

**THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION
OF SOCIOLOGY**

THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF SOCIOLOGY

A STUDY OF THE SCOPE AND PURPOSE
OF APPLIED SOCIOLOGY

BY

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**TO MY
MOTHER**

PREFACE

The development of the physical sciences during the past century has not only added vastly to our cultural accumulations—it has almost revolutionized them. In consequence, there have been continuous social adjustments to a world better understood. The practical application of the physical sciences has given rise to an artificial and highly mechanized, almost machinized, material basis for our social life. There is a widespread opinion to the effect that our human relations and social activities are being increasingly determined by these results of the persistent application of the physical sciences to the achievement of material changes.

There has been no commensurate application of the social sciences, for the achievement of social change or even for the facilitation of social adjustments to the better understood or artificially modified material order. If our social adjustment is to be more than a mere fumbling around for comfort in the dim light of social empiricisms we need a more adequate applied social science. If we should ever essay to place the achievement of our visualized social concepts as a primary objective and make the application of all science subservient to this end, then we need an adequate sociology—one that will lend itself to societal teleosis (the visualization of social objectives) and one that will provide a scientific basis for the arts of achievement. For the determination of objectives we need a comprehensive general sociology: for the discovery of ways and means of achievement, we need an applied sociology.

The development of an applied sociology may be the most certain and direct route to the development of general sociology.

Certain it is, that the physical sciences entered new epochs whenever they revealed new possibilities of practical application. When astronomy was found to be useful for world navigation, when physics and chemistry made possible the release and control of energy, when biology was proved to be of value for breeding and for the practice of medicine,—in short, when each science was found to be practically useful, it entered a new and more significant epoch in its development.

Practical usefulness adds to the survival chances of anything from pins to philosophies. Sociology emerging from a century of comprehensive positive sociology is about to take its chances as a specific science of what Herbert Spencer once styled "super-organic" relations of human beings. If as such a specific social science, sociology should become practically useful for establishing control and effecting economy in the realm of business as well as in professional enterprises, and all other social projects, its chances for survival and development will be increased.

The biggest traffic in the world is in the exchange of human experiences. It is continuous and universal and results in changes of human relationships that affect all social and economic processes and transform the social order. The fear of social taboo and the love of social acclaim, the desire for recognition, the struggle for status and prestige are persistent factors in all this business of human give and take. They are important determinants in every field of trade and exchange—social and economic.

Every human being has human relationships which he is anxious or willing to exchange for other relationships. Time, effort and material goods are given in exchange for social preferment—even life is risked. To this end, soup and nut courses are served à la Emily Post at dinner, French accents are attempted, exclusive real estate developments are sought, and distinctive sartorial creations are worn.

All of these processes are in accord with natural laws. Sociology should reveal the underlying laws and principles of this human give and take.

General sociology as the result of comprehensive observation has given us many generalizations concerning the process of *beneficium et commendatio*. It remains for an applied sociology to make these generalizations practically available for use in definite specific social transactions, to provide a science of economy and control in the business of social adjustment.

It was with these considerations in mind that I have examined the trends in sociology, especially those which have seemed most indica-

tive of its possibilities as a science of practical objectives and of ways and means of achievement.

This study has strengthened my previous belief that an applied sociology will not be an invention devised by one mind but that it will gradually evolve from persistent cooperation between practically minded sociologists and scientifically minded social artists and social engineers. Such cooperation should produce a depictive science the perceptions of which would be very detailed and drawn from every kind of human associations; it should produce also a conceptual science with resolutions and abstractions in terms that are easily translated into perceived practical problems.

From the studies it appears that the development of applied sociology will be hastened (1) by making a clearer distinction between general sociology, social arts (including social work) social economy, social arts technology and applied sociology; (2) by an effort to rectify and integrate the social empiricisms of business practice; (3) by the introduction of observational sociology wherever men are endeavoring to influence the behavior of their fellowmen; (4) by the development of a "counting technique"—the statistical study of multi-individual behavior; (5) and by the development of a "pattern technique" or "relation technique" for the study of co-individual behavior.

If there be in this volume anything of sociological virtue, it has grown out of many years of association with my friend and teacher, Franklin H. Giddings. Credit is due also to those students, colleagues and other friends who have generously read and criticized the manuscript. To no other am I more indebted than to my wife and companion, Edna Logan Shenton, not only for her supporting faith but also for generous and invaluable assistance in the preparation of the manuscript.

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H. N. S.

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