STRAUB 1998 discusses different theoretical positions within this field; summarizing descriptions are provided by KRAUS 1996 or MEY 1999.) [31]

5. Concluding Remarks

Within developmental psychology, a discussion seems necessary about the reasons for the ignorance towards a qualitative research logic and towards the use of qualitative procedures. This discussion will not be an easy one, if one remembers the gap between the demand on developmental research as "theory-led", and the principle of openness, which like a reoccurring theme runs through qualitative research and which especially concerns the relation between theory and experience: Here, in contrast to a deductive approach, a "delayed structuring" is required and "hypothesis formation ex ante" is omitted (HOFFMANN RIEM 1980, p.343; my translation; G.M.). [32]

An important aim should be—beyond possibly "ideology-pregnant" debates about the "correct" paradigm—to install a qualitative research perspective equally within developmental research, i.e. beyond the charged role as explorative etc. So again and again the question should be moved into the center, how *developmental* research may be conducted, how data collection and analysis may take place in ways adequate for a *developmental* psychology. From the perspective of a qualitatively oriented developmental psychology, a possible response might be that it must provide methodical procedures, which realize development as a process. Important seems a perspective, which does not divide phenomena into individual variables and thus in the long run eliminates development from developmental psychology. [33]

This means to take up and to develop also such procedures more strongly in the future, which can help to evoke longitudinal versions of occurrence. Besides others yet mentioned such procedures of data collection and analysis could be particularly interesting for developmental psychology, which experienced their broad application and advancement in the context of biographical studies, because similarly to a developmental focus, temporal structures are of main importance. Additionally it will be necessary to use already available procedures and concepts of developmental research. However under the condition that their references towards a "development thought" are worked out again and are obeyed also in the research practice. This presupposes the careful consideration of the (self) limitations developed in the course of the history of developmental psychology, which had been consequence-fraught for a discipline which is especially interested in (the genesis of) individual development (for resuming and differentiating discussions see VALSINER & VAN DER VEER 2000/in press). [34]

A developmental psychology, which does not only consider "qualitative thinking" more carefully, but also re-accesses the own tradition of developmental thinking, could—this is finally only briefly noted—also give important impulses for qualitative approaches, which are still less unfolded in the concrete research work than their programs suggest. In my opinion this means first of all to take into account more seriously that the data won within the research process are to be regarded as products of a social interaction in time. Accordingly, a systematic reflection is required of the changes on the part of research participants during the data collecting situation and by interacting with the researcher, and vice versa

of the changes on the part of the researcher by contacting the research participant and by co-producing data: research participants will no longer be the ones they had been before an investigation, after the situation occurred, in which data/facts are negotiated, developed and formed, so also will interpretation/understanding be impossible without the change (development) of the understanding and interpreting researcher. [35]

Acknowledgment

Helpful for the considerations presented were the many afternoon discussions with Jaan VALSINER during his stay as a visiting professor at the Technical University of Berlin in summer 1999, even because he often set another accent (and partly had different preferences) in questions of qualitative research than I do (have). Special thanks also for my partner and colleague Katja MRUCK for her helpful remarks and suggestions. Likewise I like to thank Franz BREUER for his critical comments on an earlier version of this contribution.

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Citation

Mey, Günter (2000). Qualitative Research and the Analysis of Processes. Considerations Towards a "Qualitative Developmental Psychology" [35 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 1(1), Art. 10, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0001107>.

Revised 3/2007