



SYM 101 Sociological Concepts

Unit 01
Nature of Sociology
Part 2 : Sociology as
humanistic Science



Topics to be covered:
Objection against
scientific nature of
Sociology; Nature of
Sociology as Humanistic
Science


Content

**Objection
against
scientific
nature of
sociology**

**Sociology as a
Humanistic
Science**

Objections Against Scientific Nature of Sociology

- ▶ Some thinkers accept that the aim of natural sciences is 'Explanation related with reason' while the aim of social-cultural and historical sciences is 'interpretation' of meaning or to understand it. They deny to accept sociology as a science, object against its scientific nature.

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- ▶ **Lack of objectivity**
 - ▶ **Complexity of social phenomena**
 - ▶ **Dynamic nature of social phenomena**
 - ▶ **Lack of universality in social phenomena**

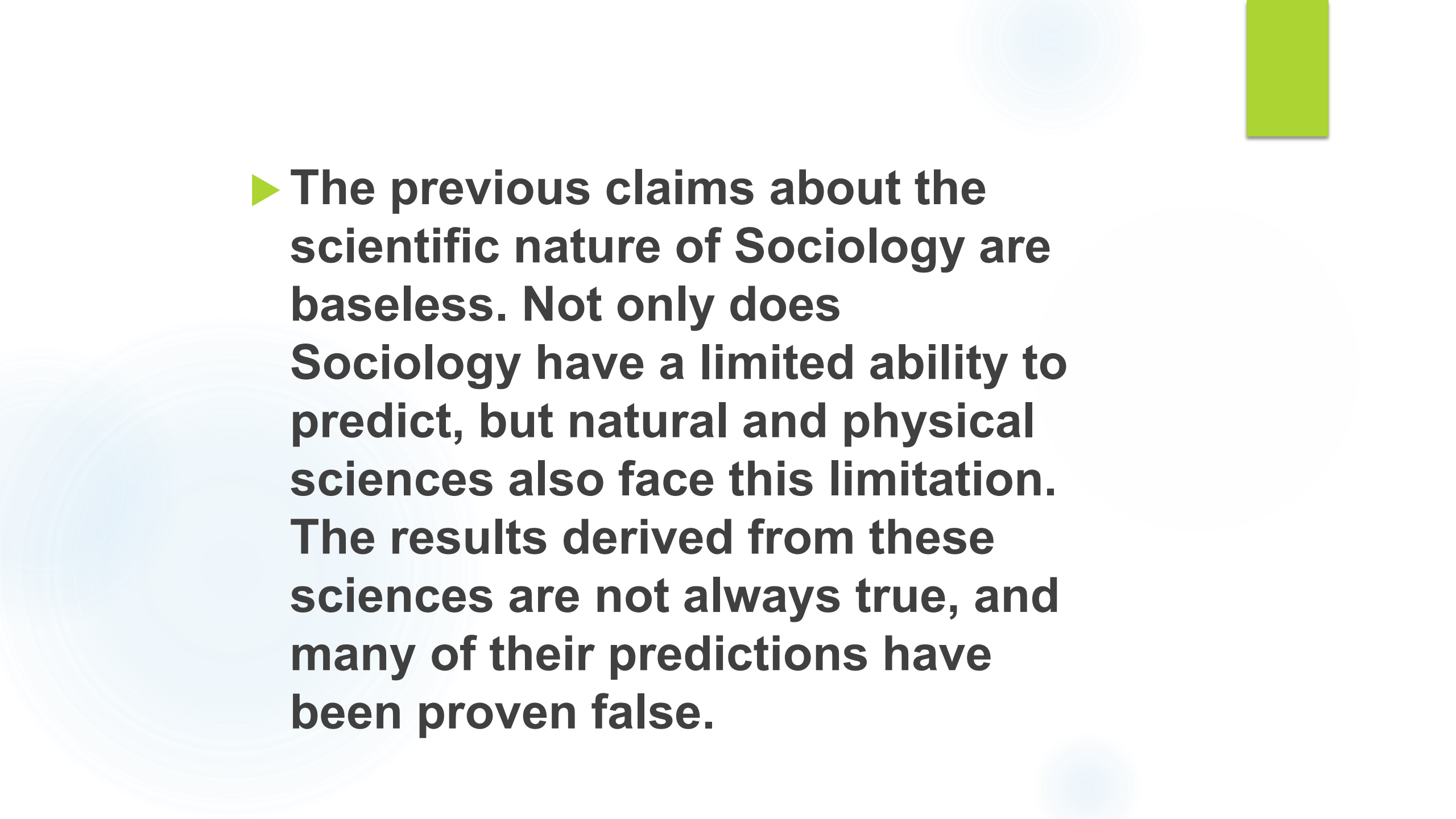


**Difficulty in
measurement of social
phenomena**

**Lack of cause-and-
effect relationship**

No laboratory

Incapable of prediction

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- ▶ **The previous claims about the scientific nature of Sociology are baseless. Not only does Sociology have a limited ability to predict, but natural and physical sciences also face this limitation. The results derived from these sciences are not always true, and many of their predictions have been proven false.**



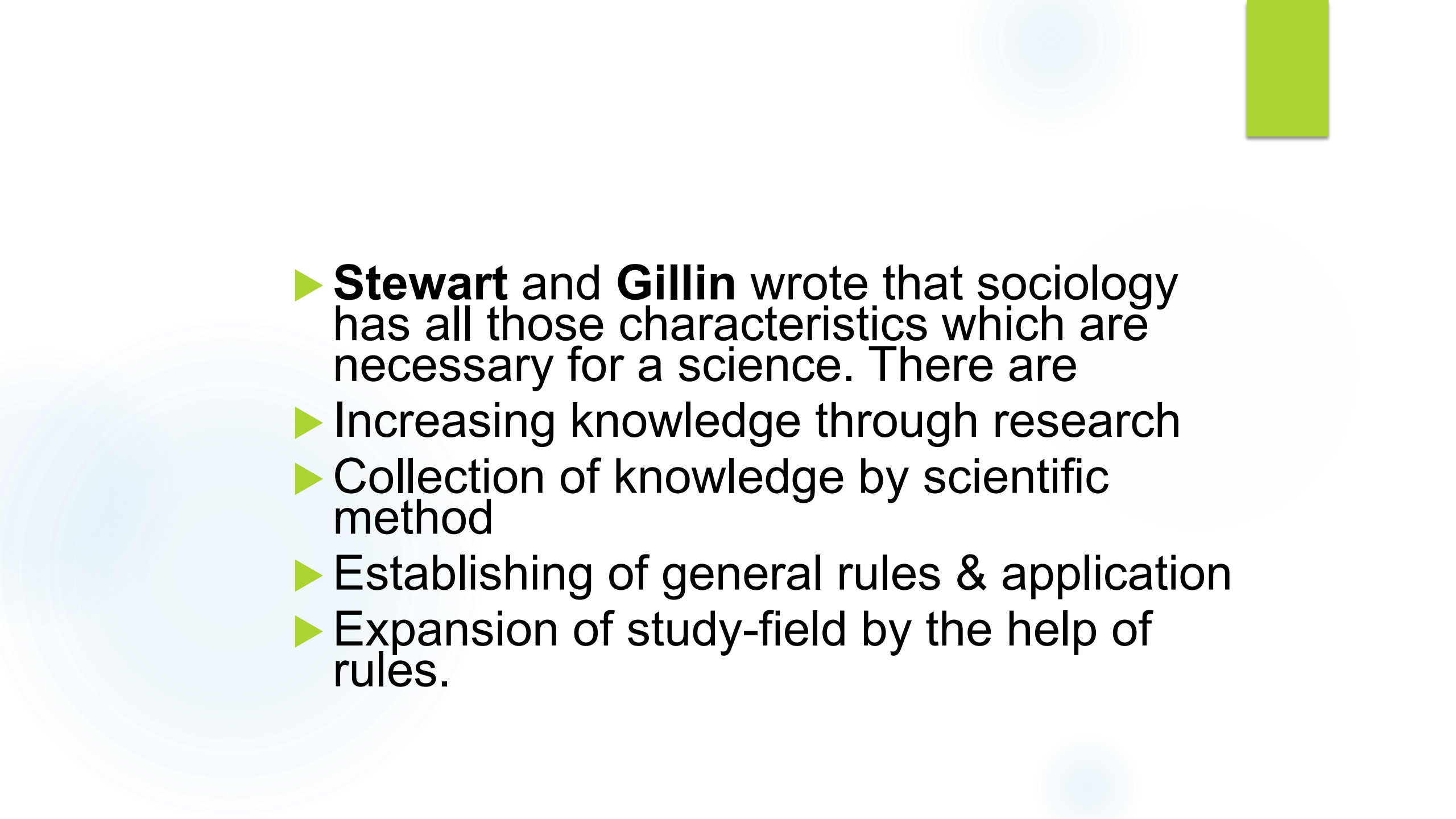
- ▶ **Despite its limited predictive capacity, since all these subjects are accepted as sciences, there should be no objection to recognizing Sociology as a science.**



- ▶ **Sociology is establishing principles based on factors identified through the scientific method, which are increasingly enhancing sociologists' predictive abilities.**



- ▶ Thus, it can be argued that predictive limitations do not hinder the scientific nature of Sociology.

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- ▶ **Stewart** and **Gillin** wrote that sociology has all those characteristics which are necessary for a science. There are
 - ▶ Increasing knowledge through research
 - ▶ Collection of knowledge by scientific method
 - ▶ Establishing of general rules & application
 - ▶ Expansion of study-field by the help of rules.

- ▶ *"Sociology is a science in its methods but humanistic in its content."*
 - Bierstedt highlights the discipline's dual nature: methodological rigor applied to the complexities of human social life.

- Sociology employs scientific methods (e.g., observation, hypothesis-testing) but studies inherently human phenomena (e.g., norms, institutions, conflicts).

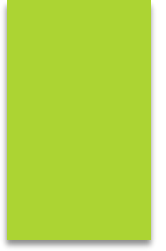


- ▶ Unlike natural sciences, it interprets subjective experiences (e.g., social meanings, ideologies).
- ▶ Focusses on Social Order



- ▶ Bierstedt emphasizes sociology's role in analysing how societies maintain stability (norms, laws) and navigate change (conflict, revolution). Example: Studying religion not just as belief (humanities) but as a social institution shaping behaviour (science).

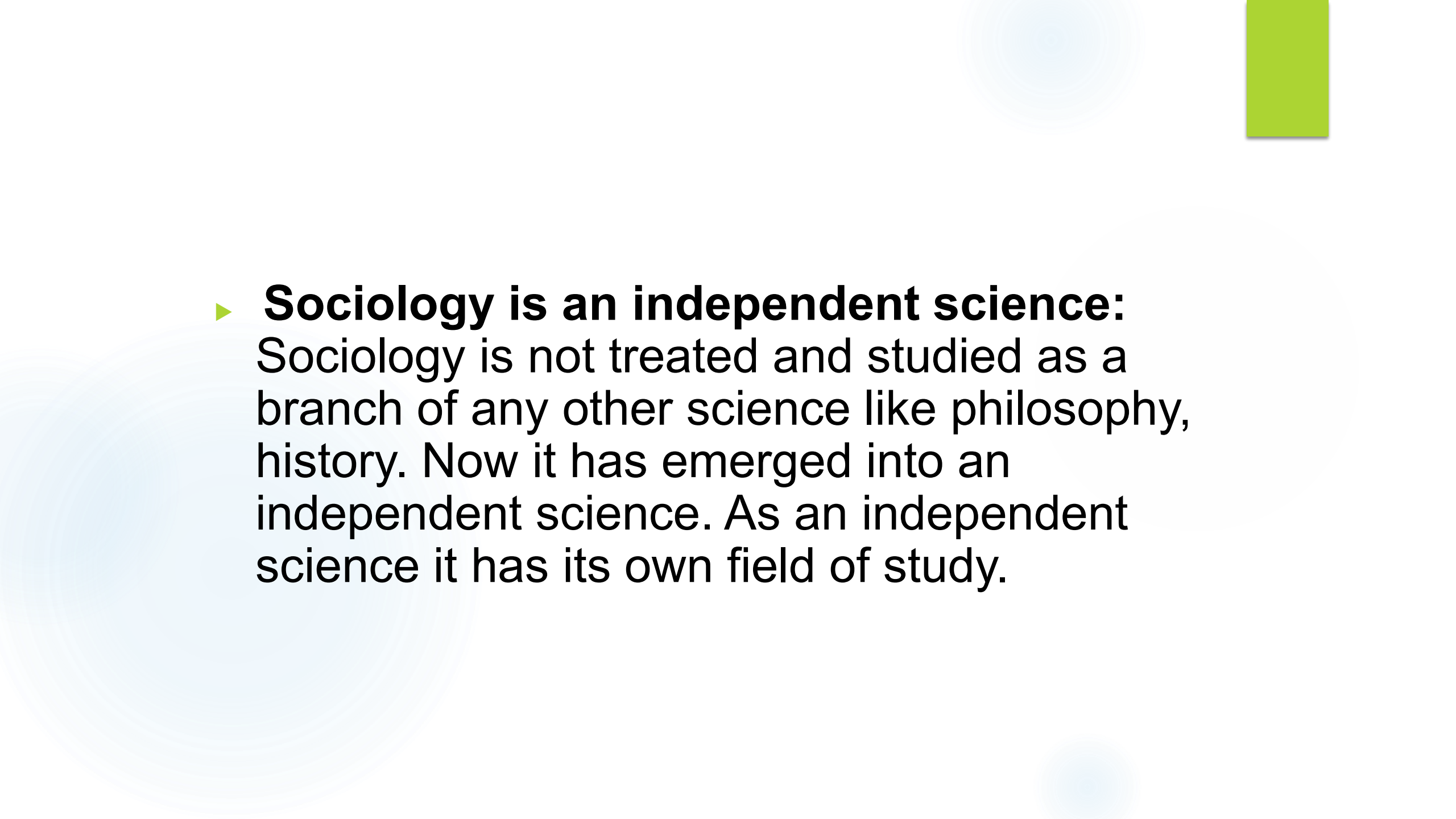
- ▶ Critique of Over-Positivism
- ▶ Warns against reducing sociology to pure positivism (like physics). Human agency and culture defy rigid laws.

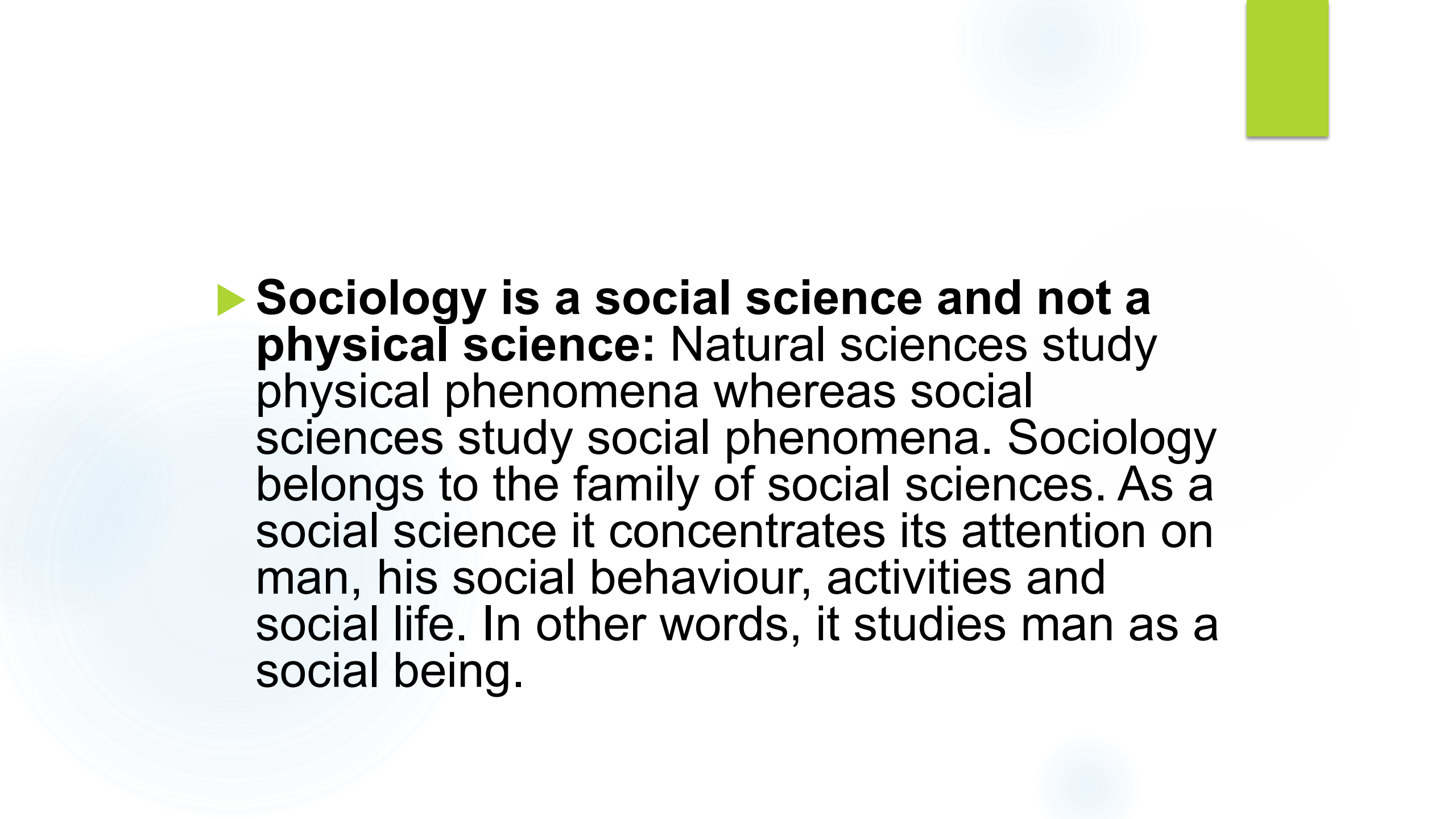


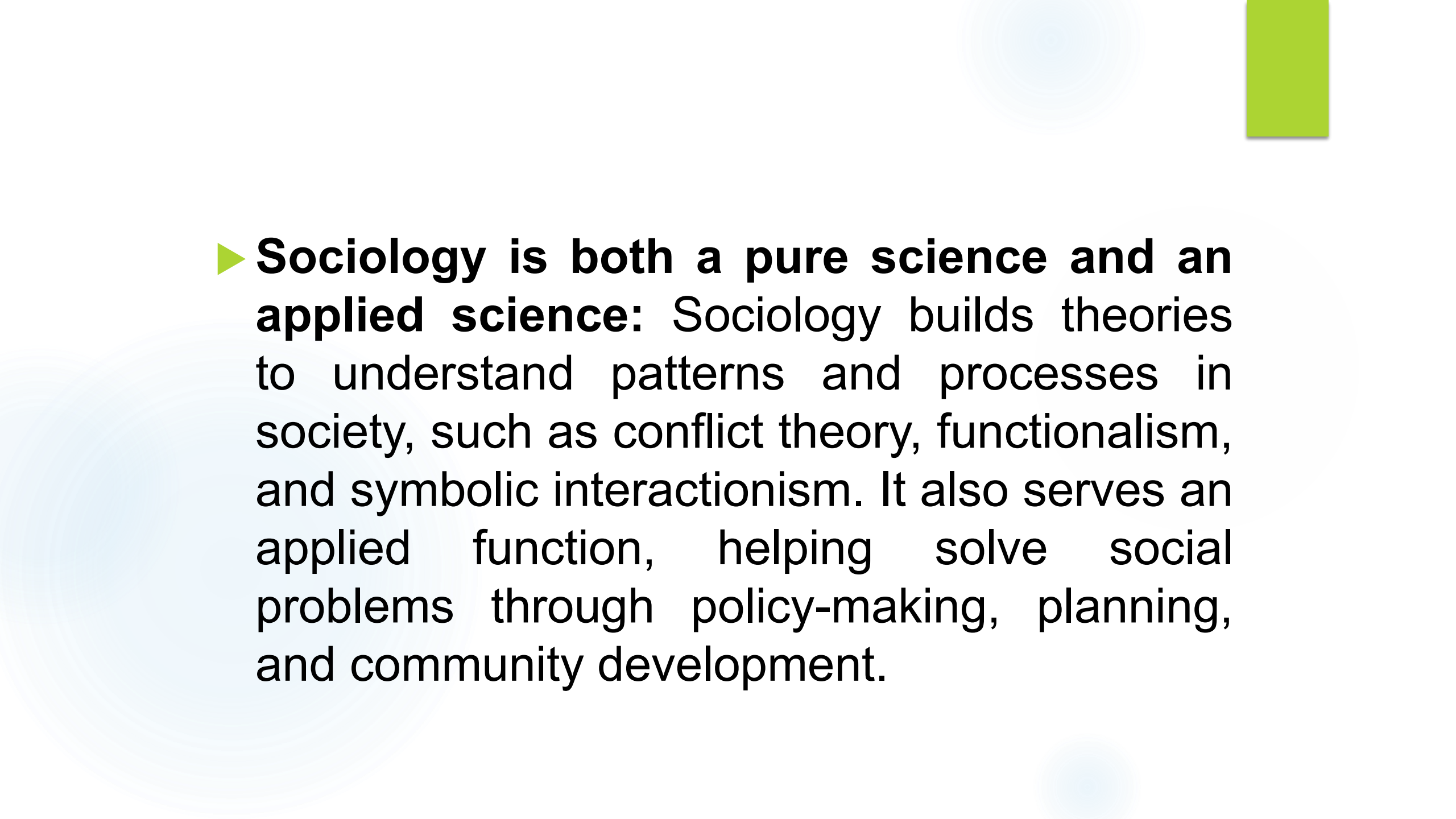
- ▶ Argues for interpretive understanding (Verstehen, à la Weber) alongside quantitative data.
- ▶ Ethical Neutrality vs. Human Relevance

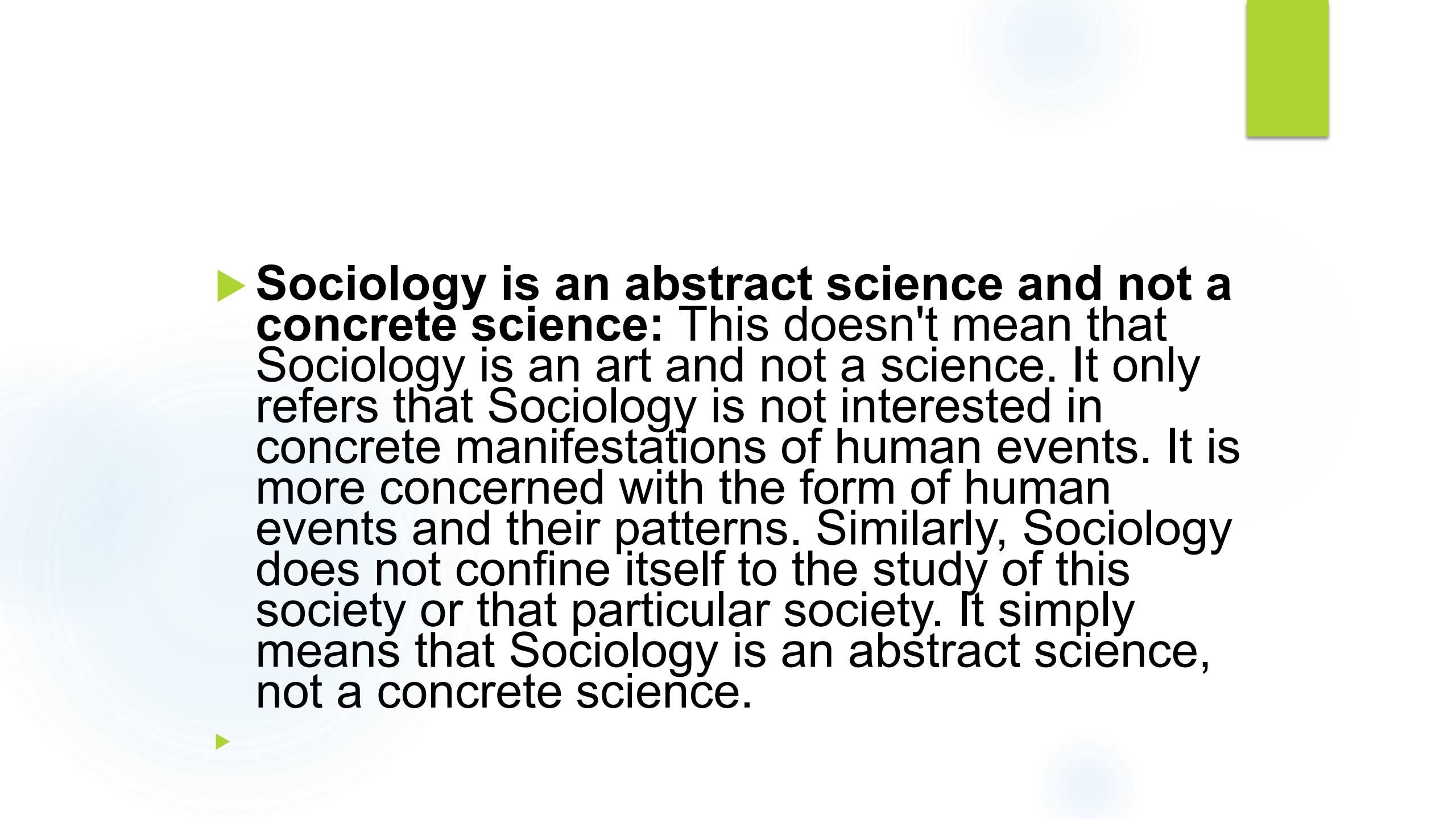



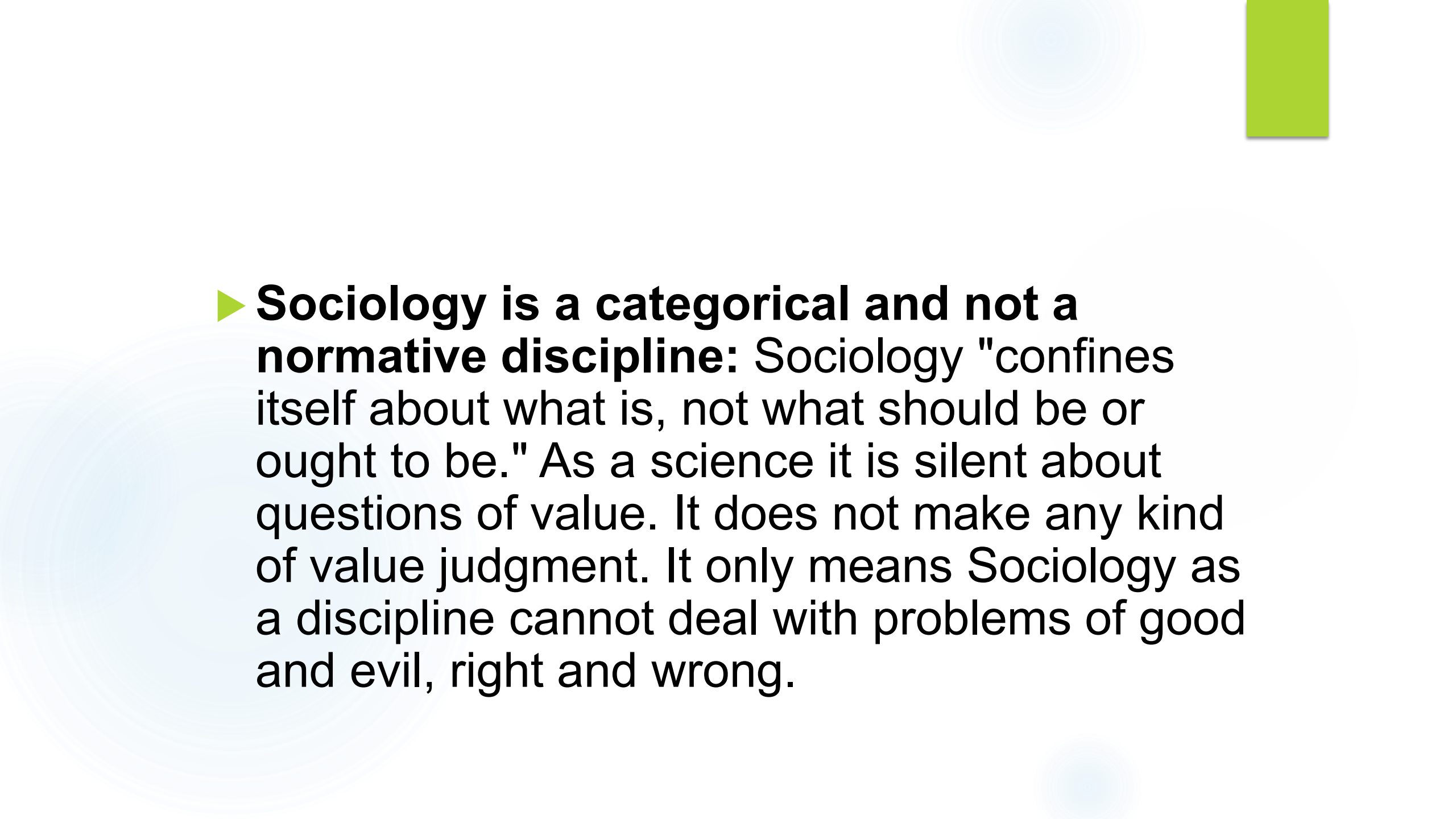
- ▶ While science demands objectivity, sociology's subject matter (inequality, power) inevitably engages with moral questions. Example: Research on poverty isn't just descriptive; it implies ethical imperatives for action.

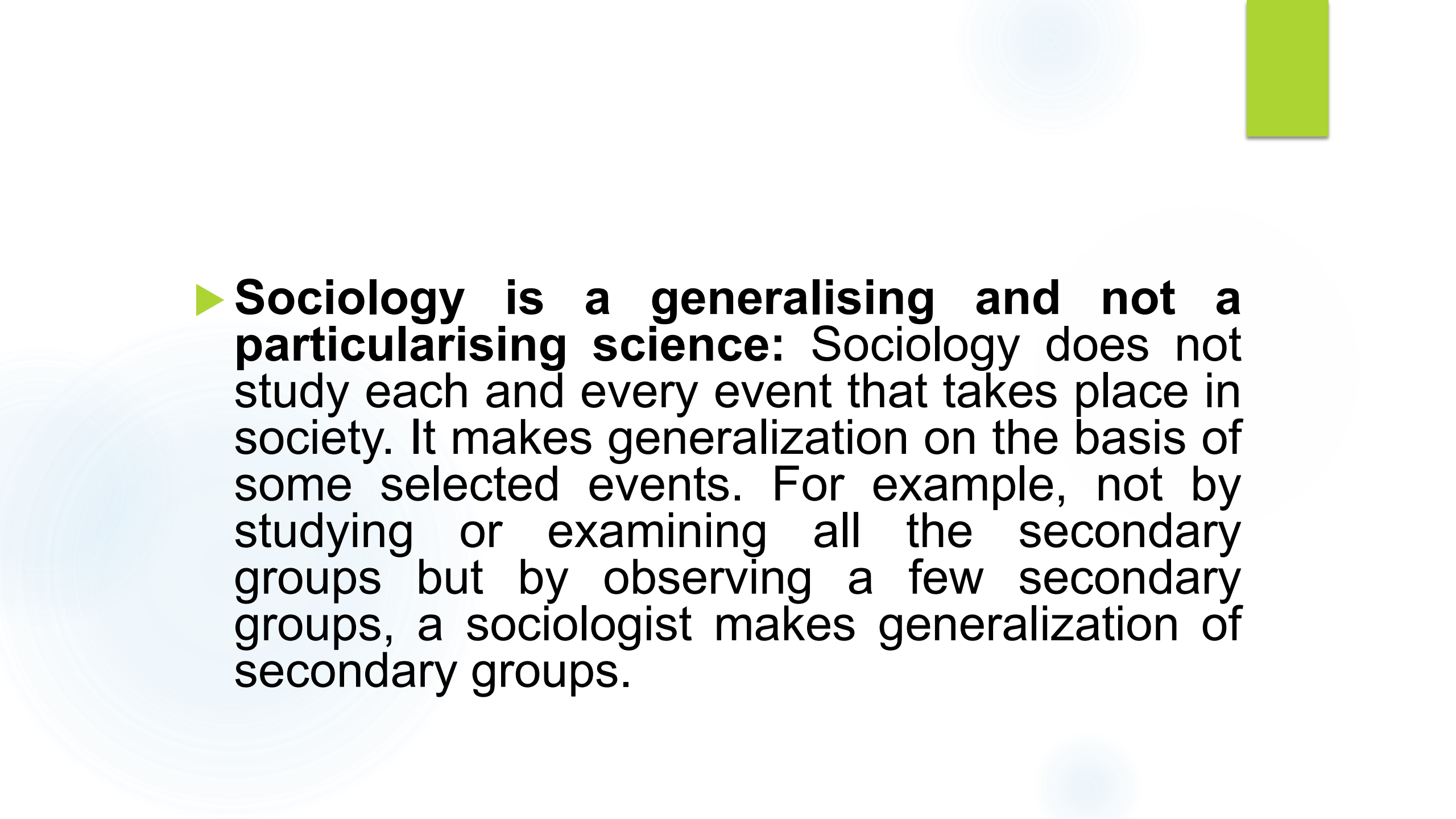
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- ▶ **Sociology is an independent science:**
Sociology is not treated and studied as a branch of any other science like philosophy, history. Now it has emerged into an independent science. As an independent science it has its own field of study.

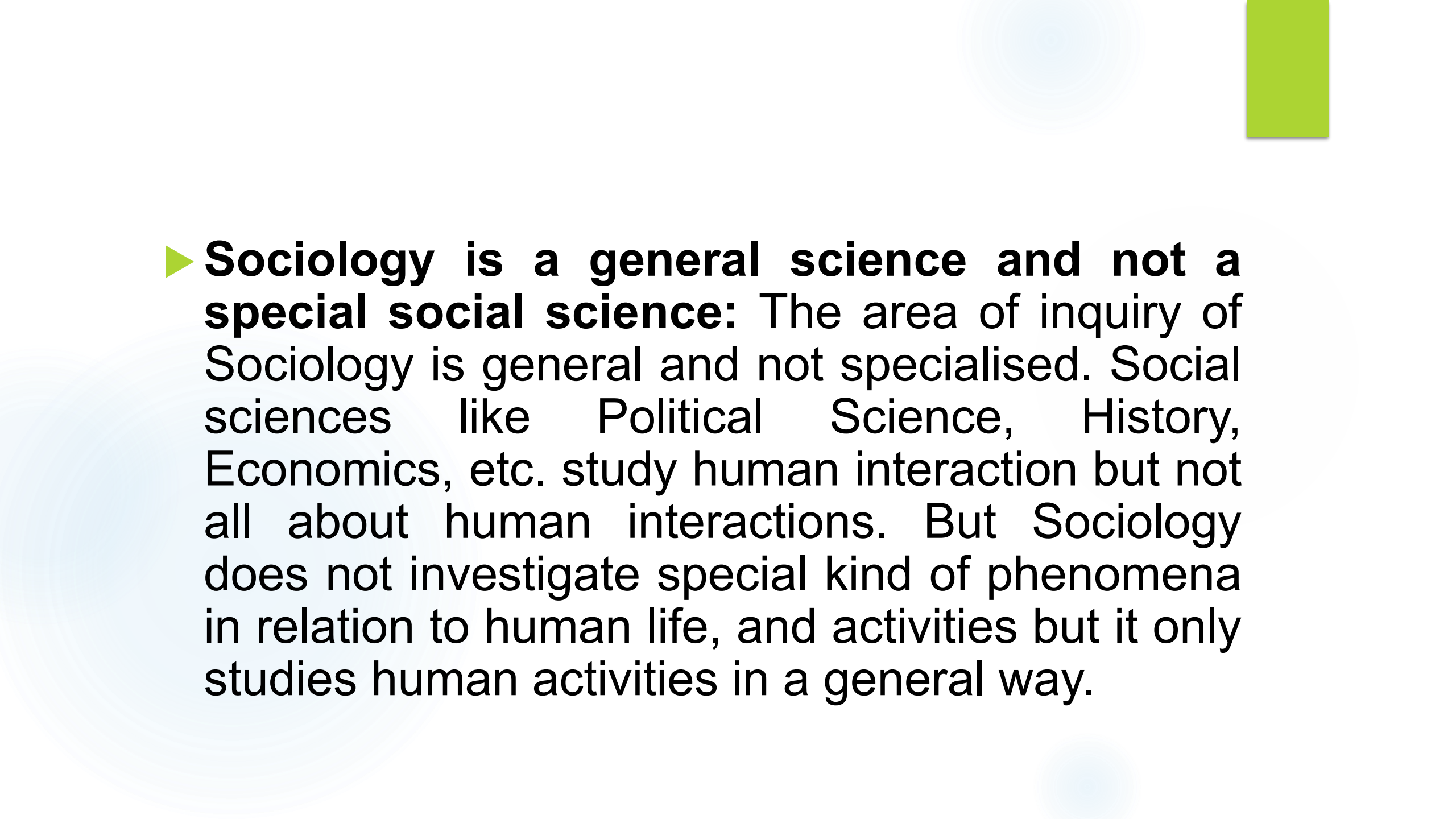
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- ▶ **Sociology is a social science and not a physical science:** Natural sciences study physical phenomena whereas social sciences study social phenomena. Sociology belongs to the family of social sciences. As a social science it concentrates its attention on man, his social behaviour, activities and social life. In other words, it studies man as a social being.


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- ▶ **Sociology is both a pure science and an applied science:** Sociology builds theories to understand patterns and processes in society, such as conflict theory, functionalism, and symbolic interactionism. It also serves an applied function, helping solve social problems through policy-making, planning, and community development.

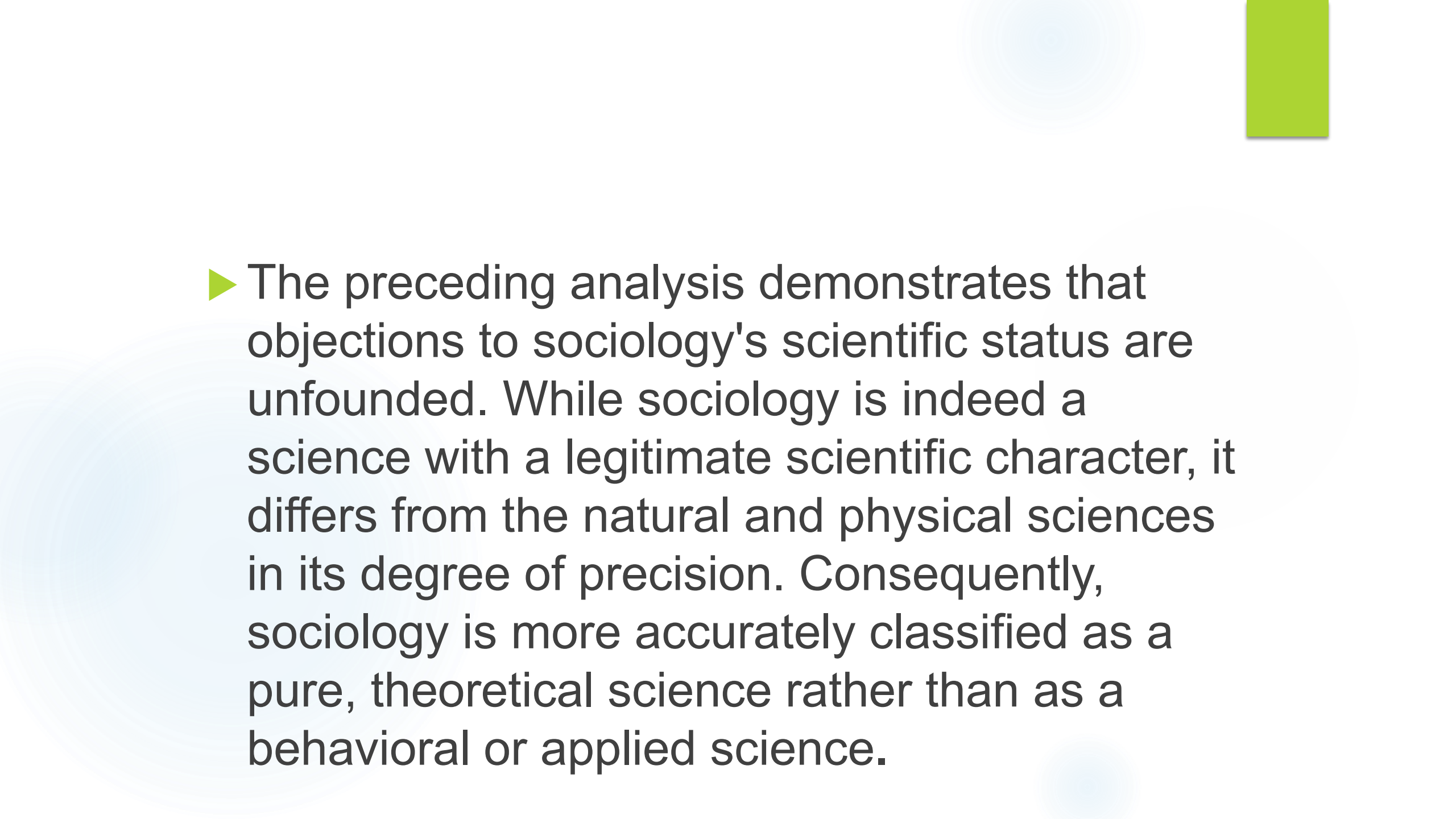
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- ▶ **Sociology is an abstract science and not a concrete science:** This doesn't mean that Sociology is an art and not a science. It only refers that Sociology is not interested in concrete manifestations of human events. It is more concerned with the form of human events and their patterns. Similarly, Sociology does not confine itself to the study of this society or that particular society. It simply means that Sociology is an abstract science, not a concrete science.
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- ▶ **Sociology is a categorical and not a normative discipline:** Sociology "confines itself about what is, not what should be or ought to be." As a science it is silent about questions of value. It does not make any kind of value judgment. It only means Sociology as a discipline cannot deal with problems of good and evil, right and wrong.

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- ▶ **Sociology is a generalising and not a particularising science:** Sociology does not study each and every event that takes place in society. It makes generalization on the basis of some selected events. For example, not by studying or examining all the secondary groups but by observing a few secondary groups, a sociologist makes generalization of secondary groups.

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- **Sociology is a general science and not a special social science:** The area of inquiry of Sociology is general and not specialised. Social sciences like Political Science, History, Economics, etc. study human interaction but not all about human interactions. But Sociology does not investigate special kind of phenomena in relation to human life, and activities but it only studies human activities in a general way.

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- ▶ **Sociology is both a rational and empirical science:** Empiricism is the approach that emphasizes experiences and the facts that result from observation and experimentation. On the other hand, rationalism stresses reason and theories that result from logical inference. The empiricist collects facts, the rationalist coordinates and arranges them. In sociological theory both are significant. Thus, Sociology is both a rational and empirical science.

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- ▶ The preceding analysis demonstrates that objections to sociology's scientific status are unfounded. While sociology is indeed a science with a legitimate scientific character, it differs from the natural and physical sciences in its degree of precision. Consequently, sociology is more accurately classified as a pure, theoretical science rather than as a behavioral or applied science.



▶ Thankyou