

AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL RESEARCH

BY
HOWARD W. ODUM, PH. D.

DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE
FOR RESEARCH IN SOCIAL SCIENCE

AND
KATHARINE JOCHER, PH. D.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE
INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH IN SOCIAL SCIENCE
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA



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HOWARD W. ODUM

*Kenan Professor of Sociology and Director of the Institute for
Research in Social Science, University of North Carolina*

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PREFACE

This *Introduction to Social Research* has grown out of a very practical situation and a very specific need for help in regional social research and in training research personnel at the University of North Carolina. Begun in the spring of 1925 it has been prepared to meet this need and also the increasing demand for an elementary textbook in the fundamentals of social research. As an introductory volume, it makes no pretense to exhaustive treatment or comprehensive details of methodology or case, as do the notable analyses of the *Case Book on Scientific Method in the Social Sciences*, being prepared by the Social Science Research Council. It does, however, attempt to present the "elements" which enter into the present-day problem of social research in such way as to guide the student and to interest also those who have specialized in technique or who are training and directing research specialists. If at the same time the volume may contribute something toward a broader background, a better understanding of the range and difficulty of the problem, and a more definite scientific attitude on the part of the great majority of younger teachers of social science, and something toward the interpretation and promotion of the whole social research program, it will have an added value. And it is hoped that the volume will approach the whole problem of social research in such way as to discourage from entering this field many who are not adapted to such difficult work and to encourage many others of ability and aptitude to undertake maximum preparation for what is universally conceded to be one of the most important tasks of the present era.

Other considerations have entered into the plan and preparation of the volume. A startlingly concrete factor is the consideration that in no one of the social sciences does there seem to be unanimity or even general agreement concerning definition, scope, method, or objectives of its own research or concerning the appraisal of the other social sciences. Appraisal of the social sciences by the physical scientists and of the physical sciences by the social scientists reveals a similar lack of unity, and in each case there

appears also a certain amount of antagonism and unsympathetic understanding quite incompatible with the scientific spirit. And this status seems to be accepted as a rather matter-of-fact corollary of the present stage of development of the social sciences. There does appear, however, agreement that the present status of the social sciences is unsatisfactory, that this present self-conscious criticism and increased interest is a wholesome index of future development, that the task of the social sciences constitutes the most important problem appearing on the modern horizon, and that there are reasonable prospects that the task will be attacked with intelligence and with vigor. Review of the social sciences and the various approaches to the scientific study of human society reveals another agreement that they have an unusually rich background and historical development progressing steadily from definite norms of philosophical and analogical study toward scientific research and real social theory. The conclusion seems warranted, therefore, that the social sciences are on ~~the eve of~~ a new development of assured scientific proportions yet to be determined and perfected. It is the purpose of this book to bring the student into a practical working relation with this situation and to guide him not only in the routine processes of social study and research, but so far as possible also into a certain amount of inventiveness and pioneering into scientific-human research of the future.

The preparation of a volume of this sort manifestly requires a large degree of coöperative effort or fair success in integration and interpretation of status, trends, and problems in its field. The present volume is an exercise in the latter method, with however the additional factor of advisory contacts with a considerable number of specialists in the several fields whose suggestions have been most helpful, but who are in no way responsible for limitations of the book. Particular emphasis has been placed upon the organization and plan of treatment and upon the wide samplings of illustrative materials cited to illustrate variable usage and divergent viewpoints. If the plan at first appears somewhat mechanical it is hoped that the complete and critical view of the book will reveal a certain unity, comprehensiveness, and logical approach difficult to attain without some such organization of materials. A specific mechanical technique of the blocked paragraph is introduced as a simple device for setting forth illustration,

quotation, abstract, and reference the more quickly and effectively. In the selection of examples and samplings we have not always presented the best, nor could we be exhaustive. Some times the best examples have not been available for quotation and often, no doubt, we have not found many that would have been more effective than those used. The effort in every instance has been simply to state the case and to support it with acceptable evidence. Nor have we attempted to evaluate examples and citations, emphasizing rather type and illustration. For this reason, identification of authorities has been by complete name or initial except where constant repetition makes this unnecessary. We have frankly made no effort to cite a great many original sources, utilizing rather secondary sources appropriate to such an elementary volume as this. We have assumed that citation of pioneers and current leaders such as Roscoe Pound, Wesley C. Mitchell, Frederick J. Turner, Charles E. Merriam, Clark Wissler, William F. Ogburn, John Dewey, Robert S. Woodworth, Robert E. Chaddock, C. Judson Herrick, whose inquiries have extended to original sources, both historical and current, to mention one each only from the major social sciences, and others like them, would be entirely adequate to the purposes of this volume.

A few preliminary notations may be important here. Manifestly the volume depends especially upon its unity and the interrelation and interdependence of its chapters for its value. Later chapters are particularly dependent upon earlier ones, but more especially the treatment of the several "approaches" and "methods" is in no way complete without the final chapters. In the case of the approaches it is important to note that their first emphasis is historical and generally analytical in that they show development and status but are not set forth as necessarily requisite parts of the new structure and function of social research. The philosophical factors, for instance, in social study, while clearly not social research, can not be neglected either in their past influence or in the present search for a scientific method and spirit. Again, the chapters dealing with the several approaches are in no sense intended to provide an analysis or "outline" of the discipline involved, but represent only what is implied in the term approach, which again is utilized because it appears to be the most representative one available. The premise of the volume

is that there is no one special method of social research and that new and significant developments in methods of social research are now well on the way. These will grow out of the mastery of the controlling factors of analysis, synthesis, method and personnel. If the economists and political scientists have been cited in reference to, let us say, the historical method, or human behavior as a key element, or if the sociologists have been cited rather more frequently in many aspects, it is for the reason that contributions are sought eagerly from whatever source and that they have been more articulate, whether authentically or not, than specialists in other fields.

Finally, we claim no exclusive evaluation for the present classification and terminology. The subject and the problem of this book is *social* research in all its phases with its backgrounds, interrelations, methods, and prospects. The problem has appeared to us to be two-fold: one the problem of synthesis, unity, and interrelation among the various approaches, disciplines, and methods; the other the problem of inaugurating and establishing upon a firm basis the scientific method in research into human affairs. Or stated in a little different manner, one is the problem of mastery in method and the other of mastery of the human factor in social research. The present plan appeared to us the most satisfactory pattern through which a workable introduction could be attained. To those who have assisted in the present plan, to those who have made helpful criticisms, and to those who will offer better classifications and better patterns we are deeply indebted and express our continuing appreciation.

We wish to thank all those—some two score—who have made valuable suggestions and criticisms of the plan of the book through personal letters and conferences without, however, involving them in the products of the volume for which they are in no way responsible. For special assistance and suggestions we wish to thank President Harry W. Chase, William F. Ogburn, Wesley C. Mitchell, Charles E. Merriam, Edmund E. Day, Clark Wissler, C. Judson Herrick, Stuart A. Rice, T. V. Smith, Paul Homan, Robert S. Lynd, Floyd H. Allport, as well as our colleagues at the University of North Carolina, and the secretarial staff of the Institute for Research in Social Science at the University of North Carolina.

CHAPEL HILL,
March, 1929.

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K. J.

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AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL RESEARCH

CHAPTER I

SCIENCE AND THE HUMAN SEARCH

Two major implications of science in the modern world may be assumed at once in this introduction to social research. The one is science seeking to discover truth and the other is science seeking to attain mastery. The one emphasizes explanation and the other direction. These two viewpoints offer no irreconcilable inconsistencies and bring no incongruous conflict. They are normal units and modes in structure and function. For the sciences—the physical sciences and the social sciences—have become so integrated with life and society and so interrelated and interdependent in all their different branches that they approach the world and man with new team work and precision. Thus the old conceptions of “pure” science and “applied” science hold vital meanings today largely as they relate to concrete objectives, method, and personnel, rather than as they concern the fundamentals of scope and content of modern universal science, which may achieve its scientific character in process of extension as well as in modes of discovery. This does not mean that there are not to some extent the two “schools” of attitude, but that even an elementary review of the varied connotations of science will show its unity. The nature and consistency of the purposive or telic implication of science will be discussed fully in later chapters, while the final unity of the sciences will be interpreted in Chapter XIX, dealing with the scientific-human method of social research. This unity is of special importance in the consideration of the too-often neglected factors of interrelation between the physical and the social sciences and among the social sciences themselves, as well as in the general development of science to its present status.

Science as Search. A guiding and universal motive of mankind has been the search for something else, something more. This something has encompassed the whole range of experience—knowledge, adjustment, happiness, power. “Man looks before