

Three examples of cooperation between qualitative and analytical research. (Lazarsfeld's research workshop.) *)

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Introduction

Paul Lazarsfeld is known as an author and a great promoter of analytical methods of research. He is often connected with quantitative methodology – with methods of statistical processing of data, with mathematical modelling. No less important part of his contribution to methodology was his emphasis on cooperation of various approaches within the complex social sciences research.

One example of such cooperation was a research of the Marienthal community of the unemployed – a working class colony near Vienna, Austria - at the time of great economic crisis in the thirties of the twentieth century. Lazarsfeld cooperated on the research with his first wife Marie Jahodová and his friend Hans Zeisel.¹ This research proves that the cooperation of different methods (based on understanding of the family's situation from children's essays and their mother's talking, using analytical methods applying analysis of sales in local shops and measurement of speed of walking of the inhabitants of Marienthal) enabled to produce a truthful picture of the unemployed community.

Second example of cooperation between analytical and qualitative methodology is a combination of two research tools used in the assessment of radio programmes in the process of production and later also for other purposes, especially in communication research. The first, analytical phase of the research used a new research tool created by Paul Lazarsfeld and Frank Stanton. It was called "programme analyser." Second, qualitative phase of the research, consists of directed inquiring - "the focused interview." Its rules and procedure were codified by Lazarsfeld's long-term colleague R.K.Merton.

Significantly different example of cooperation is Lazarsfeld's cooperation with critical sociology concerning collaboration of two seemingly irreconcilable paradigms. At the end of the thirties Paul Lazarsfeld was the head of Princeton Radio Project, which aimed to analyse the action of at that time relatively new mass media – radio – on the population of listeners. Within this project Lazarsfeld tried to cooperate with a representative of the Frankfurt School, Theodor Adorno, on the research of musical programmes. Even though the collaboration was not without problems, Lazarsfeld's workshop partially succeeded and it is an example of a tangible result of collaboration crosswise paradigms. Eduard Suchman, one of Lazarsfeld's close colleagues, used analysis of data acquired from the radio listeners of classical music to

*) The text was written during a research of social and cultural cohesion and social justice and it was supported by grants of MPSV: 1J 028/04-DP2 and MSM 0021620841.

¹ It was a research "Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal." Its results were published for the first time in 1933 [Jahoda-Lazarsfeld-Zeisel 1933]. It became a "sociological classic" only in the sixties and seventies. [Jahoda-Lazarsfeld-Zeisel 1960],[Jahoda-Lazarsfeld-Zeisel 1974]

prove that, Adorno was basically right in claiming that the mass medium and musical programmes cannot completely substitute a long-term familiarization with classical music within the family, concert halls and music schools. [Suchman 1941]

1. Combined use of analytical and qualitative methods in “Marienthal”

In the introduction to the English edition of “Marienthal” from 1971, Lazarsfeld refers to four principles that he tried to observe in Marienthal. As Marie Jahodová documents in her commemorative publication, Lazarsfeld defined the methodical principles already in 1933 in an article, which was not published at that time [Jahoda 1991: 121]:

- a) For every phenomenon under survey it is necessary to obtain objective observation as well as introspective reports.
- b) Case studies should be appropriately combined with statistical information.
- c) Information about present situation should be supplemented with information about previous phases of the development of the phenomenon under survey.
- d) Natural and experimental data should be combined: experimental data were understood as the use of questionnaires and selective surveys, natural data were acquired by “non-influential (non-interfering) methods” – it was necessary to obtain the data from everyday life of people without any interference of the researcher. [Jahoda-Lazarsfeld-Zeisel 1974: xiv]

In the introduction the researchers promise to combine quantitative methods with the method of empathizing in the situation. For this reason they chose a long-term stay in the observed village – a research on the spot that enabled them to combine various methods and procedures.

Methods used in the research:

- 1) Personal data about all 478 families of Marienthal village containing data about living conditions, family life, household establishment.
- 2) Life history of 32 men and 30 women, whose previous life presented suitable material for comparison.
- 3) 80 time images of the day.
- 4) Reports from an industry commission of the Wiener Neustadt region from previous years.
- 5) Essays of basic school children on the theme: “What I would like most of all,” “What I would like to be,” and “What I would like for Christmas.”
- 6) Competition essays of youth on the theme: “How do I envisage my future.”
- 7) 40 weekly family menus and reports about lunch packets of school children the day before and the day after the payment of social welfare.
- 8) Reports about Christmas presents of 80 small children.

- 9) Statistical data about expenses of inhabitants in restaurants, at a hairdresser's, butcher's, horse butcher's, shoemaker's, tailor's or dressmaker's, and reports from political clubs and various societies and local organizations;
- 10) Statistical data about library books from local library, subscriptions of various newspapers, club membership, election results, age structure, births, deaths and marriages of inhabitants and data about migration.
- 11) Household statistics from several households acquired by the chamber of commerce.

The research demonstrated some features (theoretically justified ten years later) and intentionally applied methods of action research. All researchers had to participate in the life of the community by carrying out some activity useful for the inhabitants of the village. For this purpose, the research team executed several projects:

- 1) Approximately two hundred pieces of clothing were collected in private collections in Vienna. They were cleaned, patched and the collection was completed by new clothes. The researchers previously visited 100 families in Marienthal asking what type and size of clothes the family needed most. This way they gained access to the houses and they could find out specific needs of the families and discover what the families handled with priority.
- 2) Courses of sewing and preparation of sewing patterns attended by approximately fifty women.
- 3) Medical consulting provided for free.
- 4) Gymnastic courses for girls – enabled contact with the part of population, which was otherwise inaccessible. With the beginning of the unemployment the girls stopped attending all events of local organizations and societies and it was very difficult to meet them.

Eating habits and family budget can serve as an example of the use of various methods of data collecting in a research in order to express one area of life of an unemployed community:²

For one week, forty-one families wrote down their menu. From these reports we find out that most of the families ate three times a day. Only 25 % of the families ate four times a week. In half of the families, meat was served only on Sunday, in 15 % of the families it was not served at all and 31 % of the families ate meat two to four times a week. Such a picture of eating habits can be observed in some communities even today. At that time it was definitely not a question of preferring healthy vegetarian diet. Lazarsfeld and his colleagues could use this data as an indicator of poverty without fear of misinterpreting the facts. In absolute majority of the cases, the occasional meat menu was cheap horse meat or home bread rabbit. Consumption of pork and beef in time of complete unemployment almost entirely subsided. As it is documented in a different part of the report, it resulted in the closing of two

² Other results of the "Marienthal" research can be found in an article published in 1997 in the Magazine of Sociology [Jeřábek 1997]. The history of the authors of the research and central European context of the research are presented in a different study [Jeřábek 2002].

butcheries, where the inhabitants of Marienthal used to buy beef and pork, and by at least temporary prosperity of the community's horse butcher.

Lack of money for food also resulted in purchasing substitute food. Consumption of sugar in the village rapidly decreased during the times of unemployment. Some families sweetened exclusively with saccharin, others adapted to the two-week cycle from one unemployment benefit to the other and during the second week they switched from sugar to saccharin. It was not easy to obtain a detailed family budget in the research. In the study it is demonstrated on an example of one numerous family with children, which lived on a small unemployment benefit.

Differences in consumption of food caused by mass unemployment in Marienthal are illustrated on global data from sales of individual types of common groceries at the grocers' in Marienthal. The study compares the sales of groceries during the years before the beginning of unemployment in 1928, at its beginning in 1929, and during total unemployment in 1930. The sale of butter decreased to 38 % of the original amount. On the contrary, the income for margarine increased by 92 %. The sale of coffee decreased to 63 % of the original amount and the sale of cheaper cocoa increased by 41 %.

As it is evident from the overview of the methods and from the examples of the results, the final picture of the unemployment was created by summary statistics and collective data analysis as well as by the data acquired by qualitative methods.

2. "Programme analyser" as an analytical tool and "focused interview" as a method of understanding

As a previously systematically created and successful example of a cooperation of analytical and qualitative methodology we can present two research procedures initiated by Lazarsfeld. Lazarsfeld proposed (or invented) a research system, which combined exact measurement and interpretation of assessment of programmes by a group of listeners. For the first, analytical part of the research procedure, Paul Lazarsfeld together with Frank Stanton constructed an instrument called "programme analyser." The result of the measurement on the machine was a diagram displaying almost continuously the development of positive and negative reactions of ten listeners in the studio to individual short passages of the tested programme. Second, interpretative and synthetic part of the research methodology, was brought to perfection by the nowadays famous Robert K. Merton (at that time he was just beginning his more than thirty-year long cooperation with Lazarsfeld) – in the form of the focused interview method.

2.1. Programme analyser – tool for assessing programme or broadcasting

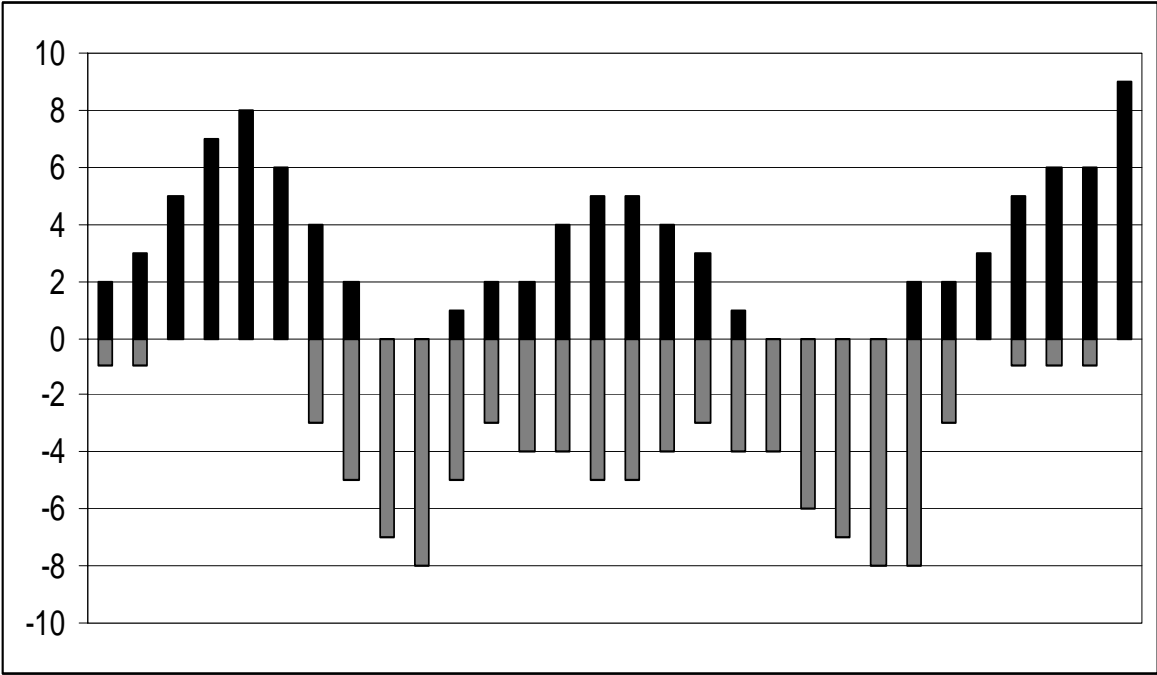
Let us briefly describe the procedure and results of this programme assessment. Ten people in the radio studio listen to a recording of a short, for example 15-minute programme. The researchers are interested in the listeners' positive and negative reactions to individual excerpts of the programme. Every participant of the test has two buttons in his hands, which he uses for assessment. They are connected with a recording device – the already mentioned programme analyser. Clicking the green button means positive assessment, clicking the red

button means negative assessment of the presented sequence. The gradually and evenly unwinding strip of paper is marked every thirty seconds by regular deflections of two pens placed on its sides. In between, there are ten pens connected with the buttons in the respondent's hands, which draw ten direct parallel lines in case no assessment takes place. With the beginning of the programme the pens record positive reactions of the listeners by deflections to one side and negative reactions by deflections of the lines to the other side. When the listening ends, the result of the ten measurements is evaluated. The number of positive reactions and the number of negative reactions is subtracted every thirty seconds from the record. Both readings are transferred to a diagram, in which horizontal axis presents both neutral assessments and a time scale. In the upward direction the diagram presents number of positive assessments, that is, how many green buttons were simultaneously pressed at the given moment. In the downward direction the diagram presents the number of negative assessments, that is, how many red buttons were pressed at the given moment. After a break the participants are presented a diagram with the results of their simultaneously executed assessments. (See picture 3) In case of a fifteen-minute long programme the diagram of thirty positively (above the horizontal) or negatively (under the horizontal) marked columns for individual moments of the programme. In case of an inconsistent assessment, the line segment appears above as well as below the horizontal. [Peterman 1940:728-729].

During the Second World War the programme analyser was used by psychologists, co-authors of the research "American soldier" for assessing film programmes for soldiers. However, they called the device simply "polygraph." (Hovland et al. 1949; Lazarsfeld 1982: 66; Levy 1982: 36)

Picture 3: Record from the "programme analyser" – a device created by P. Lazarsfeld and F. Stanton for assessing radio programmes – (hypothetical example)

Diagram presenting "positive" (upwards) and "negative" (downwards) assessment of short excerpts of the programme.



(15 minute programme was assessed every thirty seconds by 10 listeners.)

2.2. Focused interview – qualitative method developed by R.K. Merton for understanding reactions of the listeners

Second, interpretative part of the research methodology, aptly named by R.K.Merton as a focused interview, consists in a group discussion over transparently presented assessment of individual excerpts of the tested programme (Picture 3). If necessary, the assessed excerpt can be played again from the audio recording. The presenter gradually focuses attention of the people (who are testing the given programme in the studio) to its individual parts and to the individual aspects of the assessment, possibly to the causes of an identical or diverse assessment by the groups of listeners. At first, the participants freely express their opinions and assessments. Then they are asked questions dealing with distinct agreements or disagreements, majority and minority opinions, contrasts in the assessment etc.³⁾ See [Merton-Kendall 1946], [Merton-Fiske-Kendall 1956], [Levy 1982: 35].

Focused interview about the programme could on its own hardly assess the individual excerpts of the evaluated programme. On the other hand, analytical outcome acquired by programme analyser in the form of a diagram (figure 3) does not in itself provide sufficient background for interpretation, explanation and understanding of the assessment. Detailed assessment of the surveyed programme can be base only the combination of both parts of the research procedure (programme analyser and focused interview).

R.K.Merton used the method of the focused interview also in the project “War Bond Drive” and published the results in the monograph “Mass Persuasion” [Merton-Fiske-Curtis 1946]. In this case it was used as a tool for individual, not group, questioning. Its principle was the same. Here it was used in combination with content analysis of appeals of a popular radio moderator Kate Smith, who urged for purchase of war obligations. In the course of the conversation, the researcher gradually brings about stimulants to the themes and issues that interest him. The inquirer only rarely gives the respondents direct or prepared questions. He rather tries to direct the respondents during the conversation to convey their thoughts, feelings, experience and to tell him what they did every time when they listened the commentator Kate Smith going on the air. The notes of the inquirer do not direct the attention of the questioned to individual aspects of the surveyed propagandist statement. On the contrary, as R.K.Merton emphasizes: “The respondents offer their own definitions of the situation. It is them, not the inquirer, who express the peculiar circumstances of the situation to which they reacted.” [Merton – Kendall 1946:14] The questioned are encouraged to specify, what caught their attention in the commentator’s appeals. Only when the questioned describe in detail their reactions to those features of the programme, which affected them most significantly, the inquirer shifts the conversation to supplementary questions. The prepared plan of this supplementary conversation is based on a content analysis of the broadcasted appeals. During this individual use of the method “... the interviews were focused

³⁾ Merton’s “focused interview” remained until today and transformed into nowadays very popular method of “focus groups” – a method of focused group discussion frequently used in the market research and in qualitative sociological analysis. Merton himself discussed the relationship of both methods. [Merton 1987].

(stresses H.J.) on the broadcasted texts, which were submitted to an intensive content analysis.” [Merton 1987: 555]

Focused interview in combination with content analysis also provides a powerful tool allowing interpretative insight and suitable supplementary qualitative method to parallel analytical tool.

3. Testing of Adorno’s “critical hypothesis” via Lazarsfeld’s “administrative research”

On the turn of the thirties and forties, an experiment in cooperation of traditionally disunited paradigms of critical sociology and Lazarsfeld’s analytical sociology was executed within Lazarsfeld’s project, which focused on the research of the affect of radio broadcasting on listeners, the so-called “Princeton Radio Project.” Paul Lazarsfeld invited Theodor Adorno, a prominent musical theoretician, to cooperate on the research of musical radio broadcasting. He offered him the post of the head of the department for musical broadcasting research. [Lazarsfeld 1975: 199-200, 1982: 57-58] [Morrison 1978: 334] For one thing, it was a conciliatory gesture towards Horkheimer’s group of “Frankfurt School of Critical Sociology,” for another it was as an attempt to cooperate crosswise paradigms. Adorno, as a typical representative of critical sociology, made no secret of his critique of Lazarsfeld’s communication research and pejoratively labelled Lazarsfeld’s research as an “administrative research.”

Between 1938 and 1939, Adorno elaborated a number of studies for the project. His theoretical formulations were full of severe social criticism, to which the representatives of the Rockefeller foundation, who sponsored the project, reacted with lack of understanding. [Morrison 1978: 340-341] Despite all the attempts, Lazarsfeld did not succeed to integrate Adorno in the project. In the radio yearbook he published only Adorno’s short essay under called “Radio Symphony.” [Adorno 1941]

Adorno’s theoretical criticism is based on the principle premise that radio broadcasting is not able to pass on the listeners the richness of symphonic music. In the process of broadcasting, the symphony loses too many qualitative features of live and authentically heard musical composition. Adorno talks about broken or non-transmittable “structure of symphony,” about “trivialization” and “romanticisation” of the symphony, about musical symphony as a commodity on the mass culture market. [Adorno 1941: 120-135]

Adorno criticised the foundations of the analytical approach of Lazarsfeld’s research team. According to him, the research has to start “... from the sphere of reproduction of musical work via radio and not from the analysis of the listeners’ reactions...” [Adorno 1941: 135] He claimed that the opinions of the listeners are distorted by the effect of the same mechanisms, which produce and propagate music on the social scale. Adorno’s criticism of music was a criticism of the society, in which this music was produced and broadcasted. [Morrison 1978: 343]

Lazarsfeld did not accept Adorno’s general criticism. However, his reaction was not conflicting and he even wrote an article in Horkheimer’s magazine called “Administrative and critical communication research,” in which he expressed his deep belief in compatibility of both paradigms. The article was actually an appeal for cooperation between administrative research and critical research in the field of mass media and mass communication research.

[Lazarsfeld 1941] In the article, Lazarsfeld depicts “critical research” as an enjambment of “administrative research.” He finds a domain for it, which is not covered by the administrative approach: “... When we survey consequences of communication, we will be able to survey only the effect of radio programmes or press materials, which were currently distributed, no matter how refined our methods are. Critical research will be interested mainly in a material that never gained access to the mass communication media: what ideas and what forms are disposed of before they actually reach the public...?” [Lazarsfeld 1941: 165]

In this case, we encounter Lazarsfeld’s attempt to enlarge the spectrum of methodological approaches and the scale of used methods and techniques beyond the border of positivism and neo-positivism, beyond the border of “Survey Research”. This time, the attempt was not successful, nevertheless it was demonstrably executed and Lazarsfeld can hardly be blamed for the failure of this experiment, because did more than all the others for the possible convergence of both approaches.

Adorno’s studies did not aim to cooperate with Lazarsfeld’s analytical sociology. However, there was a different way of cooperation. Lazarsfeld attempted to collaborate between both research schools in the same way in which he approached Adorno’s and Horkheimer’s critical sociology in his article. In this case, the analytical “administrative research” confirmed the validity of Adorno’s “critical hypothesis.”

In his article, “Invitation to music. Study of formation of new listeners of music radio broadcasting,” Lazarsfeld’s close colleague Edward A. Suchman proved that a co-action between both schools is possible: In the introduction he presents different pictures of radio music broadcasting and its role in the society. Instead of pressure of the society on the individual emphasized by Theodor Adorno, E. Suchman presents radio broadcasting as a service to the listeners. [Suchman 1941]

Suchman’s study is based on the data from the research of regular listeners of classical music broadcasting. The aim of the research was to verify the presupposition, according to which classical music radio broadcasting brought this music to the people, who otherwise did not listen to classical music. It was a special research of those interested in listening to classical music on the radio. Approximately one tenth of the 9000 subscribers of the bi-monthly Masterwork Bulletin, which published programme offer of classical music compositions, were selected. It was extremely important to ensure proportional representation of listeners with small, medium and large interest in listening classical music. E. Suchman strained to ensure complete response rate of the completed questionnaires. [Suchman 1941: 143-144]

Suchman divided the listeners into three groups according to whether the radio broadcasting of classical music: 1) *aroused their interest* in this type of music, 2) whether it *supported the already existing interest*, or whether 3) it only *brought new occasions to listen to classical music* on the basis of a previously fully developed interest in this music. Since the determining of the type of a listener created the basis for verifying the most important research hypothesis, the typology was created with exceptional care. The first meritorious question, in which the questioned subscribers were supposed to categorize themselves in one of the above mentioned groups, was followed by three supplementary questions demanding: a) explanation of this self-categorization in the respondent’s own words, b) specification of

the factors leading the listener to interest in listening of classical music, and c) recollection of the first encounter with classical music, which led to the origin of this interest. Fifty case studies were executed in order to validate the self-categorization of the listeners into three basic types and to provide better understanding of the outcomes of the executed statistical analyses. “None of the cases was accepted as completed, until we were absolutely sure that the respondents’ interest (in classical music, note of HJ) was correctly classified as initiated, sustained or supplemented by the radio. ...” [Suchman 1941: 149]

The first type for validation represents those subscribers, whose interest in classical music would not be aroused without contribution of radio musical broadcasting. *Radio programmes aroused interest of 15 % of listeners.* The second type of listeners represented those, whose liking of classical music originated sooner. *Radio musical broadcasting supported and further developed existing interest in classical music of 38 % of subscribers under survey.* For the remaining 47 % of radio listeners, who belong in the third type, *broadcasting of classical music in the radio presents a supplement of a previously developed interest in this type of music.* We can therefore agree with the author that: “... for every seconds subscriber radio played important role in shaping his interest in music....” [Suchman 1941: 148]

Edward Suchman also surveyed, evidently on the basis of Adorno’s theoretical postulates, the quality of musical interests of individual groups of listeners. Adorno’s ideas were after all applied on the level of empirical research. Suchman proved that the group of listeners, whose interest in classical music was aroused only by radio, is motivated to listening in a different way than the listeners, for whom these programmes served only as a refreshment or as a new occasion to satisfy their deep musical interest. This third type of listeners chose less demanding, easier compositions and listening to music had a different meaning for them than for the “traditional concert audience.” Listeners, who regarded radio only as a supplementary source of classical music, were most decisively affected by their families. In case of the second group of listeners, school and teachers prepared ground for their developing interest in classical music. People, whose interest in classical music was aroused by radio broadcasting, were most significantly affected by their friends. At the same time, radio musical broadcasting served as a prepared source of music and friends as the most frequent source of influence.

Overall, Suchman found out that radio broadcasting is used provided that there exist basic dispositions or prerequisites of the listeners to listening. The main importance of the radio is not in its direct ability to arouse interest in listening to music, but in its ability to make listening accessible, or in other words, that it is at disposal as an effective way of fulfilling this need. [Suchman 1941: 172-173]

Thanks to Suchman’s thorough analysis, Adorno’s critical scepticism was in the end enforced in the research. The expectations of “radio optimists” that musical broadcasting creates new listeners of classical music were not confirmed (to a large degree). The listeners, who took to classical music only from the radio, preferred less demanding authors demanding authors (for example Rimsky-Korsakov, Dvořák or Rachmaninov) to more demanding authors (for example Bach, Brahms or Mozart), which is one of the indicators of their different approach to classical music. Detailed discussions proved that the new sympathizers

of classical music expected from the radio broadcasting primarily romantic and emotional experience, excitement and entertainment. The result of the listening of musical broadcasting without previous interest in classical music was mere acquaintance with the music with no signs of its real understanding. This type of listeners created only a pseudo-interest in the music broadcasted by radio. [Suchman 1941: 176 -179] These conclusions are also supported by a survey, which studied the effect of listening rate of musical radio broadcasting on interest in concerts or books on musical theme. These listeners go to concerts because of the musicians rather than the music. Their motive for reading books on musical themes is the composer's life rather than his work. [Suchman 1941: 184-185] We can therefore conclude that there was cooperation between the two paradigms. Even though it was not a double-sided symbiosis – the mutual coexistence originally planned by Lazarsfeld, the cooperation contributed to the research.

4. Conclusion

All three described forms of coexistence of analytical and qualitative methodology from Lazarsfeld's methodological workshop point at the need and usefulness of cooperation of various approaches and paradigms in a public opinion survey as well as in sociological research.

1. In case of the research of the unemployed village of Marienthal both views on the behaviour of the unemployed complemented each other and the overall picture became more complete and compact.
2. Assessment of the radio broadcasting by programme analyser contributed through its accuracy and possibility of comparing the assessment of the programme. On the contrary, the use of "focused interview" allowed understanding of individual listeners' reactions in their mutual connections and deepened the interpretation of the results.
3. Suchman's "analytical" testing of Adorno's "critical" hypothesis of possibilities and limits of radio broadcasting in passing over cultural models and models of listening to classical music prove that the analytical approach is useful even in case of such a conflicting initial thesis. The precondition is a sufficiently general understanding of the research, willingness to cooperate and first of all courage and tolerance to testing a hypothesis, which is based on completely opposite theoretical foundations.
4. Lazarsfeld's attempt to cooperate crosswise paradigms presents only one his attempts to assert truthful, undistorted view of a public opinion researcher on the society around us. Other methodological approaches that he promoted became the subject of a more elaborated research dealing with Lazarsfeld's methodology of a public opinion research. [Jeřábek 2005a]. Those, who are seriously interested in Lazarsfeld, will find a more detailed analysis of practically all Lazarsfeld's methods that contributed to sociological methodology in a monograph dedicated to his life and work, methodology and several famous research projects. [Jeřábek 2005b]

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