

**THE SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH METHODOLOGY IN
APPROACHING OF THE THEME: „THE SOCIAL IMPACT
OF THE EXERCISE OF STATE POWER, OF DOMINATION
AND VOLUNTARY SERVITUDE”.
THE SELECTION AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE
METHODS, TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES OF
RESEARCH (IV)**

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ABSTRACT:

THE PRESENT PAPER CONTINUES THE SERIES OF ARTICLES DEVOTED TO SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH METHODOLOGY WITH THE THEME: "THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE EXERCISE OF STATE POWER, OF DOMINATION AND VOLUNTARY SERVITUDE". THIS TIME, THERE ARE PRESENTED THE SELECTING AND ESTABLISHING OF METHODS, TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES OF RESEARCH, THE TYPES OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH SPECIFIC TO SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND SPECIFICALLY THE SOCIAL INVESTIGATION WITH THE MAIN INSTRUMENT OF INVESTIGATION, THAT IS QUESTIONNAIRE. THE EMPIRICAL SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH PERMITS THE DIRECT OBSERVATION OF REALITY, THE APPLICATION OF THE METHODS PRESENTED IN THE WORK CONTENT, A VIEW TO OBTAINING AND THE PROCESSING OF INFORMATION REGARDING THE PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH.

KEYWORDS: SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH, METHOD, TECHNIQUE, PROCEDURE, INVESTIGATION, QUESTIONNAIRE.

**1. THE SELECTING AND ESTABLISHING OF THE METHODS,
TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES OF RESEARCH**

1.1. THE RESEARCH METHODS SELECTED FOR THE SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH based on the criterion of the *strategy of approach* in temporal plan of the analyzed phenomena are of *synchronous, sequential*, respectively *transversal* type. After the reporting mode of the researcher to the phenomena and relationships that are subject of the present study and according to the degree of his intervention in compared with the proposed objectives, such as intervention over the researched phenomena and processes, we will use methods and research techniques such as: *the ascertaining sociological experiment* and *non-*

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experiment. Taking into account the context of the natural deployment of the processes and social phenomena, of the dynamics of power relations between the dominant power body and the dominated majority of society, can be invoked *the natural social experiment*. We do not propose the challenge of some reactions in relation to the social phenomena studied and experimentally researched but the investigation will not be a dull, meaningless one but a penetrating, innovating one that will determine in the future broad thematic debates. Therefore, the experiment will not be and will not remain the limited ascertaining one, but will determine the prospecting of some new directions of research in the approached theme domain or correlated with it. After the extension of the researched units, we will use *the research of extensive type*, favorable to our case and which allows the study of a larger number of units towards the intensive type method that limits our approach and the proposed purpose. The share of the methods used for *collection of data, of exploration and recording* of them in the field, will be superior to those of *processing, analysis and interpretation of the research results*. Among the known basic methods of research in sociology I selected and established that they may correspond to achieve the proposed objectives the following: *the observation, the sociological investigation using the technique of questionnaire and interview*. The data of investigation, resulted from the research work in the field, will be valorized in accordance with the methodology applied to these research methods. We thus achieve a permanent correlation between the theoretical part, related to the main *items* under debate and the actual research with applicability based on some scientific conclusions rational substantiated.

1.2. THE TYPES OF SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

The sociological research relates to the obtaining and processing information objectively verified, for building of the scientific explanations of the facts, phenomena and social processes. In the whole, the scientific research of sociological type has as the fundamental methodological principle the unity between the theoretical and empirical knowledge levels. The practical scientific research can be of laboratory or field.

The empirical sociological research of field work assumes the direct observation of reality, the application of some specific methods of information collection and processing them. This type of research has a preliminary character, it is *exploratory* and when it is of smaller scale or depth the research is a *sociological investigation*.

1.3. THE SOCIOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION it is a research technique specific to sociology and comprises commonly *the sociological questionnaire* and *the interview*. In this case the sociological investigation aims to the knowledge of the factual reality of the way in which it is exercised the state power, of perception, opinions and attitudes of members of different social groups, towards the phenomenon of domination exercised by the state and the level of voluntary obedience of citizens towards the political power and the institutions of state. Also, we are interested in what manner there are perceived and respected the social norms, moral and of positive law. Based on these criteria of social investigation it can be concluded on the social impact of the exercise of power in the state, legitimacy and authority of state institutions, of the real relationship that exists between the dominant and dominated fund, on the reaction and the level of subjecting of individuals towards power. Cumulating and analyzing these data it can anticipate on the future social behavior, of the respective groups, in the relation with the state power and can be avoided, by preventive measures, the civil disobedience and the escalation of violence in society.

The social investigation by means of *the questionnaire* and *interview* to collect the data has a non-experimental character and is based on interrogative modalities to obtain

information. Using this type of research, the researcher has a relatively low degree of control over the analyzed variables. The investigation is not limited only to interrogative modalities and can count on a complex character of this research methods combinatorial with the study of the documents and the scientific observation.

In support of the research theme chosen, *Jacques Antoine* emphasizes on the importance of social investigations for the benefit of governments in power, in order to know the concrete reality of society: "*the sample surveys are increasingly most used as means of information in the service of leadership of public affairs, the national foresight and planning, finally, in scientific research, especially in the human sciences.*"²

In this study we propose, first, to make only a description of the facts and social relations taken into debate, and then, during the entire investigation, or sociological investigation we make use of the research of explanatory type, the aim being the valorization of the relationships between phenomena. We take into account in the development the stages as the research, even being in an early stage, elementary, to be constituted in a sustainable accumulation that could be used in a future fundamental research, taken even by notoriety researchers in the field. For this we pay attention to the three classes of problems of the theory of "normal science" developed by *Thomas Kuhn*, "*the determining of the significant fact, the matching of the facts with the theory and the articulation of the theory*", in the attempt to orient the research to the substantiation of a *paradigm* in the field of the political sociology.

Claude Javeau specifies that "*the investigation is aimed at searching for information related to a given social group (a state, an ethnic group, a region, a social class, etc..) This information must be presented for their analysis under the form of quantifiable results.*"³

A. THE QUESTIONNAIRE OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

The questionnaire of scientific research was defined by several renowned sociologists and psychologists. We mention some of these definitions:

✓ The French psychologist *Pierre Pichot* in the "*Les Testes mentaux*" appreciated the questionnaires as being "*tests composed of a higher or lower number of questions submitted in writing to the subjects and which refer to the opinions, preferences, feelings, interests and their behavior in the precise circumstances.*"

✓ *Roger Mucchielli*, the French philosopher and psycho-sociologist, of Algerian origin, concentrated the definition saying about the questionnaire that "*there can only be considered a list of questions.*"

✓ The American sociologist *Earl Babbie* pronounce on the definition of the questionnaire as "*a method of data collection through the questions put the persons or the question whether they agree or disagree with the statements that represent different points of view.*"

✓ The Romanian sociologist *Septimius Chelcea* is interested in a more comprehensive definition, which was resumed in *the Dictionary of Sociology* (*Zamfir and Vlăsceanu*, 1993): "*The research questionnaire represents a technique and, corresponding, an investigation instrument consisting of a set of written questions and eventually, graphic images, arranged logically and psychologically, which, through the administration by the inquiry operators or through self- administration, determines from the surveyed persons responses that are to be recorded in writing.*"⁴

² Jacques Antoine, *L'Opinion - Techniques L'enquete par sondage*, (Paris: Dunod, 1969), 11

³ Claude Javeau, *L'enquete par questionnaire. Manuel a l'usage du prancicien*, (Bruxelles: Edition de L'Université de Bruxelles, 1970), 1.

⁴ Apud Septimiu, Chelcea, Ioan, Mărginean, Ion, Cauc, *The Sociological Research - Methods and*

A₁ THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE involves the solving of the problems of *content* and *form*. The first problem, the one of content, means the formation of a base of content in the form of indicators, ie questions. There are formulated the questions, there are established what kind of questions will be, closed or open, the answer variants, the attitudinal scales, etc.. In terms of form, here we take into account the order of the questions, the arranging of the questionnaire on the page, the establishment of the recording mode of the answers and others. The sociological questionnaire can be the most used instrument in the sociological investigation and will be made up of a set of questions in writing and logically ordered, which will refer to the issues raised concerning the state, the state power, the way in the state power is exercised, the social attitude and behavior towards the manifestations and pressure from power in relation with the citizens or the social group to which it belongs. The quality of sociological research conducted by the questionnaire depends on the quality of the questions contained therein. The investigation may not be better or worse than the correlative questions and answers contained by the questionnaire.

In elaboration of the sociological questionnaire we will do as follows:

➤ firstly we establish **The theme of investigation:**

"The Social Impact of the Exercise of State Power, of Domination and Voluntary Servitude".

➤ we identify the aspects arising from this theme and will fix the place of every aspect within the investigated domain;

➤ depending on the pursued aspects we will formulate clear and precise questions;

➤ we act at the logic ordering of formulated questions;

➤ once drafted, the questionnaire will be pre-tested, that it will be administered to a small number of persons to answer the questions it contains. From this first direct confrontation with a minimum of sample called to respond to the questionnaire, we will analyze the reaction to the content of the questions, if they are clearly formulated and if they capture the interest or not;

➤ on the basis of the conclusions drawn from the pre-test, the questionnaire is improved. In drafting of the questionnaire we take into account that it should be clear and understandable, on the level of preparation of which are to respond, to arouse the interest of those questioned to complete the questionnaire so that they may involve real from the first question and to find in the content their own turmoil and questions related to the personal relationship with the state and the attitude or reaction to the exercise of state power;

➤ we establish the dimension of the questionnaire and the exact number of questions, depending on the optimal time necessary to complete it and of the places and circumstances in which is requested the completing the questionnaire. We will consider the classical situation of the potential interviewed citizen who is on the street or in store and we will appreciate the time taken to respond should not be more than 10-15 minutes;

➤ we will consider the correctness of the information transmitted by means of the questionnaire that is conditioned on the way in which the respondents are approached, of the confidence which it inspires the selected operators which administering the questionnaire and of their communication abilities. We are careful in selecting the operators, in their training and the seriousness and correctness with which they understand to administer the questionnaire of persons included in the sample.

A₂ THE CLASSIFICATION OF QUESTIONNAIRES

The questionnaires can be classified in terms of form, content and mode of application.

After the form of questions the questionnaires may be with closed questions, with open questions and questionnaires with the two types of questions.

"In the case of *the questionnaires with closed questions* (pre-coded) the choice of responses is beforehand fixed in questionnaire and the response must be within one of the categories set by the researcher. It may offer for choice a scale of answers. There are preferable, however, the dichotomous answers. It is possible that the answers to the questions should be included even in the questionnaire like alternative or selective questions, multiple pre-coded. In the latter it must appear, as far as possible, all the answer variants. The advantages of this type of questionnaire are related to the possibility of applying some questionnaires with multiple *items*, ensure the anonymity of the respondent and facilitate the statistical analysis of the answers.

The questionnaires with open questions, free or post-coded, let the respondents the possibility of freedom of an individualized statement of the responses. They can bring more knowledge but make

it difficult the codification due to the shape and length of the answers. However, it is avoided the risk of suggestibility. This first classification criterion refers to the amount of information and questionnaires may be with a single theme (*special questionnaires*) and with multiple themes (*omnibus questionnaires*). The first is rarely used given the complexity of social phenomena which requires the concomitant research of several determining factors. The frequency of use and the superiority of the omnibus questionnaires result from the greater amount of information provided but especially from the possibility to surprise the interactions and conditioning of the analyzed factors. After the content of information, the questionnaires may be *of factual data*, of administrative type, little used in the investigation of social phenomena, and *opinion questionnaires* through which can be studied best the attitudes, the motivations, the interests, the subjective emotions, even the feelings that can be expressed through an opinion that means much more.

The mode of application in the field constitutes the third criterion for the classification of questionnaires. The questionnaires can be *administered* by the investigation operators or can be *self-administered*. The administration of questionnaires constitutes a technique and an art

at the same time. The formation of the investigation operators as professionals and their careful training before each investigation are necessarily required. These must respect a series of technical rules and must be done a validation control of how it is applied the questionnaire, the investigation operators being warned about this control." ⁵

In our case, the researcher is interested under this aspect of the reflection in the individuals consciousness of the social reality, the relationships between the power and the citizen, between the dominant factor and the subject dominated. What we are interested, and stimulate us at the same time, is that this type of questionnaire does not only offer opinions, but makes it possible the perception of the intensity of some attitudes, fact which opens wide the possibility of the ascertainment over the dynamics of social phenomena being in the study of sociological research.

Mainly, we will opt for the first type of administration because it is the most often used modality for collecting the information, ensures the representativeness of the sample and furthermore we can also benefit from some observation data provided in the work reports of

⁵ Septimiu Chelcea, *The Sociological Research Methodology, The Quantitative and Qualitative Methods*, (Bucharest: Economic Publishing House, 2001), 219.

the investigation operators. Without using, for understandable reasons, of the postal questionnaires or published in newspapers and magazines, we use, to a lesser extent, by the self-administered questionnaires through the collective self-administration on a limited sample of age (18-35 years) in the students collectives of the "Constantin Brancusi" University from Târgu-Jiu and using the social network *Facebook*, and *E-mail*.

A₃ THE STRUCTURE OF QUESTIONNAIRES

The questions in the questionnaire represents the elements of the structure of questionnaire. The relationship between these elements give the assembly configuration and any modification which occurred, either through the replacement of one or more questions or even of their content, leads to changes in the content of the whole, which must be unitary. Also, it must exist in this structure a sliding scale of the questions depending on the time of the investigation. The questions will be in order: *introductory, of contact, of passing, filter questions, bifurcated, of control and of identification*. It is recommended that the first question to be closed such as *Yes-No*. The contact questions have the role of captivate the attention and aimed at problems related to the topic and over which currently people are asking questions. According to the sociologist *Septimiu Chelcea* 's opinion, the questionnaires must not start with the identification questions, that can determine from the beginning an abstention regarding some personal data and deviate the natural course of the investigation. The responses are marked by circling the code figure appropriate the variant of response. The questions of passing prepare in the structure of questionnaire the appearance of a new question that changes the framework of approach. The questionnaire takes the appearance of a string of inter-conditioned stimuli. There can be introduced suggestive drawings or graphic elements, lines, borders, etc. The filter questions have the purpose of quality control and thoroughness of the responses stopping, possibly, the passing of some subjects to the following questions.

For example: *Did you watch any TV material or debate about the exercise of state power, domination or voluntary servitude?*

1. *Yes* 2. *No* 3. *I do not remember*. For those who answer *yes* move to the following question:

Do you think this watched material had any contribution as regards to the awareness of the submission relationship of the citizen towards the state power?

1. *Yes* 2. *No* 3. *Only in a small part*.

For those who answered to the first question with *No* or *I do not remember* the next question will be different, nonessential or for compromise:

Could you indicate a different kind of show and the TV station?

If we are interested in opinions "pros" and "cons" of the investigated ones, we can construct bifurcated questions.

For example:

Do you voluntarily and unconditionally obey to the state power? Yes or No?

If the answer is *Yes*, then it follows the question:

1.1. *Do you accept even the actions of power that you consider unjust?*

If the answer is *No*, it follows a different question:

1.2. *Do you find that it is necessary to show your indignation and disagreement? Yes or No?*

A4 THE STRUCTURING TECHNIQUES OF QUESTIONNAIRES

a) *The funnelling technique* or of funnel firstly assumes the formulation of an open question, concerning a general interest, and then the subject is asked a particular question related to its own action, which will be a closed question.

It can be highlighted thus if there is a correlation between the general statements related to a social phenomenon and open behavior, directly and individually.

For example:

1. *Do you agree with the increase of penalties for the offenses referred currently by the Penal Code?* and immediately the following question:

2. *If you have the opportunity, would you vote for more severe coercive measures?*

b) *The reversed funnelling technique* or of the overturned funnel concerns a reverse procedure. It starts with a question which aimed at the particular followed by a question regarding the same issue, this time, of public interest.

For example:

1. *In what concerned you, are you satisfied with the activity of the local police?*

2. *But the measures undertaken by the Ministry of Internal Affairs?*

The length of the questionnaire is related to the number of questions and the time needed to fill the responses. *Septimiu Chelcea* commonly recommends 25-50 questions that would not get tired neither the investigation operator nor the respondent. Personally, I believe that we must not exceed the minimum indicated, a number of *items* 25 being sufficient to clarify matters being investigated.

The design of questionnaires or the layout of the questions must consider the technical aspects of printing and the aspect of image, aesthetic. The printing can be done on both pages. The ordination of questions should permit an identification of the themes from the questionnaire. The layout needs to respond to some functional necessities. The cassettes with the codes will be ordered to the right, in the same part of the questionnaire, right next to question or answer. The framing in a pleasant border of the questionnaire leaves the impression of ordering and well done thing.

A5 THE FORMULATING OF THE QUESTIONS

Before of the formulating of the questions, the research theme or the object of the investigations defined theoretically will be translated into an *operational definition*. In indicators there are not included the introductory or passing questions. Terms such as of *state power, domination* and *voluntary servitude* requires an operational definition through "the translation" of the theoretical concepts known and generally accepted in the specialty literature. Is it possible to notice some important aspects, not included or included lapidary in the definition of these terms, over which we should come back through an operational definition that should require a validation in this sense along with the validation itself of the analyzed and researched social phenomenon or process.

We will respect the rule that indicates the use of the short, clear and concise questions. There are preferable and better understood the positive questions. It is understandable that we avoid the negative questions that may entangle the interlocutor and complicate the coding of the answers.

"The degree of abstraction of questions must be low to medium and must correspond to the level of knowledge and training of those questioned or interviewed. The questions must be currently, the product of the percentage of the positive responses and of the negative ones must be at maximum.

- 1) $(p_+ \times p_-)$ to be *maximum*, that is it should be close to $\left(\frac{100-p_0}{2}\right)^2$ where the value p_+ is the percentage of positive responses and p_- is the percentage of negative responses.
- 2) p_0 is the percentage of those without opinion to a trichotomy question and should be minimum.

The formula for calculating of the current degree for each question is:

$$A = \sqrt{\frac{(p_+ \times p_-)}{p_0^2}}$$

The majority opinion is calculated according to the formula:

$$M = \frac{(p_+ - p_-) \times (100 - p_0)}{100} \quad \text{where M is the majority opinion.}^6$$

Claude Jevéau in "*Leçons de sociologie*" believes as in the questionnaires should be included various tests even the inclusion of some scales of "thermometer" type.⁷

Taking over the model I configured the following scale, one of direct type, which should put in evidence the perception at the social level of the degree of submission to the state power in the following:

Fig ... no.

The scale of thermometer type

For example:

With the help of adjacent scale please indicate your level of perception of obedience to the state power!

Model scale: -5-4-3-2-1 0 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5

Is this submission voluntary one? Yes / No / I do not know

The questionnaire has a preamble briefly indicating the purpose or scientific finality, a necessary minimum of guidance on the correct completion, guarantees on confidentiality, the importance of the act required to the respondents and an appeal to sincerity and good faith.

The questions from the questionnaire are different and inserted in the order according to several criteria. After the role they have in the questionnaire, the questions will be:

- *questions of partial identification* through which is required to the questioned to mention gender, age, family status, political or not involved, education, profession, occupation, area of residence (rural or urban), to determine the social group to which belongs that respondent;

- *introductory questions* meant to formalize the respondent with the subject of the investigation and to arouse his interest;

Example: 1. *Do you think that the Romanian state represents your interests ? Yes, No, To a great extent, To a little extent, Insufficient.*

- *questions of passing* to the actual content of the questionnaire;

Example: 2. *Is Romania a state of law in which the governing are obeying the laws just like the citizens? Yes, No, I do not know.*

- *filter questions* which do not permit the passing to the next questions if it doesn't answer to the previous question;

Example: 3. *Do you consider yourself a free man? Yes or No?*

⁶ Septimiu Chelcea, *The Sociological Research Methodology*...,243.

⁷ Claude Jevéau, *Leçons de sociologie*, (Paris: Meridiens Klincksieck, 1988), 81.

Example: 4. Can there be freedom without justice? Yes or No?

- *bifurcated questions* that directs to the following questions depending on the answer given to this question;

Example: 5. *Can you appreciate that a law is unjust? Yes or No?*

If the answer is "Yes" then how will you react in a situation where you are subject to such a law and affects you directly?

Do you unconditionally submit? Yes or No?

Do you appeal to the court so that you get justice? Yes or No?

Do not submit to the law, do you create a current of opinion or do you revolt? Yes or No?

- *control questions* with the role of checking whether the respondent understood the meaning of the previous questions and that the answers given so far are sincere;

Example: 6. *Do you understand clearly the meaning of the preceding questions? Yes or No?*

Do you belong to the administrative apparatus of power? Yes or No?

Such questions will be always placed towards the end of the questionnaire explaining and justifying the need of a survey that should reflect a real state of fact existing at the society level or group to which the respondent belongs.

After the form of questions and the possibilities of response we will be able to use:

- *standard or closed questions* (yes, no, do not know, much, very much, little, very little, not at all).

Example: 7. *Do you think that the rules of law in Romania are imperative in excess? Yes, No, I do not know.*

Example: 8. *Do you contest the role of political power in society? Yes, No, I do not know.*

- *questions which contain possible answers;*

Example: 9. *What attitude or reaction do you have towards the exercise of state power in a discretionary manner, the abusive application of the law and the excess of power? Are you revolted? Do you submit from habit? Are you indifferent? Do you resign yourself?*

- *open questions* that enable the respondent to formulate himself the answer and give his own explanations.

Example: 10. *Do you submit to the state power and the laws edicted by this voluntarily or by coercion, for fear of a punitive action of the state institutions? Can you explain?*

We will avoid the rhetorical questions of any kind.

We use depending on the content of the targeted information *opinion questionnaires* and not *questionnaires of factual data*. In the case of the chosen theme, the strict statistical data do not interest but the perception at the social level, the opinion, the attitude and the manifestation of the social groups and society, in general, in relation to the state power. After the extent and diversity of the collected information, this type of questionnaire is a *special* one, as it is classified in the sociological research methodology. *The opinion questionnaires* have as purpose in our case the early identification of a latent conflict situation which doesn't manifest directly but it exists potentially at the mental structures level of group, from where it may break out with power and violence. Such a questionnaire makes the radiography of the unseen part of a society that apparently is equilibrated, peaceful and subject to state power. The revolts of crowds and the revolutions are decisive moments in which there flow at sight, firmly, the accumulations of some systematic and repeated suppressions due primarily to an imposed servitude which takes a visible form distorted and false of what we call *voluntary servitude*. A well designed and applied opinion questionnaire is the reliable means of achieving successfully of the *opinion poll*. Known French sociologists consider that "*the*

*opinion poll collects, starting from a representative sample, standardized information, therefore comparable, numerous and generalized one."*⁸

The success of the investigation, by the use with skill and efficiency of the opinion questionnaire, is conditioned decisively on how in which it is realized the sampling and the representative character of the sample.

⁸ Nicolas et Francois, Berthier, *Le sondage d'opinion*, (Paris: Bordo, 1981), 147.

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