

SOCIOLOGY DURING TWENTIETH CENTURY

The scope of sociology in nineteenth century was not only confined to a limited number of problems but at the same time it was characterized by varying conflicting "schools". The early history of sociology as represented by Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer, a Hobhouse or a Raizenhofer was very far from being integrated. The conceptions of each were seldom built upon the work of their predecessors. They are typically laid out as alternative or conflicting conceptions rather than consolidated and extended into an integrated product. Consequently little of what these early forerunners wrote remains pertinent to present day sociology.

Twentieth century sociology is characterized by a sound elimination of all the uncritically-accepted problems. It is an indication of a new trend toward maturity in sociology as new emphasis is laid on the formulation of sounder and more fundamental theories accepted only after careful analysis unlike the past. The predominant trend of contemporary sociology is its constructive assessment of current sociological problems.

Sociology and Social Sciences: Although sociology is distinct from the so-called social sciences, it is generally recognized that there is considerable interdependence between sociology and other social sciences such as psychology, demography, geography etc. Sociologists have always leaned upon economics for an understanding of economic phases of society. Likewise economists have recognized the assistance sociology can render in the clarification of the problems of social control, social adaptation and collective behaviour. Sociology looks to political science for the data of political organization. On the other hand, political science borrows from sociology its knowledge of political structure of which political organization is but a part. Similarly, history looks to sociology for its general view of the principles of social organization, and sociology turns to history for some of its most significant data. However, it does not mean that the relationship of sociology to the other social sciences is one of indiscriminate borrowing. Although there is an extensive overlap among all the social sciences.

Research Methods in Sociology: A problem of persistent interest for sociologists and other social scientists has been the applicability to human behaviour of the scientific methods as developed in physical sciences. Since human behaviour is much more complex as well as difficult to be brought under controlled conditions for observation, comparison and

experimentation, application of physical laws and the methodology of natural science could not be easily adopted for the study of social behaviour and sociological problems. Realising these difficulties sociologists did try to seek out areas where these conditions did not apply. One such field was that of population. Studies of vital statistics, of fecundity, of growth and migration of population could be carried out with somewhat same objectivity and precision as those of physical sciences.

Some sociologists saw no reason why the central procedures of every natural science — observation, comparison, and communication — might not be applicable ultimately to the entire gamut of human behaviour. The problem was how to be guided by the two essential requirements of scientific method; first the formulation of a working hypothesis and, secondly, the use of an objective method of verification of the hypothesis that can be repeated by other workers in the field. There has been especially since World War First, a notable attempt among sociologists to close the gap between analysis and data collection. This trend received great impetus by the work of R.E. Park and his associates.

One must admit that a large part of what is now called sociological theory consists of general orientation toward data, suggesting types of variables which need somehow to be taken into account rather than clear, verifiable statements of relationships between specified variables. In short, we have many concepts but few confirmed theories.

Application of Statistical Methods: The statistical method to a great extent received its acceptance from the necessity of controlling and manipulating population data. As studies were undertaken in the field of population and statistical methods became increasingly important in economics. Further, interest gradually developed in the adequacy and representativeness of the sample of the population selected, in correlating variables hypothetically in a cause and effect relation and in determining the reliability of significances ascertained. The most significant contribution to statistical methods was made by Karl Pearson and his students.

Another important contributor in the field was S.C. Dodd. A systematic quantitative structure for all sociological situations and concepts was formulated by him in his book "Dimensions of Sociology." It is an evidence of a growing interest of sociologists in the invention of mathematical approach appropriate to social research. As a corollary, there has been an increasing tendency to empirical research which has gained great prominence during the last few decades.