

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at:  
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235678571>

# Ethnography as a Linking Method Between Psychology and Sociology: Research Design

Article *in* Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences · July 2013

DOI: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.06.344

---

CITATION

1

---

READS

36

5 authors, including:



[Celia Marcen](#)

Universidad San Jorge

17 PUBLICATIONS 2 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)



[Fernando Gimeno](#)

University of Zaragoza

91 PUBLICATIONS 156 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)



[Héctor Gutiérrez](#)

Universidad San Jorge

23 PUBLICATIONS 7 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)



[Alfredo Sáenz](#)

Universidad del País Vasco / Euskal He...

21 PUBLICATIONS 25 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)

World Conference on Psychology and Sociology 2012

## Ethnography as a Linking Method Between Psychology and Sociology: Research Design

Celia Marcén <sup>a\*</sup>, Fernando Gimeno <sup>a</sup>, Héctor Gutiérrez <sup>a</sup>, Alfredo Sáenz <sup>a</sup>,  
María Elisa Sánchez <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> *Psychology and Sociology Department, Zaragoza University, C/Dr.Cerrada, 1-5. 50005. Zaragoza (Spain)*

---

### Abstract

Ethnography is one of the most relevant methods in qualitative research, and both psychology and sociology use qualitative methods in their research. This is essential when the purpose is to keep the historical memory of different population in relation to facts or experiences from the past. In a firstly phase, ethnography could expedite study's variables description. Based on the implication of the variable's conceptualization obtained by this first qualitative phase (ethnographic), in subsequent phases of the research, researchers might deepen in the concepts still using descriptive methodology but quantitative, which is typical of both psychology and sociology, for instance, in the quiz methodology. The aim of this study is to show how ethnography can be a relevant method in both psychological and sociologic research when they interact to explain facts and experiences from the past. To illustrate this thought, a study on women who practiced sport in the Spanish dictatorship period (1936-1975) would be shown to explain the variable determination through ethnography methods as life story and in-depth interview. Twenty four Spanish women who practiced sport (in different regions, from different socioeconomic level, either rural or urban residence and between leisure and competitive sport level) were interviewed to accomplish information about their personal and sport life. This material was ethnographic analyzed to categorize it into five dimensions which explain part of the women experiences in that convulsed period. The categories or dimensions derived were aesthetics, culture, nutrition, community and morality, and showed agreements and disagreements in their perception reflecting a complex women world in where sport was a liberating activity as well as relevant experience which has traced in their personalities and has influence not only their but also their progeny life.

© 2013 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd.

Selection and peer review under the responsibility of Prof. Dr. Kobus Maree, University of Pretoria, South Africa.

*Keywords:* Ethnography, Content Analysis, Women, Spanish Dictatorship

---

### 1. Introduction

Ethnography is one of the most relevant methods in qualitative research, and both psychology and sociology use qualitative methods in their research (Hanson, 2008). Its characteristic methodology consists of detailed

---

\* Corresponding author: Celia Marcen. Tel.: +34-976-093-019  
E-mail address [celia.marcen@gmail.com](mailto:celia.marcen@gmail.com)

descriptions of the situations and observable behaviors. It embodies what participants say, their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, thoughts and reflections uttered by themselves instead of their descriptions of themselves (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994). Besides the use of observation and interview as assessment or information collection techniques, ethnography as a paradigm and psychology and sociology as scientific disciplines have in common the fact that they do not separate people's behavior from the context in which it is shown.

Both psychology and sociology may face an investigation problem with observational (exploratory character) or descriptive matters when the aim is to reach a first approach or preliminary study to that investigation problem. In addition, questions and variables of both sciences such as support perceived by men and women, self-perception or stereotypes (among other) that would be shown in this study can be involved in this approach. This appears essential when the purpose is to keep the historical memory of different populations in relation to facts or experiences from the past. At an early stage of approaching to the study object, ethnography could expedite study's variables description.

Based on the implication of the variable's conceptualization obtained by this first qualitative phase (ethnographic), in subsequent phases of the research, researchers might deepen in the concepts still using descriptive methodology but quantitative, which is typical of either psychology and sociology, for instance, in the quiz methodology.

The basic record ways that ethnographic process supplies are often descriptive-narrative writings, which are usually complemented by the use of auxiliary means that enable video recording, photographic documentation, and other material collection and sorting. Based in those records, content techniques can be applied to identify meaning units; these units may form the object variables in a subsequent phase of the research.

## 2. Results

To illustrate this thought, a study about the women who practiced sport in the Spanish dictatorship period (1936-1975) would be shown to explain the variable determination through ethnography methods as life story and in-depth interview. 24 Spanish women who practiced sport (in different regions, from different socioeconomic level, either rural and urban residence and between leisure and competitive sport level) were interviewed to accomplish information about their personal and sport life (the specific sport activities they practiced, their perception in that moment and after all this time). This psycho-sociologic study includes individual as well as group as a whole interest to study, in addition to the study of variables with nature typically psychologist or sociologist.

This material was ethnographically analyzed to categorize it into five dimensions which explain part of the women experiences in that convulsed period. The categories or dimensions derived were aesthetics, culture, nutrition, community and morality, and showed agreements and disagreements in their perception reflecting a complex women world in where sport was a liberating activity as well as relevant experience which has traced in their personalities and has influence not only their but also their progeny life.

The meaning content identified in each of the five previous dimensions are, actually, the variables which define or explain that categories. The systemic process of "content analysis" is an endorsement of the "content validity" of each dimension or category. This heuristic procedure has been particularly claimed in research in physical activity and sport psychology (Martens, 1987; Deward & Horn, 1992) to emphasize the importance of studying subjective experience of individuals, examining how people perceive and read into "their world".

These meaning units have been extract from the individual stories of a small group of women (n=24) and although they are true and valid for each individual case, it is not possible to know the representativeness of those variables (meaning units) in the population which content the sample. Thereby, the study might be continued based on the identified and described variables (meaning units) to test their distribution (frequency, central tendency, dispersion) in a wider population group.

To achieve this, a measurement standard (ex. using a dichotomic or ordinal scale) can be established, designing a self-report type instrument (ex. a questionnaire) proposing to be filled in by more women.

In figure 1 an example of questionnaire based on the aesthetic-corporal dimension in Pujadas et al (2001) study is shown.

Items	Strongly disagree	Strongly agree
I think that women image in the Spanish dictatorship period was a male image, very unfeminine.		
People in general criticized women who practiced sports because of the esthetic of our sport attire.		
In general, people though that women who practiced sports were “butch”.		
The sport clothes we dressed did not look good to our esthetic as women.		
The moral ideas of the period determined that we should use uncomfortable sport clothes.		
I perceived the physical changes in my body caused by sport activity as negative.		
Criticism I received because of practicing sport were a main obstacle for me to endure in sports.		
I felt pretty when practicing sports.		

Figure 1. Aesthetic-corporal dimension I

The filling of a questionnaire similar than the previous one for each of the five dimensions by a wide representative sample of Spanish women who practiced sport in the dictatorship period would allow not only the individual and group item distribution, but also would enable to design a questionnaire concerning the perception of the women sport experience in that period, checking the item psychometric characteristics, internal consistency, reliability, and the factorial structure study of each dimension, and of the five dimensions as a whole, through exploratory and confirmatory factorial analysis techniques (Schreiberg, Stage, King, Nora, & Barlow, 2006).

Thus, the underlying constructs study could be extended proving if the beginning dimensions proposed by the researchers through theoretical criterion could be confirmed by this empiric study.

### 3. Discussion

The exposed foundation shows how ethnography can be a relevant method in either psychological or sociologic research, when they interact to explain facts and experiences from the past.

Moreover, in this study it has been shown how a psycho-sociological research made with a qualitative methodology, and particularly ethnographic, might be the foundation to build a knowledge structure in relation to a research line in order to continue with a quantitative reasoning which would allow the variable measurement and the specific instrument design.

### References

- Atkinson, P., & Hammersley, M. (1994). *Etnografía. Métodos de investigación*. Barcelona: Paidós Básica.
- Deward, A., & Horn, T. S. (1992). A critical analysis of knowledge construction in sport psychology. In T. S. Horn (Ed.), *Advances in sport psychology* (pp. 13-22). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Hanson, B. (2008). Wither qualitative/quantitative?: Grounds for methodological convergence. *Quality & Quantity*, 42, 97–111. doi: 10.1007/s1135-006-9041-7
- Martens, R. (1987). Science, knowledge, and sport psychology. *The Sport Psychologist*, 1, 29-55.

- Pujadas, X., Rosich, M., Abadía, S., Ribalta, D., Figueras, S., Llopis, R., ... Parrilla, J.R. (2011). *Women, sport and dictatorship. The oral memory of sports women under the Franco's regime (1939-1975)*. Memoria de investigación (Ref. 0022/UPR 10/11). Consejo Superior de Deportes (Spain).
- Schreiberg, J., Stage, F., King, J., Nora, A., & Barlow, E. 2006. Reporting structural equation modeling and confirmatory factor analysis results: A review. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 99(6), 323-337.