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Pluralism of Methods in Religious Studies

A SWOT Analysis

Adam Anczyk and Halina Grzymała-Moszczyńska

Religious studies can be called a field (Bronk 2009: 102) discipline (as, e.g., film studies, women studies, culture studies), that is different from domain disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology, or psychology. This difference may be the cause why "Religionists deploy two strategies to fend off the social sciences: neutralizing the social sciences and embracing them" (Segal 2013: 86). The "middle way" between those approaches may in some way be found by acknowledging the fact that conducting a research on religion requires multiple methods and tools. Intuitively, we feel that it is a good option, both appropriate in scientific terms and pragmatic, because religious studies is a discipline based on the fundament of pluralism, as religions – the subject of this study – are many. Also, religious studies (RS) may provide a stage for many voices, from different religious traditions, to be heard both in academia and by the general public (Flood 2014). Religious studies, indeed, may form a platform for comparative, cross-cultural research (King 2013), and for that it does need a methodological apparatus.

Our article aims at providing an analysis of pros and cons of the multi-method approach, based on a SWOT model – a tool that helps to specify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats implicated in the solution of any chosen dilemma or strategy. It is applied mostly to business decisions or economic/management solutions, but it also can be applied to academic dilemmas. We use the SWOT model in order to look closely on various aspects of the multidisciplinary approach to the study of religion. As an example, we have selected the newest handbook on the subject, namely, "The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion" (Stausberg and Engler [eds.] 2011), for it is one of the most (if not the most) representative books in the field published lately, and – as it is designed as a handbook – it surely will be influential for current and future generations of researchers.

The question of whether religious studies should have its own methodology is probably as old as the discipline itself. From the historical point of view, the discipline emerged from historical and philological studies, so naturally the methods that are used in those academic fields (like source-text analysis, linguistics, descriptive methods) were primarily adopted by scholars. The imperative to create a new scientific discipline occurred when comparative research on the phenomenon of religion began. In some way, the methods used by historians and philologists, although valid for analyzing a particular culture, were hardly applicable to the comparative research. Source-text analysis required not only language proficiency but also a broad and extensive knowledge of religious traditions, which were a subject of study. A need for methodology that can be used in comparative research aroused immediately, and phenomenology, as the philosophical approach to study certain phenomena, was the answer. The pioneers of religious studies, the giants of the discipline, like Max Müller, Cornelius P. Tiele, Gerardus van der Leeuw, Geo Widengren, Raffaelle Pettazzoni, or Mircea Eliade in their works approached a plethora of religious doctrines, myths, rituals, from different cultures all over the world. Many of the founding fathers used phenomenology as their methodological background, and some of them restrained from favoring a particular approach, presenting instead their works in the spirit of comparative study of religions. The main focus for the critique of their research was – and is to this day – the aforementioned argument, that researchers should be competent, both in language and history of the tradition they study and that is – considering the range of cultures examined by the classics – close to impossible. Such a skill allows the scholar to limit the risk of misunderstanding the culture that is the subject of their study, and indicate methodological competence. The one who lacks it is naturally a subject of critique, especially from the academics that hone those abilities. Nevertheless, the works of aforementioned authors are inspirational to this day, as they present valuable ideas. In addition, they answer an important need of identity among the disciples of religious studies; they are the Founding Fathers, the ones that a young researcher or a student can identify with, the same as with a psychologist who will look up to Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung, or Wilhelm Wundt. Exploring that comparison further, we can state that although Sigmund Freud's ideas are inspirational, they would not meet the rigorous methodological criteria applied in the contemporary psychological research. The same may as well be said of works by famous religious studies scholars. Nowadays, almost every religious studies graduate, explicitly or implicitly knows that the time of the "great synthesis" is over, and research carried out in the Eliadean way would not meet the contemporary methodological requirements (although the question whether the method itself – phenomenology of religion – is a valid approach, is a subject of debate; Blum 2012).

Between a Rock and a Hard Place

The dilemma of methodology and, consequently, research methods it comprises in religious studies has been summarized accurately by Richard E. Wentz (1970: 465): "The problem of method in religious studies arises because the study of religion as a total phenomenon does not correspond to the accepted mode of operation of any established academic discipline, or combination of disciplines. At least so it would seem." The issue of research validity arises on the meta-level. The subject of RS is religion,[1] so the research done on religion may be either reductionist – interpretation of religion in terms of other, historical, philosophical, psychological, sociological aspects (Segal 1983) – or theological (with a pre-assumption of realness of all religious phenomena, therefore, inaccessible for scholars who are not believers themselves and who do not contribute their religiously formed worldview to the academic debate). RS is then between a rock and a hard place, trying to avoid both of the extreme ends of the axis. Even the cognitive study of religion, which can "offer an empirical, experimentally based paradigm," is biased in a similar way, because, as many cognitivists conclude, "religiousness will continue to constrain the academic study of religion even as it will continue to dominate the concerns of *Homo sapiens* generally" (Martin and Wiebe 2012: 592). The debate between what should be marked as "true" and "scientific" – a debate in which "a language of justice or right versus wrong is often used" (Kramp 2013: 68) – is probably more vivid in RS than in other humanities. Ninian Smart (1973) advised that scholars of religion should refrain from discussing the ultimate status of religious definitions of reality, as they should analyze different aspects of the phenomenon, instead of asking the question how true or real they are. The dilemma of "right" vs "wrong" in RS methodology cannot be answered easily with a simple yes-no questions. It may be better to look on how contemporary RS cope with those issues in research practice and, consequently, what needs to be taught to future students of the discipline.

One of the options is concluding that religious studies should not have a methodology of its own, as RS is a field based on other disciplines in terms of methodology, so appropriate research methods should be applied and used when needed. It is, at first glance, probably the most basic and practical way to solve the method dilemma in RS. But it has some major consequences. If a discipline does not have a methodology of its own, could it still be considered an independent field of research? Religion is also a subject of interest for other disciplines: sociology of religion within sociology, history of religion within history, psychology of religion within psychology, etc. Forgoing any distinct, specific for RS research methods might be seen – in a manner of speaking – as leaving the fold. In the course of time, academics with methodological training in other disciplines, awarded with MAs or PhDs in history, philology, sociology, or psychology, worked at RS departments as researchers and teachers. This was (and certainly is in many academic units) the case of what we can call a "double methodological affiliation." They were *both*, historians, psychologists, sociologists, etc. and religious studies scholars. Many of them did not face the dilemma of choosing an appropriate method for their research, as they adopted the ones they had been trained in their respective disciplines. The situation has changed when students, who graduated from RS only and obtained PhDs in RS, entered the academia. They are RS scholars according to their diplomas, however, in terms of research methods, they are on a quest for identity. They had to use appropriate and valid methods in their research to obtain a degree. According to the classic division of religious studies into historical/theoretical and empirical research (Ringgren and Ström 1957), in the history of religion, philological, historical, anthropological, and phenomenological methods are often used, and in empirical religious studies psychological, sociological, and anthropological fieldwork research methods are applied. The "double methodological affiliation" we mentioned before may still form the academic identity of RS scholars; an RS academic, who does research in the psychology of religion may say "I am a religious studies scholar, who works within psychology of religion" and a psychologist pursuing research on individual religiousness can state "I am a psychologist, interested in psychology of religion."

Looking at both situations, the need for RS to have its own research methods is much more conspicuous in the case of scholars who are educated in religious studies only. Unfortunately the topic of research methods, as Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler state (2011: 3), is "seldom addressed at conferences … rarely discussed in … textbooks", and – what possibly is more important – "separate courses on research methods are seldom included in religious studies programs." The invisibility of this topic in the academic discussion might be the reason why many RS scholars opt for the "double methodological affiliation," as researchers in RS must use a method that is acceptable from the perspective of contemporary scholarship, and the simplest way is to borrow some from another discipline. Nevertheless, such a situation places RS in the middle of a discussion on research methods, and the question of methodological identity of RS can be easily ne-

1 This is a phenomenon sometimes described as artificial, created by scholars for their own purposes (Smith 1998) or "undefinable," which raises many questions, including the fundamental one: can one study the "Undefinable"? (and – on the pragmatic side – can the granting institutions fund a study of the Undefinable?)

glected. However, there is one more option, and that is the postulate of "methodological plurality," which needs to be distinguished from the "double methodological affiliation" we mentioned, or "methodological laissez-faire and dilettantism" (Stausberg and Engler 2011: 4). This is the leading idea of "The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion."

Materials and Methods in the Study of Religion

"The Routledge Handbook," as the first handbook on research methods in RS written in English, was published in 2011 (Stausberg and Engler 2011b: 4), which may be quite astonishing for a layman, as the discipline is over a hundred and fifty years old, but, in fact, is not surprising for a RS scholar familiar with the history, debates, and quarrels over research methods. The book we are going to discuss is designed as a handbook for RS students, attending courses on methodology. It presents a wide selection of methods and methodological approaches available for students and scholars who choose religion as their research topic. This book will definitely have an impact in the future, as it surely will be used as a resource for teaching methodology courses for students of RS. Up till the end of 2014, the book has been included in the reading list on methodological courses at the University of California in Santa Barbara, the University of Chicago, University of Leiden, Bergen University, and Jagiellonian University.

We may add a remark here, that students who have completed a BA, MA, or PhD course in religious studies, often acquire some knowledge on methods used in humanities and social sciences, although they may be familiar with a method applied in their particular research subject only, as they rarely got a chance to familiarize themselves in-depth with other methods. For religious studies, a discipline devoted to study of religion in its variety, it is vital that the students and researchers should acquire basic competences in as many research methods as possible, in order to, e.g., communicate efficiently within research teams. The approach presented by Stausberg and Engler ([eds.] 2011) suggests crossing boundaries between disciplines, methodologies, and methods.

The presentation of research methods applied to religion described in the handbook will begin with discussing the variety of materials which undergo scholars' scrutiny; secondly, it will focus on methods applied in the process of collecting and analyzing data, and, finally, concentrate on the ways of interpretation that pertain to both results and research process. In order to put some flesh on the SWOT scheme, let us begin with taking a closer look on the materials, which are selected as objects for analysis undertaken by the scholars of religion. There are three major types of resources: sacred texts/writings/materials produced by both the hierarchy and members of a specific religious tradition and their foes and enemies (a response for the orthodoxy) as well; the large category of material culture; and the third type of data – activities, beliefs, and religious experiences of members of the religious denominations.

Resources listed above can be examined with different methods, some of them are centuries old, metaphorically speaking, and others appeared only recently. Sacred texts can and should be analyzed from a different perspective. Firstly, the language analysis can be applied, since linguistic competence is the *sine qua non* condition of a precise text interpretation, entering into textual criticism and achieving the most accurate level of understanding both historical and contemporary materials. One needs to differentiate between working on manuscripts and the complex analytical work aiming at creating a text by interpretation of a manuscript which belongs to a certain historical place and period. As Einar Thomassen (2011: 349) points out, "a particular manuscript is not, strictly speaking, the same as a 'text'. Rather, a manuscript is only a 'witness' (as the philologists say) to a text. The 'text' as such is to be understood as the original source, no longer extant, which lies behind the various manuscripts. Unlike the latter, the text is not available to us as a physical object, but is something that may be hypothetically reconstructed in the form of a critical edition." Interpretation of the text extends far beyond language competence and requires also historical knowledge about the context and author of the text. Another useful method applied for a better understanding of religious and religion-related texts is called the discourse analysis, in which a text gets carefully dismantled into multiple "voices" involved (Hjelm 2011). Answering a set of questions about the social framework of origins and existence of the text contributes to a better understanding of its layers. A somewhat similar method in analyzing texts of and about religion is content analysis (Nelson and Woods 2011).

The document analysis belongs to the same group of methods. In the array of documents one can place text-based sources, presented both on paper and computer screen, but also texts preserved by the means of being carved onto gravestones. We can follow the Grace Davie and David Wyatt's observation: "it is often unclear where to place the dividing line between what is and what is not a document … this distinction is about how the researcher *frames* an artifact …" (Davie and Wyatt 2011: 152). The Internet, as a storage space for religious texts and texts about religion, not only facilitates accessibility to religious documents, which are stored in otherwise inaccessible locations, but also increases scope, speed, and depth of comparisons. The Internet provides also a huge number of texts in the context of religion on-line and on-line religion (Cowan 2011).

The second group of materials, which are analyzed by scholars in RS, are sacred objects. Traditionally they comprise of religion-related material culture products of various scales, as small as rosaries or as big as magnificent temples. The range of objects under scrutiny covers "fine-arts artifacts, craft objects and ephemera made, adapted or adopted for the purpose of worship, teaching, commemoration and propaganda (both for and against religion)" (Harvey 2011: 502). They belong to the material components of religion. They are in focus of attention of several new interdisciplinary fields like visual studies or an emerging discipline within the study of culture, with a developing methodology, called material culture studies (Carp 2011: 474). This approach extends the scope of the analysis of different material aspects (including sacred objects) of culture but it also encompasses a polysensory, body-conscious approach. Inclusion of the body in analysis conducted by material culture studies pertains to the role the body (both of the believer and researcher) has in the process of analysis. Examples of questions, that may be asked during designing and conducting such a research are: Which bodily capacities are necessary to perform specific functions required by a sacred object (surely the weight of a Siberian shaman's costume, or the size and weight of a church bell, which needs to be moved in order to make sound, require physical strength)? Which corporal features, for example, such essential as sex, make possible or impossible to conduct a research on some religious objects or within a particular religious group? Female researchers will be denied access to certain parts of male monasteries, therefore, manuscripts, paintings, or venerated statues stored there will not be available to them. They might even be barred from entering the vicinity of certain monasteries (like for instance the Mount Athos monastery) and men will not be permitted to enter some parts of a nunnery. Any laymen, irrespectively of gender, might have limited access to the buildings designated only for religious functionaries (e.g., living quarters of some Buddhist monasteries will be out of reach for outsiders).

Another way of including the body into research covers an extensive range of object's modalities, perceived by a range of bodily faculties: vision, hearing, movements, smell, or taste. Not all modalities are included to the same degree into analysis of sacred objects that is conducted mostly by Western scholars. An analysis based on visual aspects gets more frequently the scholars' attention than the one based on auditory materials. Rosalind Hackett (2011: 448) points towards three reasons for such a situation: "First, sight has been privileged over sound in Western modernity, diminishing the aural as a spiritual sense …; second, listening is held to be the most passive of the senses, and musical expression to be derivative rather than determinative of culture …; and third, there are a number of methodological challenges to conducting research on the sonic worlds of religions, even in this high-tech age."

The analysis of sounds have often escaped Western scholars' attention, because of the supposed lack of "objectivity" and its, as experienced, highly elusive character. The most important imperative of sound research is that it must transgress the limits of what is considered a research on sacred music/sacred musicology in the Western context. Particular religious traditions put an emphasis on different kinds of sound, of which music is just one, as they create different "soundscapes" (Hackett 2011: 453). In Islam, the appropriate recitation of the Quran plays an important role. Joyful chanting of the mantras, supported by multiple instruments, may be the sound of Hinduism, which is also heard on the streets of Western cities (performed, for instance, by the followers of the Hare Krishna movement), and another kind of chant is culturally specific to the Tibetan Buddhist monks – interestingly it also entered the Western pop-culture (e.g., the popular song "My Spirit Flies to You"). Sound in the religious context not only elevates spirit and mind (sounds produced during trance represent the spiritual or godly voices), but also may evoke experiencing the presence of a deity and, at times, may have a healing impact on participants of the ritual. Thinking about the complexity of the sound research in religious studies, we may imagine that they should take into account such issues as the relations between sounds made by humans and the sounds of nature (especially those that may have the power of evoking unusual experiences, fear, unrest, fascination, like thunder, for instance). The elusive character of sounds and the necessity of recording them for further study may be demanding, and the materials gathered may require an analysis performed on multiple levels. The development of neuroimaging methods, like PET analysis, contributes to the better understanding of the influence sounds have on the nervous system. In conclusion, the analysis of sound materials may contribute to the development of multidisciplinary teams that include researchers who have competences in various methods.

Another area of research that should be taken into consideration within RS and which is proposed in the "Handbook" is the dimension of space, in which people and objects operate in a religious context. The delineation of a research focus is somewhat similar to the approaches that are present in RS, namely, geography of religion and religious geography. As a result of research done within the field, various maps were created, for example, to illustrate the demographics of religious traditions across countries and continents, to observe the dynamics of religious encounters (proselytism, war, pilgrimages, or tourism), to show how many religious objects and buildings are present in any given territory, how quickly their number is increasing over the years, but also how many formerly religious buildings were converted into secular sites (like a famous pub in Dublin, Ireland, named "Church," that is located in a former Roman-Catholic church). An important aspect of the analysis pertains to the influence that religious buildings have on public space – which can even be turned into an "architectural battlefield" of different religious traditions. The dispute over building a mosque for the Polish Muslim diaspora in Warsaw (Górak-Sosnowska 2014) or the government's occasional denials of permission to erect Roman Catholic churches in Poland during the communist era (Mazgaj 2010) may illustrate this problem, which encompasses both religious and political issues. The visual aspects of being religious may also be subject of interest, including political issues (the religious headscarf debate in France, women dress code in United Arab Emirates). In this context, the question of which religious rituals are permitted by the state to be carried out publicly may also be a subject of study. The disputes over Corpus Christi street procession in Poland between Roman-Catholic Church members and district authorities during the communist period, and, nowadays, disputes between Catholics and atheists (Tyrała 2014), may provide an example of such issues.

The main group of data, analyzed by empirical scholars of religion, are activities, beliefs, and religious experiences of members of religious denominations. They were among the primary subjects of academic interest since the inception of RS and were analyzed by psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists of religion. The standard set of methods applied to these data consists of field and ethnographic research, interviews, observation, surveys, and questionnaires. The methods could be subdivided into those aiming at collecting data in the location where the religion operates (field research, which includes participating observation and interviews), and methods (surveys and questionnaires, experiments, and, at times, interviews) in which data are collected from believers in the neutral, usually secular context (in a school, hospital, shopping mall, or any other kind of public space, including the setting designed for the purpose of research, like laboratories). Sometimes there was a risk that such research created a turmoil and encountered quite hostile reactions towards both the research and researchers (e.g., like in the case of reception of Edwin Starbuck's pioneering questionnaire in the psychology of religion; Wulff 1997). At the same time, these methods provided RS with the richest source of data about core aspects of religion. In social sciences, like in modern psychology, data collected with these methods are analyzed by the means of statistical calculation, and hypotheses tested may come from the perspective of popular theories of religion, both classical (like psychoanalysis) and contemporary (e.g., Terror Management Theory; see Greenberg, Pyszczynski, and Solomon 1986). Current methods of data analysis benefit from the development of mathematics and statistics, advancement in factor analysis, facet theory, network analysis, and, first and foremost, developments in technical equipment (especially IT), which allows to document, store, and analyze data in a more efficient and easy way. The competences in statistics and precise calculations, a quantitative research should require some decades ago, were in some way replaced by the most needed skill in this matter, namely, the software proficiency, which creates new possibilities and options for teamwork.

What is also important for the fieldwork in religious studies, is the overall approach to agency of members within a specific research sample. A very strong emphasis on that perspective is placed in the research conducted from the feminist standpoint or – more broadly – women's studies. The shift between perceiving researched samples as passive objects of inquiry, conducted by scholars in order to fulfill their research goal and treating them as codeterminers of the research questions, may help to solve real problems of a community in question, but also enables participants to codetermine how the research is conducted, and, finally, include them into the result of the interpretation process. Participatory Action Research may form an example of such approach, in which a research goal needs to be formulated bottom-up rather than top-down, if the relations between the researcher and research group are taken into consideration. The issues of power and empowerment are also a subject of inquiry in that context; the ideal situation in such a research project occurs when the researcher and members of the group or individuals occupy the same position in the power structure. This standpoint stresses the fact that a researcher should take the side of the disadvantaged and aim at using research results for empowering the group and to improve its situation. This standpoint can be called engaged religious studies (Malley 2013). It implicates also that a research sample should be selected carefully and more consciously. A research should aim at experiences of religious groups' members, who struggle with particular problems and whose voices are rarely heard, rather than concentrating on the official standpoint represented by the hierarchy of any given religious community. It is a call for the necessity of including more empathy into the research process. This standpoint has a practical influence on the methods – the voice of believers should also be included in the research design and research tools preparation. The emic-etic dilemma is present in this discussion as well. Indigenous researchers may have a better access to researched materials, but their position as members of a community can sometimes make the whole process lacking of objectivity. The discussion on insider-outsider issue, which had arisen very early in the history of the discipline (Bronk 2009: 104), is even more visible on the level of methods, if we take into consideration the indigenous approach and the postulate of engaged research.

A very significant modification of the research on religion and religiosity stems from the Internet, both as a research tool and source of data (Cowan 2011). A face-to-face contact between an interviewer and a respondent may be reached through new means of communication. An actual meeting of the respondent may no longer be a *sine qua non* condition of a proper interview. Internet-based communicators allow to conduct interviews literally across the globe and they let the researcher to not only just listen to the voice but also observe the facial expressions of the respondent. Distributing questionnaires and surveys via the Internet do not even require any contact between the author/distributor of a research tool and the respondents. Websites and web instruments (e.g., SurveyMonkey or Google Forms) allow for highly mediated, non-personalized communication in that respect. Obviously, this is a very mixed blessing. It permits the collection of materials from a huge number of respondents in a relatively quick and cost-effective way, but at the same time, the usage of Internet research tools poses some threats to the research, like the lack of respondent motivation, higher probability of deception, a non-representative sample (limited to people with an Internet access), and obtaining not sufficient data – especially in the case of interviews – which may be surface-like, linked to the most external layer of a problem rather than an in-depth exploration. These issues should be taken into consideration in a research design that includes the Internet as a tool of gathering data.

The Pluralism of Methods: Pros and Cons

The postulate of using multiple research methods, as expressed in "The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion," assumes training of RS students in various research methods. The development of courses concentrated on methodology and including them in study programs may enhance the methodological awareness among RS graduates and prospective researchers. It may help to change the current situation, in which "many scholars of religion do not explicitly reflect on the methods they apply within a concrete research project, somehow assuming that these questions are irrelevant or unproblematic" (von Stuckrad 2012: 621). However, we must pay attention not only to the opportunities offered by methodological pluralism but also to its weaknesses. In order to introduce the idea into real life, there has to be a plan of action. Our contribution to the discussion on the methods in religious studies, therefore, will be an overview of the idea of using multiple research tools, as presented in the "Handbook." Let us now summarize the presented set of methods by putting the multi-method approach into a SWOT model. Fig. 1 presents a list of strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities of the proposed solution.

The output analysis shows a need for reflection concerning changes in the approach to research on religion and teaching. Three factors seem to be important: the need of methodological sensitivity and awareness about method application, especially towards issues that mostly went unnoticed for many researchers (like the new perspectives of indigenous research on religion, or engaged religious studies). Secondly, the development of research tools, that rarely have been used within the study of religions, allows to conduct, document, and analyze collected materials in a broader context. The third factor forms a need to introduce teaching courses, focused on acquiring proficiency in the usage of particular methods sufficient for conducting a valid and prop-

Strengths	Weaknesses
Provides a methodological background for research conducted within RS Freedom of choice: appropriate methods are used when applicable The openness: an RS graduate may adjust to other disciplines, like anthropology, sociology, psychology, etc., when needed Prospective study programs on methodology may be designed according to the "Handbook" or similar books The quest for the methodological identity may be resolved, as explicitly expressed methodological pluralism forms the background of research The methodological triangulation may be used in research more easily	It is impossible to teach all of the methods in a single course on methodology The plurality of presented methods may cause the difficulty of acquiring professional skills in a particular single method Teaching requires a broad knowledge on methods used in humanities and social sciences, therefore, team teaching, which is difficult to organize, may be a must Some of the methods (e. g., philological, historical) require sufficient language proficiency
Opportunities	**Threats**
It may raise the "methodological awareness" among RS scholars and students The general methodological competence of RS graduates will be raised It may help to change the image of RS as a "discipline without methodology" RS graduates may get published more successfully in journals, in which good methodological competence (e.g., in quantitative methods or fieldwork) is a requirement	Low level of interest in the methodological issues among RS students RS study programs vary from university to university, and from country to country RS study programs already contain a lot of different content, and adding methodological subjects takes time and practice

Fig. 1: The plurality of research methods – a SWOT analysis.

er research, and – at the same time – providing prospective researchers within religious studies with methodological flexibility, the ability to apply several methods to their subject of scientific inquiry, and, at least, understanding the methodological jargon of many other disciplines in order to communicate efficiently in research teams, and looking at the same problem from different angles.

The analysis suggests that the multi-method approach is a must in respect to all kinds of data – written, material, and empirical – which are in the focus of attention of scholars of religion. Moreover, it implicates that teamwork is necessary in conducting research within field disciplines. We can imagine a team of scholars, some of them are educated in religious studies and others coming from another disciplines. Some of the team members might be as close to humanities as philologists, art historians, musicologists, also researchers in social sciences, psychology, or sociology, and some are really distant, like sound engineers or neurobiologists. They combine their skills in a study devoted to, e.g., the role of music in inducing religious experiences during *kirtan* rituals conducted by ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) followers. Particular team members will contribute to the project by having a different approach towards the phenomenon in question, but also by having proficiency and experience in diverse research methods. RS scholars may also have a particular and unique position, because of the breadth of their educational background. On the level of methodology, if the postulate of teaching multiple methods is to be realized, they would be able to design multifaceted research programs, which combine capacities of different team members. This vision seems to be more promising and – in the end – fruitful than debating which method is better or more necessary to apply in any given research project. Needless to say, some other disciplines like sociology, anthropology, or psychology have already found some solutions to resolve the single vs. multi-method dilemma, and the option may be a mixed-model research design, in which different methods are applied to study particular aspects of the phenomena or serve as a complimentary resource of collecting data (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2010). The material gathered by multiple methods may provide new insights and also new interpretations of the previous research results. Thus, it is to state, as a concluding remark, that introducing the multi-method approach for religious studies opens a world of possibilities. We agree with the authors of the "Handbook," that it is surely the time to change, the time to show, as we concluded in our review of the book, that our "methods are as multiple as the aspects of the phenomenon we call 'religion'"(Grzymała-Moszczyńska and Anczyk 2013: 294).

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