

### Scientificity, generalization and dissemination of qualitative studies

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Stella and Wilza's work raises three main points, which I shall comment as a qualitative researcher, stunt and magazine publisher, namely: scientificity, generalizability and dissemination in scientific journals.

Qualitative research scientificity is theoretically substantiated by the principles of its own approach. With reference to the development of modern science, this discussion has extended over two centuries right from its cradle, namely, the German hermeneutic, phenomenological, historical and dialectical thought. It is rooted in Hegel's work, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*<sup>1</sup>, first written in 1807, followed by a development of *phenomenology* by Husserl<sup>2</sup> and Heidegger<sup>3</sup>, writings on hermeneutics by Gadamer<sup>4</sup> (philosophical hermeneutics), Adorno and Horkheimer<sup>5</sup> (objective hermeneutics) and Habermas<sup>6</sup> (hermeneutics and dialectics) and comprehensive historicism by Dilthey<sup>7</sup>. One of the most seminal thinkers of comprehensive sociology is also German, namely, Max Weber<sup>8</sup>. The foundations of this approach also intersect with the writings of several French theorists and sociologists, influenced by German thinkers, as demonstrated in works by Paul Ricoeur<sup>9</sup>, Merleau-Ponty<sup>10</sup>, Sartre<sup>11</sup>, Bourdieu<sup>12</sup>, Maffesoli<sup>13</sup>, among others. However, its expression in the practice of empirical research stemmed from the so-called Chicago School, where important names like William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki<sup>14</sup>, Harold Garfinkel<sup>15</sup>, George Hebert Mead<sup>16</sup> and Robert Park<sup>17</sup> and other inaugurated sociologically important approaches, such as symbolic interactionism, ethnography, ethnomethodology and other. This School also witnessed, at the hands of its first director, Albion Small, the birth of the world's first sociology journal in 1895, namely, the *American Journal of Sociology*, whose early writings were especially based on qualitative field research. Agreeing with authors within the philosophical framework of comprehensive theories, all inaugural and current qualitative researchers work with various types of approaches geared to the analysis of specific cases in their temporality and location and that emerge through expressions and meanings that people give to their experiences and perceptions. Their common parameter is the recognition of *subjectivity*, the *symbolic* and *relationships intersubjectivity*, and bring in the analysis the inseparable subject-object, social

stakeholders-researchers, facts-meanings and structures-representations interlock.

With regard to generalization, although qualitative studies focus on the micro-universe and furthering human phenomena, they bring a universal contribution to science. According to Hegel<sup>1</sup>, who dismantled the philosophical view of separation between phenomena of life's world and science, he who speaks of experience speaks of subject and he who speaks of subject speaks of object, because the foundation of all knowledge is the result of a genesis or a story that begins in the phenomenological realm and occurs in successive dialectically articulated oppositions between the subject's certainties and the object's truth. Due to the lack of space to discuss these issues, I turn to Adorno and Horkheimer<sup>5</sup>, who claim that, operationally, in the text (and not outside it) lie the profound sense of reality, consensus, social and historical contradictions and paths toward transformation: "He who does not compare human things with what they want to mean, see them not only superficially, but definitely falsely", authors say, referring to shallow analyzes or "duplications" of what has been empirically collected. Thus, I choose to stay with the great masters, according to which generalization is possible not as statistical significance, but rather as understanding of similar processes that occur with humans before the same challenges. Obviously, I am not talking here about technique, but ethical and philosophical sense of qualitative approaches.

Finally, I address the issue of dissemination of qualitative studies in scientific journals, which as Stella and Wilza admittedly show is far short of what is produced by researchers. At this point, my own experience evidences two main hindrances. On the one hand, the persistent positivist mentality of health journals editors, especially in medical and epidemiology fields. I particularly believe that we can only change something from within, with (almost militant) work of medical authors such as Egberto R. Turato<sup>18</sup> and Stella Taquette et al.<sup>19</sup> in Brazil, or betting on the introduction of such an approach in the training of students. There is also hope that, due to the irremediable need to get in touch with the social reality of the population that doctors will serve, new medical courses geared

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to primary care will give rise to comprehensive research and practice. On the other hand, unfortunately, large flocks of qualitative papers pour in Journals (even the most open-minded ones) without enough quality to make it through the editorial sieve. As such, I seize the opportunity to name the most common issues which, as editors Romeo Gomes, Debora Diniz and I pointed out in an recent editorial<sup>20</sup>:

(1) titles that speak of general things and not the object of study; (2) summaries that do not bring in essential information about the object, method, discussion and analysis of results and conclusions; (3) keywords that do not comply with established descriptors; (4) introduction that does not contextualize the subject of national and international literature; (5) formal description of the method, without highlighting how the object was addressed, not to mention the space, the universe of stakeholders and operational tools, without describing field work and how the analysis was performed; (6) presentation of results with a discourse that is nothing but repetition of empirical data, except for its formal categorization; (7) discussion reaffirms only what has been found in the field without showing its interconnections with relevant issues within the theme itself and the surrounding national and international context; (8) and conclusions which often have two problems: they either continue the discussion by also quoting literature or completely wandering off the subject, bringing proposals that are unrelated to the subject under study.

Finally, with these considerations, I hope to contribute to the very important purpose of discussing health and medicine scientific qualitative research in Brazil.

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