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The optional methodological system of the ethnosociology of religion¹

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Abstract. The paper deals with an attempt to explicate the optional methodological system of the ethnosociology of religion. A part of the modern scientific resources linked with the research methodology in sociology, sociology of religion and ethnosociology is analyzed, as well as an optional elements of the structure of system of methods of the ethnosociology of religion in the multiparadigm context is proposed.

Key words: deconstruction, evaluation, ethnosociology, ethnosociology of religion, fractionalization, method, religion, system, sociology, structure.

Relevance of learning the methodological system of the ethnosociology of religion interrelates with the scientific discourse on the role of ethnicity and religion in the social space. The evaluation of globalistic processes and ecumenistic tendencies require developing of new methods for studying the interaction between different religions and ethnicities in the field of various social subjects', communities', organizations', training programs' etc. functioning. Consequently, the topicality of the paper is derived from the existing **research problem:** the contradiction between the existence of multiple sources, devoted to the theoretical foundations of sociology, sociology of

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religion and ethnosociology and low representation of holistic theoretical works of metatheoretical level, focused on the conceptualization of methods of ethnosociology of religion as an optional field of sociology.

The **scientific basis of the research** includes conceptual and theoretical works of the researchers, who's works belong to the scientific spaces of sociology, sociology of religion, synergetics and ethnosociology: A. Alesina (political economy), J. Fearon (ethnic conflicts), L. Korporowicz (evaluation theory), N. Luhmann (sociology of social systems), S. Malešević (sociology of ethnicity), M. Piren (sociology of religion), Y. Romanenko (sociology of visual symbolism, visual analytics), V. Yevtukh (ethnosociology, sociology, ethnology, ethnohistory) and others.

The **purpose of this paper** is to explicate the system of the basic methods of the ethnosociology of religion as an optional field of sociology.

Ethnosociology of religion may be regarded as an integrative construct, which is built on the theoretical and methodological basis of sociology, sociology of religion, and ethnosociology. One of the main aims of the ethnosociology of religion is expedient to consider the investigation of the interaction between ethnic and religious in the social space in the light of sociology (identification, study and research of ethnic in religious (different religions) and religious in ethnic (different ethnicities) using the sociological methods, technologies and instruments (sociological apparatus). Therefore, in our opinion, exactly sociological methods and instruments of sociology, sociology of religion and ethnosociology may consist the basis of the methodological system of the ethnosociology of religion.

To the structured methodological system of the ethnosociology of religion as an optional field of sociology we propose to include the following methods, which sociologist uses to evaluate the interaction between different religions and social phenomena: methods of analysis of written resources, historical documents and statistical data, the method of content-analysis, interview method, the method of expert estimates, the method of the survey by questionnaire, the method of observation, the method of the experiment, the method of comparative analysis.

The analysis of written sources, historical documents, statistical data – the methods, that sociologists use in studying the stages of development of religious ideas of the social subjects, as well as in evaluation of the dogmas of different religions in the history of this or that society – may be used in the ethnosociology of religion, for example, in the studying the impact of Catholicism on the development of the ethnopolitical space of Europe in the historical context. The method of content analysis may be used in the ethnosociology of religion, for example: in the process of evaluation of the content of web pages (web sites), newspapers, movies and video, TV and radio programs, various documents, sociological interviews, responses to open questions of the questionnaires, public speeches – sermons of religious activists; in the analysis of the elements of the significative field of the ethnoreligious space of different social systems, etc.

The method of interview may be used in the ethnosociology of religion in the framework of the expert survey, for example, of Catholic priests, heads of theological seminaries and schools, as well as lecturers of the Christian universities, etc(18).

The method of expert estimations in the Ukrainian scientific space is deficiently conceptualized as the ethnosociological method in the ethnosociology and practically is not widely used in the research within the framework of the sociology of religion. However, we suggest to include it as the basic method into the methodological system of the ethnosociology of religion, because we consider it to be one of the most representative for the research results in the scientific field of the latter.

The method of expert estimations may be used in the ethnosociology of religion as basic for such sociological method as ethnoreligious socioevaluation, as will be discussed below. A prognostic expert estimation (which is one of the stages of the evaluation as the science and technology (instrument)) may be applied in the context of the evaluation of social, ethnic and religious phenomena, processes, global and local problems(20).

In the ethnosociology of religion the method of expert estimations may contribute to the collection of urgent (current) data for further adjustment of ethnic and religious conflicts, as well as problem situations, that arise in the ethnoreligious space of social systems' functioning. Especially if to take into account the glocalization antitendencies (according to the theory of Polish sociologist Leszek Korporowicz) and intentions of the ethnosocial and ethnoreligious subjects, that arise as the reaction to globalization trends in the modern world's sociospace. Let us also add that, in general, the method of expert estimations in the framework of ethnosociology of religion may contribute to the adjustment of intercultural, interethnic and interreligious dialogues in the context of interaction of different religions, ethnicities and social subjects.

The research specifics in the ethnosociology of religion concerns, in our opinion, the application of the integrated approach to the analysis of social, interethnic and interreligious relations in all their forms, as well as in system analysis of all factors of their state. Therefore, the integrated and interdisciplinary (intercontextual, polyaspectral, multiparadigmatic) approaches, which we offer to use in the ethnosociology of religion, will allow to carry out the comprehensive diagnostics (ethnoreligious sociodiagnostics and socioevaluation) of the abovementioned relations at the micro, meso and macro levels of their functioning in their explicated (actualized) and latent forms. The system analysis of all factors of their state will allow to receive the representation concerning the mechanisms of formation of conflict situations, as well as to identify those factors, that play the most significant role in each specific case and to prognosticate (predict) the optional conflictostates.

The method of the survey by questionnaire in the ethnosociology of religion may be used to obtain information concerning the actual state of things, assessments (opinions), interests, motives of different activities of the individuals and sociogroups (respondents) in social and ethnoreligious

spaces. For example, when a survey on the state of religiosity of this or that social subject or community will be carried out, the respondents may get questions concerning their religious affiliation, visiting the Church (Roman Catholic Church, synagogue, prayer houses, mosques), to what extent are they familiar with this or that religious doctrine, if they believe in life after death, if the respondent was influenced by his family on the formation of his religious outlook and ethnicity, what does the faith give to them, if they are satisfied with the educational and social activities of a particular denomination (religious group), what does encourage the active interest to this or that (concrete) denomination, and so on, i.e. the questions, that help evaluating the character and extent of religiosity of the concrete individual (ethnosocial subject), social community as well as social or ethnic system(18).

Along with this the survey by questionnaire in the ethnosociology of religion may help creating the basis for determining (evaluating, estimating) the degree of ethnicizing of the definite socioreligious subject, community or system. That is, the survey by questionnaire may be the instrument of socioevaluation of ethnic in religious and religious in ethnic in the social space of interaction of different social, ethnic and religious identities.

The method of observation in the ethnosociology of religion is advisable to use in the research of the state of religiosity of the representatives of one or another ethnic group (ethnicity) in the determined social space, where compactly live its representatives, as well as to get information on the religious impact of one or another confession, the state of religiosity of some local community etc. The sociologist may study the group, gather information, compare, analyze, make conclusions, construct correlations, carry out the assessment and evaluation of the particular social, religious or ethnic subjects, as well as to offer the scientific-practical recommendations for the determined organization, relevant government institutions, representatives of religious confessions, etc. Also, this method may be applied at study of new religious and ethnic movements and phenomena – "neoreligions" and "neoethnicities".

The method of experiment in the ethnosociology of religion may be used in demonstrating the unusual features of ethnosocial and socioreligious subjects (healer, extrasensory perception adept and others) or with the experiment on introduction of the programs of religious education from the aspect of effective impact of the proposed models for education among adolescents and laity(18).

The method of comparative analysis in the ethnosociology of religion should, in our opinion, transfix almost all of the abovementioned methods as technologies of the complex socioevaluation of interaction between religious and ethnic fields of the social space together with the immanent to them social subjects, communities and systems.

To the methodological system of the ethnosociology of religion we offer also to include the methods that are used in the ethnosociological studies: the "filter" method, the snowball method and the method of selection of respondents on indirect markers. In our opinion, in the

ethnosociology of religion the “filter” method optionally may be used in the study of ethnosocial and socioreligious subjects, as well as religious and ethnic communities and systems, which are located in urban agglomerations and industrial-urban sociospaces. The snowball method in the ethnosociology of religion is advisable to apply when the ethnoreligious community is numerous and compactly settled within one locus (settlement place). It is best to generate the sample by this method through the religious and ethnic (national) associations, organizations, societies, centers, schools, etc.

Well as support for the analysis of ethnoreligious space within the methodological framework of the ethnosociology of religion the method of selection of respondents on indirect markers (related to their religion, ethnicity (nationality)) may be considered. For example, on the name and surname, in particular, in the lists prepared before the next elections. The application of this method is more effective in the situation of noticeable ethnocultural and ethnoreligious distances, as well as belongingness of social subjects, who are studied, at least to different language families (ethnolinguistic spaces), that correlates with the more marked (visible) barriers for assimilation (for example, Ukrainians and Hungarians, Ukrainians and Romanians, who live predominantly in the Western part of Ukraine), because within, for example, the East Slavic sociospace it is unproductive(21).

In the framework of the ethnosociology of religion we would like to extend the abovedescribed methodological basis of the sociology of religion and ethnosociology with such methods of sociospace’s research as a method of fractionalization, ethnoreligious socioevaluation and ethnoreligious methodoevaluation, as well as to extrapolate from the antifundamentalism theory and slightly explicate certain aspects of the optional application of such scientific approach as deconstruction. In the context of the logic of further presentation of the material in this paper it will be useful to note that since, as we suppose, in the identity of one ethnosocial subject the immanents of different ethnicities (including optional religious characteristics and significant of this or that ethnicity) may be present and the field of one ethnicity may spread to the space of other ethnophors, ethnos, nations and religions, then, in our opinion, there is a need for the assessment (evaluation) of the extent of impact of ethnicities on religions and, on the contrary, of religions on ethnicities. As we know from the works of the Polish sociologist Leszek Korporowicz, societal phenomena in the social space may be assessed in the framework of evaluation – the science about the system research of social changes, activities concerned with the support of scientific and social programs, which are implemented by adopted criteria, sociological tools and models of assessment, with the purpose of their improvement, development or a better understanding, early detection of defects of the program and their correction, as well as to control the distribution of means and immaterial resources for the implementation of the program(1; 14).

Basing on the abovementioned, we may also speak about socioevaluation – the algorithmized conceptually-methodological, constructively-logic system of sociological instruments, matrices, criteria and models of assessment (evaluation) and identification of a concrete phenomenon, which focuses on the integrative metasystemic evaluation (the identificative socioreflexion of the essence of the phenomenon; the system of theoretical, methodological and practical technologies (algorithms, programs, operations) of the systematic study of the quality of the results and the process of functioning of the concrete phenomenon, which are analyzed on the basis of integral methodology, combination of quantitative and qualitative methods for monitoring the character and dynamics of changes of the estimates according to the aggregate of quality indicators, taking into account the impact of external and internal factors on concrete phenomenon, which is studied) of the societal states of social system, social subjects and trends in the development of society as a whole(15, p. 11).

Extrapolating the content of the concept “evaluation” on the research, for example, of significative (symbolic-markered) field of the ethnoreligious space within the methodological framework of the ethnosociology of religion we may construct, as we suppose, such concept as the ethnoreligious socioevaluation – sociological system of research, assessment (evaluation) instruments and technologies of scientific-advisory monitoring and support of interaction between religious spaces and ethnic spaces in the social space of functioning of the social subjects. Ethnoreligious socioevaluation thus may relate to the study of changes and phenomena, the development of models of assessment (evaluation) of the state and solving algorithms of problems, which are real in the modern ethnoreligious space. Ethnoreligious socioevaluation may also be linked with the definition of ethnoreligious trends and prognostication of the optional conflict situations that may arise during the interaction between different ethnicities and religions. As for the fractionalization as an optional method in further researches of the ethnosociology of religion, it is necessary, first of all, to mention the fact, that A. Alesina et al. (2002) attempt to distinguish between ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups in a sample of about 190 countries, and then use their lists to construct measures of ethnic, linguistic, and religious fractionalization.

In cross-national studies of political violence, economic growth, and other outcomes in political economy, analysts most often use ethnic fractionalization as a measure of ethnic diversity. Ethnic fractionalization is defined as the probability that two randomly selected individuals in a country will be from different ethnic groups(11, p. 206).

As for the index of cultural fractionalization, in its evaluation the structural distance (relationship) between languages as a proxy for the cultural distance between groups in a country is used. For instance, some countries may have somewhat similar ethnic structures, but the ethnic groups in one of them may be culturally much closer than in another, like in Cyprus and Poland, for instance. I. e. the indexes of ethnic fractionalization and cultural fractionalization

may differ if we take the language factor and such cultural proximity into account. If the ethnosocial groups in the country speak structurally unrelated languages, their cultural fractionalization index will be the same as the ethnic fractionalization index. The more similar are the languages spoken by the different ethnic groups, the more will the cultural measure be reduced below the value of ethnic fractionalization for the country. This indicates that taking linguistic similarities into account has a large effect for a significant number of countries and confirms the fact that language is one of the most important markers of the ethnic group and ethnicity. Religious fractionalization is defined in scientific space as the probability that two randomly selected individuals in a country will be from different religious groups (belong to different religions). Logically, the index of the religious fractionalization explicates the level of religious heterogeneity of one or another (ethno)social group and society as a whole(2; 11).

The differences in the results between religious, linguistic and ethnic fractionalization are quite suggestive. The distinctions in the data of religious fractionalization are perhaps less controversial and subject to arbitrary definitions than the data on linguistic and ethnic fractionalization, since the boundaries of religions are more clear and definitions consistent across countries. But religious affiliation is the most endogenous of the three variables. Religions can be banned and individual can relatively easily "hide" their religious affiliation to avoid repression. It is necessary also to be stressed, that individuals and other social subjects may change their belonging from one religion to another far more easily than they can change race or language. In a sense, the measure of religious fractionalization can be a sign of a more tolerant and democratic form of government. In a more repressive regime, you can hide your religion or conform to the state-imposed religion, but hiding your racial origin, especially if it relates to skin color, is much more difficult. For example, turning to religious fractionalization, the most diverse countries are South Africa, the United States, and Australia, and the least diverse Yemen, Somalia, Morocco, Turkey, and Algeria. Measured religious fractionalization tends to be higher in more tolerant and free societies, like the United States, which in fact displays one of the highest level of religious fractionalization. The abovementioned information means, that the level of religious diversity of this or that country almost always correlates with the level of tolerance of one or another society, as well as that the measuring of religious fractionalization is quite urgent nowadays together with the socioevaluation of the level of democracy of different social subjects of sociospace. In our opinion, the cross-ethnic researches concerning the ethno-religious evaluation based on the integrative analysis of such markers of sociocommunities as language, ethnicity and religion will continue arising the scientific interest of the researches of the social and ethno-religious space(2).

Consequently, the socioevaluation of the ethno-religious sociospace in the ethnosociology of religion, as we suppose, must be based on the complex approach and include the technology of

evaluation of the interaction of ethnic and religious sociospatial fields, taking into account and comparing as minimum two indexes: the index of cultural fractionalization and the index of ethnoreligious fractionalization (as an optional measuring method), which includes in itself the comparing the index of ethnic fractionalization with the index of religious fractionalization. The development of the mentioned socioevaluative technologies the author of this paper plans to realize in his further researches, as well as to take part in synthesising the adequate decisions and giving the efficient recommendations, for example, concerning the regulation of ethnoreligious conflicts and adjustment of the interethnic, intercultural, and interreligious dialogues.

S. Malešević sees deconstruction as a valuable research strategy and anti-foundationalism as a powerful social critique, but he finds this perspective epistemologically destructive in its unbridled and uncompromising relativism while bearing disguised cultural determinism. Anti-foundationalist perspectives, and especially post-modernism and post-structuralism, have often been criticized for their relativistic understanding of social reality. Starting from the idea that any attempt at explanation is ultimately motivated by the quest for domination, they consciously opt for conceptual looseness and deconstruction instead of methodologically rigorous explanation.

Since the idea of deconstruction is a form of attack on all conceptual systems, models and definitions, anti-foundationalists oppose theory building and rely on metaphors, wordplay and alinear interpretations of discourses and events. Despite its critical appeal, such a position is logically unsustainable since any form of deconstruction – regardless of how loose it might be – is ultimately dependent on the process of argumentation. To deconstruct and uncover invisible forms of domination, as well as to demonstrate to others the results of this deconstruction one has to operate within the parameters of reason and rationality. As Habermas (1987) and Taylor (1984) have rightly emphasized, in rejecting the possibility of individual freedom and logic, anti-foundationalists cut the ground from under their own feet. In other words, the epistemological criticisms of hegemonic meta-narratives, language games or discourses are diluted when there is no epistemological or normative “axis” to build upon. Such radical relativism is problematic on both epistemological and normative grounds(16).

Controversially, we propose to use the technology of deconstruction in positive aspect of its application (i.e. deconstruction with the aim to explicate the original and true (veritable) sense basing on fountainhead) in the ethnosociology of religion in the research, for example, of the significative field of the ethnoreligious space, ethnoreligious sensoconstructs, religious dogmatics, as well as in the study of the characteristics of different social subjects, religious and ethnic primary sources, different ethnoreligious objects of material and spiritual culture.

The example of the positive deconstruction, in our opinion, may be supposed some theses of the conception of Protestantism as the reaction on some actions of the Catholic Church in Middle Ages, when M. Luther, as we consider, deconstructed (reinterpreted) to some extent some theses of

the dogmatics of the Roman Catholicism, because they were not in line with the literary original source of the Christian doctrine – the Bible(6).

In this context we would like to add, that we also propose to develop in the framework of the methodological system of the ethnosociology of religion such a method as ethnoreligious methodoevaluation – the evaluation of the research methods (methodology, methodological system), that are used in the evaluation of the interaction between the ethnic and religious fields of the social and ethnoreligious spaces. This may be the method of the research methods' analysis and synthesis, the sociodiagnostics of different research methods that may be used in the ethnosociology of religion.

In **conclusion**, we must say, that many possibilities for further, related research could be noted. The methodological system of the ethnosociology of religion as the optional field of sociology may include the following structural elements: methods of analysis of written resources, historical documents and statistical data, the method of content-analysis, interview method, the method of expert estimates, the method of the questionnaire, the method of observation, the method of the experiment, the method of comparative analysis, the method of «filter», the snowball method, the method of selection of respondents by indirect signs, the method ethnic fractionalization, the method of religious fractionalization, the method of cultural fractionalization, the method of ethnoreligious fractionalization, the method of socioevaluation, the method of ethnoreligious socioevaluation, the technology of deconstruction, the method of ethnoreligious methodoevaluation.

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