

THE SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH METHODOLOGY IN APPROACHING OF THE THEME: "THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF DOMINATION AND VOLUNTARY SERVITUDE." THE RESEARCH PROJECT (II)

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ABSTRACT:

THIS PRESENTATION IS A NATURAL CONTINUATION OF THE THEME FROM THE PREVIOUS ARTICLE OF THIS MAGAZINE AND WHICH OPENS A NOVELTY APPROACH OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH METHODOLOGY IN ADDRESSING THE THEME: "THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF DOMINATION AND VOLUNTARY SERVITUDE." THE RESEARCH PROJECT, RESPECTIVELY THE PLAN OR THE SCENARIO OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH OPENS THE RESEARCH PROCESS THAT WILL TAKE PLACE IN SEVERAL STAGES. THE ESTABLISHED RESEARCH THEME IS THE SUBJECT OF CONCERNS REGARDING THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN SOCIETY. ALONGSIDE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE RESEARCH THEME AND THE SOCIAL PROBLEM, THE DELIMITATION THE OBJECT OF RESEARCH, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PURPOSE AND CONCRETE OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH, THE GREATEST ATTENTION IS GIVEN TO THE ELABORATION OF GENERAL AND WORKING HYPOTHESES TO WHICH IT IS LINKED THE WHOLE PERSPECTIVE MATTER OF SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND VALIDATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS. ALL THESE MOTIVATE THE WHOLE EFFORT OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH.

KEY WORDS: RESEARCH, METHODOLOGY, PROJECT, THEME, PURPOSE, OBJECTIVE, HYPOTHESES, DOMINATION, VOLUNTARY SERVITUDE

1. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE RESEARCH THEME AND THE SOCIAL PROBLEM

In the preparation stage of the research it is resolved some important matters on which depends the whole course of the subsequent research, namely: there are established the research objectives, the working methods, the timing, the necessary staff and technical means, the cost. In the preparation stage there are envisaged the theoretical, methodological aspects and those related to the organization and effective conduct of the empirical research.

In the achieving of a practical scientific research it should be completed three major moments:

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- a) the *preparation of research*,
- b) the *performing itself of the empirical study through the action of gathering of the information* and
- c) the *completion stage of scientific research through the validation, processing and interpretation of data*.

The beginning of research implies some distinct but unitary stages. In brief these include:

- 1) "The drafting of the plan or scenario of the concrete investigation;
- 2) Pre-investigation, which aimed at testing the methods and instruments of effective working through the collection of some «evidence» regarding the field dates;
- 3) The primary data processing and systematization;
- 4) The interpretation of thus obtained data, the establishment of some correlations and editing of the research report concerning the synthesis of data and appreciations arising in the first phase of the research.

The plan or the scenario of the scientific research will comprise at least the following programmatic landmarks:

- 1) The formulation of the research theme;
- 2) The establishment purpose and the objectives of the research;
- 3) The delimitation of the research universe;
- 4) The choosing of sampling techniques (by means of quotas or at random) and the ensuring of the representativeness of the sample;
- 5) The establishment of the research methods and techniques;
- 6) The operationalization of the concepts through their breakdown on the basis of a system of indicators;
- 7) The formulation of working hypotheses (affirmative or negative sentences, or formulations such as "if ... then" and "the ... the";
- 8) The organization of the work teams, the establishment of place and period of the field research, cost estimation and others." ²

The research theme is the subject of some older personal preoccupations on the role of the state in society. Very little approached in the specialized literature, the theme of the social impact of the state power exercise does difficult and arduous, such an endeavor, especially when it comes to assessing the role in the power equation of two important determinants of the social will which are *the domination and voluntary servitude*. The chosen theme can be considered innovative, not so through the content, which will not be an exhaustive one, but mainly by launching a challenging topic that brings to the surface a real social situation unsearched cautiously, appealing to repeated subterfuges, regardless of the political regime and being manifestly avoided or discouraged. Surprisingly, the stated research theme comes even in the support of power, regardless of the form of the state power, the totalitarian or democratic one, of the power in general, who wants, as any power structure, to dominate and take control over society and submissive individuals. Then, why the power is afraid of?! The exercise of power within the limits set by law should bring to the state power the support of the citizens and submission to the law consciously as a necessity of the proper functioning of the social system. But it is not so! The citizenship is by legal and factual a *submission*, which gives the meaning of synonyms of the two lexical values. But not about the citizenship we wish to orientate our sociological research but to obedience to the state power. Is it a natural or forced social attitude, determined by the coercion force of the state? The domination as the submission must know certain limits.

² Dumitru Otovescu, *Sociologie generală*, ediția a V-a, (Editura Beladi, Craiova, 2009), 84-86

The docility, I was saying, is favorable to power. The obedience in excess can be an immoral criterion to promote non-values in society, and if the society also comes to appreciate such pseudo-values, then, the society itself is a sick one. Which is the limit up to which the population of a state, the society as a whole must unconditionally obey the power which reaches systematically to violate the laws which are given in order to be respected by it, too? Here only are a few questions to which tries to answer our study of sociological research. The starting point for the realization of such an investigation is the structure of processes and relations considered object of his scientific analysis. We appreciate that the research project is motivated and that it starts from a real problematic, even if it is not visible and it is related to the hidden springs of the social will. We are launching hypothetical the idea that this real situation from the society can represent or become a *social problem* which needs to be explained through scientific research and it wants to be solved in conditions provided by law, by peaceful measures and negotiations, to avoid the escalation of violence, revolts or even a different kind of revolution. Exact knowledge of the situation can be beneficial for power if this will take into account in time a given situation which can be potentially conflictual. Thus, the scientific analysis is imposed as one of the modalities for detecting the causes that generate and maintain such a critical situation. From another point of view, the sociological research may reveal efficient ways of action which promote certain stimulatory factors in order to maintain in society of a balance of power tendencies between the dominant and dominated, between power and those who obey power. A correct assessment of the social fact became social problem can make possible to generalize some beneficial actions and their support in the future. The influences and determinations at the social level of the relationship of power and subordination produced, in our case, by psycho-social and political factors, can not always be perceived by the common knowledge. This is why the power should not remain indifferent to such an approach of the scientific research aimed to provide further the existence at the helm of society destinies. We consider here, by this formulation, those actions and changes in attitudes and behavior of power that have a special meaning and are absolutely necessary to achieve the objectives and programs of action, to satisfy the vital and fundamental interests of human groups involved in the plan of scientific research and of society in general. It does not get the wrong idea. We will not give solutions to power for a harsher political of domination with minimal or negligible risks. Our approach would be as immoral as that of instigation to revolt of the disadvantaged population, subject to a law that does not represent their interests and that forces them to live in poverty at subsistence limit, in a total obedience, as a way of existence imposed on its entire life. From such a perspective, when life itself becomes a concentrationary universe, the life of individuals and oppressed social groups is not a landmark or a supreme value. One of the solutions to get out of such a limit existential universe, on which *Nicolae Steinhardt* remembers it in his *Journal*, is the one proposed by *Winston Churchill* and *Vladimir Bukovsky* for which "*the bravery accompanied by a rabid joy*" easily lead to assuming the risk of a physical death with the noble purpose of a future extrication of the group and a spiritual unchaining of those who survive.

2. THE DELIMITATION OF THE RESEARCH OBJECT

The practical research can not be imagined without a theoretical basis on which to rely. The delimitation of the research object is achieved according to the purpose of the investigation and the research methodology. In our case, the research theme is not imposed by a specific institution interested in such a study of investigation, but derives naturally from the previous concerns of the author, which justifies a high degree of independence

both in the kind of approach and the choice of methods which considers to be the most suitable for the successful completion of scientific research and fulfillment of the intended purpose. So, we do not have a beneficiary which puts conditions but no a sponsor, unfortunately. Therefore, the material and pecuniary resources that we provide will be limited, fact that will not negatively influence the result of the investigation. For these reasons we compensate the quantitative material shortcomings with a quality work being motivated by the expectation of the final results in such a study that we consider, at least in Romania, pioneering through the theme approached. The allotted time will be judiciously divided and used between the fieldwork and processing work.

Raymond Boudon distinguishes three categories of sociological problems which may be the subject of an investigation:

- a) *The study of the global societies*; these can be investigated either in terms of social changes (as *Emile Durkheim* and *Max Weber* did) or in terms of the social system itself (as in the cases of *Talcott Parsons* and *George Murdock*);
- b) *The study of the social segments*, respectively of the individuals in the concrete social context where they are located (is the case of *Samuel Stouffer's* research);
- c) *The study of natural units, groups, institutions, communities* (such as the researches of *Michel Crozier*).

Septimiu Chelcea adds to this list of sociological problems, that may be the subject of scientific investigation, two additional classes of problems:

- d) *The study of current phenomena*, such as the population adaptation to work in small and medium enterprises in rural and urban areas, the youth integration, and so on;
- e) *The study of the social structure, mobility and social homogeneity as well as of the system of statuses and social roles*.

Analyzing the research theme from the perspective of the five categories of sociological problems, already known, I have found that not to be classed entirely in none of these categories, which prompted us to launch a sixth category:

- f) *The study of power relations, of super-ordination and subordination in the state societies*.

This study makes the transition between the classical sociological scientific study and scientific study in the field of political sociology.

3. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PURPOSE AND CONCRETE OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The rationalization and optimizing of actions and social relations, management strategies of state power, the awareness at the level of social groups and macro-groups, of the real and concrete relationship between power and these, of the dominant-dominated relationship and valences of servitude, from the *sacred* one till the *voluntary* one, there are only some of the specific objectives of the investigation which it proposes this sociological research project. We are interested in our research, in the dimensional analysis of the concepts used and those that may occur as a novelty during the research, both nominal definitions and operational definitions.

The nominal definition is linguistic one using specialized lexical terms and consists of the explanation and the definition of an unknown term through and using the known terms. The nominal definition of new terms, unknown, it can only be the final result of the sociological research and it can sign up as a qualitative element and moment of scientific knowledge. The social dynamics involves permanent changes or modifications in state of

processes and social relations that require periodically *paradigm shifts*. The social decisions should be scientifically sound and the action and the scientific level can only be the actual ones. At present the solutions and decisions taken by the governments and state power are generally not correspond to the spirit of the age. The desuetude comes not only from the application of obsolete methods or ignoring of the application of the latest results of scientific research and from a certain backwardness of the spirit and practice of scientific research to which is no longer given adequate importance. There isn't, because of the above, a rationalization platform of social action, of modeling of behaviors and attitudes of individuals and human groups and this is directly related to the purpose and the objectives of scientific research of the present project. Using those known, from the purchases made over time in the previous research until now, in the field of study of the thesis, we will go through the reverse way from theory to social practice, at the concrete reality. Some terms such as the *voluntary servitude* are loosely defined and never tried a framing of the concepts as manifestations of a particular psychosocial importance. We take into account some of the important determinants of the social will. The inverse action on which I recalled it is concretely related to nominal definition and can only be achieved through the *operational definition*. It is what can be found in the specialized literature under different names such as "*the operationalization of concepts*" or "*construction of variables*" but having the same meaning.

The operational definition consists in prescription of empirical operations necessary for the transition from theory to concrete research. By incorporating the operational definition in the context of the scientific research it is ensured the transition from the theoretical level to the empirical through a systematic procedure of indicating of the measurement operations that follows to be performed on the researched field".³

4. THE ELABORATION OF THE GENERAL AND WORKING HYPOTHESES

According to *Traian Rotariu*, the hypotheses are fragments of the explanatory model that we adopt in relation to the mentioned phenomenon. "Even if an investigation has a descriptive character, it is based on a system of relationships that are supposed to govern entirely the phenomena researched. Any question in the survey originates in such a supposition about the nature of social phenomena researched and the relationships between them. The whole design of an investigation is based on the hypotheses adopted system."⁴ In *L'enquête par questionnaire*, *Claude Javeau* specifies that "*only a system of working hypotheses clearly stated and closely related to the research objective allows us to achieve the proposed scientific objectives.*"⁵

The analysis of hypotheses in the empirical sociological researches implies:

- a) *The definition of hypothesis*
- b) *The elaboration of empirical hypotheses*
- c) *The validation of hypotheses*

The hypotheses should not be confused with the assumptions or suspicions. The assumption is a statement that will not be confronted with the reality, so it doesn't aim to its validation and the suspicion is encountered only at the level of common knowledge,

³ Ion Cauc, Beatrice Manu, Daniela Pârlea, Laura Goran, *Metodologia cercetării sociologice, Metode și tehnici de cercetare*, Ediția a II-a, (Editura Fundației România de Măine, București, 2004), 21

⁴ Traian Rotariu, Petru Iluț, *Ancheta sociologică și sondajul de opinie*, (Editura Polirom, Iași, 1997), 177

⁵ Claude Javeau, *L'enquête par questionnaire. Manuel à l'usage du praticien*, (Edition de l'Université de Bruxelles, Bruxelles, 1990), 41

where it can be considered a hypothesis of such knowledge. Using the definition given by *Johan Galtung*, who considers the hypothesis as a "*sentence about the kind in which a set of units S is distributed in a space of variables $x_1, x_2, x_3, \dots, x_n$* ", we can conclude that in the structure of hypothesis it is found a *unit* (state, society, social group, institution), a *variable* (hierarchy, exercise of state power, cohesion, social solidarity, domination and servitude) and a *set of values of the variables* (insignificant, low, low to medium, medium, growing, medium to high, high, exceptional, maximum, and other values that emphasize the position on the barometric scale of the variables). Using these data we will be able to formulate more working hypotheses that will highlight even more clearly the approach and purpose of this thesis and sociological research as a whole. In the formulation of hypotheses we will consider a set of unverified assumptions, as follows:

- a) *The level of domination is higher, the level of voluntary servitude and obedience of the social groups and individuals is lower, with other words, at a high level of power domination that ascends to maximum, the society responds with a high degree of insubordination which tends toward forms of social revolt and even revolution.*
- b) *The voluntary servitude is a manifestation of tacit acceptance of a state of domination "tolerable" within certain limits. Over these limits is born the cohesion and social solidarity against the dominating, dictatorial or totalitarian state power.*
- c) *The excessive domination and discretionary power are not only specific characteristics of totalitarian, fascist or socialist regimes, where the state politics is one of force and dictate, but can be found, in different forms, and in other types of political regime, even so-called democratic ones.*
- d) *The voluntary servitude, in response to the dominance of state power, can be a factor of balance and social stability, if the power does not abuse this determinant of the social will.*

"Up to demonstrate the validity of these assumptions, the advanced hypotheses remain, as they were defined, in general, by *Fred Kerlinger*, just *conjectural* enunciations about the relationship between two or more variables. Only by testing, which can be done through scientific research, through the analysis of data and confrontation with the reality, the hypotheses can be checked. The hypotheses into the human, social and behavioral sciences, must not contain contradictory elements, ie they should internally be coherent. Being an enunciation with the character of probability, *the hypothesis* has a reflected content about the inter-conditioning and causality of facts, phenomena and social and human processes." ⁶

The hypotheses may be *theoretical hypotheses and working hypotheses*. The theoretical hypotheses are indirectly testable and the working hypotheses are directly testable. Considering the sociological theory a system of hypotheses with a level of maximum generality, we can deduce hypotheses with intermediate level and from these working hypotheses directly testable through the empirical research. *The analogy* represents, also, a source for new hypotheses. According to *Steven Miller*, in the quantitative researches the hypotheses are formulated *a priori* while in the qualitative ones *a posteriori*.

The value of the experiment depends on the novelty and authenticity of the hypothesis or working hypotheses. That is why, we opted from the beginning to formulate some original working hypotheses which would arouse interest and motivate the empirical research

⁶ Septimiu Chelcea, *Metodologia cercetării sociologice, Metode cantitative și calitative*, (București: Editura Economică, 2001), 75

effort. *The hypothesis* is not a phantasmagoria but is formulated on the basis of existing experimental data at one time or on the basis of intuition, it is a supposition stated on the basis of known facts, about the relationship between certain phenomena or connections between them and the inner causes which they determine, in the present case the relationship between the socio-political relationship of domination and the supportability at the level of social groups.

For the beginning, in the outlining of the research project we start from the following five *hypotheses*:

Hypothesis 1: *If the state power is exercised dictatorial, even if it is apparently ensured a democratic framework, then the propitious premises are created for the fall of the regime, phenomenon which has repercussions throughout the social system.*

Hypothesis 2: *If the domination in the exercise of the state power is excessive while the abuse of power and the discretionary power are manifested unlimited in the power structures, then there are perturbed to the same extent the equilibrium, social relations and social progress.*

Hypothesis 3: *If domination in the exercise of the state power tends to record increasing values then the voluntary servitude as a form of benevolent submission towards the state power, decreases in proportion tending to zero.*

Hypothesis 4: *The level of voluntary servitude is more reduced, the instability of power mechanism is higher and vice versa, the level of servitude is higher, the social and power system stability rise.*

Hypothesis 5: *If the determinant of social will, which is the voluntary servitude, knows a regressive tendency to a minimum, then the zero point on the scale of voluntary servitude represents **the threshold of revolt.***

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