AN APPROACH TO QUALITATIVE PRACTICES IN PSYCHOLOGY FROM AN INTEGRATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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The aim of this work is to offer an overview of the most widely used qualitative practices in Psychology, emphasizing their compatibility with quantitative practices and their methodological guarantes. Furthermore, we outline the general logic of qualitative research practice and briefly examine the techniques most commonly employed for gathering qualitative data and for its analysis. Finally, we review some of the analytical strategies traditionally linked to qualitative research and conclude with a very brief look at some of the support software for qualitative analysis that we consider useful for psychologists.
Key words: Qualitative research, Qualitative methods, Epistemology

Este trabajo pretende ofrecer una visión de conjunto de las prácticas cualitativas más frecuentes en Psicología, subrayando su compatibilidad con las prácticas de tipo cuantitativo y sus garantías metodológicas. Mostraremos, además, la lógica general de una estrategia de investigación cualitativa y revisaremos sucintamente las técnicas más habituales de recogida de información cualitativa. Por último, repasaremos algunas de las estrategias de análisis tradicionalmente vinculadas a la investigación cualitativa y cerraremos con un brevísimo comentario sobre algunas de las herramientas informáticas de asistencia al análisis cualitativo que creemos más útiles para el psicólogo.
Palabras clave: Investigación cualitativa, Métodos cualitativos, Epistemología

The aim of this work is not so much to give an account of the latest advances in the area known as "qualitative methods" as to try and make professional psychologists aware of how useful this type of strategic approach can be in their everyday activity. To this end we must convince them that such methodological strategies are not opposed to quantitative strategies. We shall argue that they are compatible and even complementary practices. Moreover, we should highlight the fact that qualitative practices are not pre-scientific, subjective, irrational or lacking in rigour. And this is the case not only in Psychology, but also in other disciplines that make use of these types of methodological strategies with fewer inhibitions. For example, Qualitative Organic Analysis is a basic practice in Organic Chemistry that permits the identification of the chemical family to which a compound belongs, and can guide subsequent analyses; in a quite different context, to understand the healthcare priorities of a refugee community and guarantee the effectiveness of a social-health intervention plan, a community health team will need to make a qualitative study of the community's representations of health and illness. It will thus be necessary to observe and participate in the community and rigorously reconstruct the way of life in which such conceptions take on meaning. Although all of this information may require subsequent quantitative treatment, without this initial qualitative approach the healthcare team will run the risk of unfairly projecting their own needs on the community, of misjudging the situation and of losing effectiveness.

In any case, the reader should bear in mind that we start out from a position of disadvantage with respect to the rest of the articles in this volume, which come with obvious guarantees. In part because Psychology has mortgaged much of its self-esteem as a discipline for the possibility of perceiving itself as a science, and more specifically as a positive science, whose knowledge derives from processes of the formal development of observable and quantifiable phenomena. There is surely no day more glorious for future psychologists than the one on which, finally, they leave through the austere portals of their faculty with their WAIS kit under their arm, conscious of the symbolic power conferred on them by the possibility of scribbling a number in the box marked IQ.

This obsession with guaranteeing, be it only in appearance, our status as a science has led us to exaggerate somewhat our strategies of defence against irrationality, subjectivism, waffle or superstition. In our

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own view, this tendency has converted Psychology into a science with "hang-ups" of its own, afflicted by a kind of normative hypertrophy (Blanco, 2002; Blanco & Montero, 2009) and with a tendency to idolize the method (Montero, 2006). Psychologists (especially academics, it must be said) have created a normative culture that is clearly excessive, to the extent that, at times, our norms (such as those regulating scientific writing) actually serve to regulate the behaviour of other scientific communities (see Madigan, Johnson, & Linton, 1995). Few disciplines have invested so many resources in consolidating themselves methodologically as has Psychology. This investment has even, on occasions, become a field of knowledge in itself, and has turned into a core element of official histories of Psychology: Psychology is, for example, one of the few disciplines to identify its historical origins not with an empirical or theoretical finding, but curiously, with the founding of an experimental laboratory (Jiménez, et al., 2001).

The relative lack of prestige of qualitative practices in Psychology has a good deal to do with this "excess of methodological zeal", which often leads to a gratuitous, ornamental or strictly rhetorical use of numbers, as though their mere presence in a research report or, in general, in an argument, were a guarantee of rigour and objectivity. Fortunately, we are seeing more and more critical reactions – and of various hues – from within the methodology domain itself of this progressive banalization of its historical sense (see, for example, Delgado, 2006; León, 2006).

In our view, it is essential for Psychology to begin unburdening itself of this absurd historical mortgage, to become methodologically more flexible, and hence better equipped to judge the relevance of the issues to be addressed, participating critically, even, in the definition of new agendas of problems. Our obsession with methodological guarantees, our eagerness for neutrality and objectivity only conspire to exclude us from the public debates in which these new agendas are decided.

SOME IDEAS ON THE MEANING OF THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE PRACTICES

The distinction, and often even the opposition, between the quantitative and the qualitative is, as one might guess, underpinned by a certain world view, if we might use such an expression. This will become clearer if the reader agrees that a certain view of the world implies (1) an idea

of **what the world essentially is** (matter, energy, facts or events, phenomena, ideas, numerical relationships, social constructions, and so on), (2) an idea about **how it can be understood** (empiricism, rationalism, phenomenism, positivism, phenomenology, constructivism), (3) an idea, or set of ideas, about **how we guarantee our knowledge of the world**, and (4) a set of **values** that guide us in our task. That is, although there would be other, more sophisticated ways of representing things, a certain world view could involve, respectively: (1) an **ontology**, (2) an **epistemology**, (3) a **methodology** and (4) an **axiology**.

Specifically, the distinction at the methodological level between quantitative and qualitative practices is traditionally seen as corresponding, in somewhat Manichean fashion, to the parallel distinctions at the ontological and epistemological levels. In the sphere of methodology, this ontological and epistemological dualism is reflected, therefore, onto the distinction that gives rise to the present work – that which is drawn between quantitative and qualitative methods: the former would be responsible for establishing the necessary guarantees for **explaining** the phenomena which have frequency, duration and/or intensity, whilst the latter would propose the criteria necessary for **understanding** human actions and their products. This dualism always goes beyond the sphere of the scientific phenomena on which its appears to depend, to become a way of projecting into that sphere a series of aesthetic, ethical, ideological and political values – axiological element, in other words –, which explains the tense, even bitter tone often found in *quali vs. quanti* debates.

Although these two extreme positions extend (and have extended since time immemorial) to all cultural domains, it is precisely in that of Psychology where the debates have been the fiercest. These debates often reflect, moreover, spurious interests (power, money, intellectual narcissism) at odds with the principles of the independence of scientific rationality (Blanco, 2002). There is nothing more pitiful and boring than the all-too-common situation of one dogmatic person accusing another dogmatic person of being dogmatic.

The outline we have sketched may not be particularly original, but it gives us some idea of how the more dubious and cynical parts of the debate might be avoided, with a view to a rational and productive dialogue. Of course, the first point arising from this initial analysis is that the self-serving radicalization of the two sides obscures the fact that between the two extremes

(reflexes vs. intentional actions, for example) there is not a total vacuum, but rather a host of situations or events (circular reactions, conditioned responses, normative actions, personality traits, etc.) demanding strategic methodological solutions revolving around different procedures (what some would call "techniques"), procedures which have to be adjusted to the logic of the problems. In sum, and as we suggested in the opening paragraph of this paper, qualitative and quantitative practices should be considered as strategic resources with different purposes that can very often be combined in the same research or intervention process. Let us see why.

ON THE COMPLIANCE OF QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY WITH QUALITY CRITERIA IN PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH: REFUTING SOME CLICHÉS

Is qualitative research "subjective"?
There are at least two senses in which qualitative practices are called "subjective". On the one hand, it is said that qualitative practices are subjective because their object of study is, in one way or another, subjectivity. We might add in this regard that if we understand the subjective (that which relates to a subject or individual) as a quality of mental states and processes, then experimental cognitive psychology could equally be considered as based on subjectivity.

On the other hand, qualitative practices tend to be accused of being subjective insofar as the knowledge they propose is assumed to be anchored to the "subjective" perspective of the researcher. Obviously, all research processes are, in this general sense, subjective, but it should also be stressed that all research processes aspire to transcending the observer's point of view and to producing shared or inter-subjective knowledge. It is true that some qualitative practices emphasize the value, sometimes irreplaceable, of the researcher, but it is no less true that they aim, from the perspective of the qualified researcher, to describe and delimit the phenomenon in such a way that it can be shared, revised and criticised by any other qualified researcher. For an unqualified "quantitative" researcher the difference between an autistic baby and a deaf baby may go as unnoticed as for an unqualified "qualitative" researcher the difference between the clothes of a peaceful skinhead and a violent one, with equally disastrous consequences in the two cases.

Does qualitative research have the systematicity and transparency necessary for generating valid and reliable knowledge?
Both qualitative and quantitative methods are vulnerable to the asystematicity and lack of transparency of those who use them. The research designs included in qualitative approaches, more open and less prescribed than those developed from quantitative approaches, have undoubtedly provided cover for some methodologically dubious practices (Antaki, et al., 2003). However, a series of authors, including Elliott et al. (1999), Miles and Huberman (1994) or Stiles (1993), have developed a set of consistent and systematized strategies that provide guarantees in questions of quality control with qualitative practices. The reliability criterion is reformulated in this context through the concept of *dependability/auditability*, and is guaranteed by establishing throughout the research process explicit, transparent and recursive procedures that allow us to check the consistency of results and their interpretation across different researchers, subjects, contexts and points in time. For its part, the internal validity criterion is articulated through the concept of *credibility/authenticity*, and consists of procedures designed to guarantee the richness and meaning of the information gathered, its theoretical coherence and its testability; in turn, external validity is translated into the concept of *transferability/fittingness* and is guaranteed by making explicit the generalization criteria of the results and checking the predictions in other contexts and situations (Madill, et al., 2000; Hammersley, 2007).

Does qualitative research permit the testing of hypotheses and the production of generalizable knowledge?
In general terms, the *logical system* that serves as foundation and guide for the testing of hypotheses is the same in qualitative and quantitative practices, and involves the following sequence of actions:
(1) condensation of the information,
(2) formulation of hypotheses,
(3) falsification on the basis of the sample information, and
(4) exploration of the possibility of generalizing the sample result to the population.
Qualitative practices permit the structuring of information through conceptual systems of coding and categorization, the proposition of hypotheses – or at least conjectures – formulated by means of verbal statements and the subjecting of those statements to falsification processes of an open and recursive nature (Miller &

133

Fredericks, 1987; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The generalization of the results to a defined populational framework is made possible through the use of criteria such as saturation or the checking of theoretical and empirical parallels with other contexts/phenomena. The sample design may vary according to the needs deriving from the results and depending on the objectives (e.g., maximum variation, stratification, typicality, intensity or homogeneity).

SOME ADDITIONAL ARGUMENTS FOR INTEGRATING QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY IN RESEARCH PRAXIS

(1) First of all, and given their flexibility, qualitative practices constitute an *excellent tool for the systematic exploration of unknown and novel phenomena*, providing at the same time a suitable approach to those which take place in natural contexts.

(2) They also permit the *production and dissemination of rich and extensive descriptions*, which are extremely useful for providing direct knowledge of the phenomena in question, and represent a source for the generation of tentative explications and hypotheses.

(3) They make possible a *systematic approach to subjects' perspectives and to the meanings they ascribe to their actions*, serving in turn as a complement to other types of approach and orienting the purely speculative explanations of the results obtained by means of external indicators.

TABLE 1
SOME POSSIBLE OBJECTIVES OF A
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT

✔ To systematize and analyze information that already exists on a phenomenon via the examination of secondary sources (texts, images, audio-visual material).

✔ To discover and analyze novel or unexpected aspects of a known phenomenon.

✔ To reveal the antecedents, conditions, characteristics and consequences of a novel phenomenon.

✔ To assess the possibilities of applying an already-existing theory to a phenomenon.

✔ To explore how perceptions and discourse in relation to a topic are socially constructed.

✔ To analyze patterns of interaction in different persons or groups.

✔ To analyze cultural patterns and their interpretation by members of a community or group.

✔ To assess perceptions about an intervention program/action in those whom it targets.

✔ To produce ideas working with groups and to generate consensus and/or involvement for social intervention actions/programs.

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(4) They offer the possibility of *obtaining perspective on processes*, providing tools for the collection – prospective or retrospective – of data on the way in which certain phenomena have developed over a given period.

(5) They permit us to *deal with phenomena characterized by highly complex interactive dynamics* that are difficult to grasp and systematize by means of prescribed indicators, providing tools for the detection of patterns that may be repeated throughout different situational or temporal contexts.

(6) They permit the *analysis and follow-up of discordant cases* which are difficult to access from the nomothetic perspective.

(7) Finally, they represent an excellent tool to make possible and systematize the *participation of the subjects involved* in the phenomena under study in the joint construction of the knowledge about them.

THE GENERAL LOGIC OF QUALITATIVE PRACTICES

The implementation of qualitative research begins, like any other process of rational inquiry, with the selection of the field of interest and the delimitation of the object of study, and continues with the formulation of the objectives and the questions to which answers are sought. There are a wide range of questions that can be answered through qualitative research. On the one hand, qualitative methodology is appropriate for responding to **questions of an open or exploratory nature**, which are typical of the initial approach to a phenomenon. On the other hand, it can also respond to much more specific questions, working via the formulation of hypotheses that can be tested. The questions and objectives of the research initially define the type of design, the sample, the data-collection techniques and the type of analysis.

The definition of the **design** shares some dimensions with designs of a quantitative nature. Thus, qualitative research can be **cross-sectional** (data collected at a single point in time) or **longitudinal** (data collected at different points in time), **deductive** (starting from a theory and testing it through the data collected) or **inductive** (starting from the data collected and constructing a theory on their basis). However, it is important to stress that qualitative research normally works with designs that are more open than those of quantitative research, since researchers can modify and reorient the hypotheses, the sample, the techniques and/or the content of the research depending on the results obtained from their work. It is also common in qualitative systems of work to alternate inductive and

deductive processes, modifying and enriching the tentative theoretical formulations or the initial hypotheses on the basis of the results and checking them by means of new analysis or in the context of new information. Special mention should be reserved for so-called collaborative designs or methods, such as **Participatory Action Research**, which integrate subjects in the definition of the research objectives and procedures and incorporate the transformation of social reality as a substantive element inherent to the research process itself (see López-Cabanas & Chacón, 1999).

The selection of the **sample**, that is, of the subjects to whom the data-collection techniques will be applied, or of the cases to which the analysis will be applied, has important consequences for the results of the research. If the objective is to obtain descriptive results, it should be borne in mind that qualitative techniques are designed not to give numerical dimensions to the phenomena, but rather to offer rich, extensive or dynamic descriptions of their properties. For example, a qualitative approach will permit the description of different forms of construction of discourse shared by the members of violent groups, or the characterization of different forms of workplace harassment existing in a given professional sector. Such approaches also make it possible to delimit a specific phenomenon or a critical case, with the aim of analyzing the processes occurring within it, contextualizing them, guiding the intervention or providing data that give support to the development of further research (for example, analyzing why a particular population presents a high juvenile suicide rate or explaining why an internal conflict has arisen in a company). Hence, research of a qualitative bent will benefit less from the selection of random cases and more from the analysis of cases that can provide rich and comprehensive information.

When a qualitative study sets out to obtain results for the exploration and testing of hypotheses, qualitative techniques come up against difficulties similar to those encountered by quantitative techniques on determining the extent to which their results can be generalized. In this case, it is necessary to select and make explicit the criteria that make it possible to establish equivalences between the sample and the population, delimiting the framework and the validity of the generalization of the results. The results deriving from a sample of a qualitative nature will be generalizable insofar as it can be argued that the processes on which they are based in the sample are equivalent to those found in the population to which they

will be applied. To support this equivalence, in addition to taking into account the theoretical referents and other research (if there is any), some qualitative approaches (such as Grounded Theory Analysis or Constant Comparison Method) use the so-called saturation criterion. This criterion is met when the addition of new subjects to the sample does not substantively modify the results obtained previously. Moreover, it may be necessary to modify the initial direction of the research, restricting the object of study and/or its context, or indeed enlarging the sample. Figure 1 shows the logic behind the use of the saturation criterion.

Although there are different **data-collection techniques** in this field, qualitative analysis can be applied to a wide variety of substrata of information, including those generated from eminently quantitative approaches. This is so because the type of analysis employed depends more on the researcher's eye, on how he or she "looks", than on the actual characteristics of the information. In any case, prominent among the techniques most widely used in qualitative approaches in Psychology are the analysis of secondary sources (any document in text, image or audio format proceeding from sources other than the researcher him/herself), observation, interviews, life story and a broad range of group techniques (discussion group, group interview, nominal group, among many others). Furthermore, the new information technologies are giving rise to extensive possibilities that build on and modify the arsenal of more traditional techniques. In Table 2 we summarize some of the most commonly used techniques, showing their name, briefly describing them and indicating from which theoretical perspectives they tend to be used.

STRATEGIES OF ANALYSIS

In the case of qualitative methodology, and specifically on the question of data analysis, it is more appropriate to talk of "strategies" than of "techniques", since the procedures have a more open and flexible character than those corresponding to quantitative approaches (Gordo & Serrano, 2008). Within the framework of qualitative research there are numerous proposals establishing general procedures for the development of the analysis process (see, e.g., the excellent systematizations by Miles & Huberman, 1994, Ryan & Bernard, 2000 or González-Rey, 2000). However, certain more specific working systems have been developed and bear a specific label more or less accepted across the scientific community. In

Table 3 we summarize these, selecting from among the numerous alternatives in the literature those closest to the sphere of psychological application. In Table 4 we provide some examples of research that could be carried out from each qualitative practice proposed.

WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION ON QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

There has been a considerable increase in the publication of work on qualitative methodology in recent years. Although there may be other, equally valid options, we might guide the reader in the direction of some useful and accessible references.

A synthetic approach to the issue, somewhat more extensive than the present work, can be found in López and Scandroglio (2007); for a fuller introductory overview, useful texts include those of González-Rey (2000), Gordo and Serrano (2008) and Vallés (2000). The text by Galindo (1998) offers an in-depth review of

FIGURE 1
STEPS FOR THE DEFINITION OF A SAMPLE FROM THE QUALITATIVE PERSPECTIVE WITH THE SATURATION CRITERION
(SOURCE: LÓPEZ & SCANDROGLIO, 2007)

different qualitative research techniques, and the work by Gutiérrez and Delgado (1994) goes deeper into epistemological aspects, paying particular attention to the perspective of complex systems. The text recently published by Gordo and Serrano (2008) includes examples of most of the data-collection and analysis practices we have proposed. Useful recent examples of qualitative studies published in the Spanish context and in the psychological field would include López and cols. (2008), Scandroglio (2009), Martín (2005), Blanco and Sánchez-Criado (2006), Rasskin, (2007) or Gómez-Soriano and Vianna (2005).

HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE FOR USE IN QUALITATIVE PRACTICES

Advances in information technology have brought about crucial changes in qualitative practices, affecting both the collection and initial treatment of data and the procedures used for their analysis (see Lewins & Silver, 2006, for an overview). The development and improvement of digital equipment and media for the recording and storage of audio-visual information (video-cameras, sound recorders, scanners, portable memory devices, etc.) has in many cases made the dreams of qualitative researchers come true, so to speak. Apart from the logistical possibilities (organization and superficial editing of information) represented by such devices in general, it is important not to overlook the specific importance of audio-visual editing programs that make it possible to filter and organize the information recorded in the field. But developments in IT have been particularly decisive with regard to the sophistication and improvement of **transcription procedures for audio-visual material** that precede analysis, and above all to the design of support software for qualitative analysis.

Transana (http://www.transana.org/) is probably the tool for the transcription of audio-visual material most widely used in the social sciences today. This tool allows researchers to choose between various types of transcription, from informal narrative recordings to Jeffersonian transcriptions that code all the relevant speech properties (intonation, phonetics, etc.). Moreover, if we are working with audio-visual recordings, *Transana* makes it possible to link, in real time, the transcriptions of the linguistic material with the images. And beyond its utility for transcription, the tool permits us to categorize our transcriptions and relate them to one another with the same logic as a database, effectively situating *Transana*
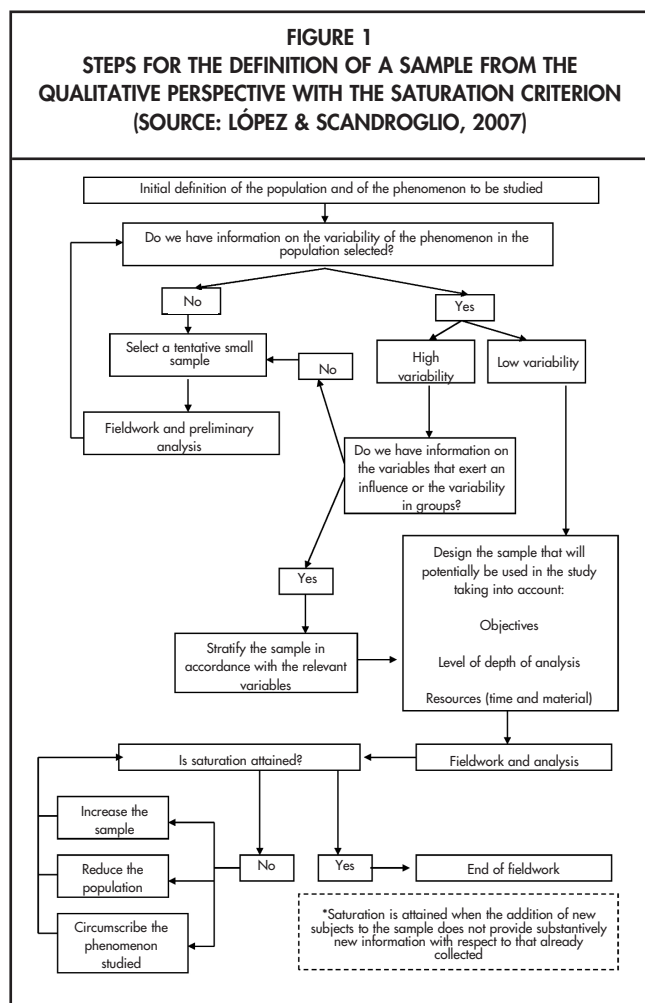
TABLE 2 SOME DATA-COLLECTION TECHNIQUES		
NAME	**DESCRIPTION**	**QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS PERSPECTIVE**
Analysis of documentary material		Collation and analysis of written, visual or audio-visual documents	Extensive possibilities for analysis that cover the spectrum of qualitative analysis strategies
Observation	Participant	Gathering of information based on the perception of an external agent who is involved in the observed event and interacts with the actors	Particularly associated with the ethnographic perspective, but can also be used from other qualitative perspectives
	Non-participant	Gathering of information based on the perception of an external agent who is not involved in the observed process	Extensive possibilities for qualitative analysis conditioned by the degree of prior systematicity and structuring of the observation
Interview		Information obtained from a dialogue between researcher and subject	Extensive possibilities for qualitative analysis, depending to a large extent on the degree of structuring of the interaction
Life story/assisted autobiography		Gathering of information based on documents and/or on communicative interaction about the way in which a person constructs and gives meaning to his/her life	Particularly associated with the ethnographic perspective, but can also be used from other theoretical perspectives (hermeneutics, genealogy, etc.)
Group techniques	Discussion group	Interaction moderated by the researcher among a small group of subjects who do not know each other and who are relatively homogeneous as regards the aspect under study	Extensive possibilities for qualitative analysis, notably discourse analysis
	Group interview	Communicative interaction between the researcher and a pre-existing group	Extensive possibilities for qualitative analysis
	Analysis and decision-making techniques	Generation of perceptions or consensus-based decisions in a group through structured interaction guidelines provided by the researcher	Extensive possibilities for qualitative analysis
Dramatization and role-playing techniques		Staging of situations in which subjects have to act out certain roles or functions	Extensive possibilities for qualitative analysis
Self-reports	Questionnaires	Collection of information through subjects' written responses to a pre-established set of questions	Especially associated with Content Analysis, given that the technique itself aims to generate concise and condensed information. However, it can be used from a wide range of qualitative analysis perspectives
	Self-registers	Collection of written information from the subject about his/her behaviours and/or the contexts in which they take place	Associated both with single-case studies and with a broad range of qualitative analysis perspectives
Subjective evidence		Gathering of information via subjects' rating or classification of concepts, objects or persons, following highly flexible criteria	Closely associated with single-case studies, but can be used from a wide range of qualitative analysis perspectives
Projective tests		Information obtained about a subject's personality and/or cognitions via his/her non-structured responses to a set of ambiguous stimuli	Closely associated with single-case studies, but can currently be used from a wide range of quantitative and qualitative analysis perspectives
Material culture (possessions, tools, normative arrangements, artistic products)		General and specific information obtained about culturally binding forms of the organization of activity	Especially useful for genealogical, *neomaterialist*, *Actor-Network Theory* and historical-cultural psychology approaches

137

somewhere between transcription tools and support software for qualitative analysis.

Among such software packages we would recommend *Atlas.Ti* (http://www.atlasti.com/de/ productintro_es.html), an ambitious program which, in addition to the usual functions of the coding and analysis of textual material, facilitates the analysis of sound recordings, video material and graphic documentation. The heart of the program is the Hermeneutic Unit, a virtual space in which one can constantly construct and reconstruct the structures,

TABLE 3 SOME QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS PRACTICES		
Classical Content Analysis	**References**: Bardin (1967), Piñuel (2002) **Objective:** To condense the raw information in a text into structured material that can be analyzed subsequently	**Procedure**: (1) Structuring and selection of the information. (2) Initial establishment of exhaustive and exclusive categories based on the theoretical assumptions and preliminary analysis of the text. (3) Testing of the category system and re-formulation. (4) Definitive coding of the text. (5) Establishment, where applicable, of inter-rater agreement indices. (6) Carrying out, where applicable, of subsequent analyses (latent content analysis, hypothesis testing, quantitative analysis) based on the coding made
Ethnographic description	**References:** Velasco & Díaz de Rada (1997), Wolcott (1999) **Objective**: To make an exhaustive description of a given social phenomenon and of the meanings attributed by the actors themselves.	**Procedure:** (1) Detailed description of the group or individual that shares a culture with others. (2) Analysis of the themes and perspectives of the group. (3) Interpretation of the meanings of the social interaction. (4) Generation of a holistic cultural portrait of the cultural group that includes the point of view of the actors (emic) and the interpretations and views of the researcher with respect to human social life (etic).
Analytic Induction	**References:** Manning (1982), Taylor & Bogdan (1984) **Objective:** To generate a theory about a social phenomenon, checking its validity inductively	**Procedure:** (1) Initial definition of the phenomenon to be explained. (2) Formulation of a hypothetical explanation. (3) Study of a case, in line with the hypothesis, to see whether the hypothesis fits the facts. (4) Validation or reformulation of the hypothesis or re-definition of the phenomenon. (5) Integration of the information from new cases. (6) New validation to obtain a good level of practical certainty, or further reformulation of the hypothesis or redefinition of the phenomenon. (7) Identification of a universal relation. (8) Theoretical integration that includes the description of the phenomenon and a set of proposals for explaining the object of study.
Grounded Theory-Constant Comparison Method	**References:** Glaser & Strauss (1967), Trinidad, Carrero & Soriano (2006) **Objective:** To generate a theory about a social phenomenon, deriving it from the analysis of the empirical information available and subjecting it to a recursive checking process of an inductive and deductive nature.	**Procedure:** (1) Theoretically-guided initial sampling. (2) Gathering and structuring of the information. (3) Open coding: generation of categories through the comparison of informative units and the finding of common elements. (4) Saturation of categories: formal definition of categories through the establishment of properties (conditions, interactions, tactics/strategies, consequences) and dimensions. (5) Theoretical sampling: selection of theoretically relevant categories. (6) Axial categorization: integration in axes of relation of categories and properties and formulation of hypotheses. (7) Delimitation of the theory, in accordance with the criteria of parsimony and scope. (8) Validation of the theory through a return to the texts and, where applicable, on the basis of new cases.
Rhetoric and Argumentation Analysis	**References:** Albaladejo (1991), Bauer & Gaskell (2000), Plantin (1998), Vega (2003). **Objective:** To identify the rhetorical and argumentational resources used by individuals to achieve the objective of being persuasive.	**Procedure:** (1) Establishment of the general nature of the discourse or text based on its functions and audience. (2) Schematization of the discourse or text, identifying its formal constituents or the *partes orationis*: *exordium, narratio, argumentatio* and *exhortatio*. (3) Analysis of each one of the parts and the relations between them, specifying their rhetorical and argumentational figures and tropes.

conceptual maps and hypertexts that link the materials we are working with in accordance with our hypotheses.

Special mention should be reserved, in our opinion, for *QDAMiner* (http://www.provalisresearch.com/QDAMiner/QDAMinerDesc.html), a particularly intuitive

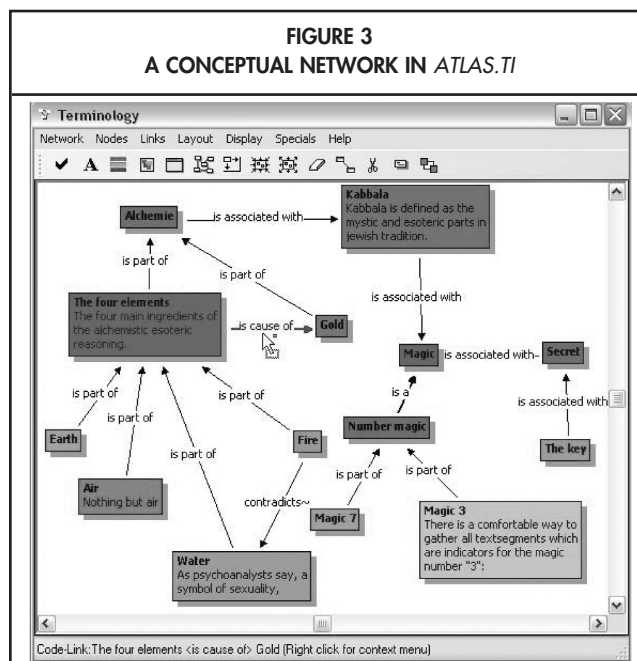analysis program for linguistic material, and which can be accompanied by two related tools for the statistical

FIGURE 2
A WORKING SCREEN IN *TRANSANA*

FIGURE 3
A CONCEPTUAL NETWORK IN *ATLAS.TI*

| TABLE 3 |
| SOME QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS PRACTICES (continuación) |

Conversation Analysis (CA) Discourse Analysis (DA) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)	**References:** CA: Drew (2003), Heritage (2004), Antaki & Díaz (2006) DA: Potter & Wetherell (1987), Willig (2003), Haidar (1998) CDA: Blommaert (2004), Wodak (2001).	**Procedure:** (1) First open classification, dictated by the object of study. (2) Search for variability and consistency through interpretive repertoires. (3) In the case of DA, examination of the functions of the type of argumentation or discursive construction and analysis of the production of the discourse as a form of solving problems, identifying the problem and the way it has been resolved (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), or as a form of the expression of power relationships (Foucault, 2006). In this same line, CDA focuses on the study of discursive practices through which social inequality emerges, integrating in its analyses the contributions of social theory and the study of the socio-political and economic context that make possible such practices. The case of CA involves analysis of the collaborative structure that emerges from the conversation, identifying both the elements that underpin the sequential organization of such conversation and the way the actors handle turn-taking and practices of opening, maintaining and closing the conversation.
	Objective: To identify, through language and/or other symbolic elements (such as images), the social practices used by people in a given social context or group.	
Genealogical Analysis	**References:** Foucault (1975/2005), Álvarez-Uría (2008)	**Procedure:** (1) Make the problem visible (problematize a social practice). (2) Organize periods in the genesis of the practice based on secondary sources (socio-political and institutional history of the practice, normative documents). (3) Analyze the genesis of the general field in which the practice takes on meaning. (4) Study the transformation of the field and of the practice.
	Objective: Problematize and make visible the conditions of historical-material possibility of the phenomena under study.	
Dramaturgical Analysis	**References:** Burke (1945/1984), Goffman (1959/1993)	**Procedure:** (1) Delimitation of the dramaturgical segment for study. (2) Determination of case (actor, act, purpose, agency and scenario). (3) Monitoring of the temporal dynamic of cases. (4) Determination of ratios (dyadic relations) between cases that give rise to the anomaly (alteration of the normal course of events) which brings about the relevance of the social action or the account.
	Objective: To study the way in which social actions (real or fictional) are inserted in meaningful situations and contexts.	

analysis of texts (*Wordstat*) and the quantitative analysis of qualitative variables (*Simstat*), which permit us to reach beyond the usual logic of qualitative analysis and overcome the absurd dualism that we criticized at the beginning of this paper.

CONCLUSIONS

We have tried to show that tools for quality control in psychological research and intervention must be based on an examination of the levels of systematicity, transparency

and distinctness of the inter-subjective consensus procedures that enable us to examine the object of study. From this perspective, although so-called qualitative methodology comprises a more open and diversified set of objectives and procedures, it is currently in possession of a whole range of resources through which it can provide adequate guarantees of the quality of processes of description, testing and generalization. Moreover, given its particular suitability for addressing in flexible fashion the study of psychological phenomena of great

	TABLE 4 EXAMPLES OF RESEARCH PROJECTS LINKED TO SPECIFIC QUALITATIVE PRACTICES
	Research examples
Classical Content Analysis	Analyzing responses to an interview applied to a small group of schoolteachers to learn about the most relevant problems they face in their job and make it possible to construct a questionnaire of closed responses for application to a larger sample. Analyzing the gender stereotypes in texts published in a local newspaper to highlight the possible persistence of sexist representations and their typologies in a specific context.
Ethnographic description	Studying the forms of relation and the structure of a rural community through participant observation and in-depth interviews. Studying the style and consumption patterns of young people who take part in the *botellón* (street drinking) through participant observation and informal interviews.
Analytic Induction	Validating and, where applicable, making proposals for modifying the Theory of Planned Behaviour on relationships between attitude and behaviour on the basis of interviews with consumers of designer drugs. Validating and, where applicable, making proposals for modifying a specific model of the course of phases of mourning through interviews, with both the professionals who have worked with the families of road accident victims and with the family members themselves.
Constant Comparison Method/Grounded Theory	Constructing a theory to explain why families refuse or agree to donate the organs of a family member who has died, on the basis of interviews with those who have participated in the process (family members and coordinators). Constructing, with the information obtained from interviews, a theoretical model that relates the different factors influencing the quality of life of people who are obliged to look after a family member with an incapacitating chronic illness.
Rhetoric and Argumentation Analysis	Comparing the discourse of a political group in Government and another group in Opposition for explaining corruption in their ranks, on the basis of the analysis of written and audio-visual material published over a given period of time. Analyzing the arguments used by a telecommunications corporation to avoid responding to certain demands from their clients, through the analysis of publicity/advertising materials, texts published on their websites and the record of calls from users.
Ethnomethodology Conversation Analysis, Discourse Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis	Studying the way in which immigrants construct their personal and social identity in a hostile context, through the use of group interviews with formal and informal groups of immigrants. Analyzing the strategies used by social network users (on Internet) to set up relationships with minors, through the analysis of archive messages and chats. Studying the way in which smokers defend continuing smoking, in discussion groups.
Genealogical Analysis	Studying the relations between forms of the autobiographical organization of suffering in refugees from socio-political violence and processes of the historical constitution of political institutions and social practices involved in the management of refugee situations. Studying the contributions of the Christian faith to the historical constitution of Clinical Psychology. Analyzing the historical origins of the discourse of people with eating disorders.
Dramaturgical Analysis	Analyzing forms of domination and the exercise of power among the different elements of the clinical personnel in a hospital, as a procedure for studying the causes of work conflicts that occur among them. Studying Spaniards' social representations of psychologists through dramaturgical analysis (actor, act, purpose, agency and scenario) of their presence in television series.

complexity and variability over time, it constitutes a set of alternatives of exceptional value in efforts to overcome some of the obstacles encountered in Psychology today. The marginalizing of the qualitative approach in the academic context is therefore, in our view, an anachronism, and a limitation more indicative of ignorance than of a conscious position on the foundations of scientific activity.

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