

UTOPIA: WRITING IN QUALITATIVE HEALTH RESEARCH IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

UTOPIA: ESCRIBIR EN INVESTIGACIÓN CUALITATIVA EN SALUD EN EL SUR GLOBAL 

UTOPIA: ESCREVENDO PESQUISA QUALITATIVA EM SAÚDE NO SUL GLOBAL 

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to reflect on how the academic culture of positivism dominates the writing style in qualitative health research in Ibero-America. The purpose is to understand how the norms and conventions of scientific writing have been assimilated into qualitative health research texts; how figures of emotion have been reduced to a single form of expression; and how these figures of emotion have been transformed into quantitative data. Finally, I reflect on some possible alternatives to advance qualitative writing.

Keywords: Scientific writing. Qualitative writing. Figures of emotion. Qualitative health research. Global South.

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1 INTRODUCTION¹

In academic culture, the adage “publish or perish” alludes to the practice of publishing as a core activity among scientists, particularly when it is driven by the hypercompetitiveness of academia. Hyland and Salager-Meyer (2008) state that it is a modern myth that a researcher spends almost all their time “discovering;” the truth is that the researcher spends most of their time preparing articles for publication. The global practices of the academic community have set the criterion of academic success as the number of articles and books published or the number of citations. For this reason, researchers continuously focus on publishing. For MacDonald (2015), the predicament of publishing or perishing causes academics anxiety to avoid perishing, leading them to write articles to add to their count rather than to be read; even if they have little to say, they must publish.

This being so, analyses tend to focus on investigating the practices, contexts and circumstances of academic publishing, and its impact on science. But this is a view focused on publication as the product, which ignores another everyday academic practice that precedes publication; that of writing, as Smith (1999, p. 153) points out, “the activity of writing has produced the related activity of publishing.” Investigating how we write arouses little enthusiasm compared to the interest in learning how we publish. This scant attention is also observed in Ibero-America in qualitative health research, where how to write is a marginal topic even among the proponents of investigating with this approach (Calderón, 2009; Chapela, 2024).

This paper aims to reflect on academic writing in qualitative health research in Ibero-America. This reflection is based on my personal experience during more than 30 years as a professor in a public university as a qualitative researcher, a teacher of graduate students, and a reviewer of journal submissions and research proposals. In addition, it is grounded in my experience as an author of manuscripts, both published and rejected.

As an author inhabiting an academic context where positivism dominates the construction of knowledge in the field of health, this means that research based on quantitative methodology is assigned greater value, while qualitative research is minimized as an inferior methodology. As a researcher, I belong to a generation of academics who have fought to give qualitative health research a place in our universities, not only conducting research in the field, but also teaching. In these academic spaces, the dominant positivist vision has streamlined guidelines on how to do qualitative research, imposing rules not only on methodology but also on how to write. It is this that is the central point of my reflection: how the academic culture

¹ This essay delves into one dimension of writing practices in qualitative health research, which I have been reflecting on since 2019.

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Subsequently, seminal reflections from this manuscript were presented at the virtual seminar “Utopias of Writing Qualitatively by a Mexican Researcher” at the Centre for Critical Qualitative Health Research, University of Toronto, on November 8, 2022, available at: <https://ccqhr.utoronto.ca/2022/10/13/november-8-cq-virtual-seminar-by-dr-leticia-robles-silva/>, which were developed and expanded exclusively for this manuscript.

of positivism dominates the style of writing about qualitative research. To illustrate these practices of domination, my reflection focuses on two examples: the first on how norms and conventions of positivistic scientific writing are reproduced in qualitative health research, and the second on how the figures of emotion as living language are transformed into numbers.

This reflection adopts a dual epistemic stance. Firstly, it is grounded in what is currently recognized as epistemologies of the South (Santos; Meneses, 2014), alongside decolonizing, Indigenous, and feminist epistemologies, all of which challenge the dominant positivist epistemology. Secondly, it aligns with Marxist critical theories, especially their engagement with epistemology, emphasizing that theory must act as an epistemological offensive—integrating everyday realities and practices that scientific reasoning tends to exclude. This offensive seeks to foster critical thinking and the capacity to envision and create alternative realities (Zemelman, 1996). Together, these perspectives inform a reflective approach to writing and the exploration of alternative possibilities for reality.

2 NEGOTIATING THE RULES OF SCIENTIFIC WRITING

A perception shared among scholars in qualitative health research in Ibero-America is that graduate students exhibit serious deficiencies in writing, not only because of difficulties in expressing their ideas or supporting arguments, but also because their texts do not conform to the narrative of a qualitative research approach. For Wolcott (1990), the reason for this poor writing is the greater emphasis given to teaching qualitative methodology and scant attention to teaching writing. In Latin America, it is the same. In graduate programs in health, in which qualitative research is taught, courses focus on teaching qualitative methodology (Bertolotto; Díaz, 2020; Conceição *et al.*, 2020; Mercado *et al.*, 2008; Rocha *et al.*, 2024; Taquete, 2020a, 2020b), but writing is not part of the students' training, and efforts to offer other opportunities for learning to write in graduate programs or other academic spaces are rare.

In the Global North of today, particularly in English-speaking academia, the teaching of how to write in qualitative research has spread to other spaces and through other practices. There is an increasing number of books on how to write qualitative research that allow for self-teaching, and also a greater number of webinars, online courses, and blogs available on the topic. Ibero-America does not have such an availability of resources for teaching writing in the field of qualitative health research, as there are no books on this topic, nor webinars or online courses, in Spanish or Portuguese.

In this context of scarce interest in teaching how to write, it is important to understand how we learn to write in qualitative health research. Articles in Ibero-American academia are dominated by a single style: scientific writing. Many of us who are currently senior scholars in qualitative health research in Ibero-America learned to write during the second half of the twentieth century in just this tradition; and in the twenty-first century, younger generations of researchers are also influenced and

trained in the same tradition. Today, scientific writing sets the standard for discursive practices in science, displacing other styles of academic writing to marginal spaces in the academic community.

The teaching of scientific writing has been positioned in graduate curricula or as part of universities' activities to strengthen the productivity of their academics. These courses reflect in particular the felt need to publish, which is why their content is oriented towards teaching how to write a scientific paper for publication.

Many of us in Ibero-America read a book that I consider a paradigmatic example of scientific writing in the field of health, *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper* by Robert A. Day. Originally published in 1979, it has gone through eight editions and translations into Spanish. A recommended text since its first edition in Latin America (Lima, 1998), its popularity is based on the clear transmission of knowledge and practices on how to stay within the limits of science and avoid artistic literary styles. This work explains the principles of scientific writing: the structure of a scientific paper; its sections; the scientific, objective, and universal language acceptable in science; and the promise of obtaining a publishable paper by following its rules.

To write in this way is to write a paper that is identified as scientific by its readers. By adopting the principles of scientific writing, the researcher enables the reader to interpret the text as scientific. In this author–reader interaction, the writer not only reproduces the rules but also makes them accessible. The norms and conventions of scientific writing are imposed as a writing mechanism, since these norms deny the existence of any other form of academic writing and suppress the option of other alternatives, particularly those related to academic rhetoric based on “subjective” expression, a type of expression considered non-scientific (Miller, 1979). Let us recall that just one of the “accusations” that circulated in the late twentieth century with respect to papers written in qualitative health research was their novel and subjective – that is, non-scientific – character.

Scientific writing projects a linguistic and rhetorical hegemony through the standardization of acceptable and respectable forms, and rhetorical and literary devices, which neutralize the author's positionality and any subjective expression appropriate to the academic writing of qualitative research. This being so, qualitative researchers have adopted certain practices of quantitative research writing to enable them to present their work as a “qualitative” scientific text according to the norms and conventions of scientific writing. This means using certain rhetorical features when reporting on qualitative research that make the text resemble and approximate a prototypical quantitative research text. In effect, these qualitative research texts are subordinated to the governance of scientific writing. To some editors, there is no reason why qualitative health research papers should not be written according to the customs and practices of any scientific paper, regardless of its methodology approach (Nebot; García 2004; Suárez-Relinque; Del Moral Arroyo; González, 2013). For this, they have allowed author guidelines to be “adapted” or “adjusted,” which means accepting certain forms of the rhetoric of qualitative inquiry, but always still following the norms and conventions of scientific writing. Yet this concession is reduced to the

inclusion of a minimum of features of the rhetoric and living language used to describe the findings, such as figures of emotion, or writing the discussion and conclusions in a single section, or allowing the article to be longer, but without altering the structure and content of the sections of a scientific article. Hence, the adaptation suppresses any other sort of alternative author guidelines and imposes a single type of academic writing on the text. Nevertheless, this practice of adapting the author guidelines has been viewed in a positive light, since it has led to an increase in the number of qualitative health research publications, and a certain degree of visibility of the field in journals in Ibero-America.

A seminal example of adapting author guidelines is the article by Fernández (2000), published in Spanish, whose title expresses exactly this idea, “*Adecuación de las normas de publicación en revistas científicas a las investigaciones cualitativas*” [“Adapting the norms of publication in scientific journals to qualitative research”], which was later included as a chapter in the two-volume anthology on qualitative health research compiled by Mercado, Gastaldo and Calderón (2002a, 2002b), a work widely distributed in Ibero-America. The author gives recommendations for writing each section of the article, but without questioning whether the structure of the scientific article, its rules, or the writing style are suitable for writing a qualitative research paper. Recommendations of this type have been widely published, to the point that almost all journals in Ibero-America have at least one article or editorial with this sort of content, arguing the importance of *adapting* author guidelines to make it possible to publish qualitative research.

In the past two decades, journals have been going a step further by adopting checklists for writing and evaluating qualitative research papers. These checklists, which have been created by experts in the field (Levitt *et al.*, 2018), include COREQ (Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research) and SRQR (Standard for Reporting Qualitative Research). COREQ has a Spanish version (Quemba-Mesa *et al.*, 2023) and another in Portuguese (Sousa *et al.*, 2021). In Ibero-America, journals are no strangers to this movement and have adopted these checklists; for example, nursing journals (de la Cuesta, 2024). Moreover, authors report using them ever more frequently when writing their manuscripts. The argument is that these checklists not only improve the writing process, but also result in published articles of better quality (de Jong *et al.*, 2021).

However, these checklists only reinforce one single way of writing in qualitative research. The authors of both COREQ (Tong; Sainsbury; Craig, 2007) and SRQR (O'Brien *et al.*, 2014) claim that their checklists apply to any qualitative methodology, meaning that they promote a universal type of qualitative research writing, although the rhetorical style of a research paper depends on both the methodology and the findings. These checklists thus propagate a principle of uniformity in writing science by presenting only one way of writing qualitative research.

Checklists and adapted author guidelines are colonizing strategies of scientific writing. Santos's (2016) notion of abyssal thinking helps us to understand how scientific writing has the monopoly on judging what is scientific writing and what is not.

In academic culture, a radical line has been drawn that distinguishes and separates the various ways of doing academic writing. Scientific writing located on “this side” of the line is the only option for writing scientific papers in the academic realm, since it is constructed as the only subsystem of visible writing. The rest, a diversity of writing processes and writing practices of qualitative research, exist only on the “other side” of the line, being perceived as non-scientific writing practices and discounted as options for writing research papers. In this abyssal cartography, the academic writing of qualitative health research in Ibero-America can only be a scientific option on “this side” of the line if it adjusts its writing practices to conform to the norms and conventions of scientific writing. This strategy is not one of emancipation, but of subordination to a certain way of writing.

Even though scientific writing dominates writing practices in academia, subversive and anticolonial practices also exist, aimed at inserting other writing practices of qualitative research into academic culture as alternative forms of academic writing. These alternative forms of academic writing inhabit the periphery of academic spaces; that is, they are on the other side of the line. An example of these is the writing practices of indigenous methodologies. Robin Wall Kimmerer’s (2013) book on indigenous methodologies is a case in point. Her chapter *Mishkos Kenomagwen: The Teaching of Grass* is a dissident text, written according to the structure of scientific writing, titling its sections in apparent submission as if it were a scientific article, but its content is subversive because it describes how scientific writing oppresses indigenous methodologies, and develops a counterproposal in each section based on various rhetorical and interactive features that enable an exposition of knowledge built on indigenous methodologies. This example shows not only the possibility but also the existence of various ways of academic writing that are different from the prescribed scientific style. However, these alternative writing practices have not yet penetrated the field of qualitative health research in Ibero-America.

3 FIGURES OF EMOTION IN WRITING A THICK DESCRIPTION

According to Geertz (1994) and Denzin (2003), a thick description permits the interacting subjects’ voices, feelings, actions, and meanings to be listened to and heard. At the same time, it offers an interpretive explanation of these phenomena based on a theoretical position. A thick description is an interpretative explanation, but it is also about trying to understand the world in its emotional intensity (Ponterotto, 2006). If they are devoid of the expression of emotion, articles reporting qualitative findings lack credibility and resonance not only for any reader in the academic community but also for the participants. Writing without the emotional component is a rhetorical choice. Still, it is impossible to think of a text that lacks emotion in qualitative research because the figures of emotion have been associated with the more extreme and habitually recognized kinds of text in qualitative research. It is a principle of identity of writing in qualitative research.

This implies recognizing the interdependence between academic canons of reporting findings and communicating emotions (Richardson, 2003). The researcher

provides clarity, appropriateness, and correctness through a thick description of the findings and the lines of the argument. The emotive rhetoric brings the strength, intensity, or conviction necessary to the argument (Fahnestock, 1999). Writing in this way is to write the story so that the reader is interested and excited, and reflects on the description of the findings (Woods, 2006). To write about the emotional part, we have figures of speech and literary devices of what is called creative non-fiction writing (Caulley, 2008), which describe facts but use techniques of fiction writing to strengthen the narration and emotional experience. This way of writing mobilizes various literary and linguistic resources (Coutinho; Miranda, 2009), and the figures of emotion are integrated in such a way as to serve the interests of the interpretative explanation.

There is no one single way to write figures of emotion; rather, there are many literary devices that can serve this purpose. Literary tools include a diversity of options in terms of genres, organizational structures, and rhetorical and narrative devices, such as anecdotes, vignettes, layered stories, and poetry. However, many written texts use quotations as the only “correct” way to communicate emotion. Brown (2010) states that quotations have become the “gold standard” in qualitative studies. In Ibero-America, quotations have become an icon of qualitative health research writing, imposed more by custom than by reason, by dint of seeming to be the only option. The function of the quotation, being an icon, is to position an aesthetic—expressive rationality as a universal and to dominate as the only figure of emotion.

Many authors, reviewers, and editors believe the use of quotations is obligatory and a necessary criterion for a paper to be classified as a qualitative research text; in fact, the presence of any other figure of emotion is judged to make the text incomplete or even deficient. The opinion of editors and reviewers is that the quotation is the only valid figure of emotion, assuming that, as a figure of speech, it possesses a universal, exhaustive, and complete capacity to express the emotional part of the text. Even though it is not.

In my experience as an author, I have received negative comments on my manuscripts, not for theoretical or methodological reasons, but for deciding to use other figures of emotion instead of quotations. Behind these comments lies an idea of the universality of quotations, like tables of numbers or graphs in quantitative research. This body of ideas, beliefs, clichés, or instructions about quotations and how to write in qualitative health research accentuates the universal character of quotations.

Each figure of emotion leads to the development and evocation of particular situations; therefore, it is necessary to choose the most appropriate ones for the type of findings and arguments supporting them. This choice implies paying attention to how these figures of emotion are used, as much as rigor is taken care of during the analysis. To write the living dimension of any kind of findings only with quotations is to resort to a prototypical linguistic type that forces the writer to adjust the narrative of the findings to the quotations, when it should be the other way around. In some of my evaluations of submitted papers, I have found that interesting findings lose their interpretative potential due to the exclusive use of quotations, whereas if other

more appropriate figures of emotion had been used, their interpretations would have gained solidity. I agree with Paula Jarzabkowski and her colleagues (2014) that quotations provide useful verbatim snapshots, but they are typically not enough to provide evidence or illustrate our interpretive explanation. The abuse and misuse of quotations does not help the reader to understand our findings or our interpretations, and instead produces a text lacking interest for the reader (Corden; Sainsbury, 2006).

In addition to the above, this aesthetic–expressive rationality has also resulted in quotations becoming a criterion of evaluation for texts in qualitative health research. An example is the COREQ and SRQR checklists, which are also used as an evaluation tool; according to the instructions in both checklists, quotations should be present in any type of text; that is, the checklists also exert a regulatory capacity on living language to describe findings. Because of this arbitrary use, the quotation loses its function of being a figure of emotion for a particular type of finding and becomes an all-purpose figure of emotion. This writing practice of using only quotations has spread to qualitative health research in Ibero-America, becoming a universal figure of emotion.

Additionally, quotations are also quantified, cataloging them into pre-conceived categories, reporting them in implicitly quantitative terms, and classifying them as evidence. The audit culture and accountability in the academic scene that quantifies any academic activity is a strategy of domination (Lincoln, 2012); thus, this culture of quantifying and converting everything to numbers is also found in academic rhetoric in qualitative health research, transforming this figure of emotion into quantitative evidence. Mathematics provides science with the most favored instrument of analysis, but also a model to represent any type of findings (Santos, 2016). Under this reasoning, quotations are quantified and converted into “quantitative variables.” This practice in particular has increased in qualitative health research articles in Ibero-America.

Various authors have pointed out that there are no rules or guidelines for how many quotations should be included in a paper, and that the most important point is not the number of quotations, but the authors’ having paid scant attention to thinking about “why,” “how,” and “when” quotations should be used in the text (Eldh; Årestedt; Berterö, 2020; Ely *et al.*, 2005; Rockman; Vough, 2023; Thorne, 2020). However, the number of quotations is a concern among authors and a frequent question asked by graduate students, and I have observed the same concern in peer discussions when they judge a text as inadequate because there are “not enough” quotations. Quantifying the quotations manifests itself in various ways at the time of writing.

Surely many of us have read papers that contain a large number of quotations, which are set out as a list with little development of arguments or interpretation, and are presented as if they were the findings. This is a style of writing that Thorne (2020) calls the “data dump,” in which there is minimal narrative explanation accompanied by a large number of quotations. This writing practice leads to the quantification of the quotations. Bunge (2002) notes that tables or graphs are not only tools for the systematization of numerical data, but also devices for the aesthetic expression of numerical data, devices that he calls “systematized data.” The rationalization for

this systematized data device is the way in which the quotations are translated into numerical data.

Over the past decade, in evaluating PhD theses, I have increasingly found that the quotations are presented in a table and not as part of the narrative of the description of the findings. In addition to this external and separate location of the descriptive narrative in the text, the quotations are translated to a quantitative result by being represented as numerical variables. They are presented in a two-column data table, as would typically be used for reporting numerical data, the first column with a list of the variables, and the second column with frequencies. In the case of quotations, a verbatim quotation is placed in the first column as though it were a variable, and in the second column, a supposed number of times the phrase was repeated in the interviews is recorded. For example, a verbatim quotation such as “*we have lost everything, but the most painful thing is to lose a child*” is in the first column, and in the second column, a frequency appears, which expresses the number of informants who said exactly the same phrase verbatim, although this is improbable. This numerical imagination subjects a figure of emotion, such as quotations to mathematical rigor, which quantifies everything, imposing a totally different interpretation on this figure of emotion.

In the past decade, some Latin American scholars have ventured into the field of arts-based research. An enthusiasm for body-maps has permeated qualitative health research because of its potential to decolonize knowledge production (Gastaldo *et al.*, 2012). Research based on body-maps is maintaining a steady growth internationally (Murray, 2023); in Latin America, not only are these publications increasing (Gastaldo *et al.*, 2018), but the topic of body-maps has also been included in qualitative methodology textbooks in Brazil (Conceição, Magalhães; Gastaldo, 2021). However, concerns still focus on how to make body-maps and how to analyze them, but on the other hand, how to write reports of findings that encompass visual, narrative, and participatory data generation is not yet part of the concerns of those who promote their use.

In recent years, reviewing submitted papers based on body-maps has enabled me to look at how their authors write and also at how they reproduce a narrative based on quotations as a universal figure of emotion. The use of body-maps is located in the lived experience approach, but the findings are written with forms and rhetorical devices unrelated to this approach. Adams and van Manen (2017) state that writing lived experiences means writing evocative texts about lived meanings that evoke dimensions of life as we experience it, and that the figures of emotion are both textual and visual. In the papers that I have reviewed and those circulating in Latin America, the descriptions of findings and the body-maps reproduce a narrative based on an excessive number of quotations from interviews, and also as the only figure of emotion. The visual component, which is the body-map, is almost completely missing; it is not included as a figure of emotion and is absent as an illustration, which means illustrating the reasoning for their findings with parts of the body-map image. This art-based approach in Latin America reproduces the normative assumptions of quotations as a universal form of the figure of emotion in their texts.

4 DISCUSSIONS

Scientific writing has been imposed as the gold standard for writing research, but it is also a practice of colonization for those of us who do qualitative health research in the Global South. Sassen's (2014) notion of conceptually subterranean trends helps us to understand this colonization of the norms, forms, and rhetoric of scientific writing. The everyday writing practices of scientific writing are based on knowledge that is difficult to see when we think in terms of what is scientific or not, because they operate under the dynamics of knowledge that we respect, admire, and follow, such as author guidelines and checklists for scientific writing. Writing based on the normative assumptions of scientific writing has become a conceptually subterranean trend that is difficult to see, since these assumptions are so familiar to us; we even find their use positive because this allows us to publish and to increase the number of articles published in the field of qualitative health research. However, it is positive only in a partial sense, insofar as these texts reproduce the epistemological assumptions of positivism, which systematically exclude the aesthetic–expressive rationality of qualitative research and impose a colonial regime on writing practices in qualitative health research in Ibero-America. To move forward, we need to discuss alternatives.

The emphasis on teaching only qualitative methods requires serious second thought. Van Manen (2006) states that writing is rarely problematized in the literature of qualitative human science methods. The same is true of the training of young researchers in qualitative health research in Ibero-America, where teaching focused on qualitative methods and the dearth of teaching about writing practices in qualitative research is rarely viewed as a problem. This would imply rethinking graduate programs and making an effort to teach writing comparable to the effort dedicated to teaching qualitative methods. This effort should also extend to another space, that of community practice; that is, a group of people with a common interest in one particular field. For Eakin (2015), community practice groups constitute a system-level strategy for educating critical qualitative researchers. Writing is a practice that is cultivated in the daily life of academia within these groups of community practice. Commenting, discussing, and providing feedback in these spaces represent opportunities to teach writing outside the canon of scientific writing in qualitative health research in Ibero-America.

In the twenty-first century to date, academics' efforts to introduce and position qualitative health research texts in journals have focused on an adaptation strategy, rather than on constructing alternative author guidelines. Negotiating the adaptation of author guidelines has not been an entirely positive experience, because it has led to writing practices that are subjected to the cognitive–instrumental rationality of positivism. Epistemicide is a provocative concept put forth by Santos (2016) that refers to the disappearance of any alternative epistemological perspective in the construction of knowledge. The practices of adaptation reduce and dispel the possibility of an alternative to scientific writing which is an epistemicide of other forms of academic writing. To resist this is to introduce the notion of horizontality, a dialogue between diverse ways of understanding the world and a search for alternative

concepts (Corona, 2019). Horizontality with respect to academic writing is to position the forms, rhetorical devices, and literacy devices of qualitative writing as a horizontal academic practice with scientific writing. The project that needs to be undertaken is to construct our own author guidelines in qualitative health research, not only from different starting points than those of scientific writing, but also to create multiple text structures according to each of the methods of qualitative research – structures in the plural, since a universal structure is opposed to the epistemological assumptions of qualitative research. We need consistent rhetoric and living language to describe our findings, as well as diverse writing styles to suit each qualitative method.

Although it is claimed that utopias are a thing of the past, utopia is an alternative to the current social structure through the expression of ideas critical of its practices. According to Schutte (2007), utopia as a way of thinking enables us to pay attention to and critique ideals and norms to establish practices and values crucial for transformation. In this sense, what I propose here is a utopian impulse (Portolano, 2012), which is a change of perspective and a positioning of the possibility of changing dominant practices, that is, a utopia against the order established by scientific writing. But a clarification is necessary, my reflection in terms of utopia focuses on the social practice of writing and its possible alternatives, but a similar reflection is missing, and is needed with respect to the subject who carries it out, the author. A reflection that, in my opinion, should be analytically oriented from an epistemological and theoretical perspective of the micro-macro link, in the sense proposed by Münch and Smelser (1994), the link between the encounters and interactions between individuals -interactions between authors with different epistemological positions-, the micro, and social structures, the macro, which through control mechanisms constitute opportunities and constraints for social action and the transformation of reality, -the global and local academic contexts that host subjects with different epistemic positions-. This would help us understand the fragmented, paradoxical, and even contradictory vision that we have of the social academic environments of the authors who write in qualitative health research in Ibero-America.

The great challenge in the field of qualitative health research in Ibero-America is to restore to our everyday writing practices their identity as qualitative inquiry. In essence, the challenge is to answer the question of who holds the power in the forms of representation in qualitative health research publications.

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Resumo: O objetivo deste artigo é refletir sobre como a cultura da escrita positivista domina o estilo de escrita da pesquisa qualitativa em saúde na Iberoamérica. Esta reflexão se concentra em compreender como as normas e regras da escrita científica foram assimiladas em textos de pesquisa qualitativa em saúde; como as figuras de emoção foram reduzidos a uma única forma de expressão; e como essas figuras de emoção foram transformadas em dados quantitativos. Por fim, proponho algumas alternativas possíveis para avançar na escrita em pesquisa qualitativa.

Palavras-chave: Escrita científica. Escrita em pesquisa qualitativa. Figuras de emoção. Pesquisa qualitativa em saúde. Sul global.

Resumen: La finalidad de este artículo es reflexionar sobre cómo la cultura de escribir del positivismo domina el estilo de escritura en la investigación cualitativa en salud en Iberoamérica. Esta reflexión se centra en comprender cómo las normas y las reglas de la redacción científica se han asimilado en los textos de investigación cualitativa en salud; cómo las figuras de la emoción se han reducido a una única forma de expresión; y cómo estas figuras de la emoción han sido transformadas en datos cuantitativos. Finalmente, propongo algunas posibles alternativas para avanzar en cómo escribir en la investigación cualitativa.

Palabras clave: Redacción científica. Escritura cualitativa. Figuras de la emoción. Investigación cualitativa en salud. Sur global.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author declares that this work involves no conflict of interest.

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Leticia Robles-Silva: Conceptualization, reflective analysis, drafting, and manuscript revision and editing.

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