

Academic Prof. Dr. sc. Dževad Termiz

# **FUNDAMENTALS OF THE METHODOLOGY OF SOCIAL WORK SCIENCE**

Sarajevo, 2024



**Author:**

Academic Prof. Dr. sc. Dževad Termiz  
FUNDAMENTALS OF THE METHODOLOGY  
OF SOCIAL WORK SCIENCE

**Reviewer:**

Academic Prof. Dr. sc. Neđo Danilović  
Prof.dr.sc. Aleksandar Halmi

**Proofreader and editor:**

M.A. Arnela Hajdarević  
M.A. Alen Mušović

**Publisher:**

Univerzitet u Sarajevu  
Fakultet Politickih Nauka  
Skenderija 72, Sarajevo  
Medjunarodno Udruženje Metodologa Društvenih Nauka  
Sindjeliceva 36, Beograd

**For the publisher:**

Prof. Dr. sc. Sead Turčalo  
Prof. Dr. sc. Dragan Tančić

**DTP:**

M.A. Alen Mušović

**Translator:**

M.A. Arnela Hajdarević

CIP - Cataloguing in Publication

National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo

According to the opinion of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports number: 03-15-4306/01 dated July 23, 2001, the book "Fundamentals of Methodology in Social Work" is exempt from the tax on the sale of products and services.



# **GRATITUDE**

I wish to express special gratitude  
to esteemed colleague Mr. Alen Mušović  
for his contribution to the realization of the Project.



# CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTORY NOTE.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>I INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>4</b>
1. CONCEPT, SUBJECT, AND COMPONENTS OF METHODOLOGY.....	4
1.1 CONCEPT OF METHODOLOGY .....	4
1.2 SUBJECT OF METHODOLOGY .....	7
1.3 CONSTITUENT PARTS OF METHODOLOGY .....	8
2. THE CONCEPT AND SUBJECT OF METHODOLOGY.....	10
3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN METHODOLOGY AND METHODOLOGY IN SOCIAL WORK.....	15
4. CLASSIFICATION OF METHODOLOGIES .....	18
5. SCIENTIFIC METHOD - CONCEPT AND STRUCTURE.....	20
6. CLASSIFICATION OF METHODS.....	25
7. RESEARCH - CONCEPT AND CLASSIFICATION.....	28
7.1 CONCEPT OF RESEARCH.....	28
7.2 THE STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS.....	30
7.3 CLASSIFICATION OF RESEARCH .....	35
8. ROLE AND TASKS OF METHODOLOGY, METHODS, AND RESEARCH IN SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE.....	43
8.1 ROLE AND TASKS OF METHODOLOGY IN SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE.....	43
8.2 THE ROLE AND TASKS OF METHODS.....	44
8.3 THE ROLE AND TASKS OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH.....	45

## **II SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY IN SOCIAL WORK ..... 48**

1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY IN SOCIAL SCIENCES .....	51
1.1 SOME QUESTIONS OF THE SUBJECT MATTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH METHODOLOGY.....	51
1.2. IMPORTANT PROVISIONS OF THE METHODOLOGY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES .....	57
2. METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH IN SOCIAL WORK .....	63
2.1 KEY ISSUES IN IDENTIFYING AND DEFINING THE SUBJECT OF SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH.....	66
2.2 BASIC ESSENTIAL SPECIFICITIES OF THE SPECIAL METHODOLOGY OF SOCIAL WORK SCIENCE.....	79
3. COMPARISON OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY IN SOCIAL SCIENCES AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY IN SOCIAL WORK.....	83

## **III SPECIFICITY OF RESEARCH IN SOCIAL WORK ..... 88**

1. GENERAL METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES OF RESEARCH SPECIFICITY .	88
2. SPECIFICITIES OF THE RESEARCH SUBJECT IN SOCIAL WORK .....	94
3. SPECIFICITIES OF RESEARCH METHODS IN SOCIAL WORK .....	99
4. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCIENTIFIC METHODS IN RESEARCH PRACTICE AND RESEARCH METHODS-PROCEDURES IN SOLVING PROBLEMS IN THE PRACTICE OF SOCIAL WORK .....	104

## **IV METHODOLOGICAL PARADIGMS IN SOCIAL WORK ..... 112**

1. SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT THE DEFINITION OF THE CONCEPT OF PARADIGM.....	112
2. BASIC GENERAL APPROACHES IN SOCIAL WORK .....	117
2.1 THEORETICAL-METHODOLOGICAL DIRECTIONS SIGNIFICANT FOR "PARADIGMS" IN SOCIAL WORK.....	119
2.2 SOME GENERAL PARADIGMS OF SOCIAL WORK (IN SOCIAL WORK)...	129



3. SPECIAL PARADIGMATIC APPROACHES AND METHODOLOGICAL CONCEPTS IN SOCIAL WORK .....	134
3.1 SYSTEMIC APPROACH TO SOCIAL WORK .....	134
3.2 GENERIC-SPECIFIC CONCEPT IN SOCIAL WORK .....	143
3.3 THE GENERIC PROCESS OF RESEARCH AND PROBLEM SOLVING .....	147
3.4 SINGLE-SYSTEM DESIGN OR CASE STUDY DESIGN.....	161
3.5 EVALUATION RESEARCH IN SOCIAL WORK .....	167
<b>V ACTION RESEARCH IN SOCIAL WORK .....</b>	<b>186</b>
1. GENERAL PROVISIONS OF THE ACTION RESEARCH PARADIGM ....	186
2. THE EMERGENCE OF THE CONCEPT OF ACTION RESEARCH.....	187
2.1 KURT LEWIN'S TOPOLOGICAL THEORY .....	188
2.2 FRIC HAG (FRITZ HAAG) AND HAJNC MOSER (HEINZ MOSER): RENAISSANCE OF THE CONCEPT OF ACTION RESEARCH.....	191
2.3 IVAN BOSZORMENYI-NAGY: DIALECTICAL ACTION THEORY OF PERSONALITY (THEORY OF RELATIONAL MODALITIES) .....	195
2.4 GIAN ANTONIO GILLI: A NEW OBJECTIVE CRITIQUE OF SOCIAL THEORY .....	195
2.5 ALAIN TOURAINE: ACTION THEORY AND METHODOLOGY OF ACTION RESEARCH IN SOCIOLOGY .....	197
3. PROBLEMS OF DEFINING ACTION RESEARCH .....	200
4. BASIC PRINCIPLES (PRINCIPLES, POSTULATES) OF THE CONCEPT OF ACTION RESEARCH .....	202
5. METHODS OF ACTION RESEARCH .....	207
6. MAJOR PROBLEMS OF USING ACTION RESEARCH .....	209
<b>VI RESEARCH METHODS AND TECHNIQUES IN THE PROCESS OF SOCIAL WORK .....</b>	<b>214</b>

1. GENERAL APPROACH TO CONSIDERING RESEARCH METHODS IN SOCIAL WORK.....	214
2. RESEARCH METHODS MOST COMMONLY USED IN SOCIAL WORK	219
2.1 METHODS AND TECHNIQUES OF SURVEYING .....	220
2.2 OBSERVATION METHOD.....	245
2.3 BIOGRAPHICAL METHOD .....	264
2.4 SOCIOMETRIC METHOD.....	268
2.5 CASE STUDY METHOD .....	282
2.6 HISTORICAL METHOD.....	288
<b>LITERATURE.....</b>	<b>291</b>

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The establishment and initial stages of development of any science or scientific discipline present many complex tasks for scientists. Scientists must answer questions about the subject and method of the scientific discipline, the properties of the body of scientific knowledge, the properties and determinations of the (social) phenomenon-process that forms the actual basis of the research subject, the situation of the theory, the relationship and demarcation of the emerging or developing scientific discipline from others, especially traditional sciences and developed scientific disciplines, the methods and techniques of researching the subject of the scientific discipline, and the methods and techniques of social practice of knowledge about it. In addition to these fundamental questions, many other subtle and complex questions must be resolved, such as the relationship between emerging theory and practiced research and applied methods and techniques; the relationship between theory and methodology, both in emerging stages; the relationship between evident and developed long-standing, even centuries-old practice (as is the case with social work) and emerging and developing theory of social work. It is also necessary to answer some important questions about the factors of the structure of the scientific discipline, such as the relationship between social policy and social work, as well as questions about the relationship between theoretical-methodological starting points, postulates, and axioms. A special complex of questions is represented by the categorical-conceptual and terminological system, the processing of which is hindered by the use of many barbarisms that

do not have stable definitions and strictly defined meanings, but rather depend on the context in which they are used.

It is not necessary to emphasize that the title does not oblige us to a detailed treatment of all the mentioned questions, but it is also clear that we cannot completely avoid them at the current level of development of the theory and methodology of social work. This is not possible especially since there are already certain theoretical-methodological standpoints that impose the requirement for in-depth consideration of certain questions. We only mention two such standpoints. The first states that social work is multidisciplinary, so the question of the self-sufficiency and specificity of the subject as a necessary component of the science-scientific discipline arises. The second standpoint is that theory, theoretical starting point determines the methods of social work, thus raising the question of the possibilities of researching and practicing social work in the situation of initiating and constructing the theory of social work. The importance of this question is also indicated by the viewpoints of some authors that it is possible to expect that the methodology (methods of practice) of social work will evolve into the methodology (research methods) of social work.

Despite the initial idea that the subject of work-consideration should be the scientific-research methods and techniques in the practice of social work, the title obliges us to address other questions in a necessary form.

**Author**



# I INTRODUCTION

# I INTRODUCTION

## 1. Concept, subject, and components of methodology

### 1.1 Concept of methodology

**C**ontemporary methodological literature understands and defines methodology as the science of methods.<sup>1</sup> There is evident agreement among methodologists and scientists engaged in research on logic. Differences in understanding arise only when considering the scope of the subject of methodology and its autonomy or uniqueness as a scientific discipline.

There are two opposing views on the understanding of methodology as a distinct scientific discipline. The first view defines methodology as an independent science of methods of science as a whole and as a separate scientific discipline of specific sciences that have constituted their subject and method.<sup>2</sup> The second view does not consider methodology as a separate science and scientific discipline but defines it as a

---

<sup>1</sup> Termiz, Dževad - Milosavljević, S.: Introduction to the Methodology of Political Science, DAX-Trade, Sarajevo, 1999, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 15-16

component of epistemology or as a discipline of logic<sup>3</sup>. The arguments for the first view are:

- a) the fact that the subject of scientific knowledge of science and specific sciences cannot be equated with the way scientific knowledge is acquired, and that the methods of acquiring scientific knowledge are specifically studied;
- b) the fact that methodology is complex and has its own structure, and that it is a logical part of that structure;
- c) the essential determination of every science is fundamentally constituted by its subject and its method, which is also characteristic of methodology.

The opposing viewpoint emphasizes the arguments:

- a) the problems of acquiring knowledge, especially scientific knowledge, are addressed by epistemology as a discipline of philosophy;
- b) the rules of true knowledge, especially scientific knowledge, are established by logic, which is itself a branch of epistemology.

Critical consideration of these views and their arguments leads us to the following conclusions:

1. The viewpoint that methodology is an independent science and scientific discipline is more contemporary and is based on the real process of the development of science and scientific disciplines.
2. Methodology fulfills the essential requirements for the existence and development of a scientific discipline because its constitutive elements are clearly defined: subject and method.

---

<sup>3</sup> Marković, Mihajlo: Philosophical Foundations of Science, Belgrade, 1981. Milić, Vojin: Sociological Method, Nolit, Belgrade, 1978, p. 15

3. Methodology has a pronounced and specific relationship to philosophy (philosophy of science, scientific philosophy, and epistemology), logic, which has already been established as a science, and other sciences and scientific disciplines. The presented facts oblige us to understand methodology as a separate science on the whole process of acquiring scientific knowledge and/or as a separate scientific discipline of individual sciences within which methods of scientific knowledge about the objects of those sciences or groups of related sciences are studied.

There are two clearly differentiated viewpoints in defining the scope of methodology. The first viewpoint, supported by the majority of methodologists, considers methodology as the science of scientific methods, methods of acquiring scientific knowledge, and research methods.<sup>4</sup> The second viewpoint, which is much rarer but emphasized by authors of methodological studies on the methodology of law, social work, and even in more recent sociology methodology, expands to the methods of practicing scientific and professional knowledge in order to act on phenomena.<sup>5</sup> There are several reasons for this, among which the most important ones seem to be:

- a) the connection between scientific knowledge and social practice;
- b) the desire for an active role of scientific knowledge in social development;
- c) the division of science into fundamental, applied, and developmental;

---

<sup>4</sup> Pečujlić, Miroslav: *Methodology of Social Sciences*, Belgrade, Savremena administracija, 1989, p. 9

Šešić, Bogdan: *Fundamentals of Methodology of Social Sciences*, Naučna knjiga, Belgrade, 1971, p. 2

<sup>5</sup> Lukić, Radomir: *Methodology of Law*, Naučna knjiga, Belgrade, p. 1-10.

Halmi, Aleksandar: *Research Methodology in Social Work*, Alinea, Zagreb, 1995, p. 53.



- d) insufficient recognition of the difference between scientific knowledge and knowledge in general and the application of existing knowledge to influence the development of social practice and phenomena;
- e) insufficient differentiation between science and scientific knowledge and professional knowledge and skills.

These presented viewpoints insist on a clear distinction between scientific methodology and methodology in specific areas.

Based on the above, we define methodology as the science of scientific methods of scientific knowledge about science and scientific disciplines, as well as a constitutive part of every science and scientific discipline, and as a theoretical-empirical science.

## 1.2 Subject of Methodology

The basic indications of the subject of methodology are already given in the definition of the concept of methodology. A more precise determination of the subject of methodology would specify it through the following contents:

1. Scientific study of methods of science, or scientific disciplines. By the term "method of science-scientific discipline," we mean the whole interconnectedness of methods of scientific knowledge suitable and adapted to the needs and possibilities of objective, true knowledge of the subject of science-scientific discipline and the processes of scientific knowledge of that subject;
2. Procedures and norms of scientific knowledge within science-scientific discipline, including processes of scientific research.
3. Research methods and their techniques, starting from their axioms and postulates, their logical and scientific-theoretical foundation,

through their procedures and instruments, to their penetrability, reliability, applicability and effects;

4. The relationship between theory and methods, research and social practice and methods;
5. Theoretical-methodological directions, orientations and paradigms and their relationship with research and practice;
6. Methodology as a science, its basic principles, structure and characteristics;
7. The relationships between scientific research methods, as well as the relationships between different types of research.

The components of the methodology subject outlined above indicate a systematic organization of the content of the methodology subject into three specific cycles that are in full structural interdependence, which is sufficient to determine the composition of methodology, i.e. its constituent parts.

### **1.3 Constituent parts of methodology**

In recognized and affirmed works in the field of methodology of social sciences, it is customary to mention three essential parts: logical, epistemological and scientific-strategic.<sup>6</sup>

The first, logical part studies the rules of various logics and their relationship with the method of science, research methods and the subject of science or scientific discipline. In it, problems of applying logical rules about thinking and true knowledge and their adaptation to the characteristics of the subject and methods of science-scientific discipline, their relationships within various paradigms, systems of logic and theoretical-methodological directions are resolved. The closest to

---

<sup>6</sup> Milić, Vojin: Sociological Method, Nolit, Belgrade, 1978, p. 15 and onwards

the original rules of logic are the most general methods, such as proving and refuting, as well as basic methods, while the furthest are so-called operative methods. The study and adaptation of logical rules are approached in such a way that they can be "appropriately" applied to both the research of the subject of science and the research of the methods of science, the process of research and the relationships between empirical, conceptual and spiritual aspects in their scientific knowledge.

The second part resolves questions about the relationship between research and scientific knowledge about the subject of science and its method. Particularly significant questions in this part of methodology are the questions of the relationship between axioms, theorems and theory on one hand, and various methods of scientific knowledge and research on the other hand; then, questions of the concrete-individual, empirical and their generalization to laws and theories and vice versa. It is understandable that this requires the treatment of the relationships between different types and types of research and methods. We refer to this part as epistemological.

The third part is called the scientific-strategic part. It can be considered as the directly applied part of the methodology because it studies and resolves issues regarding the relationship between development and the level of scientific knowledge about the subject of science, as well as the level of methodological knowledge. Scientific knowledge about the subject of science and scientific knowledge about the method are interdependent and mutually conditioned. The lagging behind and inadequacy of one affects the development of the other. The reliability of knowledge about the subject of science depends on the reliability of knowledge about the method. As the subject of scientific research determines the method of knowledge and research, scientific knowledge

about the subject (as well as its shortcomings and gaps) sets requirements for the discovery, improvement, or rejection of certain methods.

The so-called "scientific revolutions"<sup>7</sup> are part of the content of this part of methodology.

## 2. The concept and subject of methodology

**M**ethodics is often treated as an integral part of methodology or even equated with it, although the vast majority of scientists make a clear distinction between the methodology of scientific knowledge-research and methodics. There are two important reasons for this. The first is that methods are the subject of both methodology and methodics, considering the subject, they are one and the same science with two names. The second reason is the very strong connection between methodology and methodics, as well as their mutual interpenetration.

Despite this, numerous authors of various methodics clearly differentiate methodics from methodology. The basis for these differences lies in the various characteristics of scientific and other research, scientific-research and other methods, in the goals, roles, and functions of research and the application of methods, as well as in their relationships.

Confusion can also arise from the fact that methodology and methodics have a common origin, even a common source. Every targeted activity-action-behavior is realized in some way through psychophysical activity, in which the mental (psychic) or physical component can dominate. The origin of the way of acquiring knowledge implied acquiring experience that established and realized a relationship with the phenomenon or its

---

<sup>7</sup> Kuhn, Thomas: The Structure of Scientific Revolutions

effects. The trial-and-error method is the pre-method of knowledge about the methods dealt with by methodology and methodics. It led to the accumulation of selected experience and knowledge about ways in which the goal can or cannot be achieved under certain conditions. This common source, never completely abandoned, loses importance and influence over time with the development of social and especially scientific knowledge.

During the development of society and social awareness, the methods of acquiring scientific knowledge and the science about them (methodology) are increasingly different from the methods of practical action on phenomena and processes, methods of applying knowledge to achieve goals through appropriate actions on natural, psychological, and social phenomena and processes, events, behaviors, and relationships.

Methodology has developed into a science of scientific method, or the method of science - the science of scientific disciplines and the methods of scientific knowledge and research, through epistemology and logic. It has evolved into an empirical-theoretical science with the properties of experimental and normative science. Methodology is ultimately an applied science, and its study, development, and creation of new methods cannot be seen or qualified as separate from practice. In fact, there is a known and adopted classification of scientific research into fundamental, applied, and developmental, and methodology solves methodological-methodological problems for all three types of research.

Unlike methodology, methodics is exclusively concerned with methods of action on specific phenomena and processes in practice. They are methods of practicing action, more or less professional, in creating new products of society, changing or directing existing ones. Methodology primarily deals with the application and concretization, or application to

individual, existing scientific knowledge that has a significant determination of the current moment's most truthful knowledge about the general, common, and repeatable.

The differences between methodology and methodology are also manifested as differences in structure. Thus, the structure of methodology consists of its three standard parts (logical, epistemological-methodical technical, and scientific-strategic), while the structure of methodology consists of the following parts:

1. A scientific approach and general concepts about the subject of research or treatment, or, when there is no developed scientific approach, a general constituted view of the professional community on the subject of treatment (research);
2. Practical experience of action on a phenomenon, more or less systematized and generalized through general models or types of situations and general reactive action;
3. Defined general expectations or expected effects under certain conditions in a certain way with certain means - in accordance with established professional norms;
4. Evaluation of the effectiveness of action on a phenomenon applied by methodologies in general, most often or in a number of applications.

Methodology relies on scientific knowledge about phenomena-processes on which it acts or will act, as well as methodological knowledge in two modalities: first, to study methods of action on a phenomenon; second, to properly diagnose the phenomenon and select appropriate methods of action on it. Generally speaking, methodology studies not only methods of action on phenomena-processes (which is its primary task), but the overall process of action on a phenomenon-process. If we imagine this

process based on experiential and generalized knowledge as a complex, multi-stage, and multi-phase process, whose basic stages are:

1. Observing the phenomenon-process and its characteristics;
2. Assessing the factual state and prospects of the phenomenon-process;
3. Recognizing the need to act on the phenomenon with a specific goal;
4. Choosing an effective way (method) through which the intended goal can be achieved through appropriate action, it is clear that methodology must also deal with the context of method application. It must also deal with verifying and developing methods of action, constantly evaluating these methods based on the criterion of success in achieving the goal.

Is methodology a science, a scientific discipline, or just a collection of more or less systematized knowledge acquired through practice about ways of acting on certain phenomena? It is undisputed that sciences and scientific disciplines study and research phenomena and processes, their elements, relationships, and dynamics. This implies the investigation and study of various activities and actions in their emergence, development, changes, etc. that take place between and within phenomena and processes, whether it is about individual elements and their relationships, or about their sets, wholes, etc. Ways of acting of elements and activities of processes and phenomena are an inevitable and essential part of the research subject and study of every science. Simply put, it is not possible to have scientific or any other knowledge about the subject of science without studying the static (structural) and dynamic (causal, functional, cause-and-effect) aspects and elements of processes, events, and phenomena, that is, without knowledge of movements and changes under given conditions and knowledge of methods and effects of actions of one

process or occurrence on others, of one factor's activities on others that establish various mutual relationships and connections. This is especially and in a particular way expressed in social sciences through understandings and research in sociology, economics, political science, law, etc., as well as in the science of social work and its practice and in related disciplines. Moreover, even in their definitions, terms such as action, relationship, behavior, etc., that is, concepts of activities, their causes and consequences in certain conditions and situations, are explicitly or implicitly contained. This is even contained in the very term "social work".

Methodology, understandably, does not study all activities of the process-phenomenon in which it takes place, but its primary specific subject of study is conscious, purposeful action directed towards the creation (production), annulment, transformation, or alteration of structural elements and properties, or the direction of development of a particular process-phenomenon, its dimensions, intensity, etc. This is evident in economics, pedagogy, political science, as well as in social work. Answers are sought to questions such as how, by what measures (actions and means) to influence market movements, teach students, manage society and the state. The term "social work" contains the concept of work, which is defined as a goal-oriented, purposeful activity. Therefore, methodology, which studies the methods of conscious, purposeful action on certain processes and phenomena in all the mentioned cases, is a necessary, important, integral part of the subject of science, and thus acquires the first attribute of scientific nature. It has a clearly defined delimitation of its subject of study within the subject of science-scientific discipline. At the same time, action procedures as causes of targeted consequences are studied by applying scientific methods, and through them, systematic, verifiable, argumentative, etc., scientific knowledge is



acquired. By using methods of scientific knowledge belonging to the corpus of methods of the respective science in their scientific research and scientific cognition, the second attribute of scientific nature is acquired. In accordance with the above, methodology can be understood as a discipline of a specific subject of science, or a "sub-discipline," a segment of the subject of a specific scientific discipline, rather than a separate science-scientific discipline. Methodology is not a part of methodology because it is not a part of the scientific method (the method of scientific knowledge of the subject of science), but it is a part of the subject of science on which, when researching methods of action, methods of scientific knowledge are applied.

Although methodology is not a part or form of methodology, it is very closely related to methodology because of the relationship between methods of knowledge and methods of action and because of the order in relation to knowledge-action.

### **3. The relationship between methodology and methodology in social work**

**T**he relationship between methodology and methodology in social work is essentially the same as the relationship between methodology and methodology in other social sciences, where they are an important part of research subjects, activities, and actions, consciously, purposefully, and purposefully influencing.

The basis of this relationship lies in the essential provisions of action, the order of actions, and knowledge. Methodology answers the questions of how and with what means to obtain the necessary knowledge about the process-phenomenon and ways to influence it and within it. Based on already established knowledge of research methods and the subject of

research, it suggests research methods for problematic scientific and practical situations (general, specific, and individual ones that we encounter in scientific and practical life) and indicates ways to adapt general method rules to each specific case, as well as proposes methods for verifying the validity of methods and their application. Codified and verified knowledge of methodology is the basis of knowledge on which methodology is based.

In social sciences, and consequently in the science of social work, scientific knowledge methods and practice methods (actions) can have the same basis and very similar forms. Secondly, practice methods (actions) as their segment necessarily contain certain, more or less explicit methods of acquiring knowledge or scientific knowledge."<sup>8</sup>

The first case is evident in the method of examination, especially in the form of an interview. At the core of every social relationship is human communication through the exchange of messages - sending, receiving, and responding through oral, written, visual, or auditory expressions or specific actions, deeds, behaviors. Individuals can express their needs, feelings, attitudes, intentions, goals, etc. in the mentioned ways, but verbal expression or direct verbal communication is most commonly used due to its simplicity and applicability. Therefore, the conversation between subjects occurs both as a source and a way of knowledge, including scientific knowledge, but also as a way of influencing one subject by another.

The same goes for experiments. Regardless of being disputed by some authors in the field of social work methodology, laboratory experiments in social work practice are even well-known. Thus, methodology provides

---

<sup>8</sup> The author formulated the definition and structure of methodology with appropriate consultations and analysis of numerous methodologies in social work and pedagogy.

insights into procedures and possibilities of real and quasi-experiments in social sciences and social work research, while methodology offers insights into the application of experiments as a form of action on a phenomenon. In fact, all "social actions," "social therapies," "social treatments," etc. have an experimental character in that the goal is sought to be achieved by the action of a certain factor as a cause - or that goal is sought to be achieved by eliminating (preventing the effect of) a certain factor in so-called "natural" -current conditions or in artificial conditions. The factor by which we act has the properties of an experimental factor.

The second case is the integration of scientific research methods into practice methods (actions), or their alternating or simultaneous application. Namely, certain methods of action are applied in the long term, some in phases and stages with sequential goals. The application of a certain method immediately causes specific effects (reactions, feelings, etc.) in both the subject applying it and the subject exposed to the application of the method. Scientific research methods, such as observation and examination, are inevitably used to determine these effects.

It is clear that all scientific, scientific research methods do not have the same treatment in methodology because they do not have the same role in the development, application, and evaluation of practice methods (actions).

The methodology does not only appear as a user of methodology. It also appears in three other roles:

1. as an inspirer;
2. as a critic; and
3. as a corrector of methodology.

As an inspirer, it appears in situations where it points out the insufficiency or inapplicability of existing scientific-theoretical and methodological knowledge, as this indicates the presence of methodological-methodical problems in acquiring appropriate knowledge. As a critic, the methodology appears when it focuses on the problems of applying research methods in different situations that were not anticipated, signaled, or indicated by the methodology, and suggests directions for their resolution. In the role of a corrector, the methodology appears when it proposes or introduces innovations in the application of scientific-research methods that can be scientifically justified and withstand scientific criticism.

The mutual relationship between methodology and methodology is primarily functional, but compatible. However, the presented relationship between methodology and methodology does not provide a basis for their identification or understanding of methodology as a part (form) of methodology. Methods of practice (action) are not closely related to methods of scientific knowledge acquisition, unlike other areas of knowledge application in other spheres of human life, such as various technologies in natural sciences.

## 4. Classification of methodologies

Until about ten years ago, there were two dominant criteria for classifying methodologies. The first criterion combines generality and the subject to which research methods are applied. According to this criterion, we distinguish:

1. General methodology;
2. Specific methodologies; and
3. Special methodologies.

General methodology deals with the general principles and postulates of scientific research and the general, basic provisions of methods.

Specific methodologies deal with the specific characteristics of methods and the application of methods that arise from the requirements of the subject of a set of related sciences. Special methodologies address the questions of methods that arise from the requirements of the subject of specific sciences and scientific disciplines.

According to this criterion, we also distinguish:

1. General methodology;
2. Methodology of natural sciences and;
3. The methodology of social sciences, as well as
4. Methodologies of individual sciences and scientific disciplines within them.

This criterion is ambiguous. On one hand, it is the application of the criterion of subjectivity of methodologies (general, natural and social sciences and sciences and scientific disciplines within these related fields). On the other hand, it is the application of the previously presented criterion of generality. Other criteria are also known in methodology. Thus, the criterion of belonging of methodology to certain theoretical-methodological directions has also been used, so the following are mentioned:

1. Positivist methodology, which includes as its sub-branches:
  - a. Structuralist,
  - b. Functionalistic,
  - c. Behavioristic, etc. then

2. Axiological or methodology of understanding or, as it is also called, historical methodology (although some (Šešić) consider it a variant of positivist methodology), and finally
3. Dialectical methodology within which the following are mentioned:
  - a. Idealistic and
  - b. Materialistic or Marxist.

These methodologies differ in approach, understanding of possible objects of science and scientific research, and methods of scientific knowledge as well as possibilities and ways of acquiring true knowledge."<sup>9</sup>

In recent times, among methodologists and theorists of sociology and social work, another dichotomy has emerged, distinguishing "irrational", "classical," etc. methodology from "action," "action-oriented," etc. methodology (Turen, Halmi, and others),<sup>10</sup> " The foundations of this distinction are understanding of social practice, science, and the application of scientific knowledge, methodology and methods, etc.

## 5. Scientific method - concept and structure

**T**he scientific method sets two requirements in order to be considered as such. Firstly, it must be a method of science, it must have such characteristics that science, by applying it, can achieve scientific knowledge. Secondly, it must itself be constructed and verified by scientific procedures. However, the scientific method does not have to be

---

<sup>9</sup> See: Šešić, Bogdan: General Methodology, Naučna knjiga, Belgrade, 1980, and Šešić, Bogdan: Fundamentals of Methodology of Social Sciences, Naučna knjiga, Belgrade, 1974, Termiz, Dževad-Milosavljević, S.: Introduction to the Methodology of Political Science, Sarajevo, 1999, p. 18-19.

<sup>10</sup> Halmi, Aleksandar: Social Work in the Local Community, "Social Protection" Library, Zagreb, 1989, p. 90.

only a method that science directly uses exclusively in acquiring scientific knowledge. Even methods of practice (action) can be scientific in the sense that they are products of scientific knowledge and have been tested and confirmed by scientific procedures and means.

There are many different definitions of the scientific method and methods in general, from extremely concise to descriptive. In our context, "method" is often identified with the concept and term "way." Without going into a more detailed analysis of the conceptual meaning of the word "way," we must note that it is a broader term because it encompasses all actions and means by which a goal is achieved or an effect is produced.

In order to avoid ambiguity of the concept of "scientific method," we approach its definition through the following provisions:

1. Scientific activity, whose goal is the acquisition and application of true scientific knowledge, is essentially intentional, rational, systematic, and even planned.
2. The acquisition of scientific knowledge is focused on the scientific definition of the subject of each science and scientific discipline individually, as well as the complexes and groups of related sciences, and science in general understood as a whole.
3. Concepts, approaches, procedures, and means of scientific knowledge are chosen according to established scientific rules from previously verified ones or new ones are developed based on scientific criteria.
4. The application of concepts, rules, criteria, procedures, and means of scientific knowledge is strictly and critically controlled and verified through effects and procedures.

From the above, it can be concluded that the concept of "the way of acquiring scientific knowledge" (which includes subconscious, intuitive, and other processes that can lead to knowledge that can be constituted as scientific) cannot be identified with the concept of "scientific method," which excludes those mentally uncontrolled ways that did not arise from a scientific process. Based on the previous, a valid definition of the scientific method (scientific knowledge) can be formed, which can be stated as follows: *the scientific method of scientific knowledge is a meaningful and purposeful, rationally constituted system of ideas, concepts, actions (procedures), and means selected according to scientific criteria and scientifically verified with the aim of acquiring scientific knowledge or fruitful scientific research of the subject and methods of science.*

The scientific method of each science or scientific research has three basic components:

1. logical part;
2. epistemological part;
3. operational-technical part.

The first part of every method is logical. Whether methodology is understood as a discipline of logic or accepted as a specific science, every method is logical and based on rules of true thinking. The method is internally logical - the parts of the method are in logical agreement with each other. Also, the procedure for applying the method is in accordance with essential logical norms. However, in scientific practice, we encounter various logics (two-valued, multi-valued, etc., as well as different understandings of truth), so in every method, the logical part has adapted and expressed logical rules of the relevant logic, theoretical-methodological direction and paradigm, and properties of the research subject.



The second part can be called epistemological, through which the relationship between knowledge about the subject of science, theory, theory of methods, and knowledge about the practice of methods is established. The significance of this part is manifested through the relationship between the subject of science-scientific discipline on one hand, the method of science-scientific discipline on the other hand, and the specific research method and its application. This part indicates the possibilities of methods in researching the subject within a specific research-scientific concept and type of research. By pointing out the advantages and disadvantages of methods, objective difficulties, and possible ways to alleviate or eliminate them, this part allows for the establishment of criteria for choosing among multiple possible approaches, concepts, and research methods. A very significant segment of this part is the categorical-conceptual apparatus that enables the operationalization and systematization of concepts and terms used in research projects and processes. This is the basis for establishing the order of concepts and terms in research based on valid criteria of generality, fundamentality, and meaning.

The third operational-technical part deals with the relationship between the previous two parts - the method and technique of research as the concretization of the prepared method for application. Rules and general instructions for constructing and applying techniques are included in this part.

A scientific-research method can have multiple variations - types, forms, and techniques, which is most evident in data collection methods. For example, in the case of the testing method, there are mild, neutral, and sharp forms, as well as individual, group, and collective testing, and techniques such as interviews and surveys that have their own forms.

Techniques of methods usually consist of a basic concept, procedures, and means. The basic concept is the general idea of a particular technique based on logical and epistemological aspects. Procedures are the researcher's actions and behaviors during the application of the method and technique, as well as the handling of instruments and means of the technique. Means are various material and intellectual creations - from pens and paper, to various texts, photographs, images, music, tape recorders, cameras, telephones, and computers. The operational-technical part establishes harmony between the concept and the application of the technique, as well as between the concept, procedures, and instruments-means of the technique.

Although research techniques are extremely important, they are not equally developed for all methods. There are two important reasons for this. First, not all methods have their own techniques; some methods have them only in concept, others do not have specially developed instruments, only procedures, while others have not paid enough attention to this due to insufficient importance given to methodological research. The second reason is the affiliation to various, usually opposing, theoretical-methodological directions. For example, the direction that emphasizes "empathizing with the situation" does not contribute significantly to the development of technical research.

It would be wrong to discard or underestimate methods that utilize adapted techniques or groups of techniques from other methods. However, developing techniques, collecting, processing, expressing, and interpreting data is necessary and very important.

## 6. Classification of methods

Like all others, the classification of scientific-research methods and methods in general can also be based on various criteria understood as "specific differences". In methodology, common criteria include:

1. Generality and fundamentality of methods;
2. Usability;
3. Subject matter that cannot be investigated primarily or at all;
4. Membership of methods in certain theoretical-methodological directions or paradigms.

According to the criterion of generality and fundamentality, we distinguish:

1. *Basic methods* (also called basic special methods) that are the foundations of all methods. These include: analysis-synthesis; abstraction-concretization; specialization-concretization; induction-deduction. Analogies or comparisons could also be included in this group of methods.
2. *General scientific methods*, which are applied or can be applied in all sciences. They usually include: modeling method, statistical method, axiomatic method, analytical-deductive method, and hypothetical-deductive method. Comparative method, as well as proof and refutation, which is actually the most general and fundamental method of scientific knowledge, should also be included in these methods.
3. *Special methods* of specific groups or complexes of sciences (natural, social), specific individual sciences, and scientific disciplines. The methods of special sciences and especially disciplines could also be considered as their specialized methods.

The presented classification partially includes the criterion of applicability, as basic and general scientific methods are applied in all sciences, while special and specific methods are applied in groups or individual sciences and scientific disciplines.

It is worth mentioning that this classification is only partially accepted in methodology. Another classification that is not fully accepted in methodology is the distinction between:

1. Conceptualization methods that provide procedures for conceptualizing research;
2. Data collection methods, which typically include observation, survey, experiment, content analysis of documents, case study, and biographical methods, with the last two differing from the others in that they do not have specialized techniques of their own;
3. Data processing methods, which are the final modalities of basic, general scientific, and other methods.

According to the criterion of method belonging to certain theoretical and methodological directions, there are several classifications that are also associated with specific modalities.

Thus, first, there is a distinction, as in methodology, between three basic types:

1. Positivist, including structuralist (structural analysis), functionalist (functional or structural-functional analysis), behaviorist (S-R and S-R-S model), etc.;
2. Axiological (method of understanding, ideographic analysis, etc.);
3. Dialectical methods (analytic-deductive method, dialectical analytic-synthetic method, etc.).

In fact, all known methods can be applied with an approach within various concepts of theoretical and methodological directions, which introduces significant differences in understanding. In relation to these directions, it is necessary to mention the phenomenological method as well.

In methodology, there is also a distinction between qualitative, quantitative, and integral methods. Quantitative methods usually refer to mathematical and statistical methods, quantification, numerical representation, and measurement. This division has actually become outdated very quickly and, moreover, from the beginning, it had the character of overemphasizing a certain aspect. Namely, every content has its form (shape), every quality has its quantity - but there is no quantity without quality. Modern methods are essentially qualitatively quantitative whenever they are applied in conjunction with the statistical method.

Finally, let us mention another very important dichotomy of methods. This is the distinction between methods of scientific knowledge - methods of scientific research and methods of practice or action on phenomena and processes in reality. These methods differ first in terms of objectives, structure, and procedure of application, although there is a very strong connection between them. It should be emphasized that some methods of scientific knowledge-scientific research can also appear as methods or parts of methods of action (investigation, experiment, case study) with appropriate adaptation, while others can only appear in their function.

Methods of action, when applied in a certain way, also have the characteristics of methods of knowledge-research. Methods of action are the subject of methodology.

## 7. Research - Concept and Classification

### 7.1 Concept of Research

**T**he definition of the term "research"<sup>11</sup> can be approached from various perspectives, but they all agree that research is a human, predominantly intellectual activity, primarily aimed at acquiring new knowledge or verifying existing knowledge, and always with the intention to use the acquired and verified knowledge in human life, to a greater or lesser extent. It is evident that research is a continuous process that can occur spontaneously, be goal-oriented, or strictly systematic.

Every person, starting from their own interests, explores their situation and possibilities by collecting various information from various sources of varying validity, reflecting on them, and drawing conclusions by establishing a diagnosis and making forecasts with a certain degree of articulation. These are spontaneous research activities. Although scientific methodology does not directly deal with these types of research, they are of great importance in social reality and social relationships, as they form the basis for forming people's attitudes and behaviors. They are primarily addressed by communication studies and disciplines that deal with issues of information and influencing attitudes and behaviors, such as social psychology, political science, social work, etc., primarily through methodology.

In contrast to spontaneous research, there are scientific research activities, which are the subject of methodology. It is justified to assume that the definition of scientific research has long been scientifically established and verified, but this is only partially true. Even today, for

---

<sup>11</sup> Termiz, Dž.- Milosavljević, S.: Introduction to the Methodology of Political Science, p. 28-36.

example, the concepts of research and investigation are often confused. Investigation is just one method of data collection through verbal communication, and the idea of someone investigating inanimate objects (such as soil composition, metal resistance, electrical conductivity, etc.) seems comical.

We cannot investigate things without consciousness because they cannot provide a verbal conscious response to a question. This clear and well-founded standpoint has been unnecessarily complicated by an excessive, uncritical preoccupation with computers, which are attributed with human attributes.

We can justifiably adopt the definition of scientific research from the book "Introduction to the Methodology of Political Science," Sarajevo, 1999, which states: "Scientific research can be defined as a complex, organized, systematic, purposeful process of acquiring scientific knowledge about a strictly defined research subject, verified by a valid procedure, i.e., the responsible application of scientific methods." It is a whole of meaningful mental-physical, creative, routine, operational-technical, intellectual, and manual processes and actions. Scientific research is simultaneously the most general and penetrating way of authentic scientific knowledge.

Every scientific research has the following essential characteristics:

1. Every scientific research, even when it has a verificatory character, necessarily involves the scientific understanding of something new about the subject and method of science-scientific discipline.
2. Scientific research is a purposeful, functional system.
3. It is a highly organized process, with clear goals and objects.
4. Scientific research is a meaningful, consistent, complex, and structural activity of intellectual and other factors.

5. It is a functional system of feedback and relationships between scientific research activities and social reality and practice, with thinking as an essential component.

The necessary properties of scientific research are:

1. Objectivity.
2. Scientific basis.
3. Logical coherence.
4. Criticism and self-criticism.
5. Consistency and coherence.
6. Penetration.
7. Realism and objectivity.
8. Completeness.
9. Systematicity.

Not all research has these properties to the same extent, nor can the same degree be demanded and achieved in every case.

## **7.2 The structure of the research process**

The process of scientific research begins with the discovery that there exists or is likely to occur a social or scientific problem that could be addressed or prevented through the engagement of science. However, it is not necessary in all cases for a real social or scientific problem to arise or be hinted at; it is sufficient to reasonably assume that a certain good situation can be further improved through scientific research. If the concept of "problem" is understood broadly enough, it can include any stimulus for research to verify, expand, and deepen scientific knowledge and improve human life. The discovery of a problem, which science systematically works on, is only the initial moment of the first, preliminary phase. The problem is identified and articulated, followed by a preliminary



determination of the research subject through consultation with experts, scientific resources, and conceptualization of the research. In the process of conceptualizing the research, the foundation is laid for the development of a research project and the implementation of research through:

1. setting the project task and scientific-expert discussion on it.
2. developing the conceptual sketch of the research project and scientific discussion by competent individuals on the research idea.

As can be seen, the choice of research problem and the formulation of the "topic" - preliminary determination of the research subject - are not arbitrary acts, but the result of applying the research procedure. Even when there is a research client who requires a certain problem to be investigated, the procedure of formulating the "topic" - preliminary determination of the research subject - should be carried out through the same procedure for the protection of the interests of the client, researcher, society, and science.

In some cases, when the problem is entirely new and scientifically unexplored, it is possible and advisable to conduct preliminary or exploratory research based on which the conceptual sketch of the research project could be developed, and work on research design continued.

The second phase of the research process is the development of the research project, or as it is also called, the draft scientific concept. The research project is a creative scientific and operational document of the researcher(s) in which they express their own and existing scientific and other knowledge, their scientifically based assumptions (hypotheses), possible indicators, research methods and techniques, plans for implementing the research, etc. The characteristics of a scientific

document in written form (although there are other recording techniques) are present in those parts of the project where theoretical research and definition, operationalization, etc. are realized, while the characteristics of an operational document are present in the parts where plans for implementing the research are communicated.

The research project is a necessary and extremely significant document which, on one hand, systematically presents the ideas and knowledge of the researcher(s), and on the other hand, enables critical scientific verification and influence of the scientific community and other interested parties.

The main parts of the research project are:

I. Problem formulation within which the basic hypothetical positions about the problem are expressed in the function of articulating the research subject, the scientific and social significance of the research, and the scientific knowledge that serves as a starting point in setting the research project.

II. Determination of the research subject, namely:

1. theoretical determination of the subject, which implies theoretical research. This property precisely imposes the constituent parts of theoretical determination of the subject:
2. scientifically verified knowledge;
3. explored, but still unverified scientific knowledge;
4. scientifically documented, but still unexplored knowledge;
5. non-scientific existing knowledge;
6. categorical-conceptual-terminological apparatus.

This part of the subject already excludes arbitrary choice of the research subject, but requires its discovery through research efforts;

1. operational determination of the subject, which includes a definite specification of the content that will be researched; space and time to which the research will relate, as well as the belonging to science-the scientific discipline within which the research will be conducted.
2. non-scientific existing knowledge and
3. categorical-conceptual-terminological apparatus.

Even this part of the subject excludes arbitrary selection of the research subject, but requires its discovery through research efforts; operational definition of the subject, which includes a decisive statement of the content that will be investigated; the space and time to which the research will relate, as well as its belonging to science-scientific discipline within which the research will be conducted.

### **III. Scientific and social objectives of the research**

Some theoretical-methodological approaches, or more precisely, certain methodological assumptions of certain orientations, by criticizing "positivist," "traditional," etc. methodology, simply predict that scientific research, alongside scientific objectives, also have social objectives, thus focusing on the application of scientific knowledge in practice.

**IV. Hypotheses** (general, specific, usually scientifically based and working) about the research subject. Emphasizing the relationship between the research process and the independent and dependent variable(s) neglects the fact that hypotheses are grounded statements that express the relationships between variables. This establishes the basis for determining indicators of the existence, properties, and behavior of each variable, as well as the validity of the hypothesis statement. At the same time, it is a factor in the possibility of testing, confirming, modifying, or rejecting hypotheses.

**V.** Research approach in which the researcher explains how they approach the research, which theoretical-methodological approach they belong to (which paradigm they accept), and which methods and techniques they will use to collect data, analyze them, interpret them, and communicate the research results to the public.

**VI.** Scientific and social justification clearly states the role and function of this research in the science system and social needs.

**VII.** Research plans - schedule, personnel, and resources. Methodological concepts and approaches that emphasize the premise that the completion of research cannot be predicted in advance simply predict that every research project costs and requires certain resources and people.

Whether it is necessary to develop a research project for every scientific research is a question that, although rarely, some scientists pose. By arguing that the development of a research project is a "desk job," they propose that it be developed during the research process - that the "research subject be discovered through the research practice." Without entering into a deeper discussion, we adhere to the view that it is necessary to develop a research project as a guiding scientific and operational document that is created through the research procedure.

Testing the project and its eventual refinement and revision are an integral part of developing a research project.

The third phase of the research process is the implementation of the research, i.e., collecting data from the planned sources using methods, techniques, procedures, and instruments, organizing and analyzing the data, and drawing conclusions based on them. Data evaluation is an integral part of this phase.

The fourth phase is the preparation and presentation of the research report and the research results, which also include appropriate recommendations.

The fifth and final phase of the research process is the adaptation of acquired knowledge to application and their implementation.

### **7.3 Classification of research**

Research in general, and scientific research in particular, can be classified according to various criteria.<sup>12</sup> It is common to classify scientific research based on:

1. The subject of research, which includes:

1.1 Theoretical research, which focuses on a specific theory and uses analytical methods (conceptual analysis, analysis of postulates, statements, and arguments, etc.). Theoretical research often involves meaningful, logical, and reasoned thinking about a specific subject and drawing conclusions based on arguments.

1.2 Empirical research, which investigates factual social reality - past, present, or future trends - through empirical knowledge. However, this division between theoretical and empirical research is somewhat outdated. Theories can be tested through empirical research, and it is true that setting up a research project is essentially a "theoretical research". Theories can also be considered as part of social reality.

1.3 Natural research, which focuses on natural processes and phenomena.

1.4 Psychological research, which focuses on the human mind, psychological processes, and phenomena.

---

<sup>12</sup> Milosavljević, S. - Radosavljević, I.: Compendium of Methodology of Social Research, Institute for Political Studies FPN, Belgrade, 1988, p. 1-12

1.5 Social research, which investigates social processes and phenomena. Within the realms of natural, psychological, and social sciences, there are many specific sciences and scientific disciplines, allowing for classification based on the subjects of study (e.g., physical, chemical, legal, economic research, etc.).

1.6 Philosophical research, which can be understood as research in philosophy or within the framework of scientific philosophy.

1.7 Scientific research, which can be understood as research in science or research on the subjects of science.

1.8 Methodological research.

2. Based on their role in scientific knowledge, we differentiate:

2.1 Heuristic research, which aims to discover something new and provide scientific explanations;

2.2 Verification research, aimed at verifying existing scientific knowledge;

2.3 Mixed research;

2.4 Fundamental research aimed at discovering basic, essential laws, cause-and-effect relationships, axioms, and principles - in short, fundamental knowledge about processes and phenomena. Fundamental research can be carried out within any science, regarding its subject and method.

2.5 Applied research, which builds upon the scientific knowledge obtained from fundamental research, aimed at discovering possibilities for their practical application;

2.6 Developmental research, building upon the scientific knowledge obtained from applied research, seeking to discover possibilities for further concretization and improvement of the application of the results of applied research. They have the characteristics of application research;

2.7 Special, application, and action research in social sciences or in specific sciences and scientific disciplines, aimed at improving practice or discovering factual possibilities, conditions, and actions for successful execution of specific types and concrete actions.

2.8 Orientation research, which provides necessary knowledge for further research in cases where the existing scientific knowledge does not allow it.

2.9 Recently, especially among methodologists in the field of social work methodology, there has been an emphasis on the affirmation of evaluative research. According to their description, the role of these researches is to evaluate the situation, plans, programs, methods, and results in social work or in social work practice. These researches can have both methodological and methodical characteristics. They may also not necessarily be strictly scientific, but can also be professional or practical.

2.10 It would be justified to add to this classification the so-called intervention, instrumental research, which does not primarily have a scientific-knowledge role, but primarily serves the purpose of acting upon the process-phenomenon.

3. For scientific research, an important criterion for classification is also the scientific objectives of the research, or the levels of scientific knowledge that the research aims for. Thus, we distinguish:

3.1 *Descriptive research*, whose scientific objective is to scientifically describe the research subject. Scientific description should not be understood simplistically as a description of the appearance of the phenomenon, but also as a description of its structure, relations and connections, properties, etc.

3.2 *Classificatory and typological research*, which aims to create valid classifications and typologies, without which there is no basis for theory, generalization, and the formation of knowledge systems.

3.3 *Innovative (heuristic) research* that aims to discover new contents, forms, relationships, or aspects.

3.4 *Explanatory research*, which aims for scientific explanation,

3.5 *Predictive research*, which aims for scientific prediction.

It is noted that a classification based on social objectives has not been provided.

Such classifications are not common, so we will not attempt to form them, although some types of social objectives can be observed. For example, surveys primarily serve an informative role; some research aims to build a scientific knowledge base for social action, while others aim to elaborate the application of research results. However, this knowledge is not sufficient for constructing a valid classification based on social objectives.

4. The criterion of generality is inevitable in classification. According to this criterion, we distinguish between general, comprehensive research that relates to the entirety of processes-phenomena. Conversely, partial research focuses solely on a part of a process-phenomenon. They can be specific, encompassing a narrower whole - a comprehensive part or aspect of a process-phenomenon within a scientific discipline. Using the same criterion, we can differentiate between mass, group, and individual research based on the number of units covered.
5. The specific, transitional criterion from subject to scope allows us to differentiate between:



5.1 *longitudinal research*, which has a linear time flow and typically lasts for a longer period.

5.2 *cross-sectional research*, which examines the snapshot of a situation of a process-phenomenon at a specific time interval or socio-temporal moment.

5.3 *panel research*, which investigates the same subject, preferably using the same units of research, at different time periods, or specifically determined intervals.

6. According to their *affiliation with scientific disciplines*, we distinguish between:

6.1 *intradisciplinary* research, whose subject belongs to a single discipline and is investigated using methods specific to that discipline.

6.2 *interdisciplinary* research, whose subject belongs to two or more disciplines.

6.3 *multidisciplinary* research, whose subject belongs to various sciences and their disciplines.

7. Based on the criterion of the *timeliness of the research subject*, we have:

7.1 *reconstructive* research - whose subject is the past.

7.2 *current* research - whose subject is contemporary reality.

7.3 *projective* research - whose subject is the future.

8. *The relationship between the subject and object of research*, specifically the researcher and the subject, is a disputed but constantly present criterion, and according to it we distinguish:

8.1 *introspective* research - in which the object of research is a constituent part, characteristic, feeling, etc. of the subject of research, and it is essentially self-exploration of the subject.

8.2 *mixed* research is not mentioned in well-known classifications. However, methodologists in the field of social work, insisting on the equality of the researcher and the researched subject, actually insist that the researched subject performs some functions of the researcher as well as conducting introspective research on themselves. Although this primarily applies to intervention research, the possibility and benefit of conducting such scientific research is likely.

9. Research durations vary depending on the subject, objectives, material-financial, personnel, and other social circumstances. The usual distinction is based on duration:

9.1 "*flash*" research - very short surveys on a narrow question, usually of a practical nature. "Flash" research lasts from one day to a maximum of thirty days. A clear example of such research is well-known "telephone surveys";

9.2 *short-term* research that does not last longer than three months and has the characteristics of classification and typological research, with repeated research after a certain period of time;

9.3 *medium-term* research that lasts six months to one year, can have any scientific objective (usually on the border between classification-typological and innovative-heuristic research), and deals with subjects of medium size and complexity;

9.4 *long-term* research lasts longer than one year and can be fundamental;

9.5 *permanent* research essentially involves repeated, periodic repetition of research on the same subject in the same area and under the same circumstances, similar to panel research.

9.6 In classifications, we do not come across the provision of "continuous research," so we do not have enough evidence to add this category to the

classification. In research practice, we encounter continuous, ongoing data collection that has (can have) the characteristics of continuous statistical data collection for a specific project. Their processing is done in the usual manner, and the results are reported within specified deadlines. For example, birth and death records, residence registrations, criminal records, records of admission to nursing homes, etc., are kept according to prescribed obligations and established norms. The collected data can be used in scientific as well as other research. This justifies the inclusion of "continuous research" in the classification of research according to the criterion of duration.

10. We have already mentioned methodological research when discussing the classification of research according to the criterion of subject. It is clear that these researches deal with the methods and techniques of science and scientific research and that they can have properties attributed to members of each of the classifications presented. However, it is necessary to make two remarks. First, methodological research can be direct or indirect. They are direct when the only subject of research is method, technique, procedure, instrument, concept, research project - in short, any factor of the scientific research procedure. They are indirect when the primary subject of research is the subject of science - scientific discipline because even then the problematics of applied methods are investigated. This fact indicates that methodological research can be understood as predominantly continuous verificatory research. The second remark relates to the emergence of a transitional type of methodological research that could be designated as methodological-methodical research. These are researches in which the subject of intervention methods, methods of practice and influence, inducing change, and the applied methods in research are

standard scientific methods and procedures. Although we have not specifically investigated this, we have noticed the occurrence of indications that point to possible specificities of scientific research methods that are the subject of methodology.

Finally, let us mention comparative research, i.e. historical-comparative research. The fact is that there is no research in which we do not encounter analogies and comparisons. As soon as we establish similarities and differences, which we do during every classification, we make comparisons. However, not every research within which comparisons are made is comparative. Comparative research is only that in which the subject and goal are scientific knowledge of differences and similarities between two objects of research, and the discovered differences are the basis for explaining the phenomenon-process. This is primarily an anthropological and historical method, which has been primarily developed by anthropologists-functionalists (Redcliff-Brown, Malinowski, and others). Comparative research is characterized by a very systematic presentation of the subject of research and the definition of comparables, as well as their spatial-temporal determination.

Along with the presented classifications, but also despite them, special attention is drawn to research that can be labeled as:

1. successful-unsuccessful;
2. scientific-professional;
3. scientific-cognitive-interventional; and
4. creative-routine.

During further consideration, it will be necessary to point out their basic characteristics.

## 8. Role and tasks of methodology, methods, and research in scientific knowledge

If scientific knowledge is systematic, objective, verified, verifiable, developmental, the most truthful knowledge about social reality and its future in a given time, changeable in practice, and the basis of progressive social development, then the role of methodology, methods, and research can only be derived from the relationship between social human life reality-practice and science as part of that practice and synthesized efficient knowledge, as well as the relationship between science (scientific knowledge) and human-social needs. The relationship between scientific knowledge and human needs, both individual and social, is not only about satisfying needs but science also plays a role in identifying, articulating, expanding, complicating, perfecting, humanizing, and civilizing needs and ways of satisfying them. In this sense, scientific knowledge is becoming an increasingly evident and intense human-social need.

Methodology, methods, and research are in function and are instruments for satisfying this need.

### 8.1 Role and tasks of methodology in scientific knowledge

Methodology itself is an integral part, content, and form of scientific knowledge since it is itself a science, specifically, when it comes to special methodologies, a scientific discipline.

Methodology answers eternal questions: how to most efficiently, completely, cheaply, quickly, safely, and truthfully learn about the existence and resolution of social and scientific problems.

By concentrating its synthesized scientific knowledge, it explores, constructs, perfects, evaluates, and proposes methods, techniques, and corresponding research. In doing so, it enables the development of science, removes obstacles, deepens scientific knowledge, ensures the legitimacy of science, verification of scientific knowledge, their selection, classification, and ranking. Methodology only acts as an intermediary between logic, theory, approaches, and postulates, as well as the flow of science and social reality in the broadest sense. Through continuous comprehensive theoretical and empirical research on ways and paths of acquiring knowledge with a focus on ways and paths of acquiring scientific knowledge, it ensures the most successful procedures for acquiring and verifying it.

Methodology has the role of a constitutive factor of science directly, as its essential component, and indirectly, through the methods of science, which is the subject of methodology.

The tasks of methodology are to equip the science of science objects with valid procedures, methods, and instruments, as well as conceptualizations and rules for designing and implementing them necessary for acquiring scientific knowledge. Its task is also to establish the appropriate theory and metatheory, rules, guidelines, and criteria in the function of scientific knowledge.

## **8.2 The Role and Tasks of Methods**

The scientific method is a necessary condition for scientific knowledge, which involves truthfulness, systematicity, verifiability, and other properties of scientific knowledge. Its role is instrumental in that scientific knowledge can only be acquired through the application of appropriate methods. At the same time, the role of methods is orienting

and guiding, as it leads to possible efficient paths for acquiring scientific knowledge about the subject of science. Additionally, its role is constitutive because science (scientific discipline) is constituted only when it develops its own method for studying its subject. The method also has a critical-verify role towards scientific theory, its foundations, and hypothetical positions. Its highly significant integrative role achieves the integration of general scientific knowledge and the knowledge of complex related sciences by applying the same methods, with appropriate adaptations, in the scientific knowledge of all sciences and related disciplines.

The tasks of methods are multiple, but its most important task is to connect scientific thinking with the processes and phenomena of reality that are the essence of scientific knowledge. It also connects theory and practice, as well as the general and the specific, without which there would be no science or at least it would not be applicable. Through its techniques, instruments, and procedures, the method enables the systematic recording of individual knowledge about the concrete, their accumulation and generalization, the movement from indicators and data to conclusions, or the understanding of the particular and the general, as well as the repeatability of the general in the particular and the individual. Without appropriate methods, it would not be possible to understand the interrelation of the general, the specific, and the individual, which is, along with scientific laws, scientific explanations, and scientific predictions, the essential subject and task of science. The method also mediates between knowledge and practice.

### **8.3 The Role and Tasks of Scientific Research**

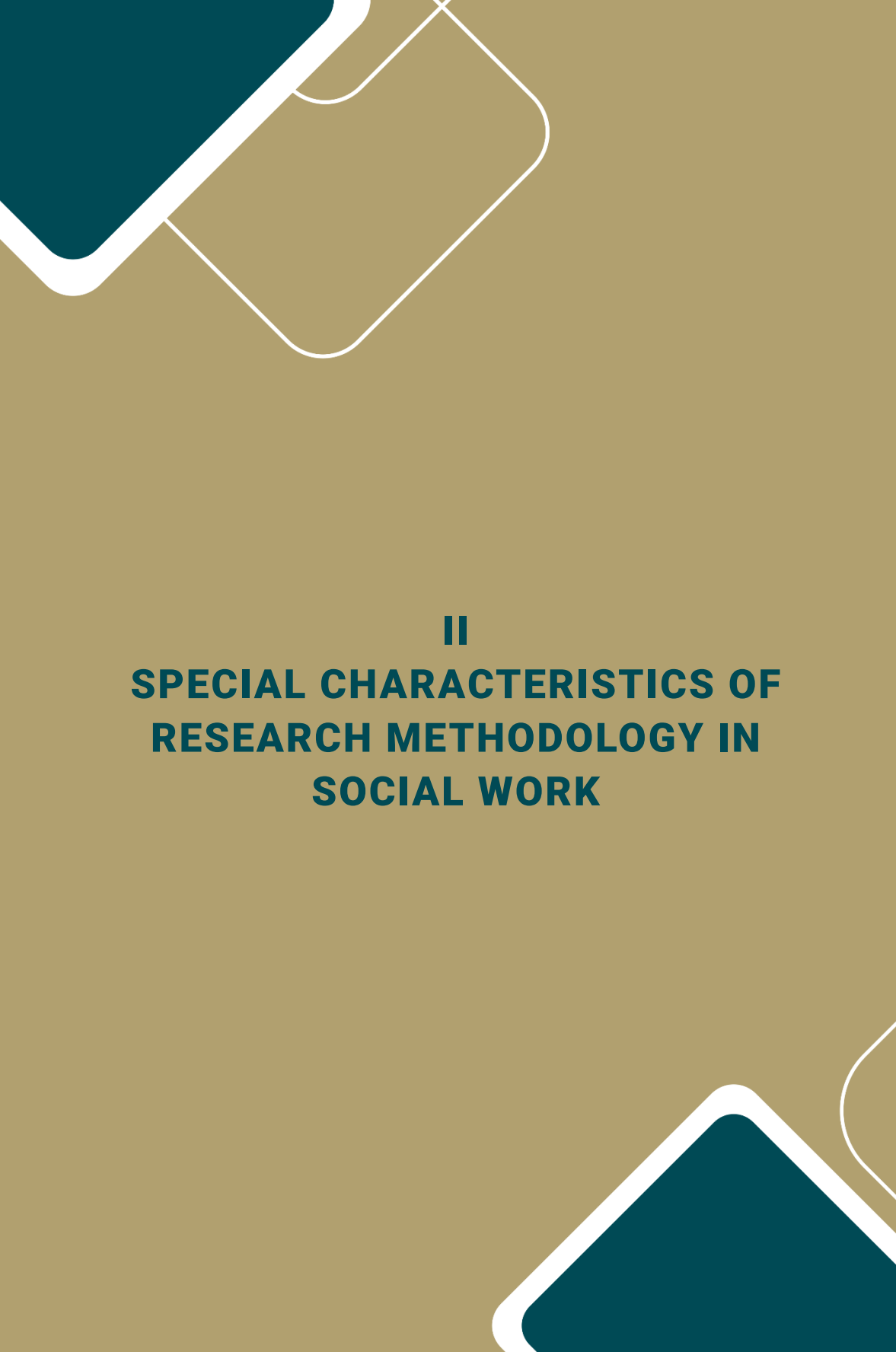
The most penetrating synthetic method of scientific knowledge is scientific research. The role of scientific research is to connect theory

with the procedures of scientific knowledge as a guide and organizer, as well as to unify, systematize, and verify diverse knowledge about the subject and method of science, including non-scientific knowledge. Research enables the input circulation of ideas, hypotheses, knowledge, practice-new knowledge, new ideas, and practice.

Depending on the type and objective, the task of research is to provide a reliable basis for building theory, to verify the validity of theory, and to strengthen, modify, or discard it based on the results of research. The task of research is also to pave the way for transforming valid theory into valid practice. It is also a means of connecting methodology and methodology, or connecting methods of scientific knowledge and methods of practice (action).

The roles and tasks of methodology, methods, and research in scientific knowledge, although presented separately, are closely interconnected and mutually conditioned, acting as a whole. Methods fulfill their roles and tasks through research, and research and methods are the subject of methodology. It is only in this interconnectedness and permeation that they acquire and fulfill their roles and tasks. Their roles and tasks in the acquisition and application of scientific knowledge make the study and development of methodology necessary.





**II**  
**SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF  
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY IN  
SOCIAL WORK**

## II SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY IN SOCIAL WORK

All special methodologies<sup>13</sup> rely on the following essential foundations and sources of their uniqueness:

1. place within the group-complex of related sciences, their methods, and methodologies;
2. subject matter of the scientific discipline;
3. properties and development of specific scientific knowledge within the subject matter of the scientific discipline;
4. specific characteristics of the research subject and methods of applying the scientific discipline, particularly their concepts, postulates, and goals.

In this sense, the usual division between natural and social sciences and the distinction between their methodologies is not sufficient. The reason for this is that there are characteristic differences in structures within the two mentioned major groups (complexes) of sciences and their methodologies, as well as within the structures of their subjects, properties, and substructure relationships, which all require significant methodological and methodical differences. It is unquestionable that within the complex of natural sciences, physics and chemistry, which

---

<sup>13</sup> Martinović, M.: Specifics of the Methodology of Social Work Science, Proceedings of the Faculty of Law University of Zagreb, no. 3, Zagreb, 1989, Halmi, A.: Research Methodology in Social Work, p. 53-55; 60; 115-123

primarily deal with inanimate objects (although their research also extends to living beings), do not use the same methods as the group of biological sciences. Mathematics has its own methods, although they are not completely isolated from the methods of other groups of sciences. The relationship between individual scientific disciplines is such that the knowledge of one science is essential and fundamental for other sciences, while the knowledge and methods of some sciences cannot and do not need to be applied within the framework of knowledge and methods of other sciences.

For example, astronomy is a recognized, highly attractive, and scientifically and socially valuable science, but it cannot rely on true laboratory experiments because it cannot manipulate original factors and systems, only their artificial substitutes. However, scientific knowledge of physics and chemistry and the method of observation are of paramount importance to astronomy. Knowledge of human and other living beings' anatomy (except perhaps the anatomy of the eye) is not of any significance or practical value to astronomy as a separate natural science or to the method of astronomy.

All sciences, all scientific research, can still apply and successfully apply some methods. Some of these methods are applied without adaptation, others with smaller or larger adaptations. Therefore, there are certain general-common research methods applicable in all sciences and scientific disciplines; some, moreover, cannot be avoided in theoretical or empirical research in any science or scientific discipline. True, they, like other methods, are applied within the framework of their axioms, postulates, premises, theorems, theories, and hypotheses that each science-scientific discipline builds for itself, but they all acquire scientific knowledge through an inevitable, albeit unequal, application of basic

(basic special) methods: analysis-synthesis; abstraction-concretization; specialization-generalization; deduction-induction; and of course, proving and disproving. The application of these methods is inevitable because they are embedded in the processes of logical, true knowledge, and scientific knowledge is primarily logical and strives to be truly true. In addition to these, some general scientific methods, such as statistical methods, modeling, and especially hypothetical-deductive methods, including the "trial and error" method, are applicable in all sciences-scientific disciplines. The same applies to some data collection methods, such as the method of observation. However, if we conditionally divide scientific knowledge into *immediate*, that is, knowledge acquired through direct relationship with phenomena and their primary manifestations, and *mediated*, in which we come into contact with manifestations of phenomena through other subjects, we will find that all the essential methods of data collection can be applied in all sciences, but with different productivity. Therefore, the best examples are methods of document analysis (content analysis) and examination.

All sciences can conduct similar scientific research: empirical and theoretical; fundamental, applied, and developmental; descriptive, classification-typological; heuristic; explanatory and predictive, with varying degrees of reliability and penetrability.

The basic principles of science, such as objectivity, systematicity, verifiability, and objectivity of knowledge, etc., apply to all sciences, and if they are truly so, then their knowledge possesses the characteristics of scientificity, and all sciences apply them appropriately to the characteristics of their subject and methods.

The circle of general principles and methods of science in general is fundamental and narrow. Within the complex of related groups of

sciences, it is specified, and towards sciences-scientific disciplines, it expands. This is especially true for the complex of social sciences.

## 1. Research Methodology in Social Sciences

The very title "social sciences" expresses the fact that it is a set-complex of sciences and scientific disciplines that have some important common provisions, but also significant distinctive features that differentiate them from each other and at the same time from the set-complex of social sciences as a whole. The essential determinant of the set-complex of social sciences is the similarity of the sciences and scientific disciplines that constitute it. They are not simply similar, but there is something essential that makes them related, which determines their belonging to a certain genus and essentially connects them with internal relations and connections, thereby surpassing the characteristics of simple similarity. The search for the relatedness of sciences and scientific disciplines highlights the relationships between the subjects of these sciences and the subjects of their research. In this regard, the question arises: how is it possible that the basis and source of relatedness of specific sciences and scientific disciplines, each of which has its clearly defined subject, is precisely the subject of research-scientific knowledge. There is no comprehensive, integral science of society; neither sociology, nor anthropology, nor any other science.

### 1.1 Some questions of the subject matter of social sciences and their relationship with methodology

A deeper study of the subjects of sciences leads to the realization that, no matter how emphasized their distinctiveness may be, they all deal with society and social life of humans - human life in society, without investigating, in principle, its biological components and characteristics,

but taking them into account to a necessary extent. We said that social sciences, in principle, do not investigate biological components and characteristics, because that is only true in principle. For example, sciences that deal with issues of physical culture, work organization, pedagogy, military sciences, etc. to a greater or lesser extent encompass biological components, although no social science studies human anatomy, physiological processes, etc. However, they clearly differentiate between ages and stages of life, normal and defective in terms of health, developed and stunted, and so on. However, all social sciences distinguish between socialized and unsocialized (in various meanings), as members of various groups and organizations, as value-oriented and interest-oriented individuals - as factors of various social characteristics.

The starting point of social sciences in understanding the subject matter is common: they all consider humans to be highly complex and multifaceted beings (without denying their natural and biological side), beings of society, social communities, groups, organizations; they are intellectual, creative, volitional, emotional, and communicative beings. All these sciences acknowledge work as a relationship with nature and the basis of social relations, and division of labor as an essential characteristic of social organization and the diversity of cultures of social communities and their development. Social sciences perceive humans and society as historical phenomena and processes that never repeat themselves completely, but they cannot abandon the essential provisions of fundamental social human processes - people, their communities, groups, and organizations always have some needs (natural and social) and strive to satisfy those needs through personal and social engagement.

Based on the previous description, it seems that we have come to a simplified, common subject of social sciences, which can be determined with the following brief formulation: the general (common) subject of social sciences is the human as a social being, their psychosocial structure, communities, groups, and organizations they create and live in - their structures and functions, relationships and connections they are in and enter into, their individual and collective needs and the ways in which they satisfy them. There is no doubt that this conditionally general subject of social sciences can be described and determined more fully and precisely, but this definition is sufficient to outline and understand the common matter that makes all social sciences related. They all study social phenomena and processes and the human as an essential actor in them who, under certain circumstances and motivated by something, articulates certain goals and desires aimed at satisfying certain needs, and therefore develops certain activities and acts in certain ways and achieves certain effects, whether individually, in a group, or in a narrower or wider community.

The diversity of contents, forms, flows, and relationships of the human and their groups, communities, etc., as well as the strict requirements of science, have led to the emergence of separate social sciences and scientific disciplines of social sciences, but not to a unified social science. Moreover, integration processes are not apparent, but with the development of society and science, new scientific disciplines of social sciences emerge. In addition, the question of the real scientific nature of social sciences arises. By noting that social sciences are "fragmented" into many separate sciences and scientific disciplines, the impression is gained that the subject of social sciences as a unified scientific subject is not properly defined, but is derived from the defined subjects of individual sciences and scientific disciplines. Hence the question: is the

methodology of social sciences as a unified scientific knowledge of the scientific methods of social sciences even possible, whether methodology is understood as a separate science or considered a discipline of logic? The posed question can only be answered meaningfully when it is determined which sciences and scientific disciplines make up the group-complex of social sciences.

The first and significant question in this consideration is: "Does psychology belong to the group-complex of social sciences, is it perhaps a completely independent complex, or could it be added to the biological sciences?" The answer is of multiple significance for the study of methodology, among other things, because many research methods originated from psychology. Many methods of social sciences contain components of psychology. This is particularly evident in the strategies of applied methods. Also, the psyche is an important factor in every individual and in every communication and action of the individual, even more so in a community and organization. Social relationships simply cannot exist without certain psychological processes taking place. They can indeed be separately researched, but social relationships cannot be researched and understood without a certain understanding and consideration of conscious and subconscious processes.

According to some classifications (such as Engels and dialectical Marxists), psychology is an independent science (a complex science) situated between the natural sciences, of which it is more complex in terms of its subject matter, and the social sciences, whose subject matter is considered the most complex. In contrast, most contemporary theorists, explicitly or implicitly, classify it as a social science, to which the development of social psychology has particularly contributed. There is almost no social science discipline that does not now deal with the



study of attitudes, information, and communication, which are closely linked to psychology. Without engaging in arbitration about the classification of sciences, we can reasonably state that psychology deeply penetrates into the social sciences and more or less permeates their methods. In this sense, it can conditionally be considered a social science as well.

The fact that some research methods, to a greater or lesser extent, originate from psychology is not decisive for the methodology of social sciences. One of the fundamental tasks of methodology in general and of each specific and special methodology is to study the processes and existing methods of acquiring scientific knowledge, including other non-scientific methods. By studying them, methodology discovers their properties and manifested and hidden possibilities of application for scientific knowledge purposes, adapts them to the objects of sciences and research, reworks them or improves them, and/or, inspired by them, develops and discovers new methods. This is evidenced by the structure of methodology and particularly the tasks of its part "scientific strategy." Hence, the undeniable role and connection of general methodology, specific and special methodologies, and even a certain connection between methodology and didactics.

Listing all the sciences and scientific disciplines that belong to the group-complex of social sciences would require forming an excessively long list. For further exposition, it is sufficient to mention only the main areas from which the contents of specific social sciences-scientific disciplines originate, which are more or less directly related to the science of social work or are related to it:

Among the most developed and, from the standpoint of methodology, the most significant social sciences or fields of social sciences are certainly:

1. philosophy (although, by many characteristics, it could not be classified as a standard science). In fact, it remains the most general link between the natural and social sciences by the existence and role of the philosophy of science and epistemology. The development of scientific philosophy also classifies it as a science, as well as the application of some general and basic methods such as proof and refutation, analytical-synthetic methods, etc.
2. economic sciences;
3. sociological sciences;
4. sciences of organization and management of society - political science, law, etc.;
5. linguistic sciences;
6. sciences of education and culture;
7. arts sciences;
8. historical sciences including archaeology and ethnology. Religious studies can conditionally be included in these sciences, although they also lack certain characteristics of secular science.

By listing these scientific fields and sciences, we have shown two important provisions. First, they are all necessarily interconnected by a common general subject; second, they all deal with a sufficiently widespread and significant segment of society or one of its dimensions, a specific sector of social life. To some extent, historical sciences, which deal with the overall past of society, and sociological sciences, which study the general determinations of society, its structure, relationships, regularities, and laws, are exceptions. However specific and clearly defined the subjects of these sciences may be, none of them is completely independent, without touching and permeating not only each other but also the natural sciences.

This is the basis of the common methodology of social sciences. It appears as an abstraction derived from the methodologies of specific sciences or as their synthesis. At the same time, this synthesis occurs in a reciprocal role: first, as a connecting factor with general scientific methodology, and second, as the basis and unifying factor in the specification of specific and special methodologies. This determines the content and tasks of the methodology of social sciences, its structure, relationships, and functions.

Based on the presented scientific knowledge about the subject (subjects) of social sciences, we can meaningfully consider the questions of methodology and methods of social sciences.

## **1.2. Important provisions of the methodology of social sciences**

In social sciences as a whole, and especially in groups of closely related sciences and scientific disciplines, the study and research of their subjects and methods can be based on the principles and norms of a certain logic of true knowledge. The problem is that there are still multiple logics (logical directions) today, but this problem is resolved by the logical part of the methodology in accordance with the affiliation to a specific theoretical methodological direction. However, methodology aims to mitigate the opposition of logical directions with a focus on the subject of scientific research. It is indisputable that social sciences start from the standpoint that valid scientific observations (not simple observations that are just elements of observation) about social reality and adequate thinking about the past, present, and future are fundamental factors of any, including scientific knowledge. However, the very high complexity of society and its reality, its diversity, the variability of social reality, shortcomings in the procedures of social and scientific

knowledge, the influence of astronomical and social time, etc., lead to illusions and errors in scientific knowledge.

Although social sciences and their methodologies strive for objectivity, accuracy, precision, and predictability of scientific knowledge about social processes and phenomena, social sciences and their methodologies do not operate with concepts of universal, absolute knowledge, homogeneity, absolute uniformity, and repeatability of conditions and phenomena in the same actions. They are replaced by concepts of relative uniformity, probability, relative repeatability, and similar corresponding concepts that contain and express certain limitations. Therefore, although social sciences emphasize the necessity of integrity and comprehensiveness - thus the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary nature of research, and require the integration of empirical research with theory, they do not equally value and develop the basic provisions of all general scientific and basic methods. This can be seen from the classifications of sciences and the orientations of methodology, respectively methodology.

The methodology of social sciences highlights the advantages of analytical-synthetic methods, while still giving preference to analytical research and procedures. The standpoint that reliable true knowledge is obtained through analytical means gives preference to deduction - deductive research and methods. Induction only provides statically relevant results, and their generalization only provides probable statistical knowledge. However, the very high diversity, timeliness, uneven distribution, and variability impose empirical research as an essential provision of inductive-generalizing research. In methodology, and especially in application, in research in social sciences, general scientific methods also have various statuses. Statistical and modeling

methods are considered the most useful in empirical research, followed by hypothetical-deductive methods, especially in long-term (longitudinal) research. Axiomatic methods are also used, especially in theoretical research, as well as analytical-deductive methods. The methodology of social sciences does not suggest the use of only one general scientific method in one research. On the contrary, these methods are often combined. It is common to combine statistical and modeling methods, often unintentionally. The same applies to axiomatic and analytical-deductive methods.

With general scientific methods, generally applicable in all sciences, the methodology of social sciences also recognizes general methods of social sciences. These general (general scientific) methods of social sciences, applicable in all social sciences, but not in all sciences, are considered by the methodology of social sciences as methods of individual theoretical-methodological approaches (methodological concepts and methods of positivism, dialectics, and axiology - such as ideographic method, method of understanding, ideal types, etc.), as well as comparative or historical-comparative method. The presented classification is the source of methodological problems that are multiplied by the inclusion of holism and individualism in this group. Some problems are based on the fact that some positivist methods, such as the concept of sensory observable research, as well as structural, functional, and structural-functional analysis and observation, can be applied outside of social sciences. The same applies to the methods of the dialectical approach - with the concept of contradiction, dialectical models, and the like. Axiology methods, as formulated, can possibly be applied only in social sciences, with the exception of the method of ideal types, which can be applied in natural sciences, especially in biological sciences. The comparative method is narrowly understood and primarily

associated with anthropologists, although within each science, appropriate comparisons and research of stages and phases of the past are necessarily conducted. In fact, measurement systems are based on comparing measuring units (measures) with units of measurement objects.

These problems are clearly reflected in scientific research practice, but they are also overcome by it. If the subject of comparison is clearly defined, comparables are defined, and valid criteria for qualitative-quantitative differentiation are defined, a scientifically valid comparison will be achieved, even if the comparative or historical-comparative method is not applied.

The methodology of social sciences has not completely resolved the issue of the relationship between holism and individualism. In essence, the problem is the extreme separation of the holistic understanding of external social action on humans and their individual, autonomous understanding, action, and behavior. In fact, the methodological position that there is only relative uniformity in society is the basis for understanding a certain reciprocity and interpenetration of "dialectics", holistic and individualistic.

The methodology of social sciences was much more determined in resolving the dispute between qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative approach, older and originally widespread, was strongly attacked by the quantitative approach and declared unscientific. However, this fundamentally unscientific dispute was only possible by overlooking or neglecting two essential aspects of general and methodological social sciences. In a rough paraphrase of the first aspect, it can be decisively stated that there is no quantity of anything, only a certain quality. The qualitative approach - orientation towards the

observation of phenomena and processes and the discovery of their properties and relationships - is characteristic of the beginning of research (which we associate with Plato and Aristotle), but even within this approach, there were certain types of quantification (more or less, closer or further, and even measurements and counting). These simple facts of reality, forcibly obvious, simply could not be predicted, especially in empirical research. Therefore, methodology in general and the methodology of social sciences, despite resistance and mutual accusations of "qualitative" and "quantitative" researchers, connected quantitative and qualitative aspects by developing various measurements and affirming them in almost all research. Of course, this required adapting the assumptions and norms of the quantitative approach to their research subjects.

The methodology of social sciences clearly distinguishes data collection methods from other methods based on criteria of their characteristics, utility, and the characteristics of their techniques (instruments and procedures). Thus, it accepts observation as a general method of data collection, including self-observation, understanding it as a direct cognitive and highly adaptable method applicable in all natural and social sciences and suitable for integration into other, more complex methods (e.g. experiments) or for combining and parallel application with other methods. Various roles and degrees of importance can be attributed to it. Under certain conditions and with the use of appropriate instruments, it can be a very penetrating and reliable method.

In contrast, the methodology of social sciences, unlike the methodology of natural sciences, considers experiments as methods with limited possibilities and limited adaptability in social sciences. It distinguishes "true experiments" (laboratory and in natural conditions) from "quasi-

experiments" (natural experiment, ex post facto, and simulation). The difficulties with experiments and the shortcomings of these mentioned experiments are attempted to be compensated for by "strictly controlled research" which requires very conscientious research project design and its consistent implementation.

The often criticized method of surveying appears as an authentic method of the methodology of social sciences. Based on knowledge of human consciousness (individual and social), their ability for objective thinking and memory, as well as the existence of language and writing as very convenient means of expressing communicability in human relationships, the method of surveying emerged and developed as a highly dispersed and highly applicable method. In certain cases, it is even irreplaceable. Forms of surveying, or methods based on surveying, can be understood as content analysis of documents, as well as biographical methods, and even as components of case study methods.

The methodology of social sciences establishes only basic starting points, concepts, orientations, basic classifications, structures, strategies, basic norms, and guidelines for constructing instruments, selecting procedures, and using surveys in research. The concretization of content, place, and role in specific research, goals, and other provisions are left to specific and specialized methodologies and projects of specific research.

The essential scientific goals of research (description, classification-typology, discovery, scientific explanation, and scientific prediction) are also defined in principle by the methodology of social sciences. In this way, it resolves an important question: whether social sciences should strive for understanding or scientific explanation. Social sciences cannot abandon scientific explanation, at least not teleologically. The demand



for understanding can be understood in two ways: as a valid understanding of a situation, attitude, statement, behavior, etc., but also as an expression of goodwill towards speech, actions, behavior, events related to the subject. Its second meaning is the determination of the method of axiological direction. In the first meaning, understanding is the ability of research to validly understand the subject of research, so it precedes and permeates every realization of a scientific goal.

The methodology of social sciences does not arbitrate between theoretical-methodological approaches, paradigms, and systems of orientation values. It only observes, describes, and represents them, critically examines their content, forms, origin, and development, and their relationship and requirements for scientific knowledge and research. However, segments of the methodology of social sciences related to certain theoretical-methodological approaches and their branches emphasize the advantages and disadvantages of those they compete with.

## 2. Methodology of research in social work

**B**y analyzing the emergence and development of special methodologies (such as political science), five essential conditions have been identified that must be met in order for a special methodology to be established. These are:

1. The first condition for the emergence and development of any social science or scientific discipline is the objective existence of a social process or phenomenon, whether real or spiritual, that is widespread and socially significant enough to generate a broader and lasting social interest. This process or phenomenon, regardless of its degree of connection to other social and natural processes or phenomena,

must be distinct and recognizable enough to be identified and studied as a unique entity across different spaces and times.

2. The second condition is related to and conditioned by the first. In order for a science or scientific discipline to be established, it is necessary for the object of knowledge to be determined and differentiated relatively accurately from the objects of other sciences or scientific disciplines. In this case, delimitation and differentiation do not mean complete and radical separation that excludes any interaction with the objects of other sciences or scientific disciplines, but rather the ability to conceptually identify significant differences between them. Otherwise, the current state of affairs in science, especially in social sciences, would not be possible. According to the understanding of methodology, the object of research requires corresponding methods, thus the object has a prior position and serves as a cause and condition in relation to the methods of knowledge.
3. There must be at least some fundamental approaches, postulates, theorems, and hypotheses regarding the object of science or scientific discipline and its cognition, but they must undergo at least initial theoretical processing, contemplation, classification, and systematization. The existence of a unified and developed theory of the object is not crucial for the construction of a special methodology, although it is desirable, because scientific knowledge consists of knowledge about the object and the method of the science or scientific discipline, which are in a relationship of mutual conditioning and interaction.
4. An important condition for the establishment and development of a special methodology are the characteristics of the object of research that prevent valid scientific knowledge about the object without

appropriate adaptation of existing methods from specific complex sciences or other sciences or scientific disciplines, or without the construction of new methods. If existing approaches, postulates, principles, methods, and research techniques can be applied without adaptation to the requirements of the respective object of research (at least to a level of applying them "accordingly" - not exactly the same, but similar), then a new special methodology is unnecessary.

5. A relatively favorable social situation is necessary for the emergence and development of a special methodology. The lowest level of a favorable social situation is the absence of direct obstacles and opposition strong enough to prevent or decisively hinder the construction and constitution of a new science or scientific discipline and its special methodology. In this regard, two social spheres are crucial: one is the sphere of science, and the other is the general social sphere outside of science.

The characteristics of a positive situation in the sphere of science can be summarized as a favorable scientific climate and disposition for the development of science, not only integratively but also dispersively; availability of a sufficiently large number of personnel with appropriate creative capacity, organized in an appropriate manner; availability of funds for scientific knowledge and scientific critical openness. In the non-scientific part of the social situation, favorable conditions manifest through a positive attitude towards science and its development, the absence of ideological and political obstacles, willingness and development of social practice to utilize and value scientific knowledge, as well as the crucial provision of material conditions for a sufficient number of various types of research.

In the practice of social life and work, all the conditions that make the situation ideal have never been met, and it is unrealistic to expect that. It is enough to achieve minimal favorable conditions to achieve positive results. In our case, according to the principle of gradualness, the realization and development of one condition leads to the realization and development of most other conditions.

For our further considerations, it is important to consider the first four conditions that belong to the field of social work science.

## **2.1 Key issues in identifying and defining the subject of social work research**

When considering the issue of identifying a specific process-phenomenon called social work, we approach it by taking into account the facts of reality, professional knowledge, and certain scientific evidence. In this regard, it is evident that in social practice since ancient times, there have been significant groups (and sometimes masses) of people who are in a situation where, for various reasons, they cannot meet even their basic human needs through their own efforts, but depend on the assistance of society-other social subjects. Throughout human history, the number, characteristics of subjects in situations of pronounced social needs, the causes of their situation, and ways of assistance have changed, starting from family, kinship, tribal, group, and other forms of solidarity, to individual acts of mercy (voluntary or prescribed), religious-confessional acts of mercy, to interest-based (union and party-political) and charitable organized assistance, to systematic institutional-professional, state-supported, and intergovernmental-international systematized (systematic) provision of assistance. Therefore, the profession, organization, situation of a particular group (mass) of people, and their relationship with the subjects

of assistance are factual, lasting, and specific social phenomena-processes that can be empirically and conceptually identified and distinguished as truly distinct from other phenomena and processes. This fulfills the first condition for establishing a special science-scientific discipline. This phenomenon-process can be scientifically studied, thus it can be constituted, marked, delimited as a specific subject of science. However, it is a very complex truth, and its demarcation from the subjects of other sciences is very difficult.

The identified subject of science can be scientifically defined and theoretically elaborated, and can be scientifically researched.

Before we embark on discussing the issues of defining and theoretical elaboration of the subject of social work science and the special methodology of social work science, we must give a few functionally important remarks.

First, it should be noted that methodology is the science of scientific methods, and that special methodologies are scientific disciplines that, on the one hand, are methodologies as sciences, and on the other hand, are scientific disciplines in which the knowledge of methodology is used. The subject of research of special methodologies includes:

1. the method of social work science as its constitutive part;
2. scientific research methods in social work as a science and methods of scientific research in social work;
3. scientific provisions of research methods and scientific knowledge used in relation to or within the framework of methods of practice, action, "social intervention", "social therapy", etc. in social work.

The main tasks of this methodology are to prepare scientific methodological foundations for scientific research in social work as a

scientific discipline and its components, by adapting or developing new methodological postulates and approaches as needed, accepting the application of basic and general scientific methods, methods of data collection and analysis, and scientific reporting on the progress and results of scientific knowledge, as well as suggestions for their application.

Additionally, a specific task of this methodology is to gain scientific knowledge about the actual application of non-scientific methods and existing non-scientific knowledge in social work, to qualify and classify them, and to integrate them into the science of social work and its methodology according to their characteristics. Another specific task of special methodology is to enable the identification and classification of scientific disciplines and segments within the structure of the science of social work.

The execution of these tasks of methodology, like its origin and constitution, is conditioned by the existence of a valid theoretical definition of the subject of the science of social work, or a definition of social work that contains a sufficiently clear statement of its specificity.

The identification of the subject of science is the task of methodology, so it is also the provision of conditions for the construction and verification of the definition and theory, but its task is not the construction of the definition itself. That is the real task of theory and scientifically and professionally based practice. Without a valid or at least acceptable, conditional definition of the subject of the science-scientific discipline, it is not possible to establish and develop a special methodology. In order to study and develop the methodology of social work, we will consider several recent definitions of the subject of the science of social work by significant authors who perceive social work as the subject of a special

science. Since definitions are considered the pinnacle of theoretical work, we cannot ignore the assessment of the state of theory by such recognized authors as I. Nedeljković, Ivan Vidanović, Aleksandar Halmi. They have a high degree of agreement on the absence of a unified theory, weaknesses and shortcomings of specific theories, and even the justification for the formation of a so-called "theory of medium scope" based on generalizations of the research subject.

The consequence of the situation in the explicated theory is that it is still theoretically unclear what the true subject of social work is, as well as the problems of differentiation from other sciences. Thus, there are still dilemmas as to whether the true subject is a social phenomenon-process or the profession itself. The relationship with other scientific disciplines, especially in the relations of psychology-social work, sociology-social work, pedagogy-social work, law-social work, political science-social work, is also unclear, and the realization of concrete practical tasks of social work is mixed with the theoretical-ideological determination of social work. Teamwork in the execution (practice) of social work tasks has contributed to the formation of an understanding of the eclecticism (multidisciplinarity) of the science of social work, its "integrative" and "service-oriented" character, etc.

Without going into the origin and history of social work, let us pay attention to some existing definitions.

M. Martinović considers the subject of social work to be a complex whole consisting of three segments:

1. human needs, paths and methods of meeting needs, and their humanization;
2. social behavior and socialization processes;
3. social problems and their prevention.

Rössner, Lutz believes that the "core subject" of social work can be determined as the "structure of social problems and social-protective needs."

Lindeman, Hamilton, and Irvin define social work as an independent science whose research subjects are "human needs and values with the aim of finding such living conditions that would best correspond to human nature."

N. Smolić emphasizes that the essential determination is "what is encompassed in social work is the individual and their behavior as a function of the entire life situation, an integrative approach to human problems..."

Ivan Vidanović: "it is an organized and scientifically based profession aimed at helping individuals, groups, and communities to regain their lost opportunities for social functioning and create favorable conditions for achieving set goals."

Nedeljković, Rastimir-iv: "it is an activity from which the profession of social work was born, which relies not only on institutional activity but especially on the awareness of individuals, groups, and communities about their mutual interdependence and conditioning in overcoming life difficulties in the development of human sociability."

Bećin, Aleksandar: "Social work is a publicly performed activity based on scientific knowledge and carried out methodically, through which certain services, on behalf of society, provide assistance to community members (individually, in groups, and at the community level) when they are, or would be, temporarily or permanently hindered from satisfying their basic needs, performing their social roles, and utilizing social values."



The viewpoint of one of the most prominent proponents in building the methodology of social work, A. Halmi, cannot be neglected due to his significant and great contribution in this field, which he expresses as follows:

"However, the central and distinguishing feature of the social work profession compared to other relevant disciplines is that, in addition to explaining and understanding facts, it has the ability to transfer knowledge into practice and professional services in a unique way to meet the broad demands of clients."

Even these definitions, taken individually, are not sufficient for approaching the construction of the methodology of social work, and when considered together, they lead to new uncertainties. We encounter these uncertainties in statements that consider social work as "special sociology," "special social pedagogy," "implementation of social policy," etc. None of these understandings are sufficiently argued. All of these sciences emerged before the science of social work and each has its own specific subject matter, none of which directly addresses the entirety of the phenomenon of social work. Therefore, they have already made distinctions from social work. The methodology of the science of social work should contribute to distinguishing social work from other sciences or scientific disciplines, which must be positively expressed unlike negative differentiations that show what social work is not.

Special methodology is not completely helpless in situations where there is no valid theoretical definition of the research subject. By helping to arrive at that definition and by indicating the norms of definition and their application, it can form a temporary working (postulated) definition. This definition cannot (should not) be arbitrary, but its essential provisions must be derived from appropriate sources. In the case of defining

(postulating, working) social work as the subject of the science of social work, methodology can rely on:

1. scientific-methodological research of valid theoretical and "practiced" explicit and implicit definitions;
2. appropriate analysis of scientific and other knowledge about the phenomenon-process of social work as part of social reality;
3. methodological research of previously conducted research on social work and within social work;
4. scientific analysis of categorical conceptual and terminological apparatus.

In this way, the methodology of social work relies on a knowledge system that includes theory, practice, scientific and professional ideas and understandings, as well as others that may be useful or only stimulating.

The definitions presented above do not meet all the requirements for developing a specialized methodology due to the following deficiencies, more or less pronounced:

First, they do not clearly express the essential specificity of social work as a social phenomenon-process.

Second, they are unnecessarily descriptive, which is a result of insufficient theoretical determination.

In an attempt to avoid excessive detail, we will critically analyze only two important definitions. Let's start with a relatively comprehensive definition by A. Bećina, which we will not repeat in its entirety. According to the definition, "social work is a public activity," but this part of the statement has at least two shortcomings. First, social work is not only a public activity, so it is not its specific determination. Second, historically, social work originated as a private activity, and even today, social work in

the broadest sense is not limited to being a "public activity." Furthermore, it states: "specific services, on behalf of society, provide assistance to members of society..." which also does not speak to the specificity of social work because there are many other services that provide assistance to members of society on behalf of society, such as security services (including firefighters), courts, legal profession, trade unions and their services, various associations and organizations, political parties, etc. There are various types of assistance, various beneficiaries, and various methods. It continues: "when members of the community are, or in order not to be, temporarily or permanently hindered from satisfying their normal life needs, performing their social roles, and utilizing social values." This statement brings us very close to the essential determination of the subject, but it is so comprehensive that it is too broad and does not express the specificities of social work. It raises at least the following questions: what should be understood by the concept of "life needs." What are these needs, what is their measure, etc. Does it include health, sex, power, professional training, information, social reputation, etc.? Obviously, these are the contents of the activities of other segments of society, its institutions and institutes, and not social work. Overall, the definition is not incorrect, none of the statements in it are wrong, but even though it is stimulating, it is not specific enough.

According to the statement by A. Halme,<sup>14</sup> the "central and distinguishing characteristic of the social work profession in relation to other relevant disciplines," several questions arise immediately:

---

<sup>14</sup> Halmi, A.: *Social Work in the Local Community*, "Social Protection" Library, Zagreb, 1989, p. 90

1. Does he consider the profession a scientific discipline? It is undisputed that it can be the subject of research, but it is difficult to understand only one profession as a scientific discipline.
2. What are the other "relevant disciplines" with which social work differs? An important basis for differentiation is that it "besides explaining and understanding facts, also has the ability to transfer knowledge into practice and professional services, in order to meet the diverse demands of clients in a unique way." The ability to transfer knowledge into practice is a characteristic of all sciences, although it may be more pronounced in some, just like in social work (law, linguistics, pedagogy, special education, political science, etc.). The view on explanation and understanding can be understood differently, and from the perspective of methodology, as a commitment to an axiological stance (understanding-empathy) which would contradict the understanding of scientific explanation as a scientific goal or outcome.

Considering the definitions, it shows how difficult it is to establish a new science, its theory, and methodology. In no way does this diminish or neglect the very significant contributions of the mentioned authors.<sup>15</sup>

The third process of discovering the subject of science - scientific discipline is the scientific-methodological analysis of research:

1. social work and
2. applied research in social work.

---

<sup>15</sup> Halmi, A.: is the only one if his continuous effort to promote and develop action research is taken into account. The significant role in the creation of the methodology of social work science is played by M. Martinović, and the works of some Slovenian authors are also significant.

According to the assessments of numerous authors, there is very little research of the first type, while research of the second type is primarily subordinate to the demands of practice - "social intervention". However, together they have considerably greater methodological value and significance for the science of social work. They indicate possible conclusions: the subject of the science of social work, since social work itself is a social process - a phenomenon in the form of social activity (purposeful, goal-oriented, organized, and spontaneous, very complex and dispersed), belongs to social sciences. The subject of this science is a social segment. It consists of a part of the social composition that is potentially or actually in a situation of pronounced social need, which can be temporary or permanent. This subject also includes social subjects who provide assistance in overcoming or at least alleviating their problems.

Some researchers understand social work as action on "social pathology". There are two reasons why this understanding does not seem appropriate to us. First, not all subjects in a situation of pronounced social need are in the same social position, have the same social behavior, or have the same origin of needs. It is enough to compare juvenile delinquents placed in certain institutions with young people with physical and mental developmental delays or elderly individuals also placed in institutions, and not accept the term "social pathology". Second, it is also not possible to classify the subjects who provide social assistance as "social pathology".

The subject of social work is essentially a social process-phenomenon that occurs in various social areas, expressed as:

1. working with individuals in marital relationships whose relationships are disrupted or divorcing;

2. working on the placement of children from divorced marriages;
3. working on issues related to children without parental care, including addressing guardianship, adoption, placement in families, and institutional care;
4. working with natural parents who do not take care of their children;
5. working with children and other minors with behavioral disorders;
6. working on issues related to families of children and youth with developmental disabilities;
7. working on issues related to determining conditions for accessing social protection rights;
8. working on issues related to the elderly;
9. working on issues of socialization in preschool institutions;
10. working on social issues in education;
11. working on issues in extraordinary social conditions and circumstances;
12. working on issues of social situations and relationships in the economy;
13. working on social issues in the health sector;
14. working in correctional facilities, and additionally, on international issues in social work.

From this, two conclusions can be drawn. First, the understanding of social work that is limited to three levels (individual, group, community) is too narrow. Second, social work can be empirically identified and conceptually understood, and can be the subject of research and scientific discipline.

The fourth process of discovering the subject of social work as a separate field is the analysis of categorical-conceptual and terminological apparatus. This implies determining the relationship

between content and forms of expression, their significance, and the existence of a specific categorical order in the system of thinking.

There are three important categorical concepts in determining the subject of social work. The first is "accentuated social need." This term refers to a social situation in which a subject has certain social difficulties-problems that they cannot resolve independently, in accordance with the characteristics and requirements of the social environment, its norms, and values. The origin of the problem can be social or non-social. In a situation of "accentuated social need," an individual, group, or community may find themselves in a difficult situation even if they have not violated any social rules, but have been affected by social events.

The situation of "emphasized social need" is resolved (should be able to be resolved) by providing social assistance. Therefore, another categorical term is "provision of social assistance" in the form of "social intervention", "social action", "community therapy", etc. The third categorical term is "client" to whom social assistance is given-provided. The term "provided" is more suitable because the offered social assistance does not always have to be accepted. This is the person exposed to "social therapy", "social action", etc. We must differentiate at least three types of clients:

1. Voluntary clients, who have requested social assistance themselves;
2. Stimulated clients, who did not seek social assistance but accepted it when offered by others;
3. Coerced clients, to whom "social therapy" was imposed against their will.

With these classifications, based on the facts and regulations that govern professional institutionalized social work, it follows that the question of

dividing social work into function and characteristics of social control is indeed redundant.

Social work always performs a dual protective function. On one hand, it always protects the client from the problems of the situation, but on the other hand, it protects society from the disruptive behavior of some "clients". Additionally, an important component and characteristic of professional social work and social work institutions is social protection.

The concept of "client", "recipient of social assistance", "beneficiary" also implies the existence of aid providers-social workers of all kinds. This further implies a specific hierarchical relationship between the provider and the recipient, with the client being subordinate. In a society where competition is a significant feature, no methodology, theory, or methodology can change this.

Based on all that has been presented, we can attempt to form a temporary working definition of the subject matter of the science of social work that will largely meet logical and methodological requirements. It could be stated as follows: "The subject matter of the science of social work is a permanent, developmental, widespread, complex, goal-oriented, and purposeful social phenomenon-process whose essence is the provision of social assistance to members of society who may find themselves in or are in a situation of emphasized social need or are in the process of overcoming it, and cannot overcome their problems in that situation through their own engagement."

This very simplified definition, as an essential provision of social work and a determinant of the science of social work, denotes the provision of social assistance (curative and preventive; to individuals, groups, and communities), distinguishing it from the subjects of all other sciences and scientific disciplines.



Discussion about whether it is a "service science" or a "service profession", as well as whether it is an "eclectic", "interdisciplinary", "integrative" science, and debates about "borrowed knowledge" lose significance with the provision that it is a social science, a integral part of the complex of sciences, and is characterized by all the characteristics of other emerging sciences and scientific disciplines.

## **2.2 Basic essential specificities of the special methodology of social work science**

In the previous chapters, we have already indicated the most important specificities of the special methodology of social work science through the consideration of the subject of science and possible research subjects.

In principle, there are three basic sources of specificity of special and special methodologies. First, these are the structure, characteristics, and understanding of the subject of science expressed through the degree of definition, differentiation, and development of theoretical knowledge about it, as well as the characteristics of the phenomenon-process that is the subject of scientific knowledge. The second source is the development and characteristics of research and other practices related to the subject of science and research, which is manifested through types of research and activities in and within the practice of relating to and within the social phenomenon. The third source of specificity of methodology is the accepted methods, their characteristics, and their interrelationships, and especially the characteristics of the application of methods.

The specificities of the methodology of social work science can currently be observed through the consideration of characteristic provisions of the

contemporary situation of this methodology and through the immediate tasks of this methodology. The second approach is more productive because it necessarily relies on knowledge of the current situation.

Special methodology must first significantly engage in the scientific definition of the subject of social work science. It is already doing so, but it is necessary for it to engage more directly in at least three ways: first, by highlighting and insisting on the rules of defining and the properties of a logically and methodologically valid definition. In this sense, starting from the true provisions of social work as a social process-phenomenon of reality, it must build and develop applicable selection criteria. Distinguishing the scientifically relevant from the scientifically irrelevant is a condition for the development of science; second, to point out fundamental differences between social work and other phenomena. In this sense, it must develop criteria for distinguishing identity, similarity, resemblance, peripheral, structural, and functional interpenetration, as well as criteria for originality and derivability. This is an important condition for reaching the original essential uniqueness of the subject of social work science so that it is not misunderstood as "special sociology", "special social psychology", "social pedagogy", etc.; third, it must offer and contribute to the identification of narrower scientific disciplines of social work science. It is evident that the current understanding of the field of social work and the "levels of analysis" as well as the place of social protection, social policy, social prevention in the content of research subjects stimulate this, but do not resolve it. Without determining and systematizing the content, social work science will rely more on normative-legal than on its own scientifically relevant concepts.

The second strategic methodological complex of the problem that needs to be resolved and resolved is the relationship between methodology and

methodology. These problems have two essential sources. The first is a highly developed methodology of social work, with highly developed general principles, instructions, patterns, and techniques, while on the other hand, the methodology is not sufficiently developed. The consequences of this are long-term and significant. In the current situation, the scientific concept of the scientific method has been neglected, so only some of their forms and types are understood as methods. The case with the method of investigation, which is reduced to one of its techniques (interview) and one instrument of one of the investigation techniques (questionnaire), is evident. A major consequence of this is the classification of research and unclear determination of their role and objectives. Simplifying the classification of research based on objectives has led to a distinction only between descriptive and action research, and classifications according to purposes have been introduced (diagnostic, evidentiary, etc.). The special methodology of the science of social work will have to quickly establish its own classification of methods in its field and their relationship to basic and general scientific methods, methods of other sciences, and methods of professional practice, as well as determine their place and role in the system of science and scientific research. The task of clearly defining the methods of science, methods based on scientific methods, and routine administrative-evidentiary methods of the profession is yet to be done.

The methodology of the science of social work also needs to consider its relationship with theoretical-methodological orientations and their methods and approaches. Simply favoring one methodological orientation (action research) and reducing the problem to "paradigms" does not solve this problem. Kun's concept of paradigm, which he himself did not explicitly define, signifies more than it resolves questions of approach, postulates, and premises. Some authors, theorists, and

methodologists, sensing this problem, have focused more on the epistemological foundations of the theory and methodology of social work than on the essential content of methodology, methods, and research. In this sense, questions of an integral methodological approach will also need to be addressed, especially problems of understanding integrality (whether it is the unity of diversity) and questions of empathy. Related to this is the question of "borrowed knowledge" and the relationship between the methods and methodologies of psychology, pedagogy, sociology, and law with the methodology (and methodology) of the science of social work or social work.

In the current scientific practice, there is a tendency towards discrimination and favoritism towards certain scientific and methodological knowledge. Perhaps the most illustrative example of this is I. Vidanović, who completely ignores political science and its methodology, even though he is a professor in the field of social work, which is located in the Faculty of Political Sciences, and he derives research methods in social work from the methodology of psychology (works by A. Berger). This raises two fundamental questions: first, to what extent can a special methodology be developed by adopting methodologies from other sciences or exclusively relying on the methodology of one of them; second, the issue of scientific personnel in the field of social work. Older scientists have been educated and come from other sciences, so it is not surprising that each of them, with the best of intentions, transfers the influence of their own discipline. On one hand, this is useful for opening a debate on identified problems, but on the other hand, it slows down the original development in the field of social work. In the methodology of the science of social work, the least attention has been given so far to research design, data analysis, drawing conclusions based on them, and the use of scientific knowledge. There is

much more information on the description of procedures, phases, and techniques of factual social work than in methodological works. In the available literature, we have only come across one author from the Balkan region who has written comprehensive works on methodology and social work (that is Aleksandar Halmi), but there are not many such works in the worldwide literature. The task of methodology is to fill this gap. Further presentations will discuss some identified specificities of the methodology of the science of social work. The next chapter will address the relationship between special and social science methodology, followed by the specificities of research in social work, and then methodological paradigms in social work.

### **3. Comparison of research methodology in social sciences and research methodology in social work**

**R**elationship between research methodology in social sciences and research methodology in social work can be studied in various ways and from different perspectives. Research methodology in social work, specifically in the science of social work, is a specialized methodology within the broader methodology of social sciences. This approach has become inevitable by incorporating the research methodology of social work into the complex methodology of social sciences. Therefore, this relationship emerges as a relationship between the general and the specific, the abstract and the concrete. The approach to examining this relationship can be twofold. Firstly, the relationship between the methodology of social sciences as a relatively constituted whole with the specialized methodology of social work can be considered, where the latter is seen as a part of the former, i.e. the relationship between the whole and the part, and vice versa. The second approach, more complex

and extensive, is the examination of the relationship between the methodology of each individual scientific discipline and the methodology of social work or only the relationship with the methodologies of the closest and most related sciences to social work. It seems most appropriate and economical to first establish the general relationship between the two methodologies, and only if necessary, when conceiving each individual research, consider the relationship with the methodologies of specific sciences. This need arises when we cannot find a methodological solution in the methodology of social work during the conception, design, and implementation of research, so we search for it in the methodologies of related sciences.

The research on the relationship between the methodology of social sciences and the specialized methodology is conducted through:

1. direct analysis of the contents and scientific views of the two methodologies, their comparison and identification of the same, related or similar solutions, as well as identification of solutions that one of them does not contain, as opposite solutions. This practically means listing and comparing widely accepted and valid principles, premises, schemes, lists, classifications and categorizations, methodological directions, methods, techniques and procedures, indicators and data, rules and instructions, and based on the acquired knowledge, discovering reasons for accepting, adapting or rejecting certain solutions. In this process, it is justified to start from the content of the methodology of social sciences because it is richer, older, and more thoroughly tested, and therefore more reliable. It already contains what is common to the methodologies of all social sciences, which makes it easier to discover the specific aspects in the specialized methodology. When verified scientific knowledge is

respected, when the procedures of scientific knowledge are clearly distinguished from other types of knowledge in the specialized methodology, when there is no pursuit of originality and distinctiveness at all costs, and when various mystifications are not used to emphasize distinctiveness, this approach is fruitful.

2. By analyzing the most significant research carried out in the field of social sciences (all or only a sample of related disciplines that are used as standardized representatives and examples) and representative research in social work, data on the relationship between methodologies can be obtained through comparison.
3. The application of standard norms, recommendations, methods, etc. of social sciences in a certain number of methodological research and the evaluation of this attempt based on the criterion of successful application to the subject of social work.

It is possible that some may insist on a "convergent" or reverse procedure. However, regardless of the approach taken, the methodology of social sciences, as determined in Chapter 1 of this section, remains:

1. A metatheoretical methodological foundation for all specialized methodologies precisely because it has resolved essential epistemological questions of the entire complex of social sciences;
2. It has codified universally valid solutions of scientific knowledge through scientific research, thus representing a functional system of practical and guiding instructions for scientific research work;
3. It has established a system for evaluating all approaches, research, their results, and the application of results.

With all of this, it becomes the real, fundamental scientific foundation and support for the construction of specialized methodologies.

The methodology of social work science has nothing more to do than critically study the essential content of the methodology of social sciences, evaluate and assess them from the perspective of the demands of its own subject, adopt certain knowledge, adapt others as necessary, reject some with justification, fill in gaps, and correct errors with justification. In doing so, it will protect itself from wandering, avoid many misconceptions and mistakes, and contribute to the development of methodology and science.





# **III**

## **SPECIFICITY OF RESEARCH IN SOCIAL WORK**

## III SPECIFICITY OF RESEARCH IN SOCIAL WORK

### 1. General methodological issues of research specificity

In order to even approach the consideration of the specificity of research in social work, we must clearly define what we mean by the terms "specificity" and "research," although they are commonly used and could be said to have established meanings. However, this is not precise enough for methodology, as it does not guarantee sufficient consensus among interested parties (primarily scientific subjects) about the content of the concepts and meanings.

The essential provisions of specificity are: (1) the existence of a particular general quality that (2) contains several related factors that can belong to different types based on their properties and provisions, but in all types and manifestations through which they can differ, they must retain the basic essential quality. Specificity is determined by applying the basic analytical method called specification, which starts from a qualitative whole, a common specific quality, and then determines the members within it who, in addition to the basic essential similarity, have provisions that make them different from others. This can be nicely seen in the example of the classification of the "division" type, which is just a form of specification. The classification must have either a predefined criterion or a derived criterion during the classification process based on which one can see:

1. common quality-whole;
2. properties that are taken as indicators of differences;
3. properties that make each member of the classification distinct, yet still belonging to the classified (specialized) whole;
4. distance-separation of members within the classification system (specialization).

In order to specify something, we must determine at least what we are specifying, in relation to what and how, with what, and through which procedure. This raises several questions, among which the following are important:

1. Does the search for specificity start from the valid definition of research in social sciences, or has the science of social work or social work itself formulated a different, fundamentally different definition?
2. Are the specificities of scientific research in the science of social work being sought, or are the specificities of all types of research that take place within social work being sought?
3. In relation to what are the specificities of research in social work sought: in relation to the conditional general subject of social sciences or in relation to subjects of other social sciences, especially related ones; according to the goals of research in social sciences.

For our consideration, it is important to question whether specificities of research in the science of social work are sought, i.e. scientific research that can encompass the entirety of the science, subject, and methods of the science of social work through the application of scientific procedures and methods, or if it demands the inclusion of all types of research (which can be treated as research in the process-phenomenon of social work activity according to certain criteria). For further consideration, the answer to this question is of particular significance

because it expresses a preference for remaining within the field of scientific methodology or departing from this field and transitioning to the field of methodology, or alternatively, remaining within the field of scientific methodology but considering the field of methodology as the subject of science. The third option, considering the situation in the theory and methodology of the science of social work, seems to be the most fruitful but also the most complex.

The analysis of research conducted so far in social work or in the science of social work, as well as the analysis of the latest texts on methodology and theory of social work, allow us to conclude that the science of social work accepts the basic definition of research constituted by social sciences and their methodology. Therefore, the following provisions for research also apply to the science of social work: "Research is a valid, psychophysical, human, organized systematic process of acquiring scientific knowledge about the subject and method of science through the application of scientific methods (techniques-procedures and instruments) and scientific procedures." This definition sets forth several essential requirements for a certain targeted and purposeful activity to be accepted as a scientific activity of scientific research. The basic requirements would be:

1. defining the problem and subject of scientific and social significance on which scientific knowledge will be acquired.
2. determining the scientific and social objectives to be achieved through this research, or the level of scientific knowledge to be attained in order to solve a scientific or social problem, thereby justifying the scientific and social relevance of the research.
3. based on verified and probable scientific-theoretical and methodological knowledge necessary for the discovery and

identification of the subject, its systematic organization, valid selection of scientific methods, and their valid and consistent application.

The three mentioned requirements imply systematicity, organization, and proceduralism, which are successfully achieved in the research practice through the procedure of conceptualization and research project development.

Does the methodology of social sciences require or allow the research project to be a "desk-based product"? This question is unnecessary to ask, given the characteristics of social sciences and the guidance on conceptualization, project design, and testing of research projects. The answer, both practically and theoretically and methodologically, is already given: socially and scientifically significant, real or probable potential problems are investigated in order to find scientific and practical solutions for them.

If the accepted definition of research formulated by social sciences is adopted, does it oblige us to accept the classifications offered by social sciences? Although the available "methodologies of social work" do not provide a systematic and comprehensive classification, the only consistent dichotomy they emphasize is the distinction between traditional methodology and action research methodology. Accordingly, traditional and action research are distinguished. As the discussion of action research and its methodological determinations will be the subject of the next section, here we will only note that purely scientific "traditional" research would aim for pure scientific knowledge with full respect for positivist-functionalistic norms such as objectivity, scientific neutrality, scientific distance of the researcher, verifiability, and other

characteristics. In contrast, action research aims for "changing the situation."

These statements indicate that the authors of "social work" methodologies as a science (but still not a science of social work) implicitly accept classifications of research based on the subject, objectives, affiliations to specific research, structure, direction, affiliation to specific approaches, methods, scope, effects, etc. Therefore, there already exists a basic classification of research in social sciences, but they selectively and, one might say, biasedly relate to it. The following facts support this. Firstly, the very term "traditional methodology" and consequently "traditional research" contains a pejorative expression that tries to portray them as less valuable compared to action research. Secondly, two essential facts are neglected: all research starts from existing knowledge, and its significant outcome is new scientific knowledge, which can be new knowledge about the subject or method of science; it can only confirm the validity of previous knowledge in various ways, or it can refute existing knowledge. Therefore, "traditional" research can be heuristic and verificatory. Furthermore, "traditional" research is attributed with the qualification of being "descriptive." Without belittling scientific description, which is a necessary component of any knowledge of a phenomenon, and some identify it with scientific explanation, we must point out the well-known scientific fact that "traditional" research can have scientific classification and typology, scientific discovery, scientific explanation, and scientific prediction as its objectives. Therefore, not all "traditional" research is descriptive.

In addition, they are not exclusively focused on acquiring scientific knowledge. They can be fundamental - those that allow essential knowledge about processes-phenomena, and they can also be "applied,"

those that make fundamental research, their knowledge suitable for practical application, and they can be "developmental," those whose knowledge enables dispersion and diversity in the practical use of that knowledge. In the traditional research system, "applied" and "action" research have long been known and applied. Long before the publication of works on the methodology of action research, "traditional action research" was known and applied in our country.

It should also be added that "a series of previous scientific research (arguments) are obtained for some social change, mainly of a descriptive nature. Based on scientific knowledge that can withstand even the most rigorous positivist criteria, verifications, and valorizations... they do not negate the descriptive part of science, nor do they negate positivism in the descriptive phase of research."

According to some authors in the field of social work, the use of scientific research knowledge is a specificity of social work as a "service science" or service activity. This, in itself, is not its specificity, and neither is the research of the science of social work and social work as an activity directly related to the practice of research knowledge. Also, all research in other social sciences is more or less, directly or indirectly, in the near or distant future, aimed at application in a certain variant. Moreover, in some social sciences, such as political science, manipulative, administrative, and similar research, which have significant intervention in political processes, are known. This is more evident in pedagogical and legal research, economic research, etc. In scientific contemplation of this issue, one should never lose sight of the fact that every social research has the characteristics of a social relationship, and the establishment of every social relationship and its realization leave certain social effects. The specificities of each research have their source in the subject of

science - the scientific discipline within which the research is conducted, in the subject of research and the degree, content, and other provisions of the already achieved knowledge about that subject, as well as the type of research and applied methods. Finally, let us remind ourselves that every research is conditioned by complex social circumstances and its social economy - which is not a simple relationship between costs and benefits.

## 2. Specificities of the research subject in social work

**T**he subject of each science is specific because it is a process-reality phenomenon or an aspect or segment that is specific to the science in its determinations compared to others. The specificity of the research subject in the science of social work, or in social work, is not that it is a process in which the activity at its center is organized, systematic, goal-defined, and human-oriented professional activity. In principle, many other activities (e.g. pedagogy) are like that in the characteristics of the subjects of that process and the performance of the activity. We did not list scientific grounding as an essential provision because the subject of scientific knowledge and scientific research can also be an activity that is not scientifically grounded. Just the consideration of social work shows that it encompasses certain natural processes, behaviors, and activities that usually cannot have scientific grounding. For example, there is no social work if, potentially or factually, there are no people in a "situation of pronounced social need," and there are no such people if there is no old age, illness, loss of employment, disturbed and deviant behavior, etc. Only the other essential component of social work, "providing social assistance," can be scientifically grounded, guided by socially accepted values, etc.



The specificity of this subject is that in all subjects of research of phenomena-processes-activities, the interaction of subjects in various social positions and various social roles is investigated, in very delicate relationships. An essential provision of the research subject is that the cause-and-effect relationships are inevitably always investigated, either in their entirety or partially. Taking a closer look, as constant essential subjects of research of any type, the following appear:

1. causes and conditions for the emergence of a state of "pronounced social need";
2. essential determinations of subjects in a situation of "pronounced social need" and subjects who should provide or provide social assistance, or perform "social intervention";
3. expectations of users-clients of social assistance and goals of social assistance providers, including expectations and demands of narrower and wider social communities, states, etc.;
4. activities in the process of "providing social assistance," on one hand, the behavior of subjects in a "situation of pronounced social need," on the other hand, the actions of social assistance providers, and, thirdly, subjects of the social environment, closer or more distant, with specific interests or without them;
5. methods and means that should, can, or are used during the provision of social assistance-"social intervention";
6. all significant effects of providing social assistance-"social intervention."

In addition to each of the listed subjects being able to be studied and researched separately, they can also be researched in connection with one or more, or even as part of the whole-complex of all six subjects. They can be understood and researched as a unique and most general

subject of social work and the science of social work. However, as a separate subject of research, the following also emerge: types and characteristics of research that have studied this subject, as well as applied scientific methods in researching these subjects.

As specific subjects of research that arise from the subject of social work (social work), areas of social work can be identified. These can be simplified in two ways. The first is individual work, group work, and community work (community organizing) - primarily at the local level. However, these subjects, derived from the "levels of social analysis" from the perspective of research in the science of social work", are insufficient and need to be supplemented with research on social work in entities, federal units, the state, international entities, and the international community. Staying at three levels is closer to methodology than methodology. The second way of defining specific subjects of activity can also involve listing areas of activity that intersect and permeate with the mentioned levels. These subjects can appear both as separate and as mutually integrated. We have already mentioned the areas of work, so we will omit their repetition.

Another specific subject of research is the classification of scientific research in the research of the science of social work and subjects within it. Understanding the functions of research also as a subject of research, and based on that, as a factor in the criteria for the classification of research by subject, we have obtained the following types of scientific research:

1. Scientific research of the science of social work whose primary goal is to acquire scientific knowledge about social work as a subject of science and its method with long-term deferred practical application of their results;

2. Scientific research whose goal is scientific knowledge that can be used soon in "intervention" methods - methods of practicing social work;
3. Scientific research as a stage, part, preparation, or evaluation of the effects of "intervention" methods;
4. Scientific research as a basis embedded in professional research or "intervention" methods;
5. Scientific research whose results are the basis for "routine" professional research or "routine intervention" methods.

Scientific research marked with ordinal numbers 1 and 2 is common in all sciences and there is no need for their elaboration due to their clear definition. However, scientific research conducted in specific phases of applying intervention methods is still a specialty of social work science.

During the diagnostic phase, true knowledge acquired through scientific methods is necessary in order to conceptualize social intervention. Such knowledge is also necessary in the evaluation phase of the results achieved through social intervention (social therapy, etc.). All the rules of scientific research apply to these studies. However, an important specificity arises in relation to the design of the research. In some cases, there is not enough time for a complete procedure that would encompass all the moments of conceptualization, project development, and testing, so a shortened procedure is necessary. However, these are often repeated situations, so it is possible to set up a framework project that is individualized in each specific case. Research marked with ordinal number 4 provides results that directly serve the establishment of "intervention" methods. Based on these results, certain lists of procedures, typical content, indicators, etc. or instructions for the sequence of procedures, etc. are created. A little more attention deserves

an explanation of "routine professional research". This is the routine collection of data based on pre-prepared forms that are formulated relying on scientific knowledge and within the framework of scientific conception. These data are suitable for scientific research-processing with a general scientific statistical method and inform about the relationship between generality and individuality.

In the study of all social sciences, including within the field of social work science, there are also research disciplines that constitute integral parts of the subjects of these sciences. In order to determine the subject of these researches, it is necessary to determine which disciplines they are. It is an open question whether it is a constituent part, and if it is, what kind of part (constitutive, derived, auxiliary, transitional) of the subject of science it is. For example, whether and what kind of parts are: social protection, social policy, social prevention, social curative, etc. It cannot be predicted whether authors of works on social policy define it as a separate (and independent) scientific discipline that uses methods of social sciences in its research, while at the same time not attaching particular importance to methodology. Many contemporary authors do not accept social protection as the exclusive or dominant content of social work, although legal norms regulating the field of social work mostly relate to institutional social protection. Also, the highest number of specific "intervention" methods relate to social protection.

The question of disciplinary research is emphasized and specifically applicable to social work or the science of social work, although there are no definite answers in other sciences either. In social work, there is a clear commitment, expressed in legal and professional norms, to teamwork. Since teams consist of expert researchers from multiple sciences-

disciplines (social worker, psychologist, educator, sociologist, lawyer), should social work research be:

- a) interdisciplinary or
- b) multidisciplinary?

In all social sciences, intra (mono) disciplinary research prevails, and necessary knowledge from other scientific disciplines is taken and used as results of those disciplines. However, except for the legal field, which is clear and recognizable, the question of demarcating the subject matter of social work, psychology, sociology, and pedagogy arises. It seems justified to even understand and pose multidisciplinary research in social work in a way that the essential core content of the research subject is social work, and auxiliary subjects serve the main subject of research by encompassing psychological, pedagogical, and other components. This is resolved through a research project (general project with sub-projects). However, this also allows for intradisciplinary research in the science of social work, which raises the question of the justification for emphasizing the "interdisciplinarity" and "integrativeness" of social work.

In making judgments, the court uses "opinions" and findings from various professions and sciences, as well as various subjects, but the court pronounces the verdict.

### **3. Specificities of research methods in social work**

**I**f we recall the definition of methods of scientific knowledge and research, their structure and classification, as well as the fact that the science of social work belongs to social sciences, we must state that, in principle, all methods of social sciences are used in scientific research in

social work, and that specificity is not related to them as such, but to their application and the researcher's approach in the field of social work. The two mentioned types of specificity manifest primarily:

1. through understanding and interpretation of methods;
2. through a selective approach to theoretical-methodological directions or paradigms;
3. through the construction of new methods or only new variants of methods;
4. through the use, independently or in combination, of certain techniques, development of instruments, and practice of procedures; and
5. through determining the place and role of certain methods.

The difference between scientific research methods and "intervention" methods in social work practice is evident and expresses the specificities of "intervention" methods compared to scientific research methods. The specificity of research in social work is determined by the characteristics of choosing and applying methods.

The research methodology in social work, indicating the preferences of traditional methodology for analytical methods, distinguishes analytical and synthetic, deductive and inductive methods. Affirming empirical research, it necessarily gives priority to "inductive" methods, which is the methodological specificity of research in social work that is necessarily linked to the general standpoint on changing social situations (situations are always empirically concrete, and that is also a change). However, the methodological specificity of research does not imply abandoning the application of basic, general scientific, and some data collection and processing methods.

Research methods specific to social work are listed by Ivan Vidanović and Aleksandar Halmi. Vidanović does this under the title "Methods and Skills of Social Work," which opens up an important question: are the mentioned "skills" a uniqueness in social work methods, or is it a separate issue.

It is also interesting that the listed methods are referred to as diagnostic, but there is no specific overview of therapeutic, intervention methods. True, as seen from the list of methods, it primarily involves data collection methods and not data processing and interpretation methods. The list includes:

1. *Observation methods*, where no explicit preference is given to any type of observation, and there is a pronounced psychological approach.
2. *Interview*, within which it distinguishes:
  - a. Research,
  - b. Clinical, as well as
  - c. Diagnostic and
  - d. Therapeutic.
3. *Questionnaire* (questionnaire method) in which measurement is mentioned
4. Case study
5. *Scales for assessing family relationships and functioning*<sup>16</sup>
6. *Genogram*
7. *Eco-map*
8. *Sociometric method*
9. *Content analysis*

---

<sup>16</sup> Social work methods include scales for assessing various types, and assessments are an integral part of the social work process. Scales are forms of measurement in social sciences, and measurement is not studied in well-known methodologies of social work.

In a separate section, authored by Nevenka Žegarac, a list of social work skills is provided, which are classified as:

1. internal (preparatory empathy, preparatory self-exploration, centering);
2. interpersonal skills (interpersonal communication, voice, speech-language-word use-body language-open body posture-eye contact-accessibility-listening-hearing others-observation-encouragement-memory-questioning-closed questions-open questions-mistakes in questioning-active listening-working with emotions-defining and explaining emotions-recognizing emotions-dealing with emotions-summarizing-confrontation);
3. empathic skills (searching for client's feelings-expressing understanding for client's feelings-expressing client's feelings in words).

This understanding of research<sup>1718</sup> methods is characterized by three moments:

1. lack of respect for standards and definitions of social science methodology. The examination, consisting of interviews (of various types) and surveys, is not mentioned, and the survey instrument-questionnaire is declared a method; skills that have been seen as procedures within research techniques become autonomous and essential parts of "intervention" methods;
2. the existing methods are impoverished. The experiment is not mentioned despite its practical use. In fact, almost all social work actions have experimental characteristics-interventions are aimed at

---

<sup>17</sup> Ščšić, Bogdan.: General Methodology, Naučna knjiga, Belgrade, 1980.

<sup>18</sup> Termiz Dž. - Milosavljević, S.: Introduction to the Methodology of Political Science, Sarajevo, 1999.



causing consequences-effects, and we are not even talking about other (basic general scientific) methods or non-methods of measurement;

3. this approach introduces significant confusion in the theory and practice of social work research as a science.

Regarding the treatment of research methods, A. Halimi's developmental path is interesting. In his doctoral thesis in 1986, he states that specific (action) research methods in social work appear differently at "levels of social analysis" and lists:

1. Individual level of analysis:

- 1.1 action (in-depth) interview;
- 1.2 social analysis;
- 1.3 biographical technique.

2. Group level of analysis:

- 2.1 participatory observation;
- 2.2 analysis of group relationship processes;
- 2.3 sociometric method;
- 2.4 evaluation scales.

3. Institutional level of analysis:

- 3.1 ethnomethodology and historical method perspective;
- 3.2 method of systematic/complex observation;
- 3.3 complex field studies;
- 3.4 monographic studies;
- 3.5 cartography.

In this classification, he remains in his work "Social Work in the Local Community" 1989.<sup>19</sup> In the last, available work, most important from the standpoint of methodology - "Methodology of Research in Social Work," A. Halmi does not deal with the classification of scientific methods at all, but pays main attention to approaches and concepts of factual integration of scientific-action research and social work practice. These concepts are truly new in their systemic provisions, they are stimulating and, in that sense, represent a contribution to methodology.

However, the specificities of research methods in the science of social work that are presented are not only one-sided, but also express significant inconsistency and imprecision. There is no doubt that a certain standpoint is not a method, that a complex field study or monograph is a form of expressing results, etc. Serious effort is still ahead on the identification of research methods that are applicable in the science of social work, as well as on the specificities of methods used in social work research and in the process of social work, and their valid classification.

## **4. The relationship between scientific methods in research practice and research methods-procedures in solving problems in the practice of social work**

**A**t first glance, this is a simple question followed by a simple, decisive and argumentative, even instructive answer. Unfortunately, before we can properly answer previous questions, such as:

---

<sup>19</sup> Halmi, A.: Social Work in the Local Community, p. 98.

1. Are these methods of "traditional" methodology or methods of "action" methodology?
2. Which theoretical-methodological direction (positivist, axiological, dialectical, etc.) do the methods in question belong to and within which direction should we seek an answer?<sup>20</sup>

Our previous presentation is conceived as integral, without giving priority to any theoretical-methodological direction, with the involvement of contributions from all directions. However, such an approach is not sufficiently scientifically grounded, it can be accused of being eclectic, etc. Namely, in our approach, two basic attitudes are essential:

1. Scientific knowledge about a phenomenon can be acquired through its direct and mediated manifestations.
2. Every person, including a scientist-researcher, acquires knowledge about a phenomenon partly by experiencing it, partly by perceiving it, but in both cases, by reflecting on it.

Let us add that the life situation of every person is partly a product of external circumstances and their actions, and partly the characteristics, behavior, and activities of the individual, group, community, organization. Every relationship is realized through some interaction, and through the system of interactions, their actions, a person's "life situation" arises.<sup>21</sup>

Our answer to the question of the relationship between scientific research methods and scientific knowledge with the methods of practicing social

---

<sup>20</sup> Milosavljević, S.: Research of Political Phenomena and Processes, Institute for Political Studies FPN, Belgrade, 1980.

Termiz, Dž.: -Milosavljević, S.: Practicum in the Methodology of Political Science, Sarajevo, 2000.

<sup>21</sup> Kočović, Dragoslav: Social Policy, Association of Professional Workers in Social Welfare of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade, 2000, p. 1S.

work can only be given in general and in principle. Each individual specific case requires special treatment.

Every successful activity, action, intervention in problem-solving necessarily requires reliable, credible knowledge about the existence of the problem, its properties, structure, spatial-temporal form, impact, etc., and the assumed possibilities and ways of solving it. Evidentness of the problem does not help much, except as an auxiliary indicator. Therefore, the problem needs to be discovered, identified, defined, and specific measures need to be taken to solve it and determine the effects (phases, stages, and final). For that, reliable, truthful, or probable knowledge is necessary. The highest degree of probability and the most reliable knowledge is scientific knowledge. It is acquired through scientific research that uses scientific research methods, which are themselves the product of accumulated, selected, and repeatedly tested scientific knowledge. Hence, scientific research methods are inevitable in acquiring reliable and truthful knowledge. They appear in different roles in "intervention" research and in relation to "intervention" methods.

Typical roles of scientific research methods, whose essential characteristic is the universality of application and penetrative power, limited only by the characteristics of the subject and the researcher's ability to deal with factual circumstances, are as follows:

1. immediate application while respecting all method rules and forms;
2. application of the scientific method in accordance with the properties of the subject and the needs of knowledge;
3. existing scientific research method serves as a basis for deriving a new method;
4. scientific research method serves as inspiration for the development of a specific method.

Not all scientific methods are in the same position. Some scientific research methods simply cannot be avoided and are always components of all research and even all "intervention" methods. These are fundamental methods (analysis-synthesis; abstraction-concretization; specification-generalization; deduction-induction-conception; proving-disproving). Logical thinking in the process of knowledge is not possible without them. The fact is that social work in practice uses analysis, classification, typology, discovery, explanation, comparison, induction, conception, generalization, synthesis, etc. These methods, with their rules, are first unavoidable in researching an individual, group, or community in any diagnostic, therapeutic, evaluative, etc. phase, and in any area of social work.

The same applies to general scientific methods, especially to the hypothetico-deductive method, which provides selective and critical accumulation of scientific knowledge, and to statistical method without which mass research cannot be conducted, and to modeling method without which various stereotypes and models cannot be formed, without which neither science nor practice can exist.

Measurement methods are also directly or with slight adaptations embedded in "intervention" methods in the form of various types of scales, most commonly known as assessment scales. Whether someone accepts it or not, testing method is inevitable both in "intervention" research and in intervention methods. Simply put, this method of scientific data collection is both the starting point and the endpoint in processes of direct communication, without which social work cannot exist. The same or similar applies to other methods of scientific data collection. It is no different with methods of processing, interpretation,

communication, and application of acquired scientific, as well as professional and other knowledge.

"Intervention" methods can be developed by combining multiple scientific research methods, even methods that do not belong to the same theoretical-methodological direction. For example, the modeling method, which can be applied as both positivist and dialectical, can be used simultaneously in conjunction with the ideal type method, which is an axiological method. The same applies to the method of understanding or empathy, which can particularly be used together with testing and observation.

The feedback effect of "intervention" methods is very significant. There are three important roles of "intervention" methods in the feedback effect. First, it is a verification role. The application of certain scientific research methods in diverse research practices validates the subject method in terms of its applicability, penetrability, and other significant provisions. Second, it is a corrective role. This role must be understood as at least twofold. On one hand, through application, the method manifests its weaknesses and shortcomings, and after their identification, they can be eliminated and mitigated. On the other hand, it manifests what kind of application the method cannot tolerate, and what consequences can occur due to inadequate application of the method. One of the significant factors in application, along with the research situation, is the researcher's qualification. It should be clear that research competence is not just ordinary professional education, but much more than that.

The third role of feedback influence is inspirational. And it is two-way. On one hand, it inspires the methodology of science to improve and develop the method, especially its reliability, penetrability, and applicability. On

the other hand, it inspires the researcher to improve and develop forms of application, to seek possibilities for useful adaptation of the method or its combination with other methods, as well as to improve and develop their research abilities.

The application of some methods in "intervention" research and social work practice requires very high natural abilities and a high level of qualification. For example, the requirement for empathy, for immersing oneself in every case of solving a social problem, is far greater and more complicated than the requirement for understanding the situation and problems of the subject. We do not know when this leads to psychological, especially emotional and intellectual exhaustion of the social worker-researcher, and we do not know what kind of training and preparation they need. However, this is a problem for research, not only for psychologists but also for social workers.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Vidanović, Ivan: Individual and Family, 3rd edition, Scientific Research Center for Social Work and Social Policy FPN, 1998, p. 149-249; 249-283







**IV**  
**METHODOLOGICAL PARADIGMS**  
**IN SOCIAL WORK**

## IV METHODOLOGICAL PARADIGMS IN SOCIAL WORK

### 1. Some questions about the definition of the concept of paradigm

The concept and term paradigm are very popular among some authors of methodological works in the field of social work. Unfortunately, although often used, its explicit definition is not given, and what further complicates the situation is that it is used in various connections with the concepts of "approach" and "concept". The consequence of such practice is that a long list of paradigms is mentioned, such as: quantitative paradigm, qualitative paradigm, individual-theoretical, positivist-functionalistic, etc.

Paradigm is considered the most important concept of approach, etc., and in statements, there are distinctions between theoretical paradigms, methodological paradigms, and research paradigms.

The concept of paradigm was introduced into science by Thomas Kuhn as a key concept for explaining how scientific revolutions occur, but unfortunately, he did not form its complete definition. From the description of the process of scientific revolution and the role of paradigm, it can be concluded that the concept of paradigm implies the basic attitude of a science that expresses the understanding of a phenomenon (object of science), possibilities, methods, and scope of its scientific knowledge. Therefore, the concept of paradigm is exclusively

related to science and scientific knowledge, not to all processes, contents, and forms of social practice.

As a fundamental general attitude, paradigm determines all approaches, concepts, interpretations, and explanations that occur within that science. Therefore, it is justified to understand that the paradigm is fundamentally a relatively lasting and stable attitude, but also developmental, and accordingly, changeable. This attitude cannot be changed arbitrarily, but only when there are significant difficulties and obstacles to scientifically understanding and explaining certain phenomena based on it. According to Kuhn's understanding, when this happens, the basic general attitude of a certain science is replaced. In relation to this, several questions arise, among which the most important ones seem to be:

1. what level of generality is necessary for a stance to be a "paradigm";
2. whether a "paradigm" is an axiomatic stance or can be a generalization;
3. how much elasticity is allowed for paradigms, i.e. whether variations of its interpretations can occur within it while the paradigm remains the same.

Since we are not currently dealing with the philosophy of science, epistemology and gnoseology, nor with the questions of meta-methodology, we will seek answers to these questions in accordance with the interests of the methodology of social work.

First, in principle, one can only speak about the paradigm of a specific science, as well as the paradigm of science as a whole. Indeed, science has its own set of axioms, principles, assumptions, and norms, but they cannot be used to interpret scientific knowledge that is not essentially universally scientific, but rather specific knowledge of individual sciences

and scientific disciplines. Based on a set of principles, etc., one can only draw conclusions about the scientific nature and structure of science, its general dynamics, etc. Therefore, only the most general questions of science can be addressed. Some of these questions belong more to the realm of philosophy than to science in the narrowest sense. Therefore, this conditionally accepted, most general paradigm of science cannot fulfill all the roles attributed to it.

Are there specific paradigms for natural and social sciences? In terms of the existence of a defined set of content, postulates, principles, axioms, etc., between which there is a higher degree of connectedness, one can consider that there is a paradigm for social sciences, as well as a paradigm for natural sciences. They are reflected not only in the understanding of the subject matter but also in the understanding of methods.

Greater problems arise when it comes to the relationship between the paradigm of social sciences (understood as a whole) and each individual science. In social sciences, there are various theoretical and methodological approaches. Does a "synthetic" paradigm of social sciences exist, as well as a paradigm for each individual science, or is this paradigm "fragmented" into paradigms of various theoretical and methodological approaches of social sciences or sciences that constitute them? This question is posed by the title of this chapter: "Methodological Paradigms in Social Work." It can be understood as a question about the existence and properties of paradigms (methodological) in the science of social work because the concept of paradigm is associated with science. However, this question already offers an answer in itself because it expresses the viewpoint that social work already exists as a social phenomenon-process and as the subject

of science, and that it is a component of either a paradigm or a complete paradigm. Obviously, if there is a certain (albeit postulative) scientific knowledge about social work based on which social work is understood and scientifically defined, then there is a paradigm. Therefore, does a constituted paradigm of the science of social work exist according to which it is a distinct science, and what does it entail? Or does it not exist, but there are levels of paradigms within it?

There is no doubt that there are no definitive, scientifically valid answers at this moment, but it is justified to consider social work as a science and a scientific discipline, as it is explicitly expressed through scientific-theoretical definitions, theories, research work, and understandings demonstrated in the practice of social work. Without this, it would not be possible to have a well-founded discussion about the science of social work.

So, what are "methodological paradigms" in social work and what is their relationship to the basic paradigm of the science of social work?

It is undisputed that in every science, various theories are developed - from simple generalizations, to theories of medium range, to general and universal theories. All these scientific efforts have their starting points, some of which are contained in the basic paradigm of the science of social work, some are based on paradigms of certain theoretical-methodological approaches in the social sciences, and some are attempts at original interpretation or original construction of their own starting points. In fact, there is a necessary connection between all these paradigms in understanding social work as both practice and science, which is already contained in more general paradigms. There is agreement on the understanding that social work is a process (phenomenon) in social reality, that it can be identified and understood,

that it can be scientifically empirically and theoretically studied and researched, and that scientific knowledge can be used both in science and in the practice of social work. There is also agreement on the basic structure of social work, whose essential structural elements are: a situation of pronounced social need (as a dimension of the overall life situation), a subject in a situation of pronounced social need (client, patient, user), a provider of social assistance (social worker or other individual or collective subject), and "social action", "social intervention", "social therapy" or the action of providing social assistance, and finally, the environment.

These are sufficient starting points for the "paradigm" of the science of social work and its practice.

"Paradigmatic" differences arise in the understanding of the roles, forms, and contents of individual factors, in the understanding of relationships, causes and effects, and in possible, purposeful goals and methods of research.

Essentially, these differences boil down to differences in the general understanding of the mentioned contents and their transformation into research and intervention concepts, articulation of goals and tasks, and methods-techniques, procedures, and instruments.

If we take this into consideration, we can talk about paradigms of theories, research, practice, research methods, and their application. We would rather use terms such as approaches, concepts, orientations, and frameworks instead of paradigms.

In literature, distinctions are also made between theoretical, methodological, research, etc. paradigms. Because of this, we will treat all theoretical and other paradigms, concepts, etc. as "methodological".

Theory cannot be separated from methodology, methods, and research, although it cannot be equated with them.

## 2. Basic general approaches in social work

**T**he basic approaches in social work are actually two general theoretical-methodological concepts and three types of theoretical-methodological understandings of society.

The first member of the dichotomy, according to authors of the so-called "actionalist" methodological orientation, is the traditional (traditionalistic) conception of scientific methodology and research, which is qualified as conservative because it insists on strict scientificness, scientific objectivity, scientific verifiability, scientific distance, systematicity, separation from practice, differentiation of methodology as scientific and methodology as applied, scientific-research and "practical" methods, whose general social characteristic is oriented towards maintaining the ruling social system and therefore does not contribute to changes, so social work is understood and conceived as a "control" activity of society. Its insistence on orderliness and internally strictly controlled research (which implies strict conceptualization, design, and implementation procedures of research) is qualified as "cabinet methodology". It is understandable that the qualifiers attributed by the opposing side in a dispute can be expressions of bias.

Namely, the very understanding of the existence of a "traditional" concept is wrong because there is no such unique traditional concept, but there are only predominant agreements on certain provisions, as well as significant and numerous disagreements on many others. This can be seen more clearly from the conflicts between basic theoretical-

methodological directions that all originated within the "traditional" concept. The differences between the theoretical-methodological directions of positivism, axiology, and dialectical approach are really significant, and the differences within them expressed through the concepts of structuralism, functionalism, behaviorism, phenomenology, idealistic and materialistic dialectics, etc., are also not negligible.

There are also significant differences between their various interpretations and applications.

The second member of the dichotomy is the actionist-"action-oriented methodology, which is, at least declaratively, characterized as "opposite to traditional methodology". This slogan, of course, is not true or accurate, as can be seen from at least two facts: action research is "sequential", and action-oriented research is not only focused on change but also on true scientific knowledge. We will discuss this in more detail in the next chapter.

There is a tendency for this dichotomy to evolve into a trichotomy. Namely, there are understandings that point to the importance of "interdisciplinarity" and the tendency of "transdisciplinarity". However, not only these aspirations are expressed, but also the aspirations of "transconceptuality" or "trans-paradigmaticity". Positivistic conceptions do not accept empathy, nor have dialectical conceptions affirmed it, but it is an important way of axiological direction. However, research practice and some theoretical statements, as well as the demands of practical, intervention methods in social work, insist on it simultaneously with the demand to note the sensory evident and to consider agreement and disagreement, opposite and contradictory. We understand this as an aspiration and process of "trans-paradigmaticity". Namely, the provisions of the paradigm are not canceled, but are softened and connections and



relationships are built with the provisions of other provisions. Part of this is played out completely consciously, and part as a result of the pressure of practice, especially research practice.

## **2.1 Theoretical-methodological directions significant for "paradigms" in social work**

We have already identified three most important theoretical-methodological directions whose basic concepts have influenced the theory, methodology, research, and practice of social work. Let us critically consider their essential provisions of significance for social work.

All three mentioned main theoretical-methodological directions fundamentally express understandings about society and its possibilities and ways of cognition, primarily concerning general provisions, structure, processes, relationships, and activities of society, regularities, laws, and explanations of society. These are primarily sociological theoretical directions. Their methodological provisions are primarily methodological understandings of social sciences and are contained in the methods of sociology. Therefore, these theoretical-methodological concepts are "paradigms" of the science of social work or social work only indirectly, only through belonging to the science of social work, social sciences, and affinity with sociology as the most general science of society. This is a very significant fact because these directions in social work appear only through certain interpretations and adaptations, the validity, objective truthfulness, true meaning of which is not guaranteed. Bias is sufficient through belonging to another theoretical-methodological direction.

### 2.1.1 The Positivist Theoretical-Methodological Direction

The Positivist Theoretical-Methodological Direction, like the other two, emerged during the 19th century and developed at the end of that century and the beginning of the 20th century. Its origins can be traced back to the ideas of Henri de Saint-Simon, but its true creator is considered to be Auguste Comte.<sup>23</sup>

For the science of social work, it is important that A. Comte, basing sociology, sees the purpose and goal of sociology in establishing a scientific foundation for the intelligent management of development and organization of society. Already in the foundations of this direction, the principle of "knowledge for the sake of knowledge" is rejected, and the social usefulness of knowledge and its orientation towards social changes are emphasized. Therefore, it is not about the static nature of the theoretical-methodological concept, but primarily about the understanding of a good society and its characteristics, which is not primarily the content of methodology.

Positivism particularly sought to develop methods of investigating causes (e.g. I. S. Mill)<sup>24</sup> and to establish a relationship between the human psyche (psychology) and human behavior, which, to a greater or lesser extent, all social sciences do, including the science of social work and its practice, perhaps more prominently than others.

Despite the criticism of positivism for rejecting the investigation of human and social values, it remains a fact that Durkheim introduced the concept of "social fact" into methodology and sociology, which includes

---

<sup>23</sup> Comte Auguste: Course of Positive Philosophy, Kultura, Belgrade, 1962.

<sup>24</sup> Mill, J.S.: Auguste Comte and Positivism. F Alkan, Paris, 1963

Mill, J.S.: System of Logic, Longmans, Green and Co. London, 1965.

the value system that he considers an essential factor in the cohesion of society and social relations.

Similarly, in his work "The Division of Labor in Society,"<sup>25</sup> Durkheim extensively discusses the solidarity of society as a necessary basis for the survival and development of society. A deeper analysis of his views on "mechanical" and "organic" solidarity of society reveals possibilities for their modernization and their usefulness for the theory of social work. His study "Suicide" directly contributes to understanding the role of the environment in individual behavior. The same applies to his works "On Religion" and "Pedagogical Writings."

For research methodology, the views on the possibilities of social experimentation, i.e. the historical method, the possibilities of "secondary analysis" and the possibilities of generalization, classification, and typologization, are important. Namely, the use of statistical data in the research on "Suicide" demonstrates Durkheim's ability to connect qualitative and quantitative approaches, rather than qualifying him as a representative or advocate of a "quantitative" approach. It could be said that positivism was more oriented towards qualitative aspects.

The most controversial and criticized aspect of the methodological-paradigmatic stance of positivism is that only what can be perceptibly observed can be investigated. This viewpoint is often used and abused in criticisms. The criticism of simple perceptibility is justified because not everything essential is immediately accessible to the senses, but a simplified understanding of perceptibility is also not useful. For social work, it is important to understand that every phenomenon-process

---

<sup>25</sup> Durkheim, E: *The Division of Labor in Society*, Prosveta, Belgrade, 1972.

Durkheim, E.: *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Prosveta, Belgrade, 1972.

Durkheim, E.: *The Rules of Sociological Method*, Savremena škola, Belgrade, 1963.

manifests in a certain way, and that specific immediate and indirect indicators can be discovered and built, simple and complex indicators-indicators of a specific phenomenon. Useless are discussions about whether knowledge is achieved perceptibly, rationally, or intuitively when it is evident, at least in empirical research, that none of these three components enables scientific knowledge, but they are connected in a specific way into a functional whole. It is undeniable that the process of thinking, without which there is no scientific knowledge, flows as a chain of observation, representation, reflection, formation of attitude, judgment, and conclusion. It is also generally accepted in science and methodology that scientific laws are necessarily empirically verifiable, which means that the role of perceptibility in all of this is very significant. Without perceptibility, there can be no method of observation, no method of experimentation, no method of examination, no method of document analysis - although "perceptible" has its role in each of them and requires additional interpretation.

We also add that social work (all its main components) is an empirical process-phenomenon whose manifestations can be perceptibly observed.

### **2.1.1.1 Functionalism**

Functionalism is one of the most significant variants of positivism. Despite its many shortcomings, it cannot be denied three significant contributions to understanding social work in conditions of factual, competitive, and stratified society in which these factors continuously produce or contribute to the creation and maintenance of a "life situation of emphasized social need." Although the concept of function has not yet been fully scientifically defined, there is no doubt that in its common meaning (function is a permanent activity-activity essential for the

maintenance-functioning of the whole), it is a fruitful concept for social work as a whole and its segments. Reflecting on the relationship between structure and function, we recognize three approaches: structural-functional, functional-structural, and eclectic. Another significant contribution of functionalism is the understanding of society as an "action,"<sup>26</sup> conflict-free system composed of subsystems. This system is characterized by functions (manifest and latent) and dysfunctions. On this idea of the system, a later systemic approach was developed. The critical treatment and use of concepts: function-dysfunction; role; system-subsystem and the relationship between structure and substructure on one hand, and function on the other, enable analytical-synthetic reflections and understanding of social work as a social function and distinguishing its control social function in favor of maintaining the system - but not the concrete situation from a possible developmental function, as well as distinguishing the function (functions) of social work from the functions of other social phenomena-processes.

For the development of social work theory, Merton's proposition on deriving "middle-range theories" from generalizations of empirical (but also other) research<sup>27</sup> is also important.

It is understandable that creative reinterpretations, characteristic of scientific development, are necessary in this case.

### **2.1.1.2 Structuralist Concept**

In short, the structuralist concept views society as a complex structure, and scientific explanation is achieved by identifying the place and

---

<sup>26</sup> Parsons, Talcott: *The Structure of Social Action*, New York, 1949

Parsons, Talcott: *Essays in Sociological Theory*, Glencoe, Illinois, 1954.

<sup>27</sup> Merton, Robert: *On Theoretical Sociology*, Center SSOH-Zagreb, 1979.

relationships of any part within the overall structure. If the structure is seen as a whole of phenomena-processes composed of essential parts-components-"elements" interconnected in something like a unity of different, even contradictory, functional and dysfunctional, stabilizing and destabilizing aspects, etc., it provides a basis for understanding the structures of society and social work, as well as understanding the system and its relationships. It is undeniable that both the structuralist and positivist variants express a holistic orientation with certain elements of individualism, and their concept is deterministic-hierarchical. Those who question the functionalist and structuralist understanding of the position, role, and function of individuals, groups, and communities in society and in the process of social work encounter problems of the relationship between freedom and subordination-superiority, equality and dominance, equal distribution and different distribution of authority and duties, etc.

### **2.1.1.3 Behaviorist Concept**

From the perspective of social work interests, alongside significant shortcomings within psychology, the behaviorist concept has developed a very applicable (although one-sided) formula. This formula, initially in the form of S-R (stimulus-response), and in the contemporary, more developed form of S-O-R (stimulus-organism-response), indicates the cause-and-effect relationship of human behavior. The external stimulus of the environment acts upon the subject (individual, etc.) who experiences, reflects upon, judges it, and reacts to it in some way. Therefore, it is the classical basis for formulating actions (of anyone or anything) and reactions to actions. Isn't the basic scheme of the social action process contained within it (if we include a certain psyche in the "organism"): circumstances (with the participation of the subject-client)

create a "situation of social need" (highlighted needs, vulnerability, pathology, and the subject, reacting, falls into it). The subject-social worker, stimulated by this, reacts with "social intervention." "Social intervention," "social therapy," etc., are stimuli for changing the situation, and its alteration is the response "response" to the "stimulus."

By mentioning the significance of J.H. Mead's understanding of "taking on the role of the other" and "joint responses"; the contributions of Znaniecki and Thomas (understanding of social behavior, understanding of social action as the basic unit of analysis, biographical method); and the contributions of R. Mills (social roles and factors of social structure), we believe we have pointed out all the essential aspects of behaviorism relevant to the theory and practice of social work.

### **2.1.2 Axiological theoretical-methodological direction**

The axiological theoretical-methodological direction is simultaneously treated as the opposite (counterpart) of positivism and as one of the forms of positivism. Without delving into the consideration of the validity and argumentation of these views, we cannot avoid the observation that axiology has introduced another important component of human life and behavior. Indeed, functionalist positivists and dialecticians did not overlook it, but it was primarily given a place by axiologists like Dilthey<sup>28</sup>, and especially Max Weber<sup>29</sup>. This is the internal experience of reality and the value orientation of human social behavior.

---

<sup>28</sup> Dilthey, Wilhelm: *Building the Historical World in Spiritual Sciences*, BIGZ, Belgrade, 1980.

<sup>29</sup> Weber, Max: *Economy and Society*, Prosveta, Belgrade, 1976.

Weber, Max: *Methodology of Social Sciences*, Globus, Zagreb, 1968.

From the perspective of the interests of social work, it seems that axiologists can have four methodological-paradigmatic contributions.

First, it is the perspective of action as the basis of society. It is not difficult to reinterpret this paradigmatic proposition as "action is the basis of social work" - because action is not just any activity or action, but only those that primarily bring about intended effects.

Foundations of the methodology of social work

Second, it is the discovery that human social behavior is directed by "expectations of others and expectations of the behavior of others, and in this social experience, empathy has significant importance." It is also the basis for the practical possibility of empathy - understanding. Insufficient knowledge of the mechanisms and methods of empathy and understanding can be and are a stimulus for research. Without denying the potential of scientific knowledge based on "external" observation, Weber points to the necessity of knowledge about motives and internal stimuli of human behavior.

His third significant contribution is the explicitly expressed classification of human social behavior as a new kind of synthesis of previous paradigmatic attitudes. In this classification, he distinguishes the following actions:

1. Goal-rational;
2. Value-rational;
3. Affective; and
4. Traditional.

In social work, we encounter all these forms of action or behavior, more often in specific combinations and adaptations than in "pure" forms. Even



social work itself is a combination of goal-rational and value-rational action.

The fourth contribution, which we have already mentioned and will not repeat, is the so-called "ideal-typical" method.

### **2.1.3 Dialectical theoretical-methodological approach**

Like other mentioned theoretical-methodological approaches, dialectical approach has several branches, but we cannot talk about them separately. For paradigms in social work, several provisions are important. The most important of them is the understanding of society as a unity of differences, contradictions, and oppositions. It is obvious, from this premise, that dialecticians perceive society as a complex dynamic, fundamentally changeable but structural whole. Connected to the perspective on the stratification of society, these premises can be relatively easily adapted into conceptions of social work. The criticism that solidarity, which is an essential provision of social work, is overlooked can only be accepted if we ignore the fact that the whole - the social community - cannot become and sustain itself without a minimum of cooperation and solidarity.

Dialecticians emphasize interest as the driver of activity, but they do not predict the role of ideas and orientational values, and of course, organization.

Two more significant moments in the dialecticians' paradigm(s) can be in the function of social work. First, the dialecticians' standpoint is that philosophers - thus scientists - should change the world instead of just describing it, which is in accordance with the active and action-oriented provisions of social work. The second is the concept of trihotomy, i.e.,

the order of thesis-antithesis-synthesis, which can be understood as situation-action-change, which fits into conceptions of social work.<sup>30</sup>

Dialecticians' views on the relationship between subject-method and the difference between research methods and communication methods have differences.

In literature, the analytic-deductive method is considered dialectical as a variant of the axiomatic method. However, this method, which deduces concepts related to the analysis of apparent reality, is undoubtedly usable outside the dialectical concept. All analyses or deductions that start from a general definition to specific and individual ones have its characteristics.

Further discussions of theoretical-methodological approaches are not necessary because they are, more or less, separate interpretations or reinterpretations of what is already generally given.

However, within this chapter, we must remind of two approaches related to specific theoretical-methodological approaches. On the one hand, these are quantitative and qualitative approaches<sup>31</sup>, which have already been mentioned. Now it is enough to say that neither of these two approaches exclusively suits social work, theory, methodology, and practice. Instead of a detailed explanation, let us remind that "Evaluation research" associated with the "benefit-cost" method simply cannot be done without quantification and measurement. Therefore, we emphasize the advantage of a qualitative-quantitative approach, whose paradigmatic provision is that every part of social reality has its quality

---

<sup>30</sup> Šešić, Bogdan: Fundamentals of Methodology of Social Sciences, Naučna knjiga, Belgrade, 1974.

<sup>31</sup> Halmi, A.: Research Methodology in Social Work, Alinea, Zagreb, 1995, p. 46.

(content, structures, relationships, etc.) and manifests itself, directly or indirectly, in a certain form and has its duration, spread, etc., thus its dimensions, its quantitative side. The question is not whether to measure, quantify, but what, how, why, and with what to measure. Just as there is a certain dependence of methods on the quality of the subject, there is also a dependence of quantity on quality, or, according to the dialecticians' understanding expressed as a principle, there is their interdependence - "the principle of transition from quality to quantity and vice versa."<sup>32</sup>

The second pair of "conflicting" paradigms, which still exist philosophically and logically, but which is practically outdated in methodology, is the conflict between empiricism and normativism.<sup>33</sup> There is no doubt that scientific knowledge of social reality cannot be obtained solely through "intuition" or rational thinking, just as it cannot be obtained through simple sensory perception. The previous practice, research, and theories of social work convincingly and logically testify to this, so we will not discuss this issue separately.

## 2.2 Some general paradigms of social work (in social work)

In the theory of social work, conditionally two or four paradigms have been established. Their origins are linked to the approaches of theoretical and methodological directions. In his book "Introduction to the Theory of Social Work" (1997, p.75), David Howe discusses "two dimensions, four paradigms". He points out two theoretical preferences of society:

---

<sup>32</sup> Pečujlić, M.: Methodology of Social Sciences, Savremena administracija, Belgrade, p. 43-62.

Luhman, N.: Systems Theory, Globus, Zagreb, 1981.

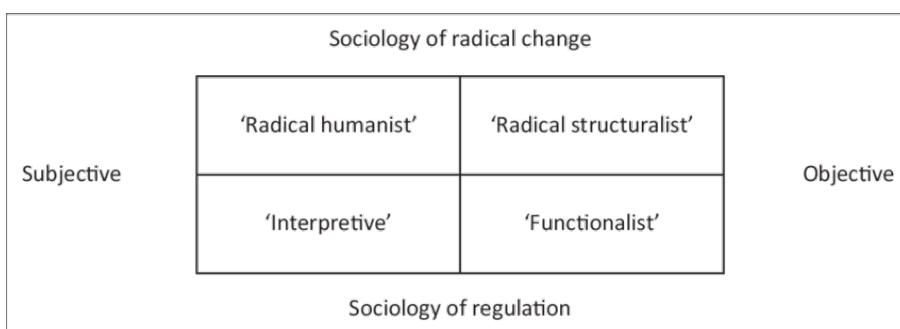
<sup>33</sup> Halmi, A.: Ibid, p. 65.

1. the concept of order or
2. the concept of conflict,

or the preference of understanding society as:

1. objective or
2. subjective.

According to him, in 1979, Burrell and Morgan constructed a schema of sociological paradigms, which looks like this:



Starting from the understanding of social work practice, the author translates this sociological paradigmatic schema, using the titles of Burrell and Morgan, as follows:

1. functionalists = sustainers;
2. interpretivists = seekers of meaning;
3. radical humanists = consciousness raisers;
4. radical structuralists = revolutionaries;

Distinguishing between *theory for social work and theory of social work*, it presents the understanding that "practice must be clearly guided by the following sequence:

1. defining the problem,
2. explanation and evaluation,

3. goals,
4. methods."

The basic understanding of the *subjective approach* can, indeed not exhaustively, can be presented with the following statements:

1. there are no natural laws in human behavior and social relationships;
2. people construct their own social reality, and meaning and order in human behavior arise in the human mind;
3. people create patterns and relationships and impose meaning on things and people, and knowledge is acquired through personal experience;
4. the world can only be understood from the perspective of direct participants in the activity;
5. there are no causes in human behavior, only reasons;
6. clients should be approached as independent agents who have their own principles, understandings, and ideas about events and possibilities.

The understandings of the *objective approach*, according to the author's understanding, are opposite to the understandings of the subjective approach. The characteristic view is that the social world is external to the individual, that the world exists independently of the individual's knowledge, it existed before the individual and has a direct and deterministic influence. Human behavior is a product of the type of society in which one lives. Human nature is determined by genetic inheritance and biological predisposition, as well as by individual experiences. Therefore, behavior is predictable in certain situations, it can be conditioned, manipulated, and can change through certain activities.

It is obvious that these two approaches, as presented, are extreme and need to be balanced. Without this, how can we arrive at an answer as to how social work is even possible.

And another pair of approaches to society - (1) the approach of radical social change and (2) the regulatory approach - are in almost the same degree of opposition. The first mentioned approach is focused on fighting against the (existing) social order, for its replacement with a better use of all available means, including revolution. The second approach implies a focus on maintaining the existing order, adaptation, and subordination to the order and "normal" functioning in accordance with the validity of social norms.

As a sociological and political paradigm, none of the mentioned ones opens up complex questions in relation to the subject of science. Indeed, the subject of political science is the study of the establishment, functioning, and change or overthrow of social and political orders. However, without an appropriate reinterpretation of these paradigms, serious questions arise regarding social work. Such a question is, for example, whether community organizing in social work implies participation in the preparation and execution of a revolution. Another question is how to expect institutionalized, professional, dominant social work, which is essentially a service of the existing order, to do so. It seems justified to consider the relationship between order and social work in two directions. One is directed towards the existing order, which can be influenced by theory, public attitudes, participation in legislative work, and the work of public institutions through critically creative activities that affirm a humanistic approach. The other direction is the practice of social work and the effort to treat each "client" as a conscious, willing, and equal individual in the process of "social intervention". This

further means giving up concepts such as "social pathology" and "social therapy" and building methods and techniques that strengthen the abilities of individuals, groups, and communities to dignifiedly "fulfill their tasks" in practice. But now come the questions: what are these tasks, who set them, etc., which we will not delve into here, but we must say that they are not independent of the general social situation, value systems, interests, and other social determinants, as well as natural factors.

That there are significant problems in determining (discovering) the paradigm(s) of social work (the science of social work) can be seen in the works of contemporary methodologists in the field of social work. Thus, they do not present a pre-formed matrix of sociology paradigms but present it in the following way:

*Scheme: Research traditions*

SOCIAL WORK FOR RADICAL CHANGE		
	Radical	Radical
Subjectivism	Humanism	Structuralism
	Interpretative	Functionalistic
	Humanism	Humanism
SOCIAL WORK FOR REGULATION		Objectivism

As can be seen, apart from terminological changes, this scheme does not show major changes or additions. Given that sociology is the most general social science, it is natural to rely on its findings.

However, traditional research paradigms cannot be conceptually equated with research paradigms because "tradition" is a very rich and broad term in content. It is obvious that critical research work is yet to come in this area.

### **3. Special paradigmatic approaches and methodological concepts in social work**

**T**he interpretation of general approaches, concepts, orientations, etc. in order to adapt them has not solved many significant theoretical and methodological problems of social work as a science of social work. Therefore, based on existing knowledge and social work practice, approaches and concepts that are closer to the needs of social work have been developed.

#### **3.1 Systemic approach to social work**

The systemic approach is considered a new paradigm that surpasses the previous analytical approach. Its essential characteristic is that it treats the problem as a whole (system) from all sides. Such an approach does not settle for knowledge acquired within one scientific discipline, but requires multidisciplinary and even more, transdisciplinarity. In the methodology of "transdisciplinary research," "transdisciplinary sciences" are not common concepts, and the problem of transitioning from "interdisciplinarity" to "transdisciplinarity" has not been resolved. Using knowledge from other sciences and scientific disciplines is not uncommon and does not even require interdisciplinary research. The fact that knowledge from psychology about psychological types and the like, or knowledge from sociology about social groups, etc., will be used does not make the research interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary. We cannot now discuss whether operational research, communication studies,



cybernetics are "new scientific fields" with transdisciplinary properties, but we can characterize the question of whether social work as a science of social work is a "transdisciplinary scientific field" as a challenging and stimulating theoretical and methodological question.

Although the systemic approach is qualified as new and original, we must remind that it is an extended version of functionalism that has been discussed twenty or more years ago.

This approach is particularly interesting as a concept that contributes to overcoming the dualism in the practice of social work characterized by therapeutic (individualistic-rehabilitative) and socio-reformist (action-interventionist) models.

Without going into the relationship between "General Systems Theory" and systemic approaches in social work at this moment, we must mention that the specificity of the approach does not arise from the ability to construct and use certain research and practical instruments ("concept maps," "genograms," "organograms"), but from the statements of fundamental, essential understanding.

Systemic approach in social work occurs in two variants. The first is the natural systemic approach, which was created by Ramsay<sup>34</sup> between 1980 and 1990. This approach is holistic in nature, which is generally a characteristic of systemic approaches. The essential provisions of the "natural systemic approach" are as follows:

1. fundamentally, all parts of the system are in complementary mutual relationship, and they can be value-qualified only by their relation to

---

<sup>34</sup> Ramsay, D.: A Conceptual Framework for Teaching the Practice in Social Work: A New Approach to an Old Problem, The Faculty of Social Welfare, The University of Calgary, 1985.

the system. Structural stability is achieved through the unity of opposites;

2. system stability is achieved through four factors (environment, values, organization, and resources), or rather, the environment, individuals, groups, communities that exchange information and modalities of problems and their solutions through six interaction lines.

The following previously identified requirements are included in it:

1. social work must discover possibilities of establishing connections between opposing-different factors of the practical system and engage in their establishment;
2. it is necessary for social workers to establish connections with different people and institutions;
3. social workers should perform their work in different institutions and systems;
4. no theoretical orientation should have a dominant influence in social work;
5. tasks, activities, and methods-techniques-skills of social work must be expressed in their characteristic terminology.

The systemic model consists of four subsystems:

1. the system of planned changes;
2. the client's infrastructural system;
3. the system of goals; and
4. the system of actions.

The model suggests that the process is carried out through phases:

1. identification, definition, and specification of the problem;

2. discovery (execution) of alternatives and selection of strategies based on the properties of the problem situation (which is understood as planning);
3. execution of actions;
4. evaluation.

Methods are understood as part of the process and as systemic series oriented towards achieving specific goals. This implies the application of specific methods.

The considered paradigm can be graphically represented, either as a whole (as a holistic conceptual model) or in segments. As can be seen, this paradigm can be expressed as a practical model (as attempted by Pincus and Minahan) and as a theoretical model. In the theoretical model, three essential provisions are important:

*structure*, without which no phenomenon or actual system can exist, and its content includes information about identity and specification of problems (diagnosis), change plans and interventions, as well as action itself and, finally, evaluation of effects;

*interaction processes*, the relationships of action that take place within the structure in time and space during all four phases of action flow in achieving changes;

*methods-skills* of social work that are applied to initiate and achieve change in accordance with a values (humanistic) orientation.

The presented paradigm-model (theoretical and practical) is highly versatile. It demonstrates the belief and experience that a situation can be changed through changes in the presented structure through voluntary and goal-oriented professional action. It can also serve as a stimulus for a more innovative conceptualization of social work in the theoretical

sphere, and as guidance in recognizing "emphasized social needs," appropriate "social intervention" systems, and necessary changes in practice. Despite its positive aspects, this paradigm-model also has visible limitations stemming from a simplified understanding of the process-phenomenon, insufficient theoretical development, and a predominant focus on the practice of social work. Methodological orientation is emphasized, but it is stimulating for methodological research.

The second variant of the systemic approach is *the ecological systemic approach to social work (life model)*. This variant originates from Ludwig von Bertalanffy's general systems theory and social ecology. It represents the understanding of the relationship between two systems: the Human system and the system of its environment as a relationship of interdependence, permeation, and reciprocity, or as two subsystems of one system.

According to the key principles of the axiological systemic approach, social work is an activity aimed at improving the active relationships between people and their environment. It does so by intervening in the human living environment, their "social network," and the relationships between people and their surroundings, thereby strengthening "adaptive" capacities. Actions aimed at changing human behavior are enriched. Consequently, the key concept of this approach in social work, unlike the usual understanding as a relationship of reciprocal reciprocity, is understood through the process of changes in humans and their environment through their mutual interactions. Individual parts of the system, as well as the whole, can only be understood through the dynamics of reciprocal and surface interaction.

From the presented general framework and practical problems of the conflicting concepts in social work ((1) the concept of working on changes in personality and (2) the concept of working on changes in the environment), a model called "Life" emerges, which integrates conflicting concepts. Its conceptualization highlights dysfunctional relationships between individuals (as individuals, groups, and communities), their social and natural environment, which is expressed through the concept of "life problem-situation." In this sense, people are understood in evolution and adaptation processes through "transactions" in which people and their environment mutually shape each other. Differences between the demands of adaptation and the ability to successfully fulfill their roles lead to stress, resulting in maladaptive, "dysfunctional" behaviors. The task and goal of social work are to increase people's ability to harmonize their adaptive needs and environmental <sup>35</sup> possibilities appropriately. Accordingly, intervention is achieved by considering:

1. "transitional" needs and problems;
2. the needs of the environment and its problems within it;
3. problems of individuals, their families, groups, etc., in their relationships during the adaptation process ("interpersonal adaptive relationships"); this relates to clients' needs and problems in one or more life problem areas, which may be interrelated.

Starting from the standpoint that the relationship between the client and the social worker is defined by a "contract" in which common issues are determined, there is a kind of "division of labor" in which the client

---

<sup>35</sup> Vidanović, I.: Individual and Family, Belgrade, 1998, pp. 55-61.

focuses on "fulfilling life tasks," while the social worker focuses on providing conditions for the client's execution of "life tasks."

The presented framework is distinctly humanistic and democratic. Perhaps this is the reason for its idealism, which neglects the characteristics of clients, problem characteristics, environmental characteristics, and the limitations of the possibilities of social work and all the factors of the adaptation process.

Erikson's<sup>36</sup> understanding of maturation, stages of readiness for valid responses, stages of sensitivity to threatening factors, leads to the understanding that the development of personality is characterized by adaptive modes of behavior (social modalities) and increased concerns for these modalities (psychosocial crises) - which are understood as "transitional challenges" or, more specifically, problems of transition from one stage to another in development. It is normal for an individual personality to use their maturation (internal factors of their ability) to respond and fulfill the social demands of their environment, while the environment provides certain opportunities and necessary resources. This applies to social groups and communities as well.

Essentially, the problem of social work (social worker) is to provide opportunities for the fulfillment of life tasks according to the client's needs, unique lifestyle, and aspirations. However, this paradigm viewpoint needs to be supplemented with the correction that social work has diverse clients and that it, no matter how it is treated, has both theoretical and practical dual factual function: on one hand, it protects clients, but within the given social, political, legal, and value system, and on the other hand, it also protects the social community. Therefore, social

---

<sup>36</sup> Ericson, E. H. Identity and the Life Cycle: Psychological Issues. Monograph No 1. New York International Universities Press, 1959.

work does not seek to provide conditions for the "fulfillment of life tasks" solely in accordance with the "needs and aspirations" of the client, but also in accordance with the demands and expectations of society. This clearly emerges from the paradigm itself, which respects the social and physical environment.

The concept of *social environment* encompasses not only individuals and groups, but the entire network of institutions and organizations of society, but it is narrower than the concept of the physical environment, which includes natural environmental factors and the social environment. As a rule, the client is in an unfavorable status towards their environment and in their social environment, so social work helps them identify the problematic life situation and find explanations and directions for finding a way out together, as well as with the strategy of social intervention (social action), which implies appropriate connections with formal structures and organizations, management, and politics. This also includes initiatives, proposals, informational and propaganda campaigns, petitions, public assessments and criticisms, etc. This can be understood as a system of interventions in the social network of the individual, and it is appropriate to call it "*social network work*".

The primary activity is the initiation and support of community self-organization in overcoming the problems of individuals, families, and social groups.

The roles of social work in social network work appear to be:

1. liberation, development, and strengthening of internal adaptive capacities, including development;
2. removal or at least weakening of obstacles to the development and adaptation of individuals, groups, and communities;

3. preservation and improvement of essential opportunities and qualities of the human living environment.

For this, a joint social action of the client and the social worker is necessary, as service users, fully involved in the intervention process and the assessments that are carried out, develop increasing competencies in the relationships of social control and the fulfillment of life tasks.

In the processes of social adaptation in groups and especially in narrower basic communities, problems of maladaptive communication arise in the form of conflicts, internal discomfort among members, blaming, etc. The difficulties lie in the fact that these behaviors can occur in multiple roles. On one hand, they can act as a way to maintain internal group balance, and on the other hand, they can be the cause of maladaptive behavior of some members.

According to existing knowledge<sup>37</sup>, interpersonal conflicts in a group (family) can have various sources, most commonly:

1. contradictions between individual and group (collective) determinations towards fulfilling "life" tasks;
2. inadequate adaptation in relationships towards pressures and deficiencies in the environment;
3. contradictions between individuals or internal groups in orientations towards mutual internal relationships;
4. incompatibility between the system of orientation values of group members (community);
5. incompatibilities or conflicts due to changes in the group's structure or the behavior of a member or part of it.

---

<sup>37</sup> Stakić Đ.: Methodology of Work with Juvenile Delinquents, Dečje novine, G. Milanovac, 1991, pp. 151-159. Vidanović, L.: Individual and Family, 1998, pp. 85-98.



Other causes are also possible, such as changes in certain characteristics of group members or similar.

Social workers help solve these problems by training and encouraging, restoring broken internal connections and relationships, reaching agreements with clients, and avoiding interpersonal barriers or client resistance.

The exposed systemic paradigm provides opportunities for multiple interpretations. However, these interpretations cannot significantly alter the theoretical and practical provisions of this paradigm, which is useful as a methodological approach and model but is closely related to the methodology of social work.<sup>38</sup>

### 3.2 Generic-specific concept in social work

Understanding and accepting the generic-specific concept in social work as a methodological-scientific research paradigm (scientific approach) is very difficult for at least three reasons:

*First*, due to the way and goals of its creation;

*Second*, due to the primary subject it dealt with;

*Third*, due to the very limited content related to the methodology of scientific research.

This concept-paradigm was developed in the United States in 1923 as an attempt to formulate social work as a practiced activity with sufficient precision. In line with the orientation of social work at that time and

---

<sup>38</sup> Halmi, A.: Research Methodology in Social Work, 1999, pp. 131-148. The presentation on the generic-specific conception is primarily based on the work of Aleksandar Halmi.

society's focus on working with individuals and individual cases (case work), its content consisted of three basic areas of knowledge:

1. knowledge of the psychodynamics of deviant behavior.
2. knowledge of social treatment methods in working with individual cases.
3. adaptation of scientific knowledge (mostly from related sciences such as psychology) for application in social work on an individual case.

The very name of the concept expresses the internal division of this concept. The first part of the name, "generic," reflects efforts to express and codify the knowledge and methods that characterize social work as a whole. The second part of the title, "specific," refers to the knowledge and methods specific to various areas and aspects of social work. In this sense, this concept should be understood as the unity of the general-common and the specific-specified. This concept was dominant until the 1980s-90s.

This concept had the greatest contribution and influence in the field of social work education, leading to the establishment of a common "generic" educational content, alongside specialized programs for applied areas and methodological complexes. This stimulated the advancement of social work practice but not scientific research, which led to significant theoretical and methodological gaps and different understandings of the concept.

The "GS" concept worked towards the unification of the social work profession and their status through the curriculum. Subjects are defined as general, while specialization is entrusted to other institutions. At the same time, between 1950 and 1960, there was a tendency to reduce the gap between education and practice in social work, and two main

foundations and sources of possibilities for analyzing professional practice were established. The first area subject to study consists of the methods and concepts necessary for the theoretical education of professionals in the field of social welfare and care. The second area consists of essential elements of competence for practical social work in various fields.

During the development and application of the "GS" concept, several important questions arose, of which we attach special importance due to their relevance:

1. Is this concept mixed with practical principles that are both "generic" and "specific," and does the problem of distinguishing between "generic" and "specific" arise?
2. And the second question that arises from statement (2) "Every field of practice can be understood as a process of social work, and every process of social work can be applied in any field of practice." This statement implies a certain degree of aggressiveness in understanding social work and raises numerous questions of delimitation and delineation, as well as clear conceptual definition of "generic" and "specific" as key concepts. Expanding the scope and content of social work disrupts their previously established common meanings.

The necessity for scientific definition of key concepts arises from their previous use, which is characterized by the following properties:

1. The dual-term designation of the "GS" concept creates difficulties in proper understanding because it equates education and theory with the term "generic," while practice is labeled as "specific."
2. The concept is not directly derived from professional practice, so a complete conceptual framework is lacking, as well as appropriate

research on current phenomena and their relevant connections to social work.

3. The "GS" concept has been used in a narrow sense: "specific" is equated with narrow specification, while "generic" mostly refers to educational models (diagnostic, therapeutic, planned changes, etc.). There is still a discrepancy between education-educational base and the practice of social work. The "GS" concept has initiated, but has not provided completeness and consistent theoretical framework. In this direction, at least the following efforts are still required:

1. Identifying the "entities" in social work and their corresponding conceptualization;
2. Elaborating the constitutive elements of a comprehensive theoretical framework, primarily the following:

2.1 System of theory and orientation values, which implies connecting and integrating scientifically based general principles, rules, and methods of social work with a distinctive social philosophy, value judgments, and professional ethics;

2.2 Practice, theory, and the values that arise from it, which require a clear definition of the goals and functions of the profession and determining the boundaries of its own competence, while respecting both the "ego" and "eco" approaches. Respecting both approaches is necessary because social intervention is realized through both independent, direct interaction with the client and collaboration with other professions. Human needs, common types of behavior related to them, appropriate scientific knowledge, basis, types, and roles of value judgments, professional role and responsibility of the social worker or social work must also be studied.

### **3.2.1 The Relationship between the Education System and the Practice of Social Work**

From the above, it is clear that the "GS" concept is not fully and specifically constituted. This fact completely justifies the question of whether it is possible to accept it as a methodological scientific paradigm. The arguments support the conclusion that this concept is only an indication that requires significant modifications and revisions in order to be considered a scientific-methodological paradigm of the science of social work.

### **3.3 The Generic Process of Research and Problem Solving**

The concept of the "generic process of research" is based on the belief that a unique methodological process is necessary, which is understood as a generic problem-solving process. According to this understanding, it is a complex methodology of the science-discipline of social work that directs its own scientific knowledge towards generic problem-solving, leading to parallelism between research and the practice of social work and unification into a single process of social action-intervention. This inspiration, articulated at the end of the eighth decade of the 20th century, does not explicitly mention social prevention, although the concept of "social action" can encompass social prevention as well.

According to the views of its proponents (Grinell, Garvin, Siegel, Martinović, Halmi), the generic problem-solving process consists of four activities in solving a social problem that take place through five distinct phases.

As there are two models that illustrate the system-process of generic problem-solving, in which "research and practice are two steps in

problem-solving" that are in dialectical relationship, we will present a draft model of an expanded form of the generic process that incorporates previous, narrower draft models.

The schema of the process model looks like this:

## **Phase I: Identification, Definition, and Specification of the Problem**

### *1. Identification and definition of the problem*

#### **A) General problem-solving**

##### *1.1 Perception and definition of the problem*

1. Perception of the problem by the client's system
2. Definition of the problem by systems interacting with the client's system
3. Perception of the problem by social and professional workers
4. Problem for the professional work itself.

##### *1.2 Identification of goals*

How the client's system sees or wants to see the solution to the problem:

1. short-term goals
2. long-term goals

What the client's system thinks is necessary to solve the problem

3. what the client's system expects from the institution in the problem-solving process
4. what goals are established in the social work process as a solution to the problem
5. what the service system can or should offer the client to achieve their goals (whose goals? the client's or the institution's?) \*Note: ours.

##### *1.3 Preliminary agreement*

1. setting actual boundaries of social services
2. stating the nature of future joint action
3. making further agreements in the process of investigation, assessment of rights, expectations, and autonomy of the client's system

#### *1.4 Research and study*

1. motivation
  - a. discomfort
  - b. hopes
2. favorable circumstances
3. capacities of the client's system

### **B) Research in social work**

#### *1.5 Identification of research problems*

1. innovation
2. variability in practice
3. relevance of research
4. possibility of solving the problematic situation

#### *1.6 Defining the subject of research*

1. choosing the area of scientific analysis
2. defining concepts and conceptual analysis

#### *1.7 Determining the goals of research*

1. practical or pragmatic goals
2. cognitive or scientific goals

### **C) Practice of social work**

#### *1.8 Diagnosis and assessment*

1. contact or discovery phase
2. contracting phase
3. diagnostic phase or phase of defining the client's problematic situation

### *1.9 Assessment of condition and interventions*

Phase 1: Baseline assessment

Phase 2: Intervention

(Applying the A-B research design in a case study)

### **Phase II: Generating alternatives and selecting strategies to solve the problem**

#### **A) General problem-solving**

##### *2.1 Assessment and evaluation*

1. How and in what way do the identified problems reflect on the clients' needs?
2. Analyzing the situation to identify the main operational factors.
3. Reflecting on important factors contributing to the continuity of social needs and problems.
4. Identifying critical factors, defining their interrelationships, and selecting those to work on.
5. Identifying available resources.
6. Choosing and applying suitable principles and concepts of professional social work.
7. Expert assessment of the main goals in the problem-solving process.

##### *2.2 Formulating an action plan*

1. Reflecting on and setting achievable goals.
2. Considering possible alternative solutions.



3. Determining appropriate service modalities.
4. Emphasizing efforts towards change.
5. Social and other professional worker services.
6. Considering potential factors that may hinder plan implementation.
7. Reflecting on knowledge and skills that can expedite plan implementation.

### *2.3 Forecasting*

1. Assessing the reliability column for the success of plan implementation.
2. Assessing the validity level of the plan.

## **B) Research in social work**

### *2.4 Formulating hypotheses and research designs*

1. Setting research hypotheses:
  - a. Affirmative hypotheses.
  - b. Negative hypotheses.
2. Identification and operationalization of variables
  - a. Dependent
  - b. Independent
  - c. Intervening
  - d. Indicators for measuring variables
3. Determination of research design
  - a. Descriptive
  - b. Causal research design

### *2.5 Selection of data collection methods*

1. Measurement
2. Observation
3. Survey

4. Interview
5. Tests
6. Rating scales
7. Content analysis

### **C) Social work practice**

#### *2.6 Process of change*

1. Selection and planning of intervention
2. Types of intervention
  - a. Intervention at the individual level
  - b. Intervention at the group level
  - c. Intervention in the social network
3. Methods of intervention
  - a. Providing practical social assistance
  - b. Methods and techniques of counseling
  - c. Organizing support groups at the local community level
  - d. Other community-level projects

### **Phase III: Implementation**

#### **A) General problem solving**

##### *3.1 Presentation of the plan*

1. Specific points of intervention
2. Assessment of tasks, resources, methods, and services to be applied

##### *3.2 Termination*

1. Evaluation of the client's infrastructure system
2. Completion of the process and disengagement
3. Support for the client's progress

#### **B) Research in Social Work**

### *3.3 Planning and implementation of field research*

1. Preparation for fieldwork
2. Conducting field research
3. Field control

### *3.4 Selection of methods for data analysis*

1. Qualitative methods
2. Quantitative methods of analysis

### *3.5 Interpretation of data*

## **C) Social Work Practice**

### *3.6 Social treatment*

1. Direct treatment of personality change
2. Indirect treatment of environmental change

## **Phase IV: Evaluation**

### **A) General problem solving**

#### *4.1 Evaluation of selected solutions*

1. Pre-evaluation and planning:
  - a. 1. Defining the beneficiaries
  - b. 2. Defining the program
  - c. 3. Assessing program durability and credibility
  - d. 4. Identifying evaluation questions
  - e. 5. Identifying measurement outcomes and data collection outcomes
  - f. 6. Determining cost-benefit analysis
2. Conducting the study and reporting results
  - a. 1. Data collection

- b. 2. Data analysis
- c. 3. Formulating conclusions
- d. 4. Making proposals
- e. 5. Findings report

## **B) Research in Social Work**

### *4.2 Writing a scientific report*

1. Problem-background of the problem, importance for the research, review of related research, presentation and explanation of the research problem and variables
2. Methods-description of the strategy (description of research design and methods, research sites and sample plan, description of data collection and analysis methods)
3. Results-presentation of results including interpretation of data, presentation through tables, graphs, and diagrams, description of relevant analytical procedures
4. Discussion-discussion of research results, including reinterpretation of data, implications for theory, practice, and education, limitations of the study, critical approach to own research results, and comparison with other results, summary, proposals, and conclusion.

## **C) Social Work Practice**

### *4.3 Evaluation of client progress and completion of the process*

Before we consider this paradigm (concept, model) from the perspective of scientific research and the essential provisions of science and scientificity, it is useful to point out some other important principles.

The first important principle is that the science of social work implies a specific, complex research methodology that further implies the parallelism of research and social work practice. It understands the

practice of social work and research as simultaneous processes in the function of planned and methodically organized social work practice focused on helping individuals and social groups (and communities, for example) within the community.

The scientific methodology of social work includes an epistemological procedure that encompasses the following activities:

1. identification, definition, and specification of the procedure;
2. generation of alternatives;
3. implementation; and
4. evaluation and publication of findings, which appear as phases I-IV in the presented model.

Everything is directed towards social intervention that yields results, with a focus on direct intervention.

Professional social workers are seen as specific practitioner-researchers who, according to Siegel:

1. use research findings to make practical decisions;
2. collect data through the process of intervention and observation of the effects of that intervention;
3. use research methods, skills, and tools to demonstrate the benefits of social welfare interventions;
4. use specific, objectively measurable indicators to describe the problematic situation in the client's infrastructure system, as well as other interventions and goals of social action;
5. follow the norms and rules of logic when considering the outcomes of social welfare practice;
6. always keep in mind that research and practice are only two forms of applied research logic;

7. understand that research and practice are a unique and generic process of resolving problematic situations, just like the science of social work itself.

At the foundation of the model are five theories that are leading paradigms in social work theory today:

1. systemic theories;
2. communication theories;
3. role-playing theories;
4. psychoanalytic theories, specifically "ego" theories;
5. theories of diversity and differences among people.

The fundamental assumptions on which this concept is built would be:

1. people want to establish control over their own lives and feel fully competent in performing relevant tasks;
2. the impetus for change lies in the integration of systemic goals (goals of various systems);
3. social workers always aim to modify certain transactions (relationships, actions, perceptions, experiences, etc.) within or between human systems;
4. human systems are open, and input vectors are critical for their growth and development;
5. in order for systems to function, they must be in a state of equilibrium or homeostasis (but their elements are constantly changing);
6. human systems are purposeful and constantly strive to achieve specific goals.

Considering these assumptions as essential and foundational, we can analyze them critically and with a tendency to do so impartially, solely

from the standpoint of the provisions of the scientific methodology of scientific research.

First, this concept is primarily a general model of the process of practicing social work in a situation where social intervention (social action) is applied to an existing client or their social environment using research. In relation to this, two observations arise:

1. the client is known;
2. it is known that social intervention towards the client or their social environment is necessary, i.e., it is necessary both for the client and their environment.

Scientific research deals with general and replicable (in some way) phenomena, and it does not necessarily have to be known by the client, especially not the individual, nor does it have to be known that there is a need for social intervention towards the client. It is possible to scientifically research the theory of social work, and in that research, there is no pre-defined client and social intervention. Instead, scientific problems of theory are discovered and defined, and scientific-theoretical solutions are sought.

Research on the tendencies of the development of a certain phenomenon (e.g. the phenomenon of divorce in a society or its segment-administrative-political unit, nation, age group, confession, etc.) also does not have a directly defined client nor is it in the function of social intervention (neither direct nor indirect). If the results of the research, for example, show that there is a decrease in the number of divorces, the logical conclusion is that no social action is needed in terms of social intervention. This kind of research can also reveal that the elimination of the causes of divorce is not within the scope of social work. Therefore, even research on the methods of social work action for the purpose of

scientific generalization, whether it is the generalization of the results of individual research or existing generalizations aimed at deriving theories of medium scope, also does not have a defined client, nor is social therapy their immediate goal.

We could further expand the list of examples to which this concept, as presented, cannot be adequately applied. The warning that "this draft problem-solving model should only be used selectively" - and that multiple selectivity is completely justified.

The theoretical foundation of the model-conception on the aforementioned five theories is not based on the original theories of social work nor on the theory of social work that has articulately absorbed and interpreted them. Therefore, it cannot be said that this paradigmatic concept is truly theoretically based. If each of these theories is a paradigm, at least two observations arise: the first is that the theory is fundamentally a paradigm, and that theory is the interpretation, argumentation, elaboration, and justification of the paradigm; the second, it is not usual, and it is also very problematic to form a new, eclectic or integrated scientific paradigm.

Without going into further detail about other characteristics of this concept, such as its functionalistic characteristics, ambivalent attitude towards paradigms of qualitative and quantitative orientation, etc., we will only mention two more questions: the requirement that every professional worker be a practitioner-researcher, while other non-professional social workers can be practitioners but not researchers, and the treatment of research work in the presented model.

Are all social workers truly endowed and sufficiently educated to perform research tasks of an appropriate scientific level?



There is no doubt that every social worker is educated to conduct routine, administrative-evidentiary, and professional research, but only some are educated and equipped for scientific research work. The demand for logical thinking and reasoning is justified, but the question also relates to whether spontaneous logical thinking is sufficient and which logic social workers study, as there are multiple scientific logics. It is easy to argue that non-professional workers cannot be researchers but can be practitioners. Let's take an extreme example. Isn't a methodologist who researches and contributes to the theory of social work methodology a social worker-researcher, but not a practitioner? And in relation to that, there are also questions about whether there is a division of labor in social work institutions, and whether social workers and those who educate them are expected to be "superhuman."

The research model appears in every phase. The first phase includes:

1. Identifying the research problem;
2. Defining the research subject;
3. Determining the research objectives.

The second phase includes:

1. Formulating hypotheses and research design, and causal design;
2. Choosing methods for data collection.

The third phase includes:

1. Planning and conducting field research;
2. Choosing methods for data analysis;
3. Interpreting the data.

The fourth phase requires writing a scientific report. Based on this arrangement of the research process content, at least two groups of

research are opened: the first group relates to the relationship between research and the process of social work. Doesn't research and its results (whether from the body of scientific knowledge or from current research) have a role in identifying, defining, and specifying problems, suggesting possible solutions and planning interventions, conducting selected interventions, and evaluating client progress? And does every social intervention, for example, giving advice on a simple routine question, really require such a fragmented research and writing a scientific report? In this sense, the aforementioned warning applies.

From the perspective of scientific research methodology, the following observations can be made:

1. The research design, a scientific and operational document, is preceded by conceptualization.
2. The problem, subject, objectives, hypotheses, methods of data collection and processing, reasoning, and reporting of research results are integral parts of the research design, and they are done as parts-phases of the design, so they do not precede or follow it.
3. In research, there are not only methods of data collection and processing. This must certainly be taken into account, as well as the fact that the research method is very complex. Does this conception determine all segments of the method and define the type of research?

These are obviously very serious methodological questions that need to be answered if one remains committed to the claim that this inspiring conception is a methodological paradigm.

### 3.4 Single-system design or case study design

In the literature, the "single-system design<sup>39</sup>" is characterized as a possible way of integrating research and practice, or a technology for integrating research and practice into a unity that allows for the evaluation of client progress and the improvement of practice through case study. It is based on the view that case studies are an important research orientation in almost all professions and sciences that deal with human behavior.

The subject of research in this case study design can be any individual case: an individual, a group, or a community, and various methods and techniques can be used within the framework of this research. The design refers to the plan of systematic data collection within a specified time period (which can be the total time of occurrence of a social case or a defined part of it).

The basic provisions and procedures of a case study, which cannot be fully equated with research phases or practice, may include:

1. Identification and definition of the problem. This practically means that the initial observed and identified problem, understood by the social worker-practitioner and the client (client system), is properly specified. In this case, specification means the precise determination of factors and aspects of a life or problem situation that will be subject to treatment and research. Identifying and precisely defining the problem and the subject of social intervention and research is the starting point of every intervention and research.

---

<sup>39</sup> Ticher and Bloom: *Evaluating Practice: Guidelines for the Accountable Professional*, Prentice Hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1982, p. 11.

2. Selection of methods and techniques for data collection, including methods and techniques for observing, recording, and measuring manifestations of the problem or problem situation of the client-system. Manifestations can have different forms and degrees of immediacy, so their measurability varies. This requires finding valid indicators and appropriate measurement systems, measures, and criteria.
3. The essence of a case study lies in the understanding and investigation of time series. Over time, the problem manifests itself in specific ways and with a certain intensity. Since the research begins before the start of social intervention, the social worker, client, and other participants-researchers can observe and measure these manifestations before, during, and after certain phases or stages of the intervention, and based on differences and their direction, gain knowledge about changes. This knowledge is practical, professional, and scientific because both professional and scientific methods are used. Therefore, it involves multiple recording and measuring of repeatedly occurring manifestations and identifying the cessation of manifestations.
4. Initiating the research of a social problem (systematic data collection about it) several days, at most three weeks, before the start of social intervention is considered a crucial and fundamental provision. Data and knowledge about the problem are the basis for two further comparisons.
5. The design of the research (research project, its elaboration and precision) and the consistency and rigor of its application allow us to answer two questions: first, what happens with the problem, how and to what extent does it change over time; second, whether the change

is a result of the intervention or whether something else ("blind" or "parasitic" variable) influenced it.

6. The case study design cannot ensure this if the intervention is not clearly defined, described, or structured. First, the intervention goal and expectations must be clearly determined. Second, the intervention procedures and means, as well as key moments of the intervention, must be clearly defined, that is, the intervention program. There is a possibility that one type or form of intervention does not lead to desired changes, so it must be replaced with another. Changing the intervention program also leads to changes or adaptation of research instruments. The intervention program must allow for differentiation of intervention lines and periods.
7. Data processing and analysis must be very precise and subtle. This practically means appropriate qualitative and quantitative processing, suitable for inference and expression. As a rule, highly complex mathematical and statistical processing is not necessary, but rather calculating certain series, trends, means, standard deviations, and the like. Additionally, presenting the results can be done in tabular, graphical, and verbal-written form.

Research based on the single-system design has many characteristics of an experiment. By starting the research with the identification of the defined client's (client's system) problem situation, an initial baseline situation is established, which is determined and measured using appropriate methods. This makes it comparable to all subsequent situations. Appropriate actions are then taken on the client's problem, the client themselves, and their environment under known circumstances. The action using certain means and procedures in defined circumstances takes on the properties of an experimental factor acting in an experimental situation. The effects of the intervention can be recorded

and measured in predicted time sequences, which is also characteristic of a true experiment. The entire research is conducted according to an established research plan-project and a plan of social action-social intervention. Is this parallel social practice and research? It seems to us that the experimental nature of this research concept indicates more of a merging and unification than parallelism.

The viewpoint that the case study is applicable as a method to all problematic situations in social work, as well as other social sciences where it cannot be considered new, is justified. Namely, as a research method-concept, it is known and applied in sociology, economics, and mostly political science under the name "casu method". Truly, it is quite difficult to accept it as a paradigm, but its essential characteristics of methodological concept, even instructions, and operational research methods cannot be denied.

Case study-single-system design is attributed with many advantages and disadvantages. Some of the advantages include:

1. It can easily be incorporated into social and research practice, regardless of the client or the type of social situation involved.
2. It allows for the evaluation of practice results, as well as the evaluation of the effectiveness of research methods, especially instruments and procedures.
3. The development of a design-project focuses attention and activities on the system.
4. The design is based on practice and science, and is directed towards practical effectiveness and its professional and scientific understanding, allowing for continuous recording and evaluation of changes.

5. Systematic monitoring within the implementation of the design enables modifications to the social intervention program, including the selection of a program that better suits the situation.
6. The systematic application of the design ensures a database necessary for effective practice through information about its success, which can be used to build practice standards and models.

Two more important advantages attributed to "case studies" can be conditionally accepted. The first is that this concept is free from any theoretical orientation. Does this mean that a case study is conducted without a theoretical approach? Isn't the very name indicative of a systemic approach and isn't that also reflected in the focus on the client's system? It is acceptable that the course of intervention, its results, and their research, based on reality, can be free from (excessive) theoretical influence. The second advantage is that this design protects against the (harmful) influence of other researchers because it is "guided by the practitioner and the client's system". First, is it really the case that there are no consultations at any stage - not even at the initial stage? Can the exchange of experiences be a "harmful influence"? The least that can be asked for is clarification of this position. If it implies excluding "other researchers" from the intervention process, that can be understandable and acceptable to us.

From a methodological-research standpoint, the concept of a "single-system design" also has certain advantages. First, there is systematic and orderly internal and procedural logic that allows for hypothesis testing, whether they are already given in the design or arise during research, e.g. after changing the intervention program. The second advantage is the potential wealth of simple and complex research

subjects, and the third is the possibility of applying multiple research methods.

Furthermore, research according to this design is closest to respecting the norms of methodology and scientific research.

Unfortunately, when highlighting the advantages of the single-system design, certain comparisons were made with research using the classical experimental design. This resulted in the negation of various incorrect claims or oversights. One of the claims is that all "classical" research is massive, conducted on large samples, and that there is no place for individual, specific problems. Indeed, many studies that aim to understand the essential characteristics of an entire population are like that. However, many studies only relate to a narrower community, segment, organization, or just one problem, which requires individual treatment.

Some research cannot be conducted without analyzing individual cases. For example, political leaders and presidents or monarchs of countries or the reporting of one newspaper in political science, etc. Understanding "macro" cases can be very helpful.

In social work, the closest case would be that of a local community. It is incorrect to assume that the number of variables depends on the goals of "classical" research. It actually depends on the subject of research, and their other characteristics depend on scientific goals, and their number is also limited.

It would be too extensive to comment on the table of comparisons between research conducted using the single-system design and the classical experimental design, which consists of twenty comparative items. The authors of this table did not highlight such research as



absolutely dominant and the only possibility, not only in social work but especially more broadly. In social work as well, "classical" research cannot be replaced by research based on the single-system design. It seems more appropriate to compare the "case method" with the single-system design within the same science, subject, and methods of the same science than to do so in a general sense. Namely, the very penetrative and reliable results of this type of research, as well as the possibility of connecting it with other similar research in terms of space, time, problems, methodology, and results, provide enormous opportunities for scientific generalization and practice improvement.

It is understandable that various objections can be raised against every concept and its application, some of which are justified and some are not. Besides the objection that there is a tendency towards glorification and therefore a lack of scientific criticality, we cannot consider the other objections justified. Among these unjustified and unacceptable objections are those about the distance from practice, the "impressionistic" character of research, the absence of scientific rigor, excessive time and energy consumption, the inhibition of practice through research, its applicability only in behavior change processes, its rigidity, and its lack of originality. However, these objections should always be carefully studied as they point to persistently open questions regarding the multivariate relationship between research and practice, concentration and interpenetration through a "single-system design" case, as well as the relationship between various methods and types of research within or outside of this concept.

### **3.5 Evaluation Research in Social Work**

The first question that arises from the title of this chapter is whether it is about a paradigm or just a new type of research that can be classified

under methods based on the criteria of research subjects. Indeed, the subject of evaluation research is specific. It relates to the evaluation of social intervention programs in social work based on criteria of suitability and effectiveness in achieving goals, as well as the economic benefits (the relationship between costs and benefits) for the community.

According to proponents of this type of research, "the evaluation phase is inherent in scientific methodology in general." Furthermore, every scientific research is subject to multiple and multi-stage evaluations in the process of conceptualization, research design, research planning, pre-research, data collection and analysis, hypothesis testing, etc. Hence, the scientific nature and verifiability of all parts of every research of the so-called "classical methodology."

It cannot be reasonably disputed that social work should and can be planned, systematic, goal-oriented, efficient, and successful. Professional social work is institutionalized, professional, predominantly funded by the state, in accordance with state policy through social work policy, and controlled by the state or another body. The need for knowledge about activities, effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, etc. is multiple and is necessary for the state, specific bodies and organizations, social work institutions, and institutions involved in social work with varying degrees of direct involvement, professionals, scientists (profession and science), and clients, etc.

Research on social work programs is therefore desirable and even necessary in some areas. However, we cannot accept them as a paradigm, but we can treat them as a form of demonstration of the paradigms and rules of the "traditional" methodology presented earlier.

It could be said that evaluation research can be observed in two groups: as research on general programs related to complex social actions-

interventions towards multiple clients, and as research within a case study ("single-system design").

Evaluation of every action, intervention, action results, method validity, etc. is undoubtedly necessary. Whether scientific research, professional research, or routine professional assessment based on common, standard criteria are needed for this cannot be answered generally. It seems that the properties and characteristics of the program determine this or should determine it.

Evaluation research, based on the presented understanding, is more of an attempt to achieve a kind of "parallelism" or integration of science-research and practice in one process rather than scientific research. Essentially, they are applicative research that aims to obtain valid, usable information on the basis of which competent authorities can make informed decisions about the program in order to achieve effective social practice and provide conditions for its implementation. This practically means that the program already exists, but it can also be accepted that the program is in the process of development, and the evaluation research is conducted parallelly and simultaneously with program development.

As a program that is the subject of research exists, first of all, it must be determined whether it is a previously applied program for which there are already experiences and knowledge, or it is a program currently being applied, or it is a prepared but not yet applied program, or it is a program in the process of preparation. Each of these mentioned programs can and should be evaluated during preparation, after the program is formulated before implementation, during implementation, and after implementation is completed. The program, or the phase of the program, significantly affects the evaluation procedure.

### 3.5.1. Some questions regarding the definition of evaluative research

Like in any theory, any reflection, in research practice, there are multiple definitions that coexist. Instead of listing them, here we will first offer a working definition of a social work program that is the subject of evaluative research.

The concept of a program is generally understood as a systematic, logical, coherent, and consistent, realistic idea about goals-intentions and ways of achieving them, as well as about the qualitative-quantitative effects of realizing this idea in a certain time and space. In this sense, a social work program (not yet applied but developed) implies a clearly defined system of interconnected activities using certain methods (procedures and instruments) with a clearly defined goal (goals), actors involved (social workers-clients and others), specified space (location), and time, defined expected effects, expenses (social energy, material and financial resources, etc.), and benefits (social, economic, scientific, and professional). A more developed program may contain multiple variants of sequential and comprehensive solutions for different situations.

A social work program can be very general - such as a program for implementing social policy, or it can be a program for solving an individual case, a series of cases, a group problem, a community problem, an institutional problem, etc.

By elaborating on this working definition, it is relatively easy to reach the basic structure and content of a social work program - a program of social action, a program of social intervention, a program of social therapy, etc.

There is no universally accepted definition of the terms:

a) evaluation program;

b) evaluative research.

The prevailing definitions of evaluation programs are:

- a) a systematic study within the implementation of social action, social treatment, or intervention programs that are elements of social action;
- b) a set of methods and skills necessary for determining the needs and validity of the respective social protection programs.

There are no specific, definitive definitions of evaluative research that strictly differentiate them from evaluation programs. A working definition of evaluative research, based on their essential provisions, could be: they are applied research of the actual value of social work programs.

One of the problems in defining evaluative research is the demand of some authors to "separate" research in social work from "fundamental social science research." This demand raises at least two very complex questions: firstly, whether "applied research" and thus evaluative research are scientific research. If they are not, their results lack scientific basis and reliability, so it is more appropriate to talk about evaluative programs, processes, etc. rather than research. Secondly, what is meant by "fundamental social science research"? Are they then genuine scientific research on social work outside of social work practice?

In planning and managing social policy and social protection programs, the evaluation program is considered to be omnipresent, but not in the form of scientific research.

### **3.5.2. Components and phases of evaluation research**

Evaluation research is carried out through five interconnected segments that are in constant interaction. These include:

1. Initial and final analysis, which includes assessing social needs. This involves determining and verifying the existence of a social problem in the target population of clients based on indicators:
  - a) socio-economic profile of the local community;
  - b) specific needs of a particular community in line with the type of program to be implemented;
  - c) necessary social services for a specific community.

The reliability of needs assessments involves all three approaches, if they are indeed different approaches. We understand them more as the use of different sources, and it is best to use them simultaneously and critically. None of them may be sufficiently informative and reliable.

2. Analysis of processes or procedures taken during social action or treatment.

Precise instruments are used to monitor and measure treatment (social) interventions and changes in clients under their cause-and-effect influence. This requires standardization of intervention procedures and instruments. Furthermore, it is necessary for the social intervention program to be acceptable to a sufficient number of clients; the included clients should be representative enough of the entire target population; social workers should effectively communicate with clients and their actions should align with the plans; there should be appropriate proportions between the number of individuals engaged in performing tasks and the actual scope and complexity, etc. Each of these requirements must be specified and standardized. Without this, social treatment cannot be standardized. Non-standardized and uncontrolled social treatment programs lead to mistakes, such as the absence of social intervention or if it was incorrect.

Mistakes can be avoided by using direct observation by supervisors (which is ideal but very difficult to implement), analyzing the notes of specific experts, and analyzing data collected by social workers.

3. Evaluation of program evaluability, which practically means determining whether a specific program can be evaluated at all. If the program is well conceptualized (consistent, logical, with defined key concepts, clearly defined program objectives that are in a specific relationship, and includes standardized social treatment) and operationalized, the program can be successfully evaluated. However, deficiencies in program conceptualization can be addressed if the evaluation program is not yet complete, by attempting to define concepts retrospectively and subsequently determining key moments of treatment focus to improve the lack of differentiation in objectives. Systematic program planning eliminates the problem of undefined specific measurement instruments. According to Hornick and Burrows<sup>40</sup>, it is essential to obtain answers to the following questions:
  - a. What is the key point in making decisions about the program, assessing treatment, and problem termination?
  - b. What activities should be taken before and after making decisions?
  - c. What changes have occurred in the client as a result of the implemented program?
  - d. Analysis of results determines the effectiveness of the intended treatment of the program.

---

<sup>40</sup> Galavway, B. Compton, B.: *Social Work Processes*, 4th Ed. Wadsworth Publishing Com., Belmont, California, 1989. The text on evaluation research primarily relies on this work and its citation: Posavec, Corey, Ratma-a, Hornick-a, and Burows-a. See Janković, J.: *Phases of Evaluation in the Methodology of the Science of Social Work*, *Journal of the Faculty of Law in Zagreb*, No 3, Zagreb, 1989.

It begins by defining how the success of the evaluated program will be measured, as well as the time period of stable results after the implementation of social interventions. Clients involved in social service programs should improve their relationships with others.

By analyzing the results, three types of efficiency can be identified: technical, economic, and social welfare efficiency. The broadest and socially most significant efficiency is social welfare efficiency, and its key indicator and measure is the success in preventing potential clients and solving social problems of a specific population - which can be operationalized. Technical efficiency is essentially the productivity and usability of certain methods and techniques in social treatment, which is expressed as the time elapsed from the start of method implementation to the first results, the degree of implementation, sustainability of change, cost-effectiveness of implementation, etc. This type of efficiency is of great importance for a positive evaluation of programs, especially when analyzing processes.

Economic efficiency is the relationship between the cost of social work programs and the economic, material, and financial value of their effects. In fact, the true indicator of economic success of social work is manifested in:

- a) in the prevention sphere, through reducing the value of social damage caused by social problems to a greater extent than the cost of social work;
- b) in the curative sphere, through reducing the value of social damage through social interventions to a greater extent than the cost of those interventions.

To determine the overall cost-effectiveness of programs, an economic method called "cost-benefit" analysis is used. This is an analysis of the



relationship between costs and benefits whenever it can be monetarily expressed. The basic principle is the so-called mini-max, achieving the maximum estimated goals for the minimum cost. Cost-effectiveness analysis is also used to determine the economic efficiency of programs, but it is not used to determine priority programs; rather, it is used to select the most suitable methods and techniques to achieve specific goals. Its essential feature is that it includes the selection of specific goals, criteria for their achievement, and the formulation of alternatives.

The monitoring program involves collecting data on program implementation, analyzing them, and providing information according to the planned program.

When these parts-phases of the evaluation program are observed together as a whole, their interconnectedness and parallelism with the process of solving social problems are observed. Therefore, evaluation, which is just one form of research, according to some authors, can easily merge with practice.

The presented viewpoint leads to a simplified perspective that the practice of social work, research, and evaluation are "equal processes" based on the same sequence of stages and their connection to the so-called "problem-solving process," which is understood as a practical-research, intellectually planned system of a series of actions aimed at achieving a goal.

### **Phases of the evaluation process and their tasks**

The connection to the "problem-solving process" has led to the modification and reduction of the evaluation process to three phases:

1. Pre-evaluation and planning;
2. Conducting the study and reporting findings;

3. Making decisions on implementation and implementing based on the findings.

### **1. Pre-evaluation and planning of the evaluation process**

This phase begins with the discovery of the actual users and their expectations from evaluation research (programs, processes) regarding information, how reliable and precise, within what timeframe and at what cost, as well as the benefits expected.

The second task is the clear determination of the program that will be the subject of evaluation and the environments in which that program will be applied. This is followed by an assessment of the durability of the evaluated program and the likelihood of achieving that program, for each of its parts. From the previous knowledge gained by solving the previous three tasks, a list of specific questions is formed that need to be answered through evaluation. It is necessary to determine research designs (projects) of the research, including methods, techniques, procedures, instruments for data collection and processing that will be applied in the research. Finally, the costs and results of the research are predicted.

The execution of the listed tasks implies:

The first task is to identify the real users and their demands and needs.

Four types of users are mentioned:

- a) practitioners, who are interested in a direct contribution to the evaluation of practices, especially practical methods of action;
- b) supervisors, who are interested in knowledge about different models of services provided by various institutions;
- c) administrators, interested in the effectiveness and efficiency of the evaluated program, but also in effectiveness and efficiency in general;

- d) representatives of various societal bodies, interested in results that enable the satisfaction of societal needs.

This list also includes some other interested direct and indirect users. First, these are potential and current clients to whom the program will be or has already been applied. Second, these are science and scientific subjects - researchers who scientifically process the results of evaluation and experience in evaluation research and include them in the body of scientific knowledge. And subjects of the environment, cooperating subjects in the implementation of the program, etc. can also be users.

It is understandable that it is advisable to identify priority users - commissioners of the evaluation research who are responsible for setting requirements and choosing the means to satisfy them. However, their responsibility cannot be exclusive because they cannot make decisions without appropriate information and suggestions from experts, professionals, etc. about the characteristics and scope of individual means. Therefore, a distinction should be made between general and research, scientific and professional responsibilities.

The second task - determining the program that is being evaluated - is accomplished by first achieving a critical understanding - understanding the program as a whole and its parts. Both the program and its parts must be clear in detail. For this purpose, all factors of the structure of the subject program (program inputs - resources; program activities; program outputs and program results), their logical connection and consistency within the framework of a certain logic, and using appropriate information are analyzed. For this purpose, appropriate models of procedures can be built (such as the PSLM model of program structure and logic).

The third task is to judge the consistency and probability of the program. Judging the consistency of the program has largely already been done

within the framework of fulfilling the previous task when determining its logic. For a program to have a rational, logical structure, it must be consistent. Of course, it is possible to distinguish between general and partially-content consistency. Partial consistency refers to the internal consistency of the content within the provisions of some segments or clauses of the program. This can be achieved through a logical analysis of the agreement-contradiction of certain provisions.

Some larger problems arise when assessing the probability of the program, that is, the probability that the stated expected results will be achieved with the given methods under the given conditions, especially if such a program or a similar one has not been applied before and there is no experience or factual judgments (data) about it. Namely, the assessment of probability is based on two postulates. One is the comparison with the existing knowledge about the program and its specific characteristics; the other is the consensus in opinions and judgments reached by expert (scientific) opinions. By reflecting and analyzing, and possibly comparing, it is necessary to answer important questions about the exact determination of the types and quantities of program resources; about the exact determination of activities and methods of program implementation and expected results; about the clarity, clarity, and measurability of program goals and their relationship to the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of the planned activities; about the expectation of incidental, unintended effects, as well as the properties of the logical basis of the program. In order to come to a valid assessment by reflection, it is necessary to record, clarify, and evaluate all expressed differences in the statements of the experts participating in this process. However, expert analysis is of limited reliability.

The fourth task: determining evaluation questions. The main subject and source of evaluation questions is the user (users), and the essence of this task is to identify, articulate, develop, and locate these questions as well as determine their priority. The questions can relate to any program content, so it is useful to verify the list of questions together with the user (users). This prevents possible later misunderstandings.

The fifth task: determining data collection methods and measurement results requires precise determination of:

1. which data sources will be used;
2. which data will be collected;
3. how, by which methods and techniques, and how it will be measured;
4. in what intervals (continuously or successively) the data will be collected;
5. what implications do the choices of sources, data collection, and measurement have.

It is understandable that the data relate to variables (and therefore also to implicit or explicit hypotheses) and that they are recorded manifestations through indicators. A condition for this is valid operationalization, which ensures the necessary reliability.

The sixth task: determining the cost-benefit analysis involves assessing the costs of program implementation and the benefits derived from it. This can be calculated if the following is known:

1. the number and profile of participants-researchers and consultants (paid staff);
2. the amount of compensation paid to staff;
3. research (study) costs in addition to staff costs (material, functional, and other costs);

4. the time required to conduct the research-study;
5. limitations in the implementation of the research-study.

Based on the described knowledge, a ranking list of evaluation options is prepared, which includes assessments of the extent of information needed to present all options to the user, assessments of construction and responses to specific evaluation questions in a timely manner for decision-making, as well as assessments of the relationship between costs and results.

After adopting the decisions contained in the ranking list of evaluation options, a rigorous research-study plan is developed. It provides essential information about:

- a) specific evaluation questions and evaluation tasks in the project;
- b) tasks related to data collection methods (from selection to adaptation and application);
- c) specific evaluation report and recipient of that report;
- d) detailed assessment of the necessary personnel and resources for conducting the research-study and a draft of the procedures to be followed during the review of the study plan.

Based on the listed necessary information, the expert team participating in the evaluation process reviews the study plan and makes necessary changes and improvements.

## **2. Conducting research and reporting on the results**

In this phase, the activation of the study plan (research) begins. The following tasks are carried out to address the problems arising from the discrepancy between the planned and actual situation:

The first task is to ensure valid data collection on the evaluated subject using appropriate methods. In this regard, it is necessary to:

- a) conduct a pilot test or survey before activating the plan;
- b) simultaneously use multiple diverse sources of data;
- c) monitor data collection throughout the entire plan implementation for any necessary interventions.

The second task is the analysis of collected data. This task involves organizing, processing, and evaluating the collected data, which were strictly controlled. By using appropriate methods, including statistical methods, the analysis aims to provide answers to evaluation questions.

The selection of data processing and analysis methods is primarily based on their suitability in ensuring the validity, reliability, relevance, efficiency, and timeliness of the data and the results of their processing and analysis, as well as their ability to provide clear and applicable expressions (presentation of results).

The third task is the formulation, or rather the construction, of conclusions about the evaluated program based on data, specific experiential evidence, research experience, logic, intuition, etc. While acknowledging the importance of all sources of inference outside collected data, we must question the purpose of data collection and the reliability, validity, relevance, and reliability of the data if they cannot serve as a significant basis for drawing conclusions. In other words, the strictness in the choice of data collection and processing methods and techniques should provide a valid basis for inference.

The fourth task is the development of primary and alternative proposals and suggestions for further activities.

The fifth task is the submission of a report on the findings of the study. The report connects the findings about the program with proposals for further activities related to it. It provides the recipient with sufficient and accurate information for decision-making. We give priority to a written report over an oral one because it can be verified by experts and can include precise statements, tables, diagrams, etc. directly in the text or in a technical appendix.

The recommendation that the evaluation report be composed of:

1. Contents;
2. Introduction;
3. Reporting section; and
4. Proposals

is acceptable due to its functionality.

A closer analysis of the relationship between the fourth and fifth task leads to the conclusion that it would be justified to merge these two parts because their contents intertwine.

Decision making on implementation (application of findings and recommendations of the evaluation research)

In this phase, the social work program (social treatment, social intervention, etc.) is aligned with the findings and proposals of the research study. At the end of this presentation, we must point out that research concepts, starting from the presentation of the generic-specific research concept, are actually aimed at rejecting and replacing "traditional," "classical," "positivist," "functionalist," etc. methodologies with a new "integrative," "praxeological," "applied," etc. methodology that achieves the merging, identification, and parallelism of research and practice. Research is practice, practice is research, and this



methodological orientation is its claim. However, the previous presentation of "anti-traditionalist" concepts has not proven the possibility of rejecting essential rules of methodology and scientific research. Hence, these concepts also demand logic, objective-true knowledge, research project development, definition of subject and objectives, variables and indicators, methods of data collection and analysis, etc., which can be attributed to "positivist" methodology.

This remark is not an introduction to a critical examination of the premises of "anti-traditionalist" concepts, as in the next chapter, another such concept called "Action research" is also discussed. It is only a warning that methodology cannot be understood and developed solely by emphasizing one-sided conceptual orientations, just as no science can be constituted or developed on such basis. Bias has never been and cannot be a valid ally in science.





**V**  
**ACTION RESEARCH**  
**IN SOCIAL WORK**

# V ACTION RESEARCH IN SOCIAL WORK

## 1. General provisions of the action research paradigm

Contemporary authors who favor action research or creators of "action methodology" affirm the concept of action research as a "new methodological paradigm"<sup>41</sup>. From their statements, it can be inferred that this new concept-paradigm is opposed to the "traditional," "classical," "positivist," "functionalist," "positivist-functionalistic," etc. methodology-conception of research. It is also qualified as a form of qualitative approach (qualitative methodology), as an integrative and humanistic paradigm.

In social work, which is a humanistic-oriented profession, action research is a means of achieving the innovative function of science and practice (thus, it is progressive) as opposed to the control function, which is regressive. This paradigm simultaneously expresses the close connection between practice and research, reality and theory, the execution of professional tasks in everyday practice, and scientific and

---

<sup>41</sup> Among the authors who have worked most on the development and popularization of action research, we place Aleksandar Halmi in first place with his three books: 1) *Methodology of Action Research as a Scientific and Self-Governing Basis of Social Work*, PhD dissertation, Faculty of Political Sciences, Belgrade, 1987; 2) *Social Work in the Local Community: Approaching Problems of Researching Local Communities*, Social Welfare Institute of the City of Zagreb, Zagreb, 1989; and 3) *Research Methodology in Social Work*, Alinea, Zagreb, 1995.

professional knowledge. It is also suggested that this paradigm enables a transition from "functionalist methodology" to a new methodology. This concept is supported by the characteristics of the practice and science of social work, which is defined as humanistic-oriented, action-oriented, focused on improving the life situations of individuals, groups, and communities, and successfully solving life problems in all three mentioned aspects of human existence.

The essence of a person is understood as a set of relationships and activities, as the complexity of needs and their satisfaction, as a communicative subject, etc., rather than as a separate social entity. Thus, work directed towards such a person as a "helping" and "service" activity requires research embedded in social action processes to achieve social change.

This presentation of the approach to action research has attempted to present all those aspects that can be considered essential and strategic. Some of them may become clearer during further analysis.

## 2. The emergence of the concept of action research

**A** ccording to proponents of the concept of action research, a comprehensive theory of social work that would serve its scientific-theoretical, scientific-methodological, and practical development has not yet been built. The paradigm of action research contains several theories of social action that were developed over a period of about seventy years in the twentieth century. Considering this, the concept of action research cannot be regarded as entirely new but rather as renewed.

The first theoretical foundations of the concept of action research were provided by the scientist Kurt Lewin in the United States.

## 2.1 Kurt Lewin's Topological Theory

The topological theory is also referred to as the "field theory"<sup>42</sup>. This is because the scientific study of humans (primarily within the framework of sociology and psychology) does not allow the individual to be understood as an isolated individual but rather must be understood within a specific space and time – a specific "social field". In this field, the individual acts and is subject to the actions of others, and finds themselves in a specific "life" situation. The "social field" and "life situation" are changeable and dynamic, and the individual within them (in the "social field" and "life situation") and their behavior are also changeable. As they mutually influence each other, changes in the "social field" cause reciprocal phenomena in the individual and their behavior, which affects certain properties of the "social field".

For the theory, methodology, and practice of social work, this provision of the "social field" and the individual and their mutual relationships is of primary importance. It excludes the possibility of successful social action-social intervention if the individual is not treated in relation to the environment and surroundings that, together with him, make up his "social field". In order to understand the individual and be able to act, the "social field" must be understood and acted upon in relation to it.

We owe Kurt Lewin the concept of "life situation", which is widely used but still not sufficiently defined. It is justified to consider that this concept encompasses and integrates all factors of a person's social position, with both the social position and the individual and all other factors of his

---

<sup>42</sup> Lewin, K.: *The Field Theory in Social Science*, Tavistok, London, 1952.

position being changeable. Although the concept of "life situation" is imprecisely and broadly defined, it is relatively easily intuitively understood as a set of psychophysical characteristics of a person's personality and the circumstances (conditions) in which he satisfies his needs. The degree and manner of satisfying social needs are dimensions of the life situation. However, this opens up questions about the concept of "social needs". It seems that a valid answer has been given that the concept of "social needs" extends to all aspects of a person's life, but problems arise regarding the fact that different individuals have different needs in the same social environments, and that some have the same needs in different environments, as well as due to their developmental nature and variability. It is justified to question whether it is within the competence and power of social work to take care of all or only some social needs. As the "favorability" or "unfavorability" of the life situation is assessed by the extent and degree of satisfaction of life (social) needs, it is desirable to further elaborate and specify these concepts (life situation, life needs).

Kurt Lewin is the true pioneer of the methodology (paradigm) of action research because he gave it the name "action research" in his article "Problems of Research in Social Psychology", in which he affirms the method of experimentation in natural conditions.

Lewin presented his understanding of action research in several principles and principles that can be summarized as follows:

1. All applied research should be used in managing society, either as "social engineering" or as "social management".
2. Action research is an auxiliary instrument of social action that guides it. It is comparative because it compares the conditions and effects of different actions and leads to action.

3. Action research has the same value as pure scientific research, but it should include conceptual and mathematical problems of theoretical analysis, descriptive research, as well as laboratory and field experiments. His principles can be summarized in the following statements:
- a. Research is thought for action and should serve the resolution of people's problems.
  - b. Research must have a comprehensive approach because human problems are complex interdependent factors.
  - c. The principle of a spiral formed by action planning, action implementation, research, which is repeated at higher levels of the spiral. This implies two phases of action research: the first contains an outline action plan and a plan specification, and the second the implementation of research and evaluation of results. Each phase constitutes a cycle composed of planning action, implementing action, and evaluating effects.
  - d. The principle of the continuous connection of action, research, and training.

Lewin sees action research as a significant stimulus for changes-modifications of "social fields". It is the reconstruction of the situation and its developmental tendencies.

Even though Lewin's concept contains almost all the valid postulates of contemporary action research (from basic principles to conceptual terminology network), there is still a significant difference between his and contemporary determinations. These differences are particularly evident in two aspects. First, his concept did not arise in opposition and with the intention of discrediting traditional methodology, but within it with the intention of developing and improving it. Second, according to



his concept, action research is any research whose results are intended for practical application. In "traditional" science, there are many such studies in various fields, which does not prevent the usual criticisms directed towards it. Finally, it should be noted that the concept of action research originated within his involvement in the development of psychological methods.

Lewin's knowledge, viewpoints, and principles were not affirmed as action research in the 1950s and 1960s, even though they were developed between 1938 and 1947. His ideas were revived only thirty years later.

## **2.2 Fric Hag (Fritz Haag) and Hajnc Moser (Heinz Moser): Renaissance of the concept of action research**

Although these two independent creators started from the postulates set by Lewin, their approach is far more radical and ambitious. They are very sharp critics of the positivist-functionalistic theoretical-methodological direction, which seeks to suppress the radicalized concept of action research. In this regard, Moser, with his work "Action Research as a Critical Theory of Social Sciences<sup>43</sup>," leads declaratively. Regardless of how successful they were in launching the concept of action research as a critical theory, it is undeniable that they affirmed this concept as a methodological paradigm opposed to the then-dominant positivist-functionalistic approach.

In criticizing traditional methodology, Haag<sup>44</sup> focuses on considering the following four areas of methodology:

---

<sup>43</sup> Moser, H.: Action Research as a Critical Theory of Social Sciences, Kosel Verlag, Munich, 1975.

<sup>44</sup> Haag, Fritz-Kriger, W.: Schwarzzel, J, Wildt: Action Research, Juventa, Munich, 1972.

1. Problem selection and research objectives;
2. Data quality;
3. Research subject;
4. Researcher's position and the object of research in the research process.

Regarding the first area, he forms two fundamental attitudes that serve as a basis for his critique of traditional methodology.

According to his understanding, the "traditional," "positivist," "functionalistic" theory and methodology choose the problem to be researched based on science's interest in a certain problem. Such a "cabinet" criterion is socially inadequate and should be rejected, replaced by the interest of the real social environment. Therefore, the postulate is: The research problem is chosen based on the existence of concrete social problems. The research problem must be a concrete social problem. This postulate has great theoretical-methodological significance for all social sciences and should be carefully studied.

The second postulate related to the area of problem selection and research objectives has the same significance. We could formulate it as follows: The objective of the research is a radical practical penetration into the social situation of individuals, groups, and communities and their transformation. These postulates emphasize that traditional science chooses problems based on theoretical criteria, neglecting practical ones, while "actionists" choose research problems based on practical criteria without neglecting theoretical ones.

Regarding the other area (related to data), there is a clear requirement that the data must be cognitively significant and must be understood and treated as moments of the process. The data are correlated and longitudinal, meaning that they must express, through their

interconnectedness, the relationships and connections of the phenomenon being studied, as well as the relationships and connections within it. This allows for the study of the quality of human relationships, which is the essence of the life situation.

The third premise requires that the social situation, which represents a problem, be viewed as a whole - a "social field" - which does not allow for the isolation of individual variables. This is prevented by the "immanent processes" that we investigate. However, it is important to note that isolation, particularly observation, etc., is not the same as isolation.

Haag has paid significant attention to the role of the subject and object of research in relation to deobjectification. There are two basic requirements:

- a) the researcher must abandon distance from the object of research and consciously influence events from participation to participatory observation;
- b) communication between the researcher and the researched during the research process is shaped as relationships between active participants in the action project.

These two postulative attitudes, which oppose the traditional view of the objectivity of scientific research, raise numerous methodological questions, including the most important questions of researcher bias and impartiality, the real role and possibilities of overcoming distance, the possibility of establishing relationships between equal participants in action, etc.

Moser attempted to address these eminent and obvious problems through the instance of "discourse," which is highlighted as the minimum criterion for conducting action research. Discourse is understood as an

"instance" in which deobjectification is established through interactional communication and collaboration. Put simply, trust and collaboration are established during the action through the researcher's efforts to behave with due respect for the integrity and dignity of the participants in communication. This requires "communicative competence" - understanding the speech (communication) topic and the behavior of the communication partner. Moser's view is that personal characteristics of the participants in communication are not important in all of this, but rather the structural characteristics of the situation in which communication takes place - a symmetrical division of roles. Feedback analysis in group work can have a function similar to the function of "instance-discourse."

Moser developed five stages of possible collaborative relationships between the social worker and the client-subject, based on the process of action diagnostic research:

1. Diagnosis of the problem situation;
2. Identification of general data;
3. Action planning;
4. Evaluation of the action plan-program;
5. Action leadership.

The social worker participates in all of these stages and is responsible for creating the situation (motivational, educational, etc.) for achieving "transsubjectivity."

The essence of Haag and Moser's premises is that the researcher participates in changing a specific situation as someone who is especially responsible but also an equal participant, thereby surpassing the subject-object relationship and never viewing the individual as

isolated but rather in the "social field." The research problem is a real social problem.

### **2.3 Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy: Dialectical Action Theory of Personality (theory of relational modalities)**

A key premise of B.I. Nagy<sup>45</sup> is that a person is not explained as an individual, but as action or relationship, as a system of relationships and actions. A person should not be viewed as an autonomous, substantial entity within the action process, but in the context of the dynamics of the subjective and objective parts of the action process.

For social work, it is important to consider that the causes of problematic behavior are not only in the individual, but also in the action relationship between needs and desires, and, let's add, the possibilities of satisfying them. A person should be viewed as a whole connected internal and external action system. The quality of a person is proportional to the quality of their relationships with others.

### **2.4 Gian Antonio Gilli: A New Objective Critique of Social Theory**

Gilli's standard work "How to Conduct Research<sup>46</sup>" is a critique of "traditional research design and application of research methods," but it cannot be considered the explicit creator of the theoretical-methodological foundation and structure of the concept of action research. His initial criticism of the obsolescence of "traditional" methodology does not require its rejection, and the essence of the criticism is that "traditional" research, instead of being conducted in

---

<sup>45</sup> Nagy, B.I.: Family Therapy, Rozwohltt, Reinbek, Hamburg, 1975.

<sup>46</sup> Gilli, G.A. How to Research, Guide to Social Research, Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 1974.

social practice, is carried out in libraries and institutes. In his opinion, they do not address the real problem, and almost never aim to change the actual situation. Considering Gilli's profession, it can be understood that he overlooks the fact that in some sciences (such as history), research can primarily be conducted in archives, libraries, etc., and that it may not be intended for immediate situation change.

His understanding primarily relates to the research of current issues, issues of the present and the very near, foreseeable future that can be directly shaped by social action. His critique of research design is precisely focused on this, and the stance that the research problem is not chosen but discovered specifically refers to the phase of research design. The problem, or rather the subject of research, cannot be a "cabinet decision" because the initial determination may prove to be incorrect, so it must be changed during the research. Discovering the true problem can be a kind of research goal. However, this stance should be further interpreted with caution. In the methodology of "traditional" research, a type of "diagnostic research" is known, whose key task is to discover the essence of a problem in a manifested phenomenon. Therefore, his stance that the true problem is revealed in advanced stages of research should not be oversimplified.

The following are his essential views for understanding action research:

1. The problem to be researched must be real and practical, i.e., a problem of practice;
2. Research knowledge as a result of research must enable practical application;
3. Action research should be preceded by "fieldwork" or some kind of preliminary investigation;

4. Action research has two goals: practical, which implies changing the social situation, and theoretical (scientific) - reconstructing the researched reality with an understanding of development trends within it;
5. Existing known methods of social scientific research meet the needs of action research, but some are more suitable (e.g., participant observation and interview) with necessary adaptations;
6. The choice and application of research methods and techniques arise from the characteristics of social work that require the involvement of a social worker in solving social problems;
7. None of the answers obtained through interviews should be accepted without discussion;
8. The direct involvement of a fully qualified social worker does not diminish the objectivity of research because both the worker and their function are known in advance;
9. The research report - the social worker's report should be a synthesis of the discussion and contain suggestions for changing the situation;
10. Research (and action) ends when the intended goal is achieved.

Dilija's understandings expressed in the mentioned book should be checked and studied multiple times, both in terms of their content and logic, in order to properly understand their meaning and how they should be understood from the perspective of social work as practice and science.

## **2.5 Alain Touraine: Action theory and methodology of action research in sociology**

Alain Touraine provided a comprehensive picture of the theoretical and methodological concept of action research in his work "Sociology of

social movements<sup>47</sup>." In the second part of the mentioned book, Touraine describes in detail the process of conducting action research. He starts from the well-known postulates about the necessity of choosing real problems of society manifested in social reality. The researcher's participation in action as more engaged actors of the action is also foreseen by Touraine in various roles, but never only as an observer. Communication with the action environment and personal experience verified through the roles that the researcher takes on in the action are the basis and source of valid knowledge that can be generalized but not made static. From this, it follows that the basic method of research is acquiring personal and group experience through communication and activity, not just observation and/or interviewing. In this sense, there are requirements for understanding and developing a new method of data collection that goes beyond the usual meaning of an interview as a "scientific conversation" and as a technique of investigation. The same goes for participant observation. Observations are not only the original observations of the researcher but are integrated and combined with the observation of the action environment.

Like others, Touraine does not deal with the significant problems of data collection, but it can be assumed that he does not focus on standard but on the most advanced technical means.

Touraine's most important contribution is not in critiquing Marx's (class) paradigm by shifting the developmental and innovative role from oppressed classes to other social groups and movements, nor is that his originality. There have been attempts by other significant authors in American sociology (e.g., Marcuse and others). His significant contribution lies in the integral presentation of action theory and the flow

---

<sup>47</sup> Touraine, A: *Sociology of Social Movements*, Radnička štampa, Belgrade, 1983.



of action research, as well as indications of the interplay between the "external" and "internal" approaches. The transition from the category of "exploitation" to "alienation" is not sufficiently clarified.

When considering Touraine's contribution, based on his extensive personal experience in researching the position of industrial workers, one must not lose sight of the fact that he is primarily a sociologist, and his views should be adapted to the characteristics of social work.

Some authors also attribute a contribution to the development of action research to Jürgen Habermas. However, this contribution is related to introducing the communication component into the process of social relations and behavior and critiquing Marx's paradigm. However, a deeper analysis of his works does not give us enough grounds to attribute an action-oriented orientation to him, although such indications can be found in his works on public opinion and "The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere" (1961).

A significantly larger and more comprehensive contribution to the popularization and application, and especially the codification of the concepts of "action methodology" - the concept of action research, was made by Aleksandar Halmi. In this regard, his work "Social Work in the Local Community"<sup>48</sup> holds a special place. A. Halmi's contribution is evident in clarifying the relationship between traditional and action research, fundamental scientific research in social work and action research in social work practice. The clear stance that descriptive research precedes action research, widely accepted in these areas (Milovanović: "Areas of Social Work"; I. Vidanović: "Individual and Family"), as well as his view on the necessity of "triangulation" approach

---

<sup>48</sup> Halmi, A.: Social Work in the Local Community, Zagreb, 1989, p. 91.

in action and other research, enable easier understanding and application of action research. His presentation of action research conducted in the field of social work in the former SFRY territory is truly inspiring.

### 3. Problems of defining action research

**D**espite almost seventy years, differences still arise in understanding and defining action research. There are several reasons for this, among which it seems that the most important are: the concept of action research emerged during the time of strong positivist trends, social needs for quick and relatively accurate, practical answers that do not require much time. This was, at least until 1968, the time of post-war capitalism recovery and very strong development of sociology and sociological methods. The group of scientists who engaged in the reform of action research after 1970 mostly come from the ranks of psychologists, so they do not belong to the most influential methodological schools (Chicago, etc.). At the same time, there was also a rise of Marxist dialectical (concrete-dialectical) direction that easily found points of contact with positivist structuralism and especially functionalism in research practice.

In the socialist countries of that time, the development concepts did not favor the development of the innovative function of social work, and the same was true in countries with bourgeois democracy, which favored its control function. At the same time, the interplay between sociology, psychology, pedagogy, defectology, political science, and medicine (psychiatry), which led to understandings of multidisciplinary and transdisciplinarity of the subject of social work, along with various and opposing theoretical concepts and limited scientific research, made it difficult to establish a science of social work, encouraging its pragmatism and the absence of a unifying explanatory theory. The efforts to

simultaneously achieve various integrations of research (scientific-research, empirical, and theoretical research) within the same process of direct social work practice (social interventions, social therapy, etc.) did not make the situation easier.

Regarding the problems of defining action research, A. Halmi says: "Action research is difficult to differentiate from other strategies and models of applied research. Theoretically and methodologically speaking, I would argue that it is a diffuse and ambivalent set of strategies, models, experiments, and theoretical elaborations and superstructures. In addition to the term action research, Franko Adam distinguishes other terms such as intervention field research (Bodeman), action sociology (Etzkovitz/Schaflander), democratic quasi-experiment (Rus), experimental innovation (Haag), problem-oriented but field-induced research (Haag), sociological intervention (Loureau), etc. Other terms encountered include combat research, intervention or participatory observation, and action experimentation."

Indeed, all the mentioned terms, when comparatively analyzed, show not only terminological but also conceptual differences and differences of a theoretical-methodological nature. Obviously, the oscillations that range from qualifying action research as a specific type of research to qualifying it as a research method are not particularly suitable for carrying out a valid definition in accordance with the requirements of the logic of science. Nevertheless, all the mentioned terms have a common feature that indicates that they are a specific type of research characterized by the same approach to the research problem, the same research objectives, and more or less the same research procedure that overcomes the separation of scientific thought and knowledge about society and action in changing the social (life) situation of individuals in

a state of social need to a more favorable and humane situation. This meaning of the concept of action research is also indicated by Rappoport's explicit statements that action research is a contribution to the practical action of people who find themselves in an immediate problematic situation with the aim of accepting a common (social) system of orientational-moral values. There is a somewhat broader understanding by Haag who considers action research as a research strategy through which researchers and research teams collaborate with interested individuals and/or groups, initiating social changes.

Social action is contained in all provisions of action research, which is emphasized as a specific differentia from all other types of research, as well as between social work and "academic" disciplines.

The advantage of action research lies in overcoming the separation between theory and practice of social work, while also achieving the improvement of practice and scientific knowledge.

In addition to the mentioned provisions, we would add that, according to the mentioned understandings, action research is primarily empirical (field), diagnostic-prognostic, inductive-deductive, and longitudinal research. They are relatively rare ("disproportionately to the needs") represented in scientific methodology and research practice. Their concept is based on several fundamental principles.

## **4. Basic principles (principles, postulates) of the concept of action research**

**A**ll statements made by proponents of action research contain two essential commitments:

- a) Action research is a new type of research in quantitative methodology that is not satisfied with only discovering and describing social problems but actively participates in solving these problems;
- b) Action research does not randomly enter into solving social problems, but based on arguments obtained from previous empirical research whose results can withstand even the most rigorous criticism.

These two positions express the essence of the strategy of relating to "traditional" research. "Traditional descriptive" research is preceding (identifying, describing the problem, learning about it, and informing about it), while action research is "subsequent," solving the problem. Therefore, action research is "opposed" to "traditional" research, but does not exclude it. This has multiple implications for the overall relationship and understanding of the relationship between "traditional" and "action" research.

Based on everything said, the essential basic principles of the concept of action research can be summarized as follows:

1. The priority goal of action research is to change the social situation, and scientific knowledge and testing scientific hypotheses are parallel or accompanying goals. This significantly differs from traditional research, whose goal is only scientific knowledge of the research subject. Action research enables the transfer of scientific knowledge into practice, making practice a "theoretically reflected practice." This replaces analytical and descriptive methodology with participatory and evaluative methodology.
2. In action research, the problem of research is discovered, not chosen. The problem of research is not determined by the researcher's "cabinet" free choice but discovered during the research. The discovery of the problem takes place "within the situation," it is real

and expressed in reality. This is one of the most important and sensitive phases of research because it requires determining the specific logic and methods of research.

3. The principle of value neutrality in action research is replaced by active participation. This standpoint requires the action engagement of research focused on problem-solving, which implies value commitment towards the problem, as well as towards the solution, the client, and the methods of achieving the solution. In social work, the value orientation is humanistic. In this regard, two positions are highlighted.

First, social work as a science has its ideological-value basis and is envisioned as an agent of social change. Social work must simultaneously be a negating and creative practice oriented towards overcoming alienation, not an activity of promoting solidarity among the powerful and powerless.

Second, the view that scientific thinking is value-neutral is unacceptable, and it is absurd in social work. Values cannot be excluded from the science of social work; they must be explored and changed based on scientific knowledge. In order not to become an instrument for maintaining a dehumanized order, social work must develop sensitivity to human needs.

Without delving into a deeper analysis of the meaning of these two positions, we cannot overlook the necessity to study them and answer the following questions: Can the ideological-value approach to researching values provide valid knowledge about these values considering their properties as possible objects of research? Is it truly within the "competence" of social work to change social orders, and is it within the power of social work to do so? Furthermore, did this

commitment arise with the genuine understanding of the "value neutrality of science"?

4. In action research, scientific objectivity is replaced by scientific deobjectivization, which significantly changes the position of the researcher. This principle requires abandoning the classical "subject-researcher" and "object-researched" relationship. Instead, the subject and object become equal participants in the research process. During the research, the "object" of research emancipates and transforms into the subject of self-research, which achieves two advantages of action research:
  - a. democratization of the research process enables the search for a common interpretation of the problematic situation and its solution;
  - b. the researcher gains a basis to interpret the real world from the perspective of the subject (object) of research.

Deobjectivization is a characteristic feature that distinguishes action research from other applied research.

Just like in the previous principle, there are many incentives for asking questions in this principle. We will mention only one: is there even a possibility for a truly equal position between the social worker providing help, conducting social interventions and therapy, and the client receiving help, in social work and the process of practicing social work?

5. The problem in action research is the entirety of a specific social situation. This truly means that in action research, individuals, groups, and communities cannot be investigated in isolation. Instead, all three social levels must be researched as interconnected complexes in which social work takes place. An individual cannot be observed independently of their environment or broader

surroundings. The same applies to groups and communities, which also cannot be observed without individuals. The entirety is understood as a system of interactions.

Understanding the entirety as a research and action problem has one more important dimension. The entirety is considered researched when the problem is solved, so research does not start and end arbitrarily.

6. Action research, inseparable from social work, is conducted through a functional logical sequence of phases:
  - a. initial;
  - b. diagnostic;
  - c. prognostic;
  - d. implementation; and
  - e. evaluation phase, using appropriate research procedures.

By encompassing all three levels (individual, group, institutional or community), functionalistic methodology is surpassed by a synthetic or integrative approach.

7. Action research in social work is a response to the problems of research utilization in practice and the need for an appropriate relationship between theory and empirical research.

The mentioned principle emphasizes the need for constant integration of action research with social work theory. Additionally, considering the role of middle-range theories in building the science of social work and indigenous theories, as well as generalizing the results of empirical research, which should be theoretically generalized.

Without this, professional social work will not be able to play the role of initiator of humanistic changes and their integration and legalization in the institutional system (order system).



Action research should strive to achieve the level of basic scientific research and contribute to its development. The presented viewpoints are of great importance to the profession and science. It remains to be specified how to achieve this in real circumstances.

In principle, all methods of social sciences can be applied in the research of these sciences, either individually or in certain combinations, with some degree of adjustment to the specificities of their subjects and objectives, and with adequate and responsible application. It is normal, as scientific research practice has already confirmed, that certain scientific disciplines, types, and forms of research are more suitable for certain methods than others, and that certain techniques and methods of application have certain advantages over others. It is the task of scientific methodology to determine and suggest this.

## 5. Methods of action research

**A**ction research suggests the most suitable research methods within its own concept. The most suitable methods for action research are considered to be:

1. For the individual level (case study or social work on a case):
  - a. action (in-depth) interviews;
  - b. social anamnesis;
  - c. biographical exploration.
2. For group analysis level (group study or social group work):
  - a. participant observation;
  - b. sociometric method;
  - c. rating scales;
  - d. analysis of group relationship processes (Bales' system of categories).

3. For the institutional level (community study or social work at the level of community organization and development):
  - a. historical method;
  - b. method of systematic observation;
  - c. method of complex field studies;
  - d. monographic studies;
  - e. cartography.

Research methods and techniques are conditioned by hypotheses and variables, so the question of the methodological direction from which the assumptions are made is seriously considered. A. Halmi explicitly states: "As for the methods and techniques for data collection and analysis, a wide range of research techniques based on the procedure of qualitative analysis is used." Social workers are required to "understand, not just explain what they observe," which will lead to a discussion of the method that manifests itself in formulating the distinction between understanding and explanation as methodological procedures in the spiritual and natural sciences, based on hermeneutic sociology. According to Weber, hermeneutic reconstruction aims to understand and interpret the human (problematic) situation in order to causally explain its course and consequences.

Since we will specifically discuss the methods of social work science in the next part (chapter) of this book, we will not dwell on the presentation and critique of the methods presented here. For now, it is sufficient to note that the methods mainly target the methods of social work practice, and that the list does not include basic and general scientific methods, and that some methods are equated with techniques.

## 6. Major problems of using action research

The concept of action research is declared as a form and segment of the quantitative approach. Therefore, it can be considered that the weaknesses and disadvantages of this approach are also found in the concept of action research.

The first weakness attributed to it is the enormous difficulties in organizing the collected data. Longitudinal studies always have a large amount of collected material, and since subjectivity is very influential in action research with a low degree of formalization and rejection of quantification and quantitative analysis, they lack statistical instruments, which makes it difficult (impossible) to successfully verify research results.

The second weakness of these studies is the ethical problems that do not occur in other studies that operate with massive data. Since action research that uses in-depth interviews and participant observation is necessarily oriented towards microstructures, publishing results becomes very delicate, which jeopardizes the scientific approach to intersubjectivity.

The third weakness is the exposure of action research to empiricism and actionism. In these cases, data accumulation and theory forcing occur without sufficient criticality and reliability, or neglecting desirable relationships between researchers and research subjects.

The fourth weakness is a product of using participatory observation. The assumption that the researcher is a member of the community and that their interests are identical leads to overlooking the fact that common interests do not have to be unique, and that there can be conflicting interests within the community. Furthermore, the community participates

in formulating the research problem, and the results are used to raise political awareness. This overlooks the stratification of the community based on various structural-functional characteristics, as well as the diversity of concepts and relationships of actors. At the same time, the question of the competence of social work in the political sphere of society, which includes political awareness, arises. Common interests and belonging to the community can make the researcher biased, resulting in the loss of truthfulness and validity of research results.

The fifth common objection is that these studies do not provide the basis for classification-typology, which is a condition for generalization.

In addition to these general criticisms of qualitative research, some more specific observations can be made about action research. In this regard, the first observation is that the term "traditional," "positivist," etc. research, methodology, greatly simplifies scientific reality. Namely, not all theoretical-methodological approaches are positivist-functionalistic, and scientific research, even in normative and theoretical sciences, is not an end in itself. The application of their results is only more or less mediated, and all of them, in principle, have a humanistic orientation. It is not a question of value orientation but of the application of those results over which the researcher has no full control, especially in action research.

The second objection is the declarative affiliation of action research to the qualitative paradigm. Neither according to the views of its founder, nor according to the actual use of very extensive inductive and conventional measurement methods, nor according to the advocacy of triangulation, are they.

Third, all methodological requirements for conceptualization and design of research insist on real, factual, or potential problems and on

discovering the subject of research through research. This is clearly not a "cabinet" decision. Certain misunderstandings arise from attempts to merge scientific research into the practical work of social work. Research within the framework of social action-social intervention, social therapy, is not entirely the same as scientific research whose results are not changeable only once, in solving only one problem. Namely, in non-action research projects, we have established scientific and social objectives, and in research result reports, we have suggestions and recommendations, and in some cases, even elaborates.

The replacement of value neutrality with active participation can be understood in many ways. Each researcher, in principle, is value-oriented, but also positively oriented towards seeking the truth and its application to problem solving. Unfortunately, even the initial value concept of "humanity" is not completely clear, just as good and evil do not always have the same meaning for everyone. Even change, even in social work, is not always good or evil for everyone! From a values perspective, help is a positive category, but its positivity is conditioned by many factors. Value neutrality is not the rejection of investigating values, but rather an effort to explore values in accordance with their specificity as objects of research.

Deobjectification, as presented, is a very subtle issue. It requires the realization that establishing a factually impossible structural-functional relationship between clients and social workers, researchers and the researched. The social worker as a researcher does not have a problem, the client does, and the social worker needs to help them through intervention. This moment allows for a mere illusion of equality, equality between the holders of authority and those to whom it is applied. This becomes even clearer when we consider involuntary clients. True, when

it comes to social actions in organizing local communities, several things change.

Orientation towards researching the whole is very positive, but it is very difficult to achieve because a series of questions arise about understanding the whole, even at the individual level of analysis. The longitudinality of the whole is unfortunately only arbitrarily determinable, especially at the group and community level.

We will not discuss the seventh principle again.



**VI**  
**RESEARCH METHODS AND**  
**TECHNIQUES IN THE PROCESS OF**  
**SOCIAL WORK**

# VI RESEARCH METHODS AND TECHNIQUES IN THE PROCESS OF SOCIAL WORK

## 1. General approach to considering research methods in social work

**B**efore listing and considering research methods in social work, we must remind and warn about some very important provisions of science and methodology that are often forgotten and neglected in the heat of discussion or the excitement of anticipating something new, as well as under the influence of difficulties and the slow process of arriving at something new and its slow affirmation. This is especially common and evident in emerging scientific disciplines and their methodologies, which are still, through numerous difficulties and intellectual struggles, distinguishing themselves from others and clearly defining their own unique subject and method, as well as their own methodology<sup>49</sup>. Without this, there is no distinct science or scientific discipline.

---

<sup>49</sup> The text on research methods is primarily based on the following works: Milić, V.: Sociological Method, 1978; Mihailović Dobrivoje: Methodology of Scientific Research, 1999; Supek, R.: Public Opinion Research, 1968; Pečujlić, M.: Methodology of Social Sciences, 1989; Šešić, B.: Fundamentals of Methodology of Social Sciences; Milosavljević, S.: Radosavljević, I.: Repetitorium, 1988; Termiz, Dž. - Milosavljević, S.: Introduction to Methodology of Political Science, 1999; Termiz, Dž. - Milosavljević, S.: Practicum in Methodology of Political Science, 2000; Moreno, Jakob: Basics of Sociometry, 1962; Halmi, A - mentioned works; and Vidanović, Ivan: Individual and



No emphasis on "similarity but not identity," on "multidisciplinarity," or "transdisciplinarity" can help, just as artificial constructs cannot.

The first note relates to methodology. Methodology is the unique science of scientific research methods (regardless of some classifying it as a logical discipline), and despite the clear distinction between methods and methodologies in natural and social sciences and specific sciences and their disciplines. Namely, the basic rules of methodology for scientific research and the scientific value of research are general and they apply to methodology as a whole and to all specific and special methodologies in all scientific research. These most basic rules stem from the striving for truthfulness and usefulness of scientific knowledge and can be expressed, with significant simplification, through the following principles:

1. Problems and subjects of scientific, theoretical, empirical, fundamental, applied, and developmental (basic scientific and applied) research must be socially and scientifically significant.
2. The subject-problem of research requires appropriate methods, techniques, and procedures that enable true knowledge.
3. Scientific knowledge must be grounded, verifiable, scientifically and socially applicable, critical, and self-critical. In this sense, it must be objective. To achieve this, it must be organized and systematic, adequately expressed, and publicly accessible.

Systematicity, organization, objectivity-truthfulness, substantiation, argumentation, scientific and social usability of scientific research knowledge are ensured by appropriate conceptualization and development of a research project in accordance with the necessary

---

Family, 1998. By mentioning the authors whose works are primarily used, we avoid burdening the text with footnotes and do not disturb the reader in following the text.

process of acquiring true knowledge of a diagnostic and/or prognostic nature. They reveal and qualify the problem and subject of research, determine scientific and social objectives, scientifically based hypotheses, variables and indicators, methods, techniques (instruments and procedures that lead to true or knowledge-useful information) and methods of processing, reasoning and presenting scientific knowledge acquired through research. Methodology distinguishes between original research projects, typical and repeated research projects. Original projects are those that, regardless of whether there are already research projects on the same subject, are developed as completely new with a complete conceptualization and design procedure. They can be similar or completely different from existing projects. Typological research projects can be understood in at least two ways. First, a typological research project is based on a large number of reliable knowledge about a specific problem or complex of problems and includes all the basic essential factors of researching that problem, as well as the characteristics of the basis that is only built upon in accordance with the specification of the research subject. In science, this is a rare situation. The second meaning of a typological research project is that it is a general, instructive model that serves as a cognitive basis for setting up concrete research projects and has the character of a general example or demonstration of the application of rules. Repeated projects can also be understood in at least two ways. First, these are projects of scientific "panel" research in which the research of the same subject is repeated at certain intervals using the same research project with possible minor modifications in the sample of objects-researched subjects due to objective circumstances. The second meaning of the term repeated research projects is closer to the nature of research in social work or the science of social work. Social work at an individual level deals with solving social problems of

individuals that are of the same nature, basis, and content and that repeat themselves, with certain individual specificities, in various specificities, so that they can be typified and for their research and social treatment (intervention, therapy, etc.) the same instruments can be constructed. Variations and differences, at least over a certain longer period, occur in a limited number. This allows for the development and application of a research project that will be applied to all individual cases with certain specifications and adjustments. Such a project allows for scientific generalization and theoretical methodological generalization into doctrinal and scientific propositions. Moreover, this is evidenced by all existing methodologies that standardize the subject and activities of social work.

In all types of research and problem-subjects of research, basic rules of truthful thinking and basic (basic special) analytical-synthetic methods are used. Every thought begins with observation - observing objectively existing, material and social reality and itself through impressions, thoughts, and knowledge. Without entering into a debate on whether the problem is observed in its entirety or only individual manifestations are observed, knowledge begins with induction - understanding, in order to, through generalization and specialization, abstraction and generalization, reach a general basis that enables concretization and deduction, classification and typology. This fact indicates that in all research, consciously and intentionally, general scientific methods are used, primarily hypothetical-deductive, statistical, and modeling methods.

However, at the core of research knowledge, as well as human knowledge, is experience and reflection on experience, which as primary methods upon which all others are built are:

1. Observation,

2. Experiment, and
3. Examination.

Observation is the oldest and is closely related to observation. The trial and error method is as old as any purposeful (including instinctive) human activity, especially meaningful and purposeful human work. The examination method is the youngest and conditioned by the development of consciousness and human speech, their abilities for articulate, meaningful communication.

Observation and experimentation, if not understood too narrowly and sectarianly, can be considered universal methods for collecting data in scientific research. Examination can be understood as the primary method of social sciences, and therefore social work or the science of social work. In fact, observation and examination methods are embedded in modern experimental methods. It should be noted that each of the mentioned methods has multiple forms, types, subtypes, and techniques, some of which are more developed in certain sciences than others, and more accepted and applicable in some than in others.

And finally, a general note regarding the methodology and research in social work or the science of social work. The methodology of the science of social work or social work is not only composed of criticism of "traditional" methodology and research concepts such as generic problem-solving and action research, especially since this concept has not yet been theoretically or practically verified in scientific research practice. Moreover, today, other "traditional" approaches are more affirmed through various theoretical and methodological directions, including eclectic orientations. Therefore, social workers who intend to engage in scientific research, especially theoretical research, must protect themselves from pressures to mechanically merge scientific and

professional research and identify scientific research methods with methods of social intervention. This will avoid unjustified identification of scientific methodology with the methodology of professional work, which will benefit both.

## 2. Research methods most commonly used in social work

In this part of the presentation, we will pay special attention to the following methods and techniques:

1. Surveys;
2. Observations;
3. Biographical method;
4. Sociometric method;
5. Case study method;
6. Historical method.

In current works that have dealt with methodological issues, there is no unified stance on which methods should be considered research methods in social work - the science of social work, and there are noticeable differences in their role and application. Furthermore, these differences not only occur between different authors, but also within the works of the same authors. Moreover, there is no standardized classification of these methods. The only articulated proposed classification is the classification based on the criteria of applicability to the levels of methodical complexes of analysis (individual, group, institutional, or community).

Within this section, equal attention will not be given to all methods that can occur - are used in social work research. Therefore, we will exclude

basic logical rules, basic methods of truthful thinking, general scientific methods, as well as experimental methods and content analysis methods, as they are not mentioned by authors of research methodology in social work, except in exceptional cases. However, although we will not specifically address them, we will briefly mention them. Our main focus will be on the methods that all authors mention, and which we have listed at the beginning.

## **2.1 Methods and techniques of surveying**

### **2.1.1 Survey as a research method of data collection**

Surveying is an inevitable method of research and practice in social work at all three levels of analysis. It is inevitable because direct communication between the interviewer and the interviewee, between the social worker and the individual, group, or community client, can only be achieved through verbal communication processes, even if the overall interaction includes other forms of communication.

In scientific methodology, three types of surveys are mentioned: mild, neutral, and sharp. A mild survey entails a tone and manner of communication that fosters mutual trust, a collaborative relationship, and closeness between the interviewer and the interviewee. This cannot be achieved without demonstrating respect for the interviewee and expressing positive expectations towards them, believing in their goodwill and competence. The behavior of the interviewer in this type of survey is a key stimulus for removing technical and interest barriers and activating the positive-collaborative and benevolent potential of the interviewee. This, of course, requires a specific psychological strategy in the conception, selection of content and form of questions, location, and environment of the survey, etc. Mild surveying essentially aims for the

characteristics of a (seemingly) spontaneous, free conversation that is nevertheless focused on the subject of the survey and whose process involves a certain expertise and skill of the interviewer. It is essentially deep and leads to the discovery of the interviewee's most hidden secrets, and in some situations, the interviewee becomes aware of their previously concealed attitudes and emotions.

This type of survey is embedded in almost all forms of social work that involve direct contact with clients.

Neutral surveying entails fair, professional, and polite behavior of the interviewer towards the interviewee. The behavior of the interviewer allows for the expression of the interviewee's stance but does not stimulate or encourage it, etc. However, even this form of surveying entails assistance in clarifying questions that the interviewee needs to answer.

Sharp questioning is a very rarely used type of questioning, especially in legal and criminal practice, as well as in some areas of social work. It is based on the concept of hierarchical pressure and provoking fear and helplessness in the respondent. Alternating multiple interrogators, extending the duration of the questioning, pointing out inconsistencies in the answers, presenting negative consequences if truthful answers are not given, etc. Its mildest form is the repetitive asking of the same questions, which leads to a certain weakening of the psychological resistance of the respondent. This form of questioning, except in exceptional cases, is the most difficult to apply and least productive in the research process.

Questioning takes different forms, including individual, individualized questioning, as well as group and collective, and anonymous and public questioning. Not all of these forms are equally applicable to all types of

questioning. There are two main types of questioning: the interview (scientific conversation) in which the interrogator's participation in the conversation of a certain nature is mandatory, and the survey in which the interrogator's participation is not mandatory, but when present, their role is strictly technical. Group and collective questioning and public questioning exclusively correspond to the interview, just as mild and sharp questioning are only possible through interviews.

Methodology has not yet addressed new possibilities and the emergence of transitional forms and types of questioning that do not rely exclusively or primarily on "pen and paper" but on certain technical aids. The adequate use of these aids (cameras, computers) not only facilitates and ensures the recording of the authenticity of the conversation-questions and answers but also enables the integration of questioning and observation methods as the emergence of certain transitional forms of questioning. The impact of the internet has not yet been sufficiently studied from a methodological perspective.

The interview has several techniques. Generally, in scientific methodology, the following are mentioned:

1. Free or unstructured interview
2. Structured interview
3. Directed, rigorous interview

Authors in the field of social work, primarily methodologists, have introduced the concept of "in-depth" or "action" interview. Other classifications are found in the literature. For example, Vidanović, I. distinguishes: "with regard to professional goals: research interview and clinical interview." The clinical interview is further divided into diagnostic and therapeutic interviews, with the diagnostic interview being further divided into pairs:



- a) Surface-depth
- b) Standardized-non-standardized
- c) Directive-nondirective.

It is obvious that Vidanović's classification of interviews does not include the research interview, for which he says: "The research interview, as the name itself suggests, is used when data of relevance to scientific study of phenomena are to be collected, according to the standards of scientific or research projects." Furthermore, this author deals with the processing of clinical, i.e., diagnostic and therapeutic interviews. He even provides examples of directive and nondirective interviews.

Every interview, especially a research one, consists of questions asked by the researcher and the respondent's answers. In principle, questions are formulated and asked according to a certain psychological and scientific strategy in an instrument called the basis for a scientific conversation. Depending on the type of interview, questions are formulated and asked in various ways.

For an unstructured free interview, it is not necessary to establish a standard basis for the conversation, it is sufficient to compile a reminder that contains important questions about the research subject or about the attitudes, hypotheses, variables, and indicators. This reminder must include a form for recording the answers, and the interviewer has great autonomy in asking, developing, and commenting on questions and formulating answers. It is within their authority to formulate the answers together with the interviewee. Whenever possible, the interviewee's response is recorded in the original formulation. This is quite simple with the help of technical means if the interviewee agrees to their use. This type of interview does not insist on a strict determination of a scientific strategy, but a psychological strategy is still planned. However,

depending on the characteristics of the interviewee, the interviewer adjusts both strategies during the interview in order to obtain as complete and truthful answers as possible.

An unstructured, free interview is considered most penetrating when used as a mild inquiry, whether it is an individual, group, or collective being interviewed. During a group interview, it is possible for each group member to provide their own response to each question. This is a more difficult and time-consuming form and can only be done if the group is small, with no more than ten members. Another form is to record the response of one member and those members who have opposing or different opinions. Those who do not express a specific stance are considered to have the same answer as the member whose answer they did not oppose.

Both variations of group interviews have several drawbacks, but the second one has more drawbacks and is less reliable.

A collective interview is less complex and more reliable. The response is formed through consultation with all members of the group or community and represents a collective response, while also recording individual opinions.

A guided interview differs from an unstructured one in that it requires the preparation of a conversation basis that includes a form for recording answers, and both psychological and scientific strategies are developed. The interviewer's authority is limited to helping the interviewee understand the question and, when necessary, change the order of the questions, but they must ask all questions and record the answers as faithfully as possible. In order to save time, the conversation basis may include formulations of predicted possible answers based on existing scientific knowledge or knowledge gained from preliminary research.

However, if a certain answer cannot be categorized under the predicted formulations without distorting its true meaning, it must be written in its original form in the designated place.

Psychological strategy predicts the location and ambiance of the interview, behavior in establishing contact and during the interview - such as manner of addressing, reactions to unforeseen situations, number and difficulty of questions, duration of the interview, etc.

Scientific strategy determines the content of questions and their logical and content-related connections and dependencies, and based on that, the order of questions. There are three basic scientific strategies. The first is the funnel strategy, a reverse pyramid. The reverse funnel involves asking questions of narrower content, more detailed, in order to then ask broader and more general questions. Through this series of questions, answers to essential and fundamental questions about the research subject are obtained. The proper funnel requires the reverse procedure. It starts with broader content, in order to ultimately focus on the narrowest, essential and fundamental. The second is the battery strategy in which all questions that are explicitly asked are more or less equal, but they all relate to one central topic. For example, questions about economic status. By connecting multiple batteries, the answer to the essential question(s) of the investigation is obtained. The third is the polydeterministic strategy, which is a combination of the two previous strategies.

The basis for a scientific conversation - a conversation reminder, consists of a substantive and technical part. The substantive part consists of the title of the research, requiring certain labels and statements and questions to be entered into the form. Questions are an essential part of every form in the research method. They consist of the foundation - which

is the formulated content of the question asked to the respondent, and the framework – which is the elaboration of the factors of the foundation, possible answers, etc. The technical part consists of the size and color of the form, graphic solutions for recording answers, and other graphic solutions. The creation of a form for conducting surveys (questionnaires) is more significant than the basis for a conversation, especially because the respondent encounters the question, its formulation, and meaning, and in some cases may be in a situation where they enter the answers themselves.

A survey is a special type of investigation and differs from an interview in terms of the roles of the interviewer and the surveyor. The surveyor has solely a technical role, while the interviewer communicates substantively with the respondent. It is more formalized, its questions are usually simple, and the answers are offered in pre-formulated statements between which the respondent has the right to choose one or more of them, or to reject all of them. A survey is less fruitful and penetrating, but its advantage lies in easy and relatively inexpensive implementation, as well as quick and simple processing.

According to the aforementioned part of I. Vidanović's ("Individual and Family"), methods, techniques, and skills of social work are used as methods or techniques of social work.

### **2.1.2 Testing as a method of social work**

Social work, social action (treatment, intervention, therapy, etc.) includes in its process, in addition to administrative-routine and professional and much specialized, research work both individual social worker and team social workers and multidisciplinary concepts. Therefore, there is a understandable effort to connect and interweave research methods and methods of practicing social work in the ways presented in the chapter

on the specifics of research in social work. However, certain significant differences remain, which are often seen both in the classification of interviews and in the description of interview characteristics.

### **A) Interview as a method of social work**

Interview emerges as an initial method in social practice. Sometimes it is the first applied method, and sometimes it follows immediately after the analysis of document content. In cases where social action, social intervention is preceded by a written request or a written order, the interview is the next method in application.

We have already mentioned the distinction between diagnostic and therapeutic interviews.

*The diagnostic interview* is the "basic and most important procedure for collecting relevant information about the client and their problems" (Vidanović) which relate to the client's characteristics, manifestations of symptom problems, current client's condition, living conditions in which they have lived and currently live, etc. This interview is pre-planned-standardized-and conducted with all clients with the necessary degree of individualization and concretization. The goal of using this interview is to collect valid data for making a diagnosis, so it is a set of various and specific interviews.

Extreme forms of diagnostic interviews are:

- a) surface-depth;
- b) standardized-non-standardized; and
- c) directive-non-directive.

These types of interviews most often occur in specific combinations in accordance with the specific case.

A *surface interview* is the simplest and serves to collect basic data such as education, profession, employment, socio-economic situation, etc. It has the characteristics of neutral questioning and often comes down to filling out a standard form (form).

A *depth interview* originated from psychoanalytic practice, so as specialization is necessary for it, few social workers can use it.

However, proponents of action research insist on action (depth) interview as a method in individual work. This interview is understood as a dynamic interaction that has four levels of connectedness:

- a) physical,
- b) action-reaction relationship,
- c) empathy-mutual expectation, and
- d) interactional mutual dependence.

The specificity of this interview is that it often encounters resistance from the interviewee due to the characteristics of their problem. Even in that case, communication does not have to be interrupted because communication is done through paralinguistic phenomena. The dyadic situation in a social interview is full of emotional interactions. The task is to use the interview to discover the specificities of the interviewee's emotional behavior, as well as the changes that occur in their behavior during the interview. Key moments in the action interview are various levels of interactional dependence, complementary roles of the interviewer and interviewee, emotions, and educational status.

The uniqueness of problem situations requires a new approach every time, which requires developmental and longitudinal research. The basic criterion for evaluating the success of this interview is the action-intervention that follows based on it. The interview is an integral part of

the process of creating a social history, which appears as a comprehensive written document.

*Standardized interview.* The process of oral conversation is pre-planned and systematically applied in this interview, in accordance with the characteristics of the problem. The advantages of a standardized interview are as follows:

- a) It does not require extensive experience from the interviewer, but it does require the ability to establish a communicative situation;
- b) All questions that make up the content of the examination and are important for the researched problem must be asked;
- c) It is time-limited, and therefore economical in that regard;
- d) Its standardization allows for the comparison of individuals and groups;
- e) It enables statistical processing, facilitates sorting, classification, typology, and the derivation of statistical generalizations.

The interviewer is authorized to adapt the question formulations to the education level of the interviewee.

The main weakness of a standardized interview is that, due to standardization, the questions and answers can be generalized, and thus the specific characteristics of individual cases can be lost. Therefore, it is considered necessary but insufficient for a deeper understanding of the essence of an individual case.

*A non-standardized interview* is open to everything that the current situation and the client's state impose. This is a typical clinical interview. The main focus is to understand, comprehend, and experience the client in a natural and authentic environment. Trust, understanding, and

cooperation between the interviewer and the interviewee are particularly important.

The advantages of a non-standardized interview are:

- a) Adaptability of the interview flow to the interviewee's current mood and preoccupations, which positively affects the sincerity and truthfulness of the answers;
- b) The obtained answers are less controlled and therefore diagnostically more significant;
- c) It allows for the clarification of the client's difficulties, especially of an intimate nature.

The drawback of this interview is the fact that it may provide a multitude of important data about insignificant matters, while not encompassing the essential ones.

These two types of interviews have their counterparts in scientific research interviews, as well as the basis for their combination and the construction of transitional forms.

*A directive interview* implies an authoritative role of the interviewer, who has the decisive word during the interview, takes the initiative, has a superior role, and determines when the interview will end. This interview is conducted in a way that allows the expert to obtain the necessary information from the client as easily, quickly, and accurately as possible. It is similar to a directed research interview. Vidanović gives the following example of a directive interview:

**Example of a directly guided interview:**

*A client, 37 years old, technician, married, father of one child. Repeatedly referred to therapy.*



**Therapist:** "What brought you here?"

**Client:** "Well, you know, I'm tense, irritable, and I have no motivation for anything (sighs). Everything gets on my nerves."

**Therapist:** "How old are you?"

**Client:** "Thirty-seven and a few months."

**Therapist:** "How long have you been experiencing these symptoms?"

**Client:** "Well, it's been going on for several months now."

**Therapist:** "Have you sought treatment before?"

**Client:** "What do you mean?"

**Therapist:** "Have you previously sought help from a psychologist, social worker, or neuropsychiatrist?"

**Client:** "Yes, I have. The first time was when I was twenty-five."

*A non-directive interview* is, in terms of its conduct, the opposite of a directive interview. The main requirement for the interviewer is not to use their professional and status authority, but to encourage and help the client to present their problem in the way that suits them best. The principle of this interview is that understanding the problem is more important than description, and that understanding is achieved by following the client's experiences. The non-directive interview does not differentiate between the diagnostic and therapeutic phases. The interviewer is in the position of an interested listener, and focuses their attention on the feelings that accompany or lie behind the client's statements, rather than the statements themselves. The interviewer occasionally verbalizes recognized feelings, which is a characteristic of reflection technique. It originated as a form of social therapy-counseling.

**Example of a non-directive interview:**

*Non-directive interview is conducted with a client with similar problems as in the example of a directive interview.*

**Therapist:** "Would you like to sit down?" (soft voice)

**Client:** Sits down with an expression of effort (sigh)

**Therapist:** "What brought you here?"

**Client:** (sigh) "Well, you know, I'm tense, irritable, and I don't have the motivation for anything (sigh). Everything annoys me."

**Therapist:** "I see..."

**Client:** "You know, I have troubles at work. Everything is tangled up there."

**Therapist:** "You're worried now?"

**Client:** "Yes. I can get stuck, but it's no use, then it gets even worse. Then I lose motivation."

**Therapist:** "You're feeling down?"

**Client:** No, yes, that's right... (pause)"

Therapeutic interview follows diagnostic procedures and is conducted in order to influence the client to gain a more accurate and complete insight into themselves and their own problems, so that they can constructively change their behavior based on that.

In addition to the mentioned types, the initial contact interview is also mentioned. The first contact between a social worker and a client usually begins in an atmosphere of undefined tension. The initial contact interview serves the social worker to present to the client in an acceptable way what is expected of them (and what they can expect in the process)

and to establish a relationship of mutual understanding and trust, and encourage their honesty. Difficulties in establishing such a relationship arise partly from the client's anxieties and unclear expectations, and partly from the position and behavior of the social worker, as well as their social and personal characteristics. Achieving desirable relationships in this case depends less on education and knowledge than on the natural abilities of the interview participants. Emotions play a significant role in all of this.

Some general rules are set for conducting the described interviews:

- a) prior preparation for conducting the interview is necessary, which typically includes: defining general and specific problems related to certain behavioral segments, as well as those that are unique and exceptional among the characteristics of the problem and manifestations in the client's behavior;
- b) the place and time of conducting the interview must be determined and respected;
- c) the method of documenting the conversation during the interview should be determined. In addition to "paper and pencil," there are also technical means that preserve the authenticity of the interview. If the client is reserved towards possible forms of documentation during the interview, and none can be applied, documenting the conversation can be done immediately after its completion;
- d) appropriate education, training, and practice of the social worker for conducting interviews are necessary, which are also contributed to by the analysis and evaluation of the course and effects of each conducted interview. This creates a knowledge base for research and improvement of the methodology and methods of social work.

## **B) Survey as a method of social work**

Some authors refer to the survey as a questionnaire method, although the questionnaire is only an instrument of the survey. Regardless of that, all opinions actually refer to the survey.

The survey (questionnaire method) is understood as complementary to the interview and as protection against the subjectivity of the interviewer. The questionnaire is essentially a form that contains clearly formulated questions and often, but not always, provides possible answers. Direct communication here is replaced by indirect-interpersonal communication. The loss of immediacy is compensated by systematicity, uniformity of statements, and the possibility of statistical processing and inference, as well as increased verification possibilities.

Four basic types of data that can be obtained through a questionnaire are of interest to social work:

- a) data related to personal characteristics;
- b) data related to the environment and personal context;
- c) data related to behavior or activities;
- d) data related to the respondents' awareness.

It seems that the first three types of factual data have a valid classification basis, while the fourth is unjustifiably broad. The respondents' awareness of certain social realities is not identical to their attitudes, motives, feelings, etc. Therefore, this classification should be expanded with a type of data on beliefs, convictions, value orientations, etc. of the respondent-client.

Drawing conclusions based on such surveys is done through various qualitative and quantitative indicators, including measurement methods of the subject matter.

The advantages attributed to "questionnaire surveys" include:

- a) cost-effectiveness and adaptability;
- b) independence from situational variables;
- c) the possibility of quantifying results; and
- d) overall closer alignment with scientific methodology.

Among these four mentioned advantages, two are truly debatable. First, independence from situational variables is not achievable even in a survey. Perhaps only in a laboratory experiment. Quantification is also enabled by various forms of interviews, as well as other methods, and a standardized interview is no farther from scientific methodology.

Numerical results enable the determination of measures of individual differences, which can establish whether a particular individual belongs to a certain category or is outside of it. The basis for drawing conclusions about this (individual's position in relation to two or more categories or their place based on intensity) are norms that are empirically determined quantities.

In surveys of more complex subjects (questionnaire method), they cannot be protected from manipulation and false reporting. The desire to prevent "concealing behavior" can be mitigated by efforts in questionnaire construction, which is achieved through multiple phases:

1. Drafting the questionnaire:
  - a. what will be the subject,
  - b. why the questionnaire will be applied - which involves dissecting the problem and variables;
2. Indicator selection, which involves choosing the specific content of possible questions;

3. Formulating questions, with open and closed responses using commonly understood words and precise terms, without suggesting answers and with multiple meanings. There can be a diverse debate about the characteristics of questions, starting with their role, content, form, connection, conditionality, difficulty, etc.
4. Designing the questionnaire, which includes substantive and technical (graphical and aesthetic) design, determining the arrangement and order of questions depending on logic and psychological strategy.
5. Preparation of instructions for completing the questionnaire.
6. Questionnaire verification (logical-content analysis and pre-investigation).
7. Revision and creation of the final version of the questionnaire.

Example questionnaire that examines students' motivations for choosing the profession of a social worker.

*Example questionnaire that examines students' motivation for choosing a profession in social work*

**INSTRUCTIONS**

*Dear colleagues!*

We would like to learn more about the motivation of young people for studying social work. Your contribution to this research will be very significant if you freely and honestly express your opinion. There are no better or worse, correct or incorrect answers. It is not necessary to sign your name because the survey is anonymous and conducted solely for scientific purposes. For most questions, you should answer by circling one of the provided answers, the one that expresses your opinion or stance. In some questions (where indicated), you should write a few words or a number. A smaller number of questions require you to circle some alternatives that also express your opinion or stance.

Answer all the questions!

Thank you for your cooperation!

1. At what age did you want to study social work?

---

And at what age did you decide that?

---

2. How long did you prepare for the entrance exam?

---

3. Is this your first time taking the entrance exam for social work studies?

YES NO

If not, how many times have you taken it?

---

---

4. If you were not accepted now, would you try again next year? (circle)

- a) definitely yes
- b) probably yes
- c) maybe
- d) probably not
- e) definitely not

5. When choosing what to study, did you have any other options besides social work?

YES NO

If yes, which ones?

---

---

---

6. When you expressed your desire to study social work, what was the attitude of your surroundings towards it? (circle)

Your mother was:                      a) for              b) against      c) neutral



- Your father was:                      a) for              b) against      c) neutral  
Your closest friends were:           a) for              b) against      c) neutral  
Your brother/sister was:            a) for              b) against      c) neutral

7. Who supported you the most in the decision to study social work?

---

8. Where did you first hear about the profession of a social worker?  
(circle)

- a) in conversations with parents or relatives
- b) in movies, TV shows, books, magazines
- c) at school
- d) in special TV programs that dealt with the topic of social work
- e) by chance

9. List (if you know) institutions, which you can currently remember, where social workers can work.

---

10. Have you had the opportunity to meet a social worker before?

YES    NO

If yes, where? (circle one)

- a) At an interview in an institution
- b) Privately
- c) Something else

Describe in a few words the impression that person left on you.

---

11. Different opinions can be expressed about every profession through corresponding statements. We list a few of them. Please circle to what extent you agree with them.

• As a social worker, I will have the opportunity to help people in need of expert assistance.

- a) Completely agree
- b) Partially agree
- c) Undecided
- d) Partially disagree
- e) Completely disagree

• I think as a social worker, I will have good income that will provide me with a decent life.

- a) Completely agree
- b) Partially agree
- c) Undecided
- d) Partially disagree
- e) Completely disagree

• Social problems are what interests me the most, and I believe that I will get to know them well through social work studies.

- a) Completely agree
- b) Partially agree
- c) Undecided
- d) Partially disagree
- e) Completely disagree

• I believe that social work studies will positively influence the formation of my personality and that through them I will learn to function better in some important life situations.

- a) Completely agree
- b) Partially agree
- c) Undecided
- d) Partially disagree
- e) Completely disagree

• I think that the profession of a social worker is very popular, and social workers are highly valued in society.

- a) Completely agree
- b) Partially agree
- c) Undecided
- d) Partially disagree
- e) Completely disagree

• As a social worker, I will have the opportunity to constantly be in contact with people.

- a) Completely agree
- b) Partially agree
- c) Undecided
- d) Partially disagree
- e) Completely disagree

12. Rate to what extent the following things are important to you, regardless of whether social work studies allow them or not. Do this by circling one of the numbers whose meaning is as follows:

4 - very important

3 - partially important

2 - undecided

1 - partially unimportant

0 - completely unimportant

a) to earn a lot of money	4	3	2	1	0
b) to easily find employment	4	3	2	1	0
c) to be valued by people because of my profession	4	3	2	1	0
d) to manage people from my surroundings	4	3	2	1	0
e) to learn a lot about social problems	4	3	2	1	0
f) to gain a broad education	4	3	2	1	0
g) to empathize better with other people	4	3	2	1	0
h) to help others overcome difficulties	4	3	2	1	0
i) to have a wide circle of friends	4	3	2	1	0
j) to not feel lonely	4	3	2	1	0
k) to better raise my children one day	4	3	2	1	0
l) to learn to establish a harmonious relationship with a partner	4	3	2	1	0
m) to become a more stable person	4	3	2	1	0
n) to feel more confident in myself	4	3	2	1	0
o) to influence the resolution of problems I have in my family	4	3	2	1	0
p) to resolve personal problems	4	3	2	1	0

13. Regardless of whether they know a social worker or not, most people have a certain image of a typical social worker. We present some of those opinions. Circle the letter in front of each statement with which

you agree, or in front of statements that, in your opinion, describe a typical social worker.

- a) Social workers develop a sense of concern for others.
- b) Social workers understand people better than others and can more easily help them.
- c) Social workers are better parents than others.
- d) Social workers see problems in others even when they don't exist.
- e) Social workers have some psychological or social problems to a greater extent than others.
- f) Social workers are very emotional individuals.
- g) Social workers are somewhat eccentric.
- h) Social workers are marginalized compared to other professions because they work with populations on the margins of society.
- i) Social workers are not shy individuals.
- j) Social workers choose their marital partners better, which is why their marriages are more stable.
- k) Social workers are part of the state's repressive system.

14. How would you rate the status of the social work profession in our society compared to other professions? (circle)

- a) high
- b) average
- c) poor

Please also answer the following questions at the end:

1. Age - how old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Gender (circle)

Male    Female

3. Previously completed high school

---

4. Permanent place of residence

---

5. Educational qualifications of parents:

Father\_\_\_\_\_

Mother\_\_\_\_\_

If there is anything we did not ask you but you would like to answer or comment on, please feel free to do so.

---

---

---

Thank you for your cooperation!

## 2.2 Observation Method

### 2.2.1 Observation Method as a Scientific Research Method

Observation is a scientific method of collecting data through direct sensory perception (observation) of immediate manifestations of phenomena. It is not limited to manifestations that can be observed by the sense of sight alone, but includes all manifestations that can be perceived by any sense or multiple senses simultaneously. Scientific observation requires some form of mediation between the observer and the observed object (subject), but does not include modern technical means that enhance the capabilities of human senses or replace them under certain conditions. It is one of the oldest and most widespread methods of acquiring knowledge in all sciences precisely because nothing can be reliably known about processes and phenomena that do not manifest in any way. Therefore, it is closely related to other fundamental methods of data collection, especially experimental methods. In social sciences, and consequently in the field of social work, observation is a very useful and insightful method for collecting accurate original data, but it is also subject to many limitations. Some of these limitations can be mitigated through research design and careful selection of subjects, while others cannot be mitigated at all. Suitable subjects for observation can be:

- a) manifested objects or phenomena that multiple independent observers can perceive as the same or essentially the same;
- b) the observer can be the subject of observation himself/herself, which essentially introduces feelings and imagination as a mode of perception.

There is a widespread understanding that only current phenomena can be observed. This understanding should be corrected by recognizing that

past phenomena can also be observed through material remains, as well as phenomena in the process of emerging.

The basic difficulties and limitations of scientific observation are:

- a) limitation of the researcher's field of perception;
- b) subordination to the spontaneous rhythm of events;
- c) complexity of phenomena and simultaneous numerous diverse manifestations;
- d) uneven occurrence of phenomena and their spatial distribution.

However, this does not apply to all phenomena, and in the science of social work, some research subjects can be spatially and temporally controlled. Significant difficulties are also caused by theoretical and methodological deficiencies, especially insufficient methodological exploration of observation. The most favorable observation subjects in social work can be considered clients and working with them, certain (smaller) groups and smaller social communities. There are various scientific observations, and therefore there are also various classifications. One of the more important classifications is based on the criterion of using technical means of various types and purposes:

- a) observation without the use of technical aids;
- b) observation with the use of auxiliary technical aids;
- c) observation with intensive use of technical aids, or exclusively through certain instruments.

Immediate observation as a criterion requires distinguishing between:

- a) observations in which the same person observes, records, processes data, and draws conclusions from them;
- b) observations in which multiple observers in the role of field workers observe and record data according to a single researcher's



instructions, and the researcher draws conclusions after processing the collected data.

The first situation in the science of social work may be more common than the second.

The usual classification, or rather a list of types of observation, includes the following types of observation:

- a) Synthetic (complex) observation focuses on a more complex, global, and lasting phenomenon, such as unemployment. Such observation requires a more flexible research project and allows for changing instruments, procedures, and research concepts according to the course of events in stages or phases. Sequential data analysis (and observation flow) is done in stages, and it is useful to quasi-statistically organize the collected data. Sequential analysis serves as a defense against chronicle-like exposition.
- b) Direct observation has always attracted more attention than others. According to the observer's work and role, we distinguish between direct observation with participation and without participation.

Direct observation with participation has attracted the attention of social work methodologists and methodologists. This type of observation is divided into five subtypes. These are:

1. Full participant, in which the observer is a member of the observed environment with a standard function and interest in it, and is involved in the observed process and well-informed about it. The observed group-community may not be aware of his role as an observer, and in some closed, illegal groups, this may not be possible. However, in social work, the observer, a social worker, can sometimes be known and legitimately perform observation in some cases.

2. The participant-observer is a member of the observed group-community and fulfills their regular role in it, but with the knowledge of the group-community, they also take on the role of an observer. Performing their regular role is primary, while the role of the observer is secondary.
3. The observer-participant also has a certain role in the community, but their primary role is that of an observer, giving them greater freedom of movement.
4. A pure observer is not a member of the group-community and has no role in it, they only attend events, observe them, and document them.
5. A scientific observer has the sole task of conducting observations in the role of a researcher, and the observed group-community has accepted them in that capacity. In the first and second types of observation, if the observer is not intentionally inserted into the group-community, there is a significant danger of excessive identification with the center and the bias that can arise. In general, the advantages of observation that directly provide original data on factual events are ensured by: first, precise development of the research project and the instrument called the observation protocol. The observation protocol contains all the essential factors of the observed object, systematized and with measuring instruments. Second, the selection of observers, physically, mentally, educationally, and morally capable individuals who are specifically trained to carry out the respective observation project. Third, the better distribution of observers based on criteria of time, space, and environment, and ensuring that the same phenomenon or sequence of phenomena is observed simultaneously by multiple observers, at least two. Fourth, through sequential analyses and correlations based on them, the results of observation are determined by aligning the

evidence of multiple observers, thereby mitigating the narrowness of the observer's field and making it difficult to prevent observer bias, while increasing the credibility of the collected data.

### **2.2.2 Observation Method as a Method of Social Work**

The basic principles and rules that apply to observation as a scientific research method also apply to it as a method of social work. However, the practice of social work and proponents of action research concepts have primarily shown an interest in observation with participation, as well as the weaknesses and shortcomings of observation.

In the practice of social work, the requirement is emphasized that the phenomenon for which data is being collected must be directly and fully perceptible to the observer's senses. There is no technique in social work that does not, in some way, involve observation. The systematic, controlled observation method is used to collect direct and indirect information relevant to a specific case.

Observation can encompass the entire personality and behavior of the client, or it can focus only on a specific problem situation.

In order to prevent observer biases that can arise from the specific interactional relationship between a social worker and a client, the following measures are taken:

- a) Clearly define the components of behavior that will be observed;
- b) Connect observation with experimentation by manipulating observed and life situations;
- c) Increase the representativeness of data by including multiple time samples, observation situations, and observers;
- d) Introduce appropriate data recording techniques.

Observation, as a method, has not resolved two significant problems in understanding a person:

- a) The relationship between external manifestations (behavior) and what lies behind them;
- b) How we can recognize feelings, attitudes, motives, and conflicts in a person's personality.

Its premise is that each individual is a complete person who has the same essential human qualities, the characteristics of the community and group to which they belong, and their own peculiarities. What is recorded during observation is attributed to a characteristic that manifests itself through a specific behavior in a given situation. Therefore, the observation instrument (protocol) in its simplest form is a list of symptoms or behavioral characteristics that are observed. In this sense, the most well-known (in psychology) is Cattell's scale of about 200 words, which is used in personality assessment.

1. Reserved, critical, cold (schizothymia)	Open, direct, warm (cyclothymia)
2. Less intelligent, concrete thinking, higher academic achievement	More intelligent, abstract thinking, lower academic achievement
3. Prone to emotions, emotionally less stable, easily disturbed (lower "Ego" strength)	Emotionally stable, accepts reality, calm (higher "Ego" strength)
4. Humble, gentle, obedient, conforming (submissive)	Tendency to assertiveness, independent, aggressive, stubborn (clever)
5. Sober, rational, serious, reserved	Carefree, cheerful, enthusiastic
6. Resourceful, law unto oneself, avoids obligations (weaker "Super- Ego" strength)	Aware, steadfast, disciplined (stronger "Super-Ego" strength)

7. Shy, inhibited, humble, timid (Threctia)	Entrepreneurial, brave in society, unrestrained, spontaneous (Parmia)
8. Tough, independent, realistic, "No nonsense" (Harria)	Soft, dependent, overprotected, sensitive
9. Trusting, adaptable, not jealous, easy to get along with (Alaxia)	Suspicious, inaccessible, on guard
10. Practical, caring, conventional, focused on reality, righteous (Praxernia)	Imaginative, preoccupied with internal needs, uninterested in the practical side of life, bohemian
11. Direct, natural, unaffected	Thoughtful, calculated, materialistic penetrating (insightfulness)
12. Calm, confident, secure, composed	Timid, worried, depressed, disturbed (inclined to guilt feelings)
13. Conservative, respects established ideas, tolerates traditional difficulties (conservatism), analytical	Free-thinking, willing to experiment, critical, radical
14. Dependent on the group, a person who always "belongs" to someone, a loyal companion	Independent, likes to be their own boss, resourceful
15. Careless, uninterested in form, untidy, lives according to their own desires (low level of integration)	Controlled, self-disciplined, compulsive, respects manners, (high concept of self-control)
16. Relaxed, calm, unaffected by disturbances	Tense, restless, irritable, fed up (high ergic tension)

Observation has its phases:

- a) acquiring a global impression of the client's personality;
- b) systematic exploration of various moments of the client's behavior;
- c) observation focused on the client's key problem (intensive behavior).

When observing a group or community, the observer can have various positions:

- d) complete participant,
- e) participant,
- f) the observer does not have to be a participant,
- g) the observer is not a participant and the group-community is unaware of being observed.

This classification mostly corresponds to the earlier classification within scientific observation.

The validity of observation is influenced by the observer's characteristics and the properties of the environment-circumstances in which the observation is conducted. There are no universally good observers. It is necessary for the observer to be able to clearly distinguish and separate phenomena by type and intensity and to avoid the "halo effect" and the tendency for "logical fallacy" or "personal equation of observation."

Significant factors of observation circumstances are the place and time of observation, the favorability of the general situation and atmosphere, the representativeness of the behavior sample, and the method of data recording.

Advocates of action research have particularly emphasized participant observation, which is in line with their basic premise. They also mention the following roles of the observer:

- a) complete participant;
- b) participant observer;
- c) participant observer whose role as an observer is known to the group, and
- d) pure observer.

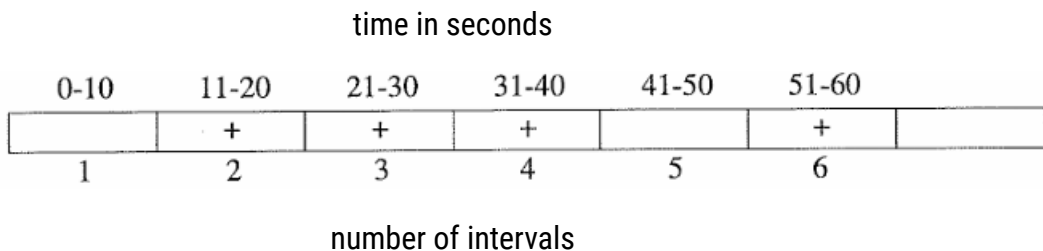
These roles can change, supplement, or combine during action research, but it is important for the observer to participate in the activities being

investigated. This allows for necessary modifications to the observation plan and sensitivity to unexpected and confusing data that can be crucial and lead to new discoveries. The observer simultaneously creates empirical data and theoretical categories. During observation, a sequential analysis takes place, which informs about social changes in time intervals. Sequential analysis is achieved through three phases that repeat as a whole in each sequence:

1. selection and definition of problems, concepts, and indicators;
2. determination of frequency and distribution of phenomena;
3. incorporation of obtained results into a broader model.

Participant observation is the most challenging form of data collection, but it depends on the scope, complexity, and essential characteristics of the observed subject. Understanding the difficulties of participant observation and the significance attributed to it prompted A. Halmi to propose a systematic procedure for complex forms of observation with six schemas, which are presented here:

Schema 8: Interval Scale



Recording data on an interval scale with multiple observed tasks.

Observed subject:

Observer:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Observed problem:

General observations:

a. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Time period

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Duration of each interval

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Minuta	Problem	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
	a											
	b											
	a											
	b											
	a											
	b											

degree of agreement

Reliability: \_\_\_\_\_ x 100 = % agreement

degree of disagreement + degree of agreement



*Scheme 9: Registering frequencies for a specific time period*

Observation Period	Number of observed events
8:00 to 11:00 AM	XXXXXX
Subject of observation:	Observer:
_____	_____
Observed problem:	General observations:
a. _____	_____
b. _____	_____
Time Period _____	_____
Duration of each interval _____	_____

Date	Frequency	Additional comments

Measurement reliability is confirmed by two independent observers whose observation results are compared. The common formula for calculating reliability is:

Low frequencies

$$\frac{\text{Number of agreements}}{\text{Total number of observations}} \times 100 = \% \text{ agreement}$$

High frequencies

*Scheme 10: Registering the duration of a single problem*

Observation Period 8:00 to 11:00 AM	Number of observed events XXXXXX
Subject of observation: _____	Observer: _____
Observed problem: a. _____ b. _____	General observations: _____
Time Period _____	_____
Duration of each interval _____	_____

Date, time	Length of time in which the problem occurs	Total or overall time in minutes	Additional comments

*Scheme 11: Measurement of children's mood range*

Observer I		Observer II	
Time	Range	Time	Range
10:02	3	10:02	3
10:57	2	10:57	3
11:17	3	11:17	3

Legend: Agreement time = 100%, Agreement range = 2/3 or 67%

*Scheme 12: Example of a spot-check situation*

Spot-check	Manifest behavior	Latent behavior
1.		+
2.	+	
3.	+	
4.		+
5.	+	

Measurement reliability is ensured in the same way as in previous methods, and the degree of reliability is calculated using a similar formula as for registering frequencies:

$$\frac{\text{low spot-check}}{\text{high spot-check}} \times 100 = \% \text{ agreement}$$

**SUPERVISORY PROTOCOL**  
participatory observation of small groups

**I. BASIC DATA**

1. Group name \_\_\_\_\_
2. Age of group members \_\_\_\_\_
3. Gender \_\_\_\_\_
4. Number of participants \_\_\_\_\_
5. Date \_\_\_\_\_
6. Meeting time \_\_\_\_\_
7. Meeting place \_\_\_\_\_
8. Group leader \_\_\_\_\_
9. Observer \_\_\_\_\_
10. Observation duration \_\_\_\_\_

(Evaluation criteria: 3 very satisfactory, 2 satisfactory, and 1 unsatisfactory. Note! Place a cross in the appropriate place for evaluation.)

**II. MEETING PLACE**

1. Ventilation
2. Lighting
3. Cleanliness
4. Attractiveness
5. Suitability of equipment

6. Seating conditions
7. Convenience for the meeting
8. Distraction-free

### III. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE WORK PROGRAM

Descriptions	Schedule	Comments & Description
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

### IV WORK PROGRAM

	3	2	1	Comments & Description
1. Well-planned appearance				
2. Level of responsibility of group members for planning				
3. Level of participation of group members in the program				
4. Level of interest of group members in the program				
5. Program is connected to the experience of group members				
6. Meets the personal needs of group members				
7. Level of continuity in the program				

8. The program is implemented through cooperation.

9. Decisions and plans are executed.

## V. INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOR OF GROUP MEMBERS

(Bales' category system)

I. Social-emotional area: positive reactions	F	1	Shows solidarity, enhances the reputation of others, helps, rewards
	E	2	Contributes to easing tension, introduces humor, expresses satisfaction
	D	3	Agrees, passively accepts, participates, compromises, gets involved
II. Task area: proposing solutions	C	4	Suggests, directs, without compromising autonomy
	B	5	Expresses opinions, evaluates, analyzes
	A	6	Guides, informs, repeats, provides explanations
II. Task area: questions	A	7	Seeks orientation, information, repetition, confirmation
	B	8	Seeks opinions, evaluations, analysis, expression of feelings
	C	9	Seeks suggestions, instructions, possible courses of action
II. Socio-emotional area: negative reactions	B	10	Disagrees, passively rejects, takes a formalistic stance
	B	11	Shows tension, seeks help, withdraws
	F	12	Shows antagonism, diminishes the reputation of others, defends oneself

Legend: A. Communication, B. Evaluation, C. Control, D. Decision-making, E. Coping with tension within the group, F. Group integration.

## VI. INTERACTION GROUP AND PROCESS

	3	2	1	Remarks & Description
1. Members know each other well and are friendly towards each other	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Members show a sense of belonging	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Cohesion and the spirit of unity are evident	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Members show a sense of patronage	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. The group shows initiative and responsibility	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. The group itself controls behavior	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. All members appear accepted and have status	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. There is a common intention and goal of the group	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. The group achieves integrated decisions and plans	_____	_____	_____	_____

## VII. GROUP LEADER

	3	2	1	Comments & Description
1. Respected and accepted by group members	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Encourages the group to make decisions and plans	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Skilled at encouraging opinions and judgments	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Allows more than dominates	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. Understands the personal needs of group members	_____	_____	_____	_____

VI – RESEARCH METHODS AND TECHNIQUES IN THE PROCESS OF SOCIAL WORK

6. Accepts the behavior of individuals or the group without emotional attachment	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. Implements control within the group	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. Shows respect for the personality of each group member	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. Successfully uses encouragement and praise	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. Uses different situations	_____	_____	_____	_____
11. Handles conflicts wisely	_____	_____	_____	_____
12. Aware of the group's interests	_____	_____	_____	_____

**VIII. ACQUIRING GROUP EXPERIENCE**

	3	2	1	Comments & Description
1. Developing respect for others in the group	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Developing respect for others outside the group	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Making decisions and choices	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Developing collaboration, planning, and taking responsibility	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. Problem-solving	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Developing care for others	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. Showing care for equipment and tools	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. Developing specific skills such as observations and descriptions	_____	_____	_____	_____

**IX. OBSERVER'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE GROUP**

	3	2	1	Comments & Description
	_____	_____	_____	_____



1. Observer is a complete participant - group members do not know that he is a researcher

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Observer is a participant-observer - group knows that he is a researcher

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Observer is an observer-participant - group knows that he is a researcher, but he has no practical role in the group

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Observer is a "pure" observer - group does not know that he is a researcher and he has the role of an observer as a spectator

\_\_\_\_\_

## X. RETROSPECTIVE OBSERVATION DIARY

(Equidistant sequential diary - ESD)

HOURS	WHERE HE WAS WHO HE WAS WITH	WHAT HE WAS DOING
00 h		
02 h		
04 h		
06 h		
08 h		
10 h		
12 h		
14 h		
16 h		
18 h		
20 h		

22 h		
------	--	--

Conclusion and opinion of the supervisor of the supervision protocol:

---

---

Protocol led by:

---

It is understandable that there are numerous problems in the processing and interpretation of collected data, starting from understanding the data, verifying their validity, connecting sequential analyses, to drawing conclusions based on them. These problems are solved according to the properties of the subject and the characteristics of observation or research. Observation does not have to be the only method used in a specific process. Furthermore, it is often combined with examination, which requires appropriate joint solutions in which methods can have different roles from priority to auxiliary methods.

## 2.3 Biographical method

### 2.3.1 Biographical method as a scientific research method

This method is primarily a method in its concept, without specific techniques of its own. In fact, it uses techniques of document content analysis. The concept of this method is based on the view that comprehensive and true biographies of individuals can provide insights into their behavior, social position, perception of that position, and any aspirations for changing that position. A collection of such biographies of individuals belonging to the same group, class, layer, nationality, or

religion is a source based on which careful analysis can lead to conclusions not only about the individual but also about narrower and broader groups. The primary way of collecting data is obtaining or receiving detailed, comprehensive, and true biographies written personally by a certain individual. In the period of the emergence of this method, biographies were written on one's own initiative, but later on, there was encouragement and even commissioning of biographies. To address the problems arising from illiteracy or low literacy, it became acceptable to dictate the biography to another person or record the oral narration of the biography. In addition to significant and valuable content for socio-psychological and other similar social research, biographies included some insignificant information for researchers. Moreover, the multitude of biographies written in various ways of presentation made it difficult to organize, process, and systematize the data. To make biographies more convenient, guidelines for writing biographies were developed, which included recommendations on what content and in what order life experiences and perceptions should be communicated.

At the time of its creation, this method was primarily qualitative. Later, possibilities for quantification and statistical analysis of data contained in biographies, as well as drawing conclusions based on statistical regularities, generalizations, and laws, were discovered.

The advantages of this method, when biographies are true, include obtaining original data about actual events, as well as circumstances and influences on those events, causes and consequences of events, and the author's perception, understanding, and evaluation of those events. Systematically analyzed data contained in biographies provide extraordinary opportunities for comprehensive understanding of individuals and groups.

The method also has certain drawbacks, primarily due to the abundance of unsystematic material, the lengthy process of organizing it, the difficulty of verification, and therefore an indeterminate degree of reliability. When it comes to individual biographies, some statements can be verified by examining official records, but this is also a costly, extensive, and time-consuming task.

Like other research, it is necessary to first discover and define the problem and subject of research. Then, hypotheses are developed, variables and indicators are identified, and based on that, instructions for writing biographies are structured. After completing this preparatory phase, the most complex phase of research begins. This involves determining a group of authors who will write their biographies, establishing contact with them, and motivating them to write or orally present their biographies. The problem is that one never knows how representative the achieved sample of biographers is, nor how much and how their biographies will correspond to the subject of research. In an effort to standardize as much as possible to avoid the aforementioned drawbacks, the biographical method has become very close to the "biographical interview." Finally, the biographies are processed and conclusions are drawn.

In contemporary practice, there is a widespread demand for submitting biographies with various applications and requests, as well as publishing biographies of well-known and popular personalities. Based on these, various structural and social movement research is possible, and there are already successful attempts at reconstructive and predictive research on socially powerful individuals.

Despite all its advantages, this method is not widely accepted in social sciences. Nevertheless, it can be an extremely fruitful method in the field of social work, both in science and practice.

### **2.3.2 Biographical method as a method of social work**

In the methodology of social work, we come across the term "biographical technique." It is understood as an organized, systematic effort to gather data about the subject-client. This process is considered analytical, with the data arranged chronologically, and the primary source is the client themselves. The goal is for the client to communicate, based on their memories, all the important facts that have significantly influenced the emergence of their problem in chronological order. To implement this method, which is specific to the individual level of social analysis, there needs to be a certain level of emotional connection between the social worker and the client. The interpretation of the past often has therapeutic significance because it involves a critical examination of past events, which is a condition for change. It is important through this process to identify all the factors that have contributed to the current problem, such as the quality of their environment, pivotal events, contacts with influential individuals, etc. However, not all possible data is collected, only those that have the highest diagnostic value for problem-solving, which shed light on the social aspect of the biography. Based on this, we gain the ability to determine a preliminary diagnosis of the problematic situation. The usefulness of the "list of basic biographical information" (LOBI technique) is emphasized, and its insufficiency is compensated by "social history," "in-depth interviewing," etc. Essentially, the important method through which the "biographical technique" is implemented is the interview within a gentle inquiry, with possible observation.

We are free to note that it would be beneficial for the methodology and theory of social work, as well as for practice, if various authors use terms that do not create confusion. In that case, the biographical method would not be declared a technique (technique consists of procedures and instruments, and the biographical method does not have its own specific instruments) and would not be declared an analytical procedure, unlike social analysis where the biographical method is a concept, not a procedure, and both are analytical-synthetic. Analytical in the process of data collection, and synthetic in the creation based on that data.

In conclusion, the biographical method can be applied not only at the individual level of analysis but also in group analysis and analysis of specific communities. For example, a marital union has its own biography that is not simply the sum of the biographies of the spouses. Additionally, the biographical method is necessary both in the practice of social work and in scientific research.

## **2.4 Sociometric Method**

### **2.4.1 Sociometric Method as a Scientific Research Method**

The sociometric method is based on investigation. It can rely on interviews and surveys, and rarely on observation. The creators of this method are Helen Jenings and Jacob Moreno, but it was scientifically established by Jacob Moreno.

The subject of this method is the structures and relationships within small groups. The condition for the successful application of this method is that all group members know each other and have minimal communication with each other. This provides it with great penetrability and reliability, but also limits its use. Due to its requirements, it is not applicable for mass research. Therefore, it is more commonly used in

pedagogy, penology, military sciences, social work, special sociology, defectology, and psychology, rather than other sciences. However, by connecting the results obtained in groups, its possibilities can be significantly expanded with certain adaptations.

The process of the sociometric method can be presented through the following stages:

1. Formulating the problem and research subject, defining the objectives and hypotheses. The problem and research subject usually revolve around the affinities or non-affinities between group members, acceptance and rejection of joint actions, and mutual meanings. The indicators are predetermined.
2. Creating a basis for conversation or questionnaire.
3. Selecting a group based on appropriate criteria.
4. Asking group members questions and recording their answers.
5. Analyzing the data and determining the results.
6. Presenting the results by creating sociograms or tables.

The possibility of creating sociograms as a graphical way of treating data significantly enhances the analytical and research capabilities of the researcher. Sociograms also imply information that is not directly related to the research subject.

Based on the recording of positive and negative choices made and experienced by each group member, sociometric types are formed:

1. "Star" - someone who is chosen significantly more often than others.
2. "Isolated" - a group member who is neither chosen nor rejected by anyone.
3. "Rejected" - members with whom other members do not want to establish connections.

4. "Dyads" - mutual pairs of group members.
5. "Triads" - groups of three members who choose each other, etc.

Based on the same basis, other forms of connections such as "chains" and "circles" can be observed.

These basic forms can be observed in all relationship cases, but their composition changes depending on the reasons, basis of connection, acceptance, or rejection. Structures that occur based on one foundation, for example, a preference for joint entertainment, change when it comes to performing a task.

#### **2.4.2 Sociometric method as a method of social work**

All the aforementioned rules also apply to the application of the sociometric method in the practice of social work. With further development of the application of the sociometric matrix (which, like the sociogram, is shown at the end of this text) in statistical processing by calculating:

- a) the index of social expansion (average number of positive votes in the group);
- b) the index of group tension (average number of negative votes in the group);
- c) the index of group affective atmosphere (relationship between positive and negative choices),

Practitioners and researchers in social work have introduced significant innovations in this method. Thus, in addition to criticism that the results obtained through the use of the sociometric questionnaire provide only a static overview of a moment in the group's life, they have demanded the inclusion of dynamic components such as motivations in choice, perceptions, members' awareness of their status in the group, future



relationships, etc. These justified demands are essentially aimed at discovering psychological factors, while at the same time making the application of the method much more complex. Adding the question "why" to the sociometric questionnaire only partially solves this problem.

A contribution to the development of the sociometric method is the formulation of Petrovsky's "stretchometric conception of group activity," which sees interpersonal relationships based on two types of connections:

- a) direct connections (sympathy, antipathy, susceptibility to the influence of others, openness to communication, etc.); the basis of direct connections is determined values;
- b) connections based on members' perception through experiencing relationships with other group members.

When comparing the actual status of group members with the status they perceive, the degree of members' expectations in interpersonal relationships can be assessed. The procedure called autosociometry implies that respondents rank the mutual relationships of group members based on their position in the group and express their perception of the relationships between group members and themselves, from which an autosociogram and autosociometric matrix are constructed. This procedure is believed to have therapeutic effects.

They are very interesting and the efforts of J. Cečetka (J. Čečetka) in conceiving and statistically developing a group version of the sociometric questionnaire are remarkable. This requires the respondent to choose the members of the group with whom they would most prefer to carry out a task. Through statistical analysis of the results, four value determinations have been made:

- a) the group attraction of a group member is expressed by the number of people who chose them as a member of their group;
- b) the group orientation of an individual is expressed through the size of the group, indicated by the number of chosen members;
- c) position in the group, which is expressed by the attitude of others towards the respondent, i.e. their reciprocity;
- d) the mutual relationship between the respondent and the members of the group whom they prefer as members of their own group.

In addition to the cybernetic model of "group entropy" by F. Kube, the "Syracuse Scale" for measuring social relationships also attracts attention. According to D. Perić and I. Vidanović, this scale first asks respondents to rank individuals on a five-point scale based on who they would most or least like to help them in a specific situation, thus establishing a starting system for the respondent. Based on this system, the respondent evaluates members of their group, and each evaluation is expressed numerically. Based on these scores, it is possible to determine the relationships within social group connections.

All of these mentioned innovations, as well as others, essentially affirm Moreno's basic principles and aspirations.

## SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE SCALE FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

INSTRUCTIONS: *On a separate sheet, you will find the names of all the students in your class. We would like you to place a number next to each name. The number you write should be one of the numbers for the following points:*

My closest, best friends      1 - I would like this person to be one of my closest, best friends. I would like to spend a lot of time with this person and go to various places with them. I would confide in them about some of my difficulties and secrets and do everything I can to help them overcome their difficulties. I will assign the number ONE to my closest, best friends

My other friends                2 - I would like to work and be with this person. I would invite them to socialize and I would like to go on trips with them and our friends. I would like to talk and do various things with this person. I would like to work with this person and be with them often. I would like this person to be one of my friends. I will give NUMBER TWO to every person who is my friend.

They are not my friends but I like them      3 - I would like to be in a group or in the same club with this person. I wouldn't mind if they were in the same team as me or if

they lived in my neighborhood. I would gladly play with his person. I would also gladly be with them at school. This person is not one of my friends, but I think they are a good person. I will put NUMBER THREE in front of the name of every person I think is good.

I don't know them

4 - I don't know this person very well. Maybe I would like them, maybe I wouldn't. I don't know if I would want to be with them. I will put NUMBER FOUR in front of the name of every person I don't know well enough.

I don't care about them

5 - I say "hello" whenever I meet this person at school or on the street, but I don't like being with them. I can spend some time with this person if I have nothing else to do, but I would rather be with someone else. I don't care much about this person. I will give NUMBER FIVE to all the people I don't care much about.

I don't love them

6 - I only speak to this person when necessary. I don't like working with this person and I would rather not speak to them. I will give NUMBER SIX to every person I don't like.

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Give each student a piece of paper with the names of all the students in the class written on it - OR - give each student a lined piece of paper and have them write the names of all the students in the class in alphabetical order, according to your dictation.
2. Then say: "When you are having a hard time, I try to help you. I also want to help you make friends and be good friends to other people. But in order to do that, I need to know how you think about each boy and girl in this classroom and how each boy and girl thinks about you. So today we are asking you to tell us what you think about the other boys and girls in this class. Once you write down what you think about your classmates, all your papers will be mixed up, so no one will know who added what to which paper.
3. First, I want you to put the number FOUR in front of your own name. Do it now. Put the number FOUR in front of your own name. If you are a girl, write GIRL at the top of your paper. If you are a boy, write BOY at the top of your paper.
4. Pause. Then say: "Now I will read the first paragraph. Read it to yourself as I read it aloud. If you don't know the meaning of a word, raise your hand and I will help you understand the text."
5. The teacher reads the FIRST PARAGRAPH. After a short pause, he/she says: "If this matches any personality in your classroom, put the number ONE in front of the name. Put the number ONE in front of each name that matches."
6. Pause for a minute or two while the children write. Then read paragraph TWO again and say: "If this matches any personality in your classroom, put the number TWO in front of the name. Put the number TWO in front of each name that matches." Pause while the students

write. Then read the next paragraph and continue like this until you complete all the points.

7. Tell the students to turn their papers over when they finish the task. Remind them several times that there should be a number in front of each name. Give them time to read the paragraphs again individually. Help them where they need help interpreting words or phrases.
8. When the papers are collected, shuffle them in front of the class and emphasize the fact that you will not know how each person marked the papers; that no one will ever find out how they filled out their papers.

### **Sociogram**

Sociogram is used for graphical representation of data obtained through sociometric technique in small groups and with a limited number of choices. The symbols used are:

Square for boys □

○circle for girls

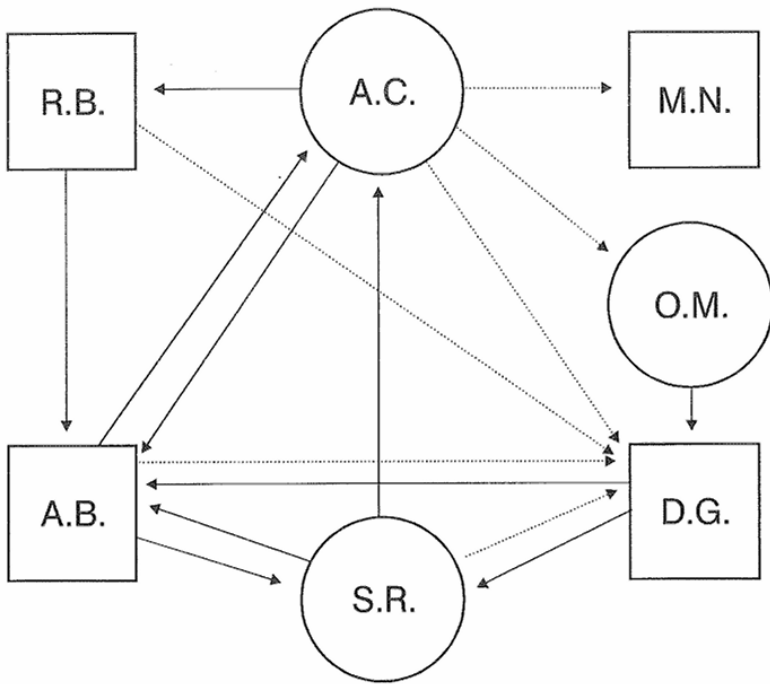
Positive choice

Negative choice

Solid line

Dashed line

*Example of a simple sociogram*

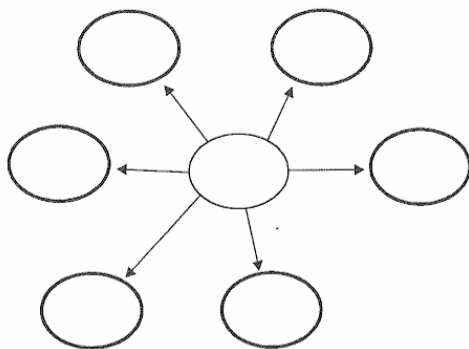


According to Moreno, the typical structures within groups are as follows:

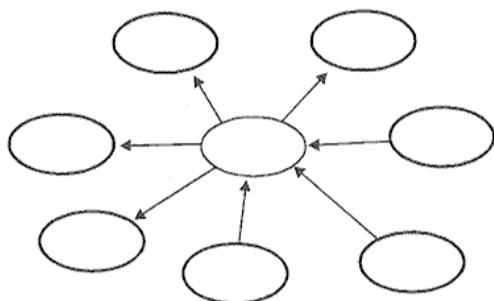
1. Complete isolation: no line of attraction or rejection ties the subject to any other person.



2. The subject is attracted to six external faces (faces that do not belong to the subject's group are marked with a thicker circle) that do not respond to his sympathy.

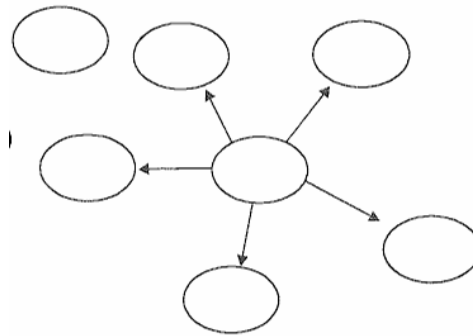


3. The subject is attracted to four external faces; three other external faces attract the subject who does not respond to their sympathy.



4. The subject is attracted to five faces in his group who are indifferent towards him.





The sociogram provides the possibility for other types of analysis as well. Since each group member shows different frequency of choices and gives different frequency of levels at which they are chosen, there is a possibility of scaling individuals in terms of acceptance. This, on the other hand, involves the possibility of scaling based on willingness to accept others. The most suitable method for this type of work is the sociometric matrix. This is a procedure for graphical representation using columns (rows), of which there are as many as respondents. The columns record from whom the respondent received votes (who chose them), and in the rows, to whom they gave votes (who they chose). By adding up the votes in the columns, the sociometric status is obtained.

*Example of a simple sociometric matrix*

	A.B.	Đ.C.	V.A.	S.R.	R.B.	D.G.	O.I.	Σ+	Σ-
A.B.		+		+		-		2	1
Đ.C.	+		-		+	-	-	2	3
V.A.								0	0
S.R.	+	+				-		2	1
R.B.	+					-		1	1
D.G.	+			-				1	1
O.I.						-		0	1
Σ+	4	2	0	1	1	0	0	8	
Σ-	0	0	1	1	0	5	1		8

A.B. are the initials of the first name (A) and last name (B); Σ = sum

Example of a more complex sociometric matrix (showing who chooses whom as a member of a student school board):

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
A		3	2				1									
B	2				1	3										
C																
D		3	1			2										
E			3				2									1
F				2			1				3					
G	2								2		1					
H																
I					3		1				2					
J				3		2	1									
K		1					2		3							
L	3								1						2	
M								2	1						3	
N							1		3							2
O				2			1				3					
P							2				3				1	
I		1	1		1		6		2		1				1	1
II	1		1	2		2	3	1	1		1				1	1
III	2	2	1	1	1	1			2		3				1	
Y	3	3	3	3	2	3	9	1	5		5				3	2

Y - total

I - chosen as first

II - chosen as second

III - chosen as third

Based on the analysis of the sociometric matrix, the individual's social status within the group can be calculated and represented. Social status indicates the individual's position within the group, which is determined by the attitudes of all group members towards them. Social status shows how the group accepts the individual, and it is higher if the individual receives a higher number of positive votes from group members. By

summing the votes in the rows, the social expansiveness of the participants is obtained.

The result shows how many positive and negative votes each respondent gave. Social expansiveness is greater if an individual gives a greater number of votes. Various sociometric indices can be calculated using the sociometric matrix.

- **Group expansion index** represents the average number of positive votes in a group. Higher group expansion indices indicate better mutual relationships in the group, i.e., a greater number of sympathies among group members. This index is calculated by dividing the total number of positive votes in the group by the number of group members.
- **Group tension index** represents the average number of negative votes in a group. Higher group tension indices indicate higher tension, intolerance, and strain in mutual relationships within the group. If there are a small number of negative votes in the group, it is considered that the tension is not high. The group tension index is calculated by dividing all negative votes in the group by the number of group members.
- **Group affective atmosphere index** show the relationship between positive and negative votes in a group. This index ranges from 0 to 100. If all votes are negative, the index is 0. An index greater than 50 means that there are more positive than negative votes in the group. A higher index indicates a better atmosphere in the group. Group affective atmosphere indices can be calculated by dividing the total number of positive votes by the total number of positive and negative votes.

## 2.5 Case study method

### 2.5.1 Case study method as a scientific research method

The case study method, or "casestudy method," has been widely used in science for a long time. However, despite its relatively rich research experience in the field of social sciences, it is less developed and popular compared to its application in medical and other sciences.

The basic concept of the case study method is the effort to thoroughly and comprehensively study a specific case. In this regard, the first requirement is to define the concept of a case, and then identify the case as the problem or subject of the research. Fulfilling both requirements presents various difficulties and often conflicting understandings. Without delving into a deeper discussion on the definition of the term "case," we will approach the examination of both methods from the understanding that a case is any empirical or theoretical entity that can be differentiated from others and formulated as a defined subject of research. This starting point allows us to distinguish between so-called "macro," "meso," and "micro" cases. It is clear that macro cases are social phenomena of the greatest scope, meso cases are of moderate scope, and micro cases are of smaller scope or individual-specific. Criteria for scope and size can be determined in various ways on a global scale, within the framework of a society, organization, community, group, etc. Establishing the framework within which the scope of a case will be determined is an important initial step.

Cases, or case studies, also differ significantly based on other criteria. For example, in terms of the properties of the research subject, we distinguish between reconstructive cases, which deal with past events, current cases, which are ongoing or happening in real-time, and

prospective or prognostic cases, which relate to probable and/or possible future events.

The case study method has been recognized for its penetrative and credible knowledge gained through its application. However, its validity as a basis for broader, more comprehensive inference about dispersal phenomena has been questioned. In response to this criticism, research practice has utilized the case study method as a special case and conducted multiple studies of the same subject at different periods, similar to panel studies, following the principles of typical induction. Based on a typical example, it is possible to make inferences about similar phenomena. Of course, the problem of determining a typical example remains. Additionally, another type of research has been developed, which is far more representative, comprehensive, and has greater prognostic advantages. This is the "mosaic case study." Its concept is to simultaneously and using the same procedures investigate the chosen research subject (case) in multiple typical locations, with the requirement that the researched cases be representative. When the results of typical and representative case studies are combined into a whole, a very well-founded and reliable, multi-purpose diagnostic and prognostic knowledge is obtained.

Reconstructive and prognostic case studies are conducted within a developed research project. Significant problems arise only when investigating a "live" event whose beginning could not be predicted. It is approached by using knowledge and research projects on past, similar, and related phenomena, and by improvising a previous research project.

The process of investigating a "live case" proceeds as follows:

The researcher, either individually or as a team, equipped with previous information, an initial sketch or an improvised project, and instruments,

usually only a sketch for observation, a sketch of an evidence sheet for qualitative content analysis, and a list of potential competent interviewees, establishes necessary communications and begins data collection. In this initial phase, the following overviews are created based on data collected from all available sources and all applied methods:

1. Chronology of events with descriptions of characteristics;
2. Overview of the most significant actors;
3. Overview of available and possible data sources, both living and written.

This first stage of the initial phase concludes with organizing the available data and consolidating specific overviews into a comprehensive chronological overview.

The second stage of the initial phase consists of verifying the formed comprehensive chronological overview through individual interviews and group interviews with a group of the most informed and competent interviewees.

The second phase begins with developing a scientific concept and instruments and creating criteria for selecting document samples, interview subjects, and objects of observation. Developing instruments includes:

1. A basis for scientific conversation, both individual and group, with gentle questioning and an orienting interview approach;
2. A code and form for quantitative and qualitative content analysis;
3. A protocol for direct observation in the form of "participant observation."

This is the minimum research equipment for further work, which is adjusted according to the requirements of the researched case.

The second stage of the second phase is carried out by collecting data using prepared instruments.

The third phase involves data processing and creating the first descriptive version of the research report. It presents the chronological flow of events and identifies specific factors of occurrence, their connections, relationships, and influences without taking positions or making value judgments. All of this can be presented in a questioning and hypothetical form. This preliminary, descriptive report is put up for public discussion (group or collective interview) with relevant representatives or all participants in the event. The discussion is an essential verification of the correctness of the selection of materials, the method of observing the event, and the identification of activity factors and their relationships. The views expressed in the discussion, which are themselves the subject of discussion and clarification, serve as the basis for modifying and supplementing the preliminary report.

Based on the preliminary report and the results of the discussion and re-examination of collected and newly obtained data, a complete report is formed, which includes both scientific and practical implications. An integral part of it is a review of questions of broader social and scientific significance, highlighting those that need further processing and research.

This prepared report is once again considered by the same or an expanded group of participants in the events, after which, with further refinement, it becomes the final report. In addition to reviewing significant questions, it may contain appropriate recommendations from the researchers in various forms.

The presented procedure-method primarily refers to "micro" and "mezzo" cases and has been repeatedly tested in our familiar research practice.

### 2.5.2 Case study method in social work

The basic methodological rules of the case study method also apply to its application in social work.

One understanding of the case study (single-system design) was mentioned within Chapter IV, so now we will focus on the specifics of general understanding of the case study method in social work practice.

The starting point in social work practice is that the case study method is a broad exploratory and methodological framework that connects various social, psychological, and other diagnostic techniques for assessing disorders and personality.

It is a method whose goal is to study the forms and content of individual problems. Unfortunately, this definition reduces the subject method to working with individuals, which largely limits real research possibilities and favors a medical-psychological approach. It is also considered a method that prefers quantity of data. In this sense, the principle is formed that "nothing should be missed, and everything that is collected should be usable," which requires skill and expertise of the researcher. The research-application of the case study method is seen as a mandatory combination of a "diagnostic battery" consisting of the biographical method, interview, and observation, with the possible use of assessment techniques.

The case study unfolds through several phases. The first phase consists of anamnesis, whose goal is to collect data that will enable the general reconstruction of the biography and development within which the following can be determined:

- a) noticeable moments,
- b) risk factors and deviations,



- c) potentially threatening factors to adaptation and personality development.

The second phase consists of forming a "history of the disorder" in which a form is created with about ten items that contain provisions (contents) relevant to the systematic procedure, and each of them encompasses some group of functions of the complete personality or its aspect. According to this concept, this requires multidisciplinary teamwork consisting of a psychologist (psychiatrist, educator, social worker, and if necessary, other experts).

The elements of the case study would be:

- a) biography - according to a developed plan;
- b) description of current problems;
- c) analysis of the content of selected documents;
- d) results of laboratory tests;
- e) psychodiagnostic exploration of personality;
- f) interviews with family, spouse, and others;
- g) case consultation as a final diagnostic procedure.

As an innovation, the task-oriented case study, target case study, is emerging, which increasingly replaces the "problem-solving case study" model. It deals with problems:

1. that the client acknowledges and accepts;
2. that can be solved through action outside the contract;
3. that can be easily defined;
4. that arise from the client's unfulfilled desires, not defined by others;
5. that arise from things the client wants to change.

With a focus on the displayed exhibits, the concept of "task-oriented (social) practice" has been formed, which consists of eight "categories".

These are:

- a) interpersonal relationships;
- b) dissatisfaction with social relationships;
- c) problems with official institutions;
- d) difficulties in role performance;
- e) decision-making problems;
- f) reactive social coupling;
- g) insufficient resources;
- h) psychological problems and behavioral problems.

## 2.6 Historical Method

### 2.6.1 Historical method as a method of scientific research

In discussions about the historical method as a science, there are still identifications between the methods of history as a science or a set of sciences and the historical method as a research concept in social sciences. The fundamental and essential difference between the methods of history as a science and the historical method in social sciences is, firstly, in the subject and goal of research. History and the historical method exclusively deal with the investigation of the past based on material remains, records-documents, and oral testimonies based on memory of events older than fifty years. Accordingly, the basic research methods are:

1. analysis of document content (qualitative and quantitative);
2. historical-comparative method, which enables the understanding and differentiation of historical phenomena.

Analytical-synthetic methods, especially methods of classification and periodization, induction and generalization, are of particular importance.

The historical method in social sciences aims to gain knowledge about the existing and upcoming based on its past and development.

The basic principles of this method are: every phenomenon has its origin in its past; every present contains a part of the past, the present itself is partially becoming the past and contains the future; every historical phenomenon has its origin, development, and cessation; humans and human society can only know through their own history. This understanding of the historical method utilizes the method of analysis of document content, as well as all other methods of data collection and processing, comparison and periodization. However, in this case, there is no methodological prohibition to analyze events that have not occurred fifty years ago. On the contrary, when referring to the past, history, it can be about recent past.

Dilthey articulated the philosophical framework of the historical method, thus establishing the methodological direction of axiology. This direction was further developed by Windelband and Rickert, and the true representative of this approach is Max Weber, who operationalized the method of understanding and the method of ideal types. This has been sufficiently discussed during the presentation of the axiological paradigm.

### **2.6.2 The Historical Method in the Practice of Social Work**

In the theoretical-methodological literature of social work science, the historical method is either not discussed or incorrectly associated only with action research in the community. Moreover, emphasis is placed on the use of cartographic data and sources, and the form of "area" studies,

which otherwise fall under the political science method, is specifically mentioned. The historical method is encompassed in the basic concept of social work regarding the importance of development, biography, chronology, the history of social problems, and ultimately, the dynamism and procedural nature of the emergence and development of problematic situations and issues, as well as social work itself. Chronologies and biographies are the most basic forms of history that go beyond the level of tradition and legends. Accordingly, the historical method is applied in social work at all levels, in all forms and methods that connect the past with the current situation.

The scarce treatment of the historical method in this field should focus more on the method itself, as well as the actual procedures and research techniques, primarily content analysis of documents.

In addition, the task of the methodology of social work science is to reconsider the attitudes towards the impossibility of experimentation in social work, realizing that every social therapy, intervention, etc. essentially involves the actions of one or a group of factors aimed at change, thus creating a genuine experimental situation. The same applies to measurements in social sciences, without which assessment scales could not exist. In fact, social work continuously uses nominal and interval scales, and even ratio scales, so it is important to incorporate knowledge of measurement into methodology and methodology.

## LITERATURE

1. Adam, E: Qualitative Methodology and Action Research in Sociology, doctoral dissertation, Zagreb, 1980.
2. Baškovec, A.: Rodgers' Counseling Method, Higher School for Social Workers, Belgrade, 1980.
3. Bowers, S.: The Nature and Definition of Social Casework, Family Service Association of America, New York, 1960.
4. Becker, H.: Interviewing Medical Students. In: Densin, N- Sociological Methods, A Sourcebook. Aldine Publishing Company, Chicago, 1970.
5. Borowski, A.: Social Dimensions of Research. In: Grinell, R. - Social Work Research and Evaluation. Third Edition. FE. Peacock Publishers, Inc, Hasca, Illinois, 1988.
6. Bogdanović, M.: Methodological Studies, Institute for Political Studies, Belgrade, 1993.
7. Babbie, E.Rubin: Research Methods for Social Work. Wadsworth Publishing Company, Belmont California, a Division of Wadsworth Inc. 1989.
8. Batarelo, A.: Problems in Social Research, Critique of Traditional Methodology, Zagreb, 1990.
9. Bodeman, Michael: Considerations on practice-oriented sociology using the example of participant observation, V. Badura - seminar Applied Social Research, surhcamp, 1976.

10. Berger, P.: Innovation to Sociology. A Humanistic Perspective, Doubleday, New York, 1963.
11. Berger, J: Psychodiagnostics, Lob - technique Belgrade 1980.
12. Bottomore, T.B.: Sociology as Social Criticism, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1975.
13. Barton, A, Lazarsfeld, P.: Some Functions of Qualitative Analysis in Social Research, Prentice Hall, INC, 1961.
14. Biondić, Ivan: Special Education at a Turning Point Contribution to the Sociology of Education, Institute for Pedagogical Research, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb, Zagreb, 1986.
15. Boszormenji - Nagy Ivan: Family Therapy, Rovolt. Reinbeh, Hamburg, 197S.
16. Battegay, R.: Der mensch in der Gruppe, Volume I, I, Verlag Hans Huber, Stuttgart 1963.
17. Becker, H.: Outsiders. The free Press of Glencoe, 1963.
18. Bogdanović, M.: Quantitative Approach in Sociology, Belgrade, 1981.
19. Blumner, H.: Symbolic Interactionism, Prentice Hall, 1960.
20. Campbell, D.: Factors Relevant to the Validity of Experiments in Social Settings, American Psychological Association, New York, 1957.
21. Campbell, D.: Experimental and Quasi-Experimental in Participatory Research, Rand Mc Nally and Com. New York, 1968.
22. Comite, A.: Course of Positive Philosophy, Kultura, Belgrade, 1962.

23. Collins, D. - Polster, R.: Measuring Variables by Direct Observations. In: R.M.: Grinnell J.(Ed) Social Work Research and Evaluation, Itasca, Peacock, 1988.
24. Corcoran, J.K.: Selecting a Measuring Instrument In: R.M. Grinnell J. / Ibidem.
25. Coyle, G.: Group work with American Youth, New York, Harper and Bros, 1948.
26. Cook, M.: Interpersonal Perception, Penguin Books, London, 1971.
27. Churchman, W.: Systematic Approach, Informatics and Society, CDD, Zagreb, 1986.
28. Caldarević, O.: Qualitative Methodology of the Chicago School of Sociology, Revija za sociologiju, Vol. XIV, No 3-4, 1984.
29. Četka, I.: Quotes of groups in the variant of sociometric test and its statistical evaluation, Pedagogika, Prague, 1967.
30. Diltaj, V.: Construction of the Historical World in Spiritual Sciences, BIGZ, Belgrade, 1980.
31. Denzin, N.: Sociological Methods, A Sourcebook Aldine Publishing, Chicago, 1970.
32. Durkheim, E.: The Rules of Sociological Method, Modern School, Belgrade, 1963.
33. Đurić, M.: Problems of Sociological Method, Critical Consideration of the State in Western European and American Sociology. Modern School, Belgrade, 1962.
34. Epstein, I.: Quantitative and Qualitative Methods. In R.M. Grinnell I. (Ed) Ibidem.

35. Etzkowitz, H.: Schaflander G.: Formation of Institutions - New Sociology, Ideje, Vol 11, No 2-3 1970. Psychoanalytic publisher 1921.
36. Fistead, W.J.: Qualitative Methodology, Markan Publishers, Chicago, 1971.
37. Fischer, J: Bloom, M.. Evaluating Practice: Guidelines for the Accountable Professional, Prentice - Hall, Inc. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1982.
38. Flamm, F: Social Knowledge and Social Work in the Federal Republic of Germany, Frankfurt a/M 1977.
39. Friedlander, W.A. Peaffehberger, H.: Basic Principles of Social Work Method, Technical Publishing of Slovenia, Ljubljana 1970.
40. Filstead, W.J.: Qualitative Methodology, Markam Publishers Com, Chicago, 1971.
43. Gilli, G. A.: How to Conduct Research, Guide to Social Research, Školska knjiga, Zagreb 1971.
44. Gold, R.L.: Roles in Sociological Field Observations, Social Forces, Vol. XXXVI, 1958.
45. Glass, J.F: The Humanistic Challenge to Sociology, M. Goodyear Publishing Inc., Pacific Palisades California, 1972.
46. Good, C- Scates, D.: Research Methods in Education, Psychology, and Sociology, Otokar Keršovani, Rijeka, 1967.
47. Gadamer H.G.: Truth and Method, Veselin Masleša, Sarajevo, 1962. Beograd, 1966.
48. Group of authors: Methodology of Scientific Research in Medicine, Medicinska knjiga, Belgrade, 1988.



49. Galaway, B. - Compton B.: Social Work Processes, Fourth Edition, Wadsworth Publishing Company Belmont, California, 1989.
50. Garvin, C.D. Seabury.B.A.: Interpersonal Practice in Social Work, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall Inc. 1984.
51. Glass, J.E: The Humanistic Challenge to Sociology, M. Goodyear Publishing Company Inc. Pacific Palisades, California, 1972.
52. Gross, M.: Historical Science, Development, Forms, Features, SNL, Zagreb, 1980.
53. Galas, H.: Structuralism as an Integrative Approach, Nolit, Delo Journal, Belgrade, 1974.
54. Halmi, A.: Research Methodology in Social Work (Contributions to the Study of Social Work Methodology), Alinea, Zagreb 1995.
55. Haag, A.: Action Research, Munich, 1972.
56. Haines, J.: Skills and Methods in Social Work, Constable and Co Ltd. London, 1975.
57. Holštajn, V and Meinhold, M.: Social Work in Capitalist Production Relations, Higher School for Social Workers, Belgrade, 1980.
58. Hou, D.: Introduction to the Theory of Social Work, Scientific Research Center for Social Work and Social Policy, FPN, Belgrade, 1977.
59. Hamilton, G.: Theory and Practice of Social Work, New York, 1951.
60. Halmi, A.: Social Work in the Local Community, Social Welfare Library, Zagreb, 1989.
61. Haag, F: Social Research as Action Research, Haag-Kruger Schwarzel-Action Research, Juventa, Verlag, 1972.

62. Halmi, A.: Methodology of Action Research as a Scientific and Self-management Basis of Social Work. Doctoral thesis at FPN in Belgrade, 1986.
63. Ilić, V.: Functionalism in Sociology, Institute for Sociological Research, Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade, 1995.
64. Junker, B.H.: Field Work, The University of Chicago, 1960.
65. Jick, M.: Sociology, Vol. XXIV, No 4, Belgrade, 1982.
66. Joroien, E.: Social Work and Human Problems, Published by Perg. International Library, 1979.
67. Janković, J.: Phase of Evolution in the Methodology of Social Work Science, Proceedings of the Faculty of Law in Zagreb, No. 3, Zagreb, 1989.
68. Jilek, M.: Empirical Research without Positivism, Contemporary Society and Sociology, Proceedings: Contradictions and Developmental Problems of Contemporary Yugoslav Society, Globus, Zagreb, 1985.
69. Ivey, A.E.: Microcounseling: Innovations in Interviewing Training, Charles C. Thomas, Springfield, IL, 1974.
70. Johnson, C.L.: Social Work Practice, A Generalist Approach, Allyn and Bacon Inc. Boston, 1986.
71. Junker, H.: The Counseling Conversation, Theory and Practice of Critical Social Work, Munich - Kosel, 1978.
72. Kahn, A.: Issues in American Social Work, Columbia University Press, New York, 1977.

73. Kendall, K.: Reflections on Social Work Education, American Social Work, New York-Wien, 1978.
74. Kendall, K, Fiske, M, Merton, K.: The Focused Interview, Bureau of Applied Social Research, Columbia University, New York, 1952.
75. Konopka, G.: Social Group Work: A Helping Process, Englewood, Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1963.
76. Kuhn, T.: The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Nolit, Belgrade, 1974.
77. Keef. T.: Empathy the Critical Skill, Social Work, Vol. 21, 1976.
78. Kadushin, A.: The Social Work Interview, 2nd ed. Columbia University Press, New York, 1983.
79. Kuvačić, I.: On the Advantages and Disadvantages of the Qualitative Approach in Sociology, Revija za sociologiju, 304/73
80. Kuvačić, I.: Parsons' Theory of Social Equilibrium in the book: Marxism and Functionalism, Komunist, Belgrade, 1970.
81. Kuvačić, I.: Discussions on Method. Problems of Approach in Social Sciences, Naprijed, Zagreb, 1988.
82. Kočović, D.: Social Policy, Association of Professional Workers of Social Welfare of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade, 2000.
83. Koen, M. Neigel .E.: Introduction to Logic and Scientific Method, Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, Belgrade, 1970.
84. Lazarsfeld, P.E. - Stanton, F.: Communication Research, New York, Harper and Bros, 1949.
85. Lekić, Đ.: Methodology of Pedagogical Research and Creativity, Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, Belgrade, 1980.

86. Lewin, K.: The Psychological Situation of Hunger and Fear, Leipzig, Hizek, 1931.
87. Luhman, N.: Systems Theory, Globus, Zagreb, 1981.
88. Lindeman, E.: Social Case Work Matures in a Confused Word. The Coppas, New York, 1947.
89. Lourean, R.: Institutional Analysis, Les Editions Lim, 1970.
90. Lukić, R.: Methodology of Law, Naučna knjiga, Belgrade, 1989.
91. Martinović, M.: Scientific Foundations of Social Work, Narodne novine, Zagreb, 1987.
92. Martinović, M.: Specifics of the Methodology of Social Work Science, Zbornik Pravnog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, No. 3, Zagreb, 1987.
93. Marković, M.: Philosophical Foundations of Science, Belgrade, Naučna knjiga, 1981.
94. Marković, O. and Berger, D.: Clinical Psychology, Naučna knjiga, Belgrade, 1990.
95. Magnusson, D. and Allen, V.L.: Human Development: An Interactional Perspective. New York, Academic Press, 1983.
96. Med, G.H.: Mind, Self and Society. From the Hand point of a Social Behaviorist, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1973.
97. Meyer, C.H.: Social Work Practice: A response to the Urban Crisis, New York, Free Press, 1970.
98. Mesec, B.: On the Specifics of Methodology in Social Work. Social Work. Theoretical Concepts of Social Work and Education, Volume XXIX, 1990.

99. Mesec, B.: Methodology of Action Research in Social Work, I University of Edvard Kardelj in Ljubljana, Higher School for Social Workers, Ljubljana, 1982.
100. Merton, R.K.: On Theoretical Sociology, Pitanja, CDD, Zagreb, 1979.
101. Milić, V.: Sociological Method, Nolit, Belgrade, 1978.
102. Milosavljević, M.: The Future of Social Work, Social Work Yesterday-Today-Tomorrow, Belgrade, 1982.
103. Milosavljević, N.: Gerontology, Center for Preventive Work and Educational Activities in Health, Novi Sad, 1993.
104. Milosavljević, S.: Research on Political Phenomena, Institute for Political Studies and Center for Youth and Pioneers, Belgrade, 1980.
105. Milosavljević, M. and Vidanović, I.: Social Work and Voluntary Social Activities, Scientific Research Center for Social Work and Social Policy FPN, Belgrade, 1999.
106. Milovanović, M. and Krgović, T.: Fields of Social Work, Association of Social Welfare Workers of the Republic of Serbia and Home for Children and Youth with Mental Developmental Disabilities - Sremčica, Belgrade, 1998.
107. Mihailović, D.: Methodology of Scientific Research, FON, Belgrade, 1999.
108. Moser, H.: Action Research as a Critical Theory of Social Sciences, Kosel-Verlag, Munich, 1975.
109. Mozer, C.A.: Survey Methods in Researching Social Phenomena, Kultura, Belgrade, 1962.
110. Moreno, J.: Who Shall Survive? New York, Beacon Inc., 1953.

111. Muller, E.J. and Dunspon, J.: Evaluation of Social Intervention, San Francisco, Jossey Boss, 1972.
112. Mužić, V.: Methodology of Pedagogical Research, IGKRO Svijetlost, Sarajevo, 1970.
113. Mullon, E.J: Methodological Dilemmas in Social Work Research. Social Work Research and Abstracts, 21 (4), 1985.
114. Novosel, P.: Theory and Practice of Interviewing, Radničko sveučilište Moša Pijade, Zagreb, 1962.
115. Neigel, E.: Structure of Science, Nolit, Belgrade, 1974.
116. Nedeljković, U.R: Social Work, Book I, Belgrade, 1982.
117. Parsons, T.: Toward a General Theory of Action, Harvard University Press, 1951.
118. Parsons, T: Essays in Sociological Theory, Glencoe, Illinois, 1954.
119. Parsons, T.: The Structure of Social Action, New York, 1949.
120. Pinker, R.: Social Theory and Social Policy, BSR, Zagreb, 1974.
121. Pečujlić, M.: Methodology of Social Sciences, Savremena administracija, Belgrade, 1982.
122. Piccard, B.: An Introduction to Social Work, The Dorsey Press, Illinois, 1976.
123. Posavec, E.J. and Carey, G.R.: Program Evaluation: Methods and Case Studies, 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1985.
124. Popper, K.R.: The Logic of Scientific Discovery, Nolit, Belgrade, 1973.

125. Pincus, A. and Minahan, A.: *Social Work Practice: Model and Method*, Itasca, IL, Peacock, 1973.
126. Perlman, H.: *Social Casework - A Problem Solving Process*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1957.
127. Radovanović, V.: *Empathy as a Skill and Stimulating Factor for Helping Professions - In: Directions for the Development of Theory and Practice of Adult Education*, Institute for Pedagogy and Andragogy, Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade, 1991.
128. Reid, W.: *Family Problem Solving*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1985.
129. Reid, W.Y.: *The Task-Centered Casework*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1978.
130. Richmond, M.: *Social Diagnosis*, New York, A Free Press, 1971.
131. Rössner, L.: *Theories of Social Work*, Ernest Rainhart Verlag, Munich, 1973.
132. Rappoport, R.: *Three Dilemmas of Action Research*, Human Relations, No. 23, 1970.
133. Richter, G.: *Toward an Integrated Sociological Paradigm*, Boston, 1981.
134. Ristić, Ž.: *On Research, Method, and Knowledge*, Institute for Pedagogical Research, Belgrade, 1995.
135. Rogers, C.: *The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions of Therapeutic Personality Change*, *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 1957, Vol. 21.
136. Rogers, C.: *On Becoming a Person. A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy*, Houghton Mifflin Co. Boston, 1961.

137. Rutman, L.: Evaluation Research and Methods: A Basic Guide, Beverly Hills, CA, Sage, 1984.
138. Stanisavljević, N.: Empathy in the Professional Relationship of a Social Worker, Master's thesis, Faculty of Political Sciences, Belgrade, 1998.
139. Stakić, Đ.: Methodology of Working with Juvenile Delinquents, Dečje novine, 1991.
140. Sorokin, P.: Fads and Foibles in Modern Sociology and Related Sciences, Henry Regnery Co. Chicago, 1956.
141. Straus, A.I.: Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
142. Stakić, Đ. - Milovanović, M.: Methods of Social Work, Association of Social Workers of Serbia, Belgrade, 1991.
143. Smolić, N.: Methods of Social Work, Social Work, 1-2, Zagreb, 1975.
144. Smolić-Krković, N.: Dynamics of the Interview in Social Analysis, Supervision in Social Work, BSR, Zagreb, 1977.
145. Schutz, A.: Phenomenology and the Social Sciences. Collected Papers, Suhrkamp, 1979.
146. Shapiro, G., Vidich, A.: Comparison of Participant Observation and Survey Data, In: N. Denzin (Ed).
147. Smiljanić-Čolanović, V.: Sociometry and the Study of Social Perception, Publishing House for Textbooks, Belgrade, 1982.
148. Stojak, R.: Content Analysis Method, Institute for the Study of National Relations, Sarajevo, 1990.



149. Supek, R.: Public Opinion Research, Naprijed, Zagreb, 1968.
150. Supek, R.: The Craft of the Sociologist. Structural Analysis, Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 1983.
151. Šešić, B.: General Methodology, Scientific Book, Belgrade, 1980.
152. Šešić, B.: Fundamentals of Methodology of Social Sciences, Scientific Book, Belgrade, 1974.
153. Šuković, F.: Informal Social Relations in the Organization of Associated Labor (Sociometry), Financial Guide, Belgrade, 1970.
154. Termiz, Dž.: Application of General Statistical Methods in Social Protection Research, FPN, Sarajevo, 1992.
155. Termiz, Dž. - Milosavljević, S.: Introduction to Methodology of Political Science, DAX-Trade, Sarajevo, 1999.
156. Termiz, Dž. - Milosavljević, S.: Practicum in Methodology of Political Science, Sarajevo, 2000.
157. Vidanović, I.: Methodology of Social Work with Individuals and Families, Scientific Book, Belgrade, 1991.
158. Vljaković, J.: Life Crises and Their Overcoming, Nolit, Belgrade, 1992.
159. Vljaković, J.: Crisis (Theory, Etiology, Phenomenology) In: Foundations of Counseling and Social Work in Community Organization, City Center for Social Work, Belgrade, 1987.
160. Vujević, M.: Introduction to Scientific Work in the Field of Social Sciences, Informator, Zagreb, 1983.
161. Vreg, France: Social Communication, Zagreb, 1978.

162. Vidanović, I.: Individual and Family - Methods, Techniques, and Skills of Social Work. 3rd revised edition, Research Center for Social Work and Social Policy, Faculty of Political Sciences, Belgrade, 1998.
163. Weber, M.: Methodology of Social Sciences, Globus, Zagreb, 1989.
164. White, F.W.: Street Corner Society, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1969.
165. Watzlawick, P.: Human Communication, Verlag, Hans Hanter, Bera-Stuttgart-Wien, 1971.
166. Zaječaranović, G.: Fundamentals of Methodology of Sciences, Scientific Book, Belgrade, 1987.
167. Collection: Methodology of Research on Social Phenomena, Institute for Criminological Research, Belgrade, 1963.
168. Collection of Concepts in Social Policy, Belgrade, 1973.
169. Zastrow, Ch.: The Practice of Social Work, 4th ed. Woodsworth Publishing Co., Belmont, California, 1992.
170. Žegarac, M.: Review of the Scale of Family Environment, Social Thought - Methods and Techniques for Assessing Marriage and Family, Belgrade, 1994.