

**Editorial: About Qualitative Research Epistemologies and Peripheries**

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The *FQS* website was relaunched in 2003 during which the Spanish speaking staff began a restructuring process that lasted over 1 year. This process was aimed at encouraging the participation of native Spanish speaking qualitative researchers into the international audience of *FQS*. In July 2004, the idea of publishing "Qualitative Research in Ibero America" was discussed between the German, American and Spanish editors. To realize this project meant a rather difficult and challenging task for all involved in the face of the affordances that are inherent in producing multi-lingual texts and especially in regards to our intention to make the Ibero American stock of knowledge accessible for an international qualitative research community.<sup>1</sup> [1]

In our call for papers for "Qualitative Research in Ibero America", posted at the beginning of 2005, we recognized that qualitative research has expanded its presence and influence in several non-English speaking countries, collectively known as Ibero America (Spain, Portugal, Central and South America, and the countries of the Caribbean). In the first days of 2005 we understood Ibero America to be those countries linked by the cultural process that began with the colonization of those lands "discovered" by Spain in 1492, and also conquered by Portugal. The distinction between Latin America and Ibero America was needed in order to include potential collaborators not only from countries in Central and South America but also to include colleagues who currently are doing research in countries related to this Ibero American legacy. [2]

Our call for contributions encouraged submissions that would portray the rich and diverse experiences of those doing qualitative research in these countries and provide an international audience an overview of the current developments of the theory, methods, and perspectives of qualitative research in Ibero America (QRIA). We were particularly interested in articles that addressed these issues:

1. the evolution and current state of QRIA (the historical development of qualitative research on a national level and in specific fields of study, the epistemological background of such experiences, the challenges faced, institutional organizations, criteria used to judge the quality of research);
2. the approaches, theories, and methods of QRIA (old and new approaches, theories, and the methods and application of qualitative research in different areas of study);
3. educational issues related to teaching qualitative research methods (examples of projects, emerging ideas, and evaluation);
4. critiques of the use and application of qualitative research (current state of practice, goals and strategies for other projects and emerging areas of research);
5. the realities and visions of QRIA (perspectives and challenges in the future, personal trajectories of researchers, learning to be a qualitative researcher, developing ideas). [3]

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<sup>1</sup> To become visible internationally Ibero American research needs to be translated into English as the lingua franca of (social) science. This means an enormous effort, as English texts, written by non-native English speakers, cannot be published without the support of native English-speaking colleagues in a process of continual exchange between those involved.

We received submissions from 10 countries (Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Chile, Mexico, Nicaragua, Puerto Rico, Spain and the United States). We were in contact with more than 40 colleagues from numerous disciplines who sent abstracts or complete articles that focused on a variety of topics. [4]

The selected papers we are presenting in this special issue display a wide range of themes that reflect the interests and concerns of qualitative researchers in Ibero America. As diverse as the themes explored are they still represent a small sample of the qualitative research done. In publishing this special issue we are of course not claiming to be comprehensive; rather, we want to stress that this issue is just a first step in our efforts to make Ibero American qualitative research more visible and expose it to a broader discussion with an international audience. [5]

Although the chosen title of this issue is "Qualitative Research in Ibero America," perhaps a better title would have been "Examples of Qualitative Research in Ibero America." To paraphrase AGAR (2006), there is no *one* "real" qualitative research paradigm. There are many paths to follow when doing qualitative research; the path one chooses often shapes the research. There are many stories to tell about qualitative research in Ibero America, we can share in this issue only a few. Moreover if you are reading this in Spanish, German, or English you are reading partially different narratives shaped by language. We present these stories to you with the promise of more to come. Ibero America is not a homogeneous unity. It is formed by several countries sharing a common language and other cultural practices, but each has a unique story and national trajectory, and it is this that gives such diversity to Ibero America. [6]

With the rise of the Internet and the globalization of science there are many commonalities between qualitative research done in Europe and North America. Also, universities and research centers throughout Europe and North America have become the hub of qualitative research. Consequently, many Ibero American researchers have sought training in either Europe or North America. However, there is a special "flavor" to Ibero American qualitative research that has been enhanced by the unique links between politics and science and practice and science in this part of the world. [7]

This uniqueness is reflected in many of the papers in this issue. For instance, the contribution of FERNÁNDEZ-DROGUETT (2006) presents a personal reflection in which he discusses his participation in protest actions in post-dictator Chile. Similarly, in LAPERRIÈRE's contribution (2006) we see the role played by participatory action research which led to social action in the context of evaluative research in a remote region of Brazil. In the article by OBANDO-SALAZAR (2006) we see how participatory action research is conducted from the perspective of political psychology in Colombia for researchers working with children and youth in the critical situation of armed conflicts. These two contributions reflect the legacies of FREIRE (1970) and FALS-BORDA (1991), who brought to the social sciences awareness of critical pedagogy and participatory action models. [8]

In terms of the links between qualitative research and practice, DE LA CUESTA (2006) reports a study about home care-giving within families of patients with advanced dementia; she calls attention to the significance of this practice for these families in Colombia. The author convincingly shows that in contrast to "developed" countries there is no one single care-taker in the Colombian contexts she analyzed but rather a whole network of care-takers. MARZÁN RODRÍGUEZ and VARAS DÍAZ (2006) reflect on the emotions associated with HIV/AIDS among health professionals in Puerto Rico. These examples reflect the diversity of the contributions to this issue. [9]

Another unique quality of Ibero American qualitative researchers is the epistemological perspectives they embrace. From the stance of sociology of science, this uniqueness is due to the differences in the social contexts in which knowledge is produced in each country. Therefore the geographical closeness of Mexico and the U.S. provides an interesting case. In his analysis of the differences between Mexican and American approaches to doing sociological research, ABEND (2006) has noted "... an empirical sociology of epistemologies would constitute a step forward in the agenda of the sociology of knowledge, as it would further our understanding of the social conditioning of scientific knowledge ..." (p.32). The

more noticeable difference ABEND discovered in his analysis is related to the way Mexican scientists are "testing theory" or thinking about the dialogue between theory and data. ABEND's sample of articles was drawn from the most cited and most prestigious journals in each country: In the U.S. the *American Journal of Sociology* and the *American Sociological Review*; in Mexico the *Estudios Sociológicos* and the *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*. Qualitative journals in the U.S., like *Qualitative Inquiry* and *Qualitative Health Research* do not have counterparts in Mexico or other Spanish-speaking countries. Consequently, a true comparison cannot be made between Mexico and other Spanish-speaking countries, and the U.S. because of the absence of such journals in the former countries. [10]

We recognize there is still more to do in FQS to incorporate into our agenda discussions of how epistemological perspectives are constructed and how social conditions can shape qualitative inquiry. MRUCK, CISNEROS-PUEBLA and FAUX (2005, para.9) highlighted the center and peripheries of doing qualitative research remarking: "We need to know more about what is happening in the different (national, disciplinary, medial) 'peripheries' to learn about the conceptual roots of our current practices and to act in a future globalized academia, opening our minds to the fascinating diversity (and unity?) of our memories, images, styles, focus, strategies and life-worlds as qualitative researchers." This issue depicts an effort aiming at this goal to enhance our knowledge and awareness of what is happening in the non-Anglo-Saxon "peripheries" of our globalized qualitative research world. [11]

Notwithstanding the globalization of academia (ALASUUTARI 2004), qualitative research in Ibero America is conducted and discussed in Spanish. A number of our authors wanted their contributions to be initially in Spanish only; their contributions will appear in English at a later date. The ideas of GONZÁLEZ and LINCOLN (2006) about cross-language work are relevant in this context. The reflection on the roots and reasons for the current relevance of biographical and narrative research in Ibero America presented by BOLÍVAR and DOMINGO (2006) is a good example of the productive perspectives produced in Spanish as native language. [12]

Qualitative research in Ibero American is vibrant, it contributes to numerous academic discourses, it plays a critical role in practice, and it plays a role in the political arena. Because of the Internet and journals like FQS, among other reasons, these researchers have been able to reach out and connect with international colleagues. However, we have yet to see the establishment of an organized body of qualitative researchers in Ibero America. Consequently, many such researchers remain on the peripheries of the international academic community. We hope that by our efforts with this special issue we will increase the visibility of those on the peripheries. [13]

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