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## Contributions of the Ethnographic Method in the Process of Linkage with the Community

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### Abstract

*The main objective of the research is to categorize the contributions offered by the ethnographic method in the process of linking with the community; being complemented with the following specific objectives: 1. To identify the components of the ethnographic method that facilitate the approach with the community, and 2.- To interpret the perception of the participating researcher about the contributions of the ethnographic method in the process of linking with the community. The methodology applied is based on the phenomenological-hermeneutical paradigm, with a qualitative approach, whose method is descriptive and documentary, naturalistic and non-experimental, among the techniques of information collection are direct observation and focus group, having as key informants students of the last semester of the university degree in their practices of linking with the community. Among the main reflections is the fact that the ethnographic method adapts to different social groups and makes it possible to adjust approaches and techniques of data collection according to their particularities.*

**Keywords:** Community, Ethnographic Method, Bonding.

### Introduction

The research that implements the ethnographic method is framed in a phenomenological-hermeneutical paradigm. In turn, the ethnographic method is a technique widely used in research with a qualitative approach, since it allows us to know, through interaction with communities, the native (natural) behavior of the groups that live within the same community. The intention of this work is to review the contributions of the ethnographic method in the process of linking with the community, based on the own experience lived by the researchers who make daily use of this methodological praxis, also known as ethnographer researchers.

As is well known, the qualitative approach stands out for its constant search for subjectivity, which provides findings that from a different perspective (quantitative) would be very difficult to find. Strauss and Corbin (2002) assume that "qualitative research produces findings that are not reached by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (p. 32); on the

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other hand, Hernández-Sampieri, R. Mendoza-Torres, C. (2018) refer that qualitative research "focuses on understanding the phenomena, exploring from the perspective of the participants in a natural environment and in relation to their context". (p. 11). Alvarez-Gayou, (2018) considers that qualitative research "seeks subjectivity, as well as explaining and understanding how these and individual or group subjective meanings interact, this makes it inductive, since it allows the researcher, from the data, to develop concepts and interactions". (p. 54)

As for the phenomenological-hermeneutical paradigm, it can be indicated that "it is aimed at revealing the meaning of human actions and social life in general, based on the penetration into the subjectivity of the human being, his situations, the beliefs, motivations and intentions that guide him to act". (Castillo-Rocuber, 2019, p. 4); regarding phenomenological, Martínez (2006) points out that "Phenomenology is the study of phenomena as they are experienced, lived and perceived by man. Husserl coined the term *Lebenswelt* (world of life, lived world) to express the matrix of this "lived world, with its own meaning" (p. 167). And hermeneutics, seen from the perspective of social action, allows us to interpret the relationship between the perspectives of the actor and the environmental conditions of the action in which he is involved, which means that in the hermeneutical process the social actor creates meanings. Based on the above, the process involved here is a process of hermeneutical phenomenology, whose purpose is to discover the meanings that, at times, do not manifest themselves immediately to our observation and analysis. (Martínez, 2006, p 178)

However, reviewing interesting positions of prominent authors, there is disagreement as to whether the distinctive feature of ethnography is the recording of cultural knowledge (Spradley, 1980), the detailed investigation of patterns of social interaction (Gumperz, 1981) or the holistic analysis of societies (Lutz, 1981). Sometimes ethnography is defined as essentially descriptive, other times as a way of recording oral narratives (Walker, 1981); In contrast, the emphasis is only occasionally placed on the development and verification of theories. (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Denzin, 1978). (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1994, p. 15)

Another contribution is the development of qualitative methods, giving space to focus on subjective experience, in which ethnography has been favored by the growth of interest in qualitative methods that prioritize the deep understanding and interpretation of people's subjective experience. Undoubtedly, there is a constant interest in subjectivity and personal experience (exploration of the self and the other), which makes ethnography marked by an interest in exploring the subjectivity of both the researcher and the subject. The ethnographic researcher's focus on personal experience and critical reflection on his or her own influence on the study is a distinctive aspect.

From this subjectivity, ethnography has been driven by criticisms of positivist and quantitative approaches that are often perceived as reductionist, making ethnography an alternative by focusing on internal perspective and cultural meaning. This means that stories and experiences are given a special value, as their narratives provide a more nuanced and richer understanding of social realities. Ethnographic research has developed and become an essential methodology in the social sciences because of the key contributions it provides to the process of social understanding. These contributions have shaped the approach and practice of ethnography, making it a valuable tool for understanding specific cultures, communities, and contexts. For example, one can mention the interest in cultural diversity, giving recognition to the desire to understand the variety of ways in which people live, think and organize themselves. This interest in cultural diversity seeks to capture the complexity and richness of human experiences.

It is understood that ethnographic studies promote the development of cultural and social theories, thanks to the fact that ethnographic data allow researchers to formulate and refine theories based on detailed and contextual observations, which sometimes allow the generation of new theories. On the other hand, ethnographic studies contribute to the possibility of satisfying social public policy demands, thanks to the fact that needs can be identified that can be solved through projects and programs based on a deep and contextualized understanding of the communities, in which the ethnography itself can provide qualitative data and recommendations based on lived experience.

For the purposes of the topic addressed, ethnographic research plays a critical role in the community engagement process by providing a deep and meaningful understanding of the culture, beliefs, practices, and social interactions within a specific group. When the ethnographic method is implemented in a process of linking with the community, specifically with the intention of collecting qualitative information, in which participant observation (by the researcher) and the interview with community members are the most used techniques, it is important to consider at least two aspects that are relevant when interacting with the members of a community; The first is to identify if individuals belong to a community, and if the individuals themselves feel part of the community. This identification is vital on the part of the researcher, since this way he will be able to use the time appropriately, preventing the research from obtaining unreal impressions. Therefore, it is necessary to identify their customs, their social activities, the ways they interact with each other, and the way they interpret their social environment.

Direct and extensive participation – on the part of the researcher – in the daily life of the community "implies two apparently contradictory qualities" (Duranti, 2000, p. 126), in which Duranti himself argues that the researcher must have, firstly, the ability to maintain a distance in his emotional and cultural reactions, in which objectivity must always be present; and the other quality is to be empathetic with the members of the community, so that they can have a perspective from the inside.

However, there are difficulties or barriers that must be overcome. Some of the most visible are:

1. Access and trust: It can be difficult to gain the trust of community members, especially if they are reserved or distrustful of strangers. Access to certain groups or spaces within the community can also be a challenge
2. Language and cultural barriers: Effective communication is essential in ethnographic research, and language and cultural barriers can make it difficult for the researcher and the community to understand each other
3. Role of the researcher: It is important for the researcher to establish and maintain an ethical balance in his/her role within the community, avoiding influencing the behavior of the participants or altering the natural patterns of interaction
4. Time and resources: Ethnographic research is a process that requires significant time and resources. It can be difficult to spend enough time building strong community relationships and collecting data comprehensively
5. Cultural sensitivity: It is essential to be aware of the cultural norms and values of the community in which you are researching to avoid misunderstandings or conflicts that may arise due to cultural differences

6. Political and social context: The political and social context in which research is carried out can also influence the relationship with the community, especially in environments where there are tensions or mistrust towards researchers

Facing these difficulties requires a combination of interpersonal skills, cultural sensitivity, flexibility and patience on the part of the researcher, as well as a thoughtful and ethical approach at all times. To all this, the researchers ask themselves the following question: What are the contributions of the ethnographic method in the process of linking with the community? The researchers take on the challenge of answering the question, which is why the following objectives are established: To categorize the contributions offered by the ethnographic method in the process of linking with the community; as specific: 1. Identify the components of the ethnographic method that facilitate the approach with the community, and 2.- Interpret the perception of the participating researcher about the contributions of the ethnographic method in the process of linking with the community.

### **Theoretical Construct**

From this moment on, the epistemic and theoretical bases are configured, raised from the perspective of the researchers. The epistemological perspective (first) allows us to show a vision of the community from the point of view of complexity. It begins with investigating and deepening the contextualization and foundation of the subject under study (Ethnographic Method), through the heuristic arching of documentary sources, for the understanding of the object of study (link with the community).

#### *The ethnographic technique. A story always to tell*

The ethnographic method, with its focus on immersion and participant observation in the natural environment of communities, offers valuable contributions to the construction of effective solutions to social and community problems, allowing the researcher to delve into people's daily lives, understanding their dynamics, needs, and cultural meanings from within. Observing practices that are not always evident or accessible through other methods, such as surveys or interviews, includes rituals, informal interactions, and cultural meanings that community members may not easily verbalize. This ability to capture the unsaid or implicit in human behavior is one of the strengths of ethnography. Such a more nuanced understanding of individuals' behaviors and beliefs, rather than relying solely on quantitative data or superficial reports, is key to designing solutions that are tailored to local reality and truly relevant.

By living with the community, as ethnographers we can detect needs, problems and opportunities that are not evident to the naked eye, but arise from detailed observation and close interaction with local actors. When a relationship of trust and collaboration between researchers and the community is fostered, everyone is actively involved in identifying problems and co-creating solutions, strengthening their agency and empowerment. A point that needs to be centralized refers to recognizing that we live in contexts of globalization and rapid change. Hence the need to pay attention to cultural hybridization. As researchers we must be attentive to how external influences and interactions between different cultures can modify local practices and beliefs. This requires an approach that contemplates both continuity and change in cultural traditions, systematically recording the changes observed in the cultural context over time that may require the creation of a detailed field diary that captures not only observations, but also reflections on how and why changes occur.

#### *Contributions of the ethnographic method. An opportunity to build solutions*

The link between the university and society is a fundamental process for the integral development of the region, as it can improve the quality of life of the intervened population; to contribute to the economic, political and social development of the area; to provide knowledge and technology from the university to society. In this regard, it should be noted that UNESCO emphasizes that universities are key institutions for the social, economic and political development of the regions. These must be strengthened to fulfill their role in improving the quality of life and sustainable human development. [1] Higher education must be relevant and responsive to the needs of society. This implies that universities must not only impart knowledge, but also be actively involved in the resolution of social problems and in the development of public policies. Likewise, the need for universities to generate and disseminate knowledge and technology is emphasized, thus promoting a culture of innovation that benefits society as a whole. This includes establishing bridges between research results and public policies, always considering the plurality of identities that characterize the groups and societies that make up humanity. A source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is so necessary for the human race as biological diversity for living organisms. In this sense, it constitutes the common heritage of humanity and must be recognized and consolidated for the benefit of present and future generations. (p.61) [2]

We must always consider that, in order to reach this goal, they have to go through a series of phases, which we exemplify from an experience carried out by students of the Tourism Career of the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador, Manabí campus [3]:

1. Initial phase (diagnosis): Analysis of the social, economic and environmental reality; collection of information from primary and secondary sources; identification of specific needs and problems of the community. *A catalogue of tourism resources was drawn up as a tool to analyse them and consider possible improvements and benefits through sustainable activities.*
2. Project planning and design: Definition of clear objectives and goals; selection of strategies and activities to achieve the objectives; establishment of impact indicators. *The general objective was to strengthen the administrative and technical capacities of entrepreneurs in the popular and solidarity economy sectors, as well as to identify the benefits of the different communities of a given canton. The selection was based on legally constituted micro-enterprises.*
3. Implementation of the project: Execution of the planned activities; active participation of the community and the university; monitoring and follow-up of the process. *Visits were made and technical sheets were prepared, identifying the main tourist resources.*
4. Evaluation and monitoring: Measurement of the impact of the project; identification of areas for improvement; adjustments and modifications as necessary. *At the end of the course of activities, the students presented the result by delivering copies of printed catalogs, with the tourist resources of the Canton. The teachers accompanied the evolution of the linking project, intervening at the necessary times and evaluating the actions of the young people in their direct interaction with the community and in their proposal to preserve cultural and natural resources.*

And, in this plot, the ethnographic method appears to be indicated to go beyond and seek alternatives to solve problems of different communities:

- By providing valuable information for the design of educational programs tailored to the specific needs of the community by identifying areas of strength and weakness in local education. *Both technical and practical knowledge with the inhabitants of the place, allowed the*

*students to discuss tourism issues, combining science and reality, in an attitude of listening to concerns and needs.*

- The data obtained can be used to influence policy-making that is tailored to local realities. It facilitates the identification of specific needs that require government attention. *Acting in the context of the communities, allowed to know and feel in depth the situations presented by the families of the canton and highlight the natural and cultural wealth, to enhance within a tourist context.*
- The knowledge acquired, on the other hand, constitutes a valuable input to design projects that respond to the specific needs of the community, and to arrive at acceptable and sustainable solutions from a local perspective. *Linkage projects help students understand the projection of a career – such as tourism, for example – to generate new sources of employment by valuing the context with all its natural and heritage wealth.*
- Ethnographic analysis can provide valuable insights into cultural practices and traditions and opens up to the creation of strategies that respect and promote local cultural identity. *The entrepreneurs who responded to the concerns of the students, expressed their gratitude and hopes for the commitment of future professionals who rescue the talent and wealth of a locality. They also highlighted the importance of tourist circuits to achieve sustainable integral development.*

### **Methodological Construct**

The research uses the documentary strategy to support a good part of its arguments, it is of a non-experimental design, since at no time was the situation studied deliberately manipulated. The facts were observed as they were presented in reality and then analyzed, without modifying or influencing the situations studied. Kerlinger and Lee (1979) state that "Non-experimental or ex-post-facto research is any research in which it is impossible to manipulate variables or randomly assign subjects or conditions." (p. 116). In a non-experimental study, no situation is constructed, but existing ones, not intentionally provoked by the researcher, are observed.

As for the type of research, it was field and descriptive. Field since the information was collected directly from the selected social actors, as well as experts in the field. The descriptive level allowed to detail the observed situation, for Hurtado and Toro (2005), the descriptive research aims to accurately describe the event to be studied. To the latter, this type of descriptive research, the diagnosis and the characteristics of the phenomenon under study or the purpose of the researchers are added. Thanks to the above, the research supports its theoretical foundation of the analyses corresponding to the results and findings that arise from the information collection techniques selected by the researchers.

#### *Approach, paradigm and research scenario*

As has been made evident, based on the subject matter under study, the objectives set and the narrative throughout this writing, the research is based on a clear qualitative approach, in which a search to make sense of and discover the meaning of the findings is proposed. This sense or meaning is according to what is provided, through their discourse, by the actors involved in their own particular socio-cultural context, experiential, nuanced by their own experiences.

It is logical to think about the scientific paradigm in which research is immersed. This paradigm is the phenomenological-hermeneutical one. The description of this paradigm is already given. The prominence of hermeneutics is what we wish to highlight, since, thanks to it, the findings

that have been made known in the theoretical construct give a sample of the knowledge that emerges as a result of the instrumentation of the same ethnographic method in an investigation developed from the aspects that guide the process of linking with the community. Positions such as that of Gadamer (1975) and Schütz (1982) on hermeneutics have been revised as a strategy to be followed.

Gadamer's (1975) view of hermeneutics is that:

Understanding expressions also ultimately refers not only to the immediate grasp of what the expression contains, but also to the discovery of the hidden interiority that understanding allows us to realize, so that in the end we also come to know what is hidden. But that means that one understands oneself with it. In this sense, it is valid for all cases that the one who understands understands himself, projects himself towards possibilities of himself. (p. 328)

For his part, Schütz (1974) argues that:

... Social reality has a specific structure of meaning and relevance for the human beings who live, act and think within it. It is these thought goals that determine your behavior by motivating it. In order to grasp this social reality, the objects of thought constructed by the social scientist must be founded on the objects of thought constructed by the common sense of men. (...) Thus, the constructions of the social sciences are, so to speak, second-degree constructions.

The use of the hermeneutical method in this research was developed on the basis of the thought of Schütz (1974). As for the epistemological, ontological and axiological, research has found space to show the importance of each of these philosophical aspects. Epistemologically, an *archaeology* is developed on the most resonant positions in relation to the topic addressed, seeking a theoretical saturation in which the bifurcations are present, to guarantee an adequate triangulation of the theoretical data. From the ontological point of view, the *sense of being* and its importance and impact on the environment, its relevance and commitment to others is observed. The axiological has been represented in the unique and indelible social values of the groups that seek to maintain their history, culture and behavior, regardless of the passage of time, and the changes that it brings with it.

### **Information Collection Techniques**

Making good use of the information collection techniques used by a qualitative approach such as the ethnographic method itself, it should be noted that within the same ethnographic technique there are three very significant instruments such as participant observation, in-depth interviews (commonly applied to one or two key informants), and the so-called *focus group*. which in turn represents an interview -in this case a group- a little more structured from its design and that is applied to groups of informants ranging from six to twelve people.

To understand a little more about these instruments, we turn to prominent references who have put these techniques into practice in their research. Let's start with participant observation. From the perspective of Taylor and Bogdan (1984), participant observation:

It involves the social interaction between the researcher and the informants in the milieu (social scenario, environment or context) of the latter, and during which data are collected in a systematic and non-intrusive way. It involves the selection of the social setting, access to that setting, usually an organization or institution (e.g., a hospital), interaction with gatekeepers (responsible for organizations that favor or allow researcher access to the setting), and with informants, and data collection. (p. 252)

In the words of McKernan (1999), this type of research is based on three pillars: 1.- Participants who are experiencing a problem are the best able to address it in a naturalistic environment; 2.- The behavior of these people is influenced in an important way by their natural environment; and 3.- The qualitative methodology is the most convenient for the study of naturalistic environments, since it is one of its epistemological pillars. (p. 249)

As for the interview, it must be "... flexible, dynamic and is considered non-directive, non-standardised and open, applicable to small groups of people". Rusque (2007, p.18); and as also referred to by Gutiérrez and Denis (2000), the interview allows complementing and verifying the information obtained through observation, it can be casual and informal or structured (p, 135); on the other hand, Vegas-Meléndez (2015) points out that the in-depth interview is:

An instrument that allows obtaining the personal conceptions of the interviewees about the situation object of the research, in the midst of an effort of immersion and reinvestment with intimacy and familiarity to sincerely reconstruct, through discursiveness, the point of view (perspective) of the informant (or relevant actor) in which the research is located and its context. (p. 98)

As for the *focus group*, it represents an interpretative strategy of what is manifested collectively, in which a thematic aspect is traced in which the empirical predominates, being the group the one that gives it a sense of relevant *meaning* by expressing its impressions on what is debated, giving relevance to the finding that arises. There are also interesting positions on this instrument. For example, Martínez-Migueléz (1999) points out that the focus group is the collectivist research method, rather than individualistic, which focuses on the plurality and variety of the attitudes, experiences and beliefs of the participants, and does so in a relatively short space of time. In turn, Vegas-Meléndez (2015) regarding the *focus group*, points out that:

The focus group technique represents a set of knowledge expressed collectively, in which the moderator (researcher) establishes a topic of sensitive interest and binding order with the needs, attitudes and experiences of the participants, in which, in turn, more can be inquired about the knowledge and expertise of the people involved in an environment of full interaction with each other. (p. 43)

The position of Vegas-Meléndez (2015) allows us to determine that the *focus group* technique is an ideal instrument for a qualitative research approach such as the one presented here, in which the search for a collective discursivity allows the empirical meaning of the findings to be sustained. As can be seen, one or more qualitative information collection instruments can be applied within another instrument with the same qualitative approach.

In this research, the social actors are the informants who, in the scientific context, form the conglomerate of informants on which the study will be applied. The group of interviewees was made up of university students who were in their last year of undergraduate studies.

### **Categorization**

As an example, we have selected an article about a project carried out in Manabí, we have established how it was organized in its different phases and we have coded aspects and recurring themes within it, in order to identify patterns. We try to highlight how the application of the ethnographic method allows unique contributions in different contexts with the possibility of findings and solutions that from another perspective would not have been detected. And, just as

important as that fact, the development of solutions and transferability also meant contributions to be considered.

### **Project Phases**

1. **Diagnosis:** Analysis of the tourism reality. Assessment of the current state of local tourism resources and their potential. Identification of problems recognizing challenges such as lack of promotion or deterioration of heritage sites. Gathering information through surveys and interviews with the local community and tourists.
2. **Project Planning and Design:** Direct observation. Visits to tourist sites to assess their condition and attractiveness. Definition of indicators. Set objectives and goals. Define what you want to achieve, how to increase sustainable tourism or improve infrastructure.
3. **Project Implementation:** Execution of activities: Carry out workshops, cultural events, think of gastronomic routes that involve the community. Community participation (students, local organizations and implementing authorities).
4. **Evaluation and Monitoring:** Dissemination of the project. Present results in schools and communities to generate interest. Create brochures or guides on local cultural and gastronomic heritage. Use of social networks, promoting the project through digital platforms to reach a wider audience.

### **Fixed Categories**

- **Community Engagement (VC):** Fostering relationships between students and the local community.
- **Tourism Education Programme (PET):** Develop educational activities on sustainable tourism and heritage.
- **Cultural Awareness (CC):** Activities that promote the importance of cultural heritage among young people.
- **Outreach (D):** Strategies for sharing project findings with a wider audience.
- **Social networks (SR):** Effective use of digital platforms to promote tourism resources.
- **Participant observation (OP):** Involve students in the research and development process of the project.
- **Reflections (R):** Document impressions about the impact of the project on the community.

To truly understand the contributions of the ethnographic method in this project, we made a codification from the report that included several aspects:

### **Thematic Coding**

- **Community Engagement (VC).** Description: Relationships established between the research and the local community. (VC1: Meetings with community leaders. VC2: Joint activities with local groups).
- **Tourism Education Program (PET).** Description: Educational activities related to responsible tourism and the value of gastronomy as a cultural contribution. (PET1: Educational workshops on responsible tourism. PET2: Information campaigns in schools).

- Cultural Awareness (CC). Description: Specific activities aimed at the community in general. (CC1: Cultural events that celebrate local traditions. CC2: School projects on regional gastronomy).

- Disclosure (D). Description: Strategies used to share results and promote social change (D1: Publications in local media about the project. D2: Creation of a blog to document progress. DM3: Production of educational materials distributed in schools and communities).

- Social networks (RS). Description: Use of digital platforms to disseminate the project and its findings (RS1: Creation of visual identity for the project, RS2: Registration to share images of activities)

- Participant observation (OP). Description: Method used to obtain information in context (OP1: Regular attendance at community study group meetings, OP2: Participation in the development of educational programs as observers).

- Personal impressions and reflections (PI). Description: Researchers' thoughts and opinions on the process (IP1: Reflections on community members' acceptance. IP2: Perceptions of the response and collaboration of the community, before the presentation of projects of tourist guides and routes).

This coding allowed us to systematically analyze each component of the project and evaluate its individual and combined contribution to the success of the project. By using this coding, you achieve:

- Compare the relative importance of different project components
- Identify patterns or relationships between different categories
- Track the temporal development of each category
- Perform more accurate statistical analysis
- Make it easier to find and compare relevant information in the future

On the other hand, we understood that this type of proposal in the area of tourism studies not only enhances the resources of the field, but also fosters a sense of belonging and commitment among young people towards their cultural and gastronomic heritage. Table 1 is invited, which shows strata of the interviews conducted with the key informants, and how the referenced categories have emerged.

Discourse	In vivo code	Sub category	Family
<b>INTERVIEWED</b>			
"I feel that this project has brought us closer together as a community. Before, everyone was in their own world, but now we work together to improve our neighborhood."	- Community Engagement (VC)	-New social constructs	Linkage - Research - Innovation
	- Tourism Education Program (PET)	-Community-driven innovation	
"Creating tourist routes has been a great way to showcase our culture and generate income for the community."	- Cultural Awareness (CC)		-Living laboratories
	- Disclosure (D).	-New ways of understanding the community and connecting with it	
"It is important that the new generations know our traditions and value our history."	- Social Media & Communication (RS)		
	- Participant observation (OP).	- Re-enroll citizens in their community role	
"We have used social media to spread information about our project and reach more people."	- Personal impressions and reflections (PI)		
"By participating in this project, I have learned a lot about my community and myself."			
"This has been one of the most rewarding projects I've been involved in. I am proud to be part of this community."			

Table 1. Axial Matrix Categorization of Discoursetable 2

Description
1. Category: Public trust
1.1. Cultural autonomy. Sustain and maintain ancestral customs and historical value
1.1.1. Self. A strengthened knowledge in itself
1.1.2. Internal logical recognition of society as an autonomous and integrated totality
2. Category: Public Value
2.1. Experiences, perspectives and intervention
2.2. Proposals for solutions from the community

Table 2: Description of the Categorization Process

Source: Own elaboration (2024)

### Final Thoughts

The researchers give a final reflection on the research process. Under the aspects or guidelines indicated at the beginning of this work, the research begins a journey of theoretical triangulation that allows conceptualizing, and reinforcing, the narrative about the research that has been carried out in the context of the link with the community, and in which the use of the ethnographic method facilitates the meeting of needs that can be solved through programs and public policies validated by this type of approach.

On the other hand, the ethnographic method with its flexibility adapts to different social groups and makes it possible to adjust approaches and techniques of data collection according to their

particularities. By emphasizing the importance of the perspectives of the community members themselves, situated knowledge is constructed; hence, the interpretations and conclusions are based on the meanings that the social actors give to their experiences, which enriches the validity of the findings. And these, in turn, can bring new perspectives and theories to the field of social sciences, by offering concrete examples that challenge or complement existing theories, enriching the field of study by fostering a continuous dialogue between theory and practice.

Research continues to open spaces for the search for new knowledge.

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