



LESSON 6 PART II- RELATIONSHIP OF SOCIOLOGY WITH POLITICAL SCIENCE & ECONOMICS

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

- 6.0 OBJECTIVES
- 6.1 INTRODUCTION
- 6.2 NEED FOR UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIOLOGY & POLITICAL SCIENCE
- 6.3 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIOLOGY & POLITICAL SCIENCE
- 6.4 SOCIOLOGY HAS ITS ROOTS IN POLITICS
- 6.5 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIOLOGY & ECONOMICS
- 6.6 REFERENCES



6.0 Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to understand and learn about

- Relationship Between Sociology and Political Science
- Relationship Between Sociology and Economics

6.1 Introduction

Social Sciences deal with the social universe or phenomena in general. They deal with forms and contents of man's interaction. They study human groups, society and social environment. The social phenomena which they study are as natural as the phenomena of magnetism, gravitation and electricity, and a modern city is as natural as an ocean.

Different social sciences deal with the different aspects of the social life of man. Accordingly, History, Anthropology, Social Psychology, Economics, Political Science, etc. study the various facets of the same reality, i.e. the social milieu. Naturally, these social sciences are then very much interrelated. Sociology, as social science, has joined the family of social sciences very recently. It was born at a time when there was no other social science to study the human society in its entirety with all its complexity.

It is essential for a student of sociology to know in what respect his subject differs from the other social. Sciences and in what ways it is related to them. However, this is not an easy task. It is more difficult to distinguish sociology from the various social sciences, because the same content or area of investigation is sometimes studied by different social sciences with different degrees of emphasis.

Further, some of the relationships between sociology and other social sciences have been matters of controversy. For example, there are some thinkers, like Comte, Spencer, Hobhouse, who would say that sociology is the basic or the sole social science and all the others are its subdivisions. There are others like Giddings who would argue that sociology is not the 'sole' science, not the mother of other social sciences, but only their common sister. Some others regard sociology as a specialized science of social phenomena; as specialized in its interests as are economics and political science. Again, some sociologists profess to see the closest relations between sociology and psychology on the one hand, and sociology and anthropology on the other. Still some others say that sociology and history are more interrelated than others.

In the field of social sciences interdisciplinary approach is gaining more currency today. Understanding of one social science requires some amount of understanding of the other. Further, sociology as a young science, has borrowed many things from other sciences. In return, it has enriched other sciences by its highly useful sociological knowledge. In this context it is essential to know the



relationship and differences between sociology and other social sciences (political science, economics and anthropology).

6.2 Need For Understanding The Relationship Between Sociology & Political Science

The assertion that understanding the interplay between Sociology and Political Science is crucial and it stems from several fundamental reasons:

This foundational statement, attributed to Aristotle, underscores that human existence is inherently social. Human beings prefer to live in groups and isolation is unnatural and detrimental to human development. Individuals are born into, develop within, and are constantly shaped by social contexts. Our behaviors, beliefs, values, and even our identities are products of social interaction and social structures. Political activities, such as voting, participating in political movements, or engaging with the state, are not isolated acts but are deeply embedded within this social fabric. To study political behavior without understanding the underlying social dynamics is to examine a tree without considering its roots and the soil that nourishes it. Sociology provides the framework for understanding these fundamental social structures, processes, and influences that inevitably shape political attitudes and actions.

Both Sociology and Political Science examine human behavior and social organization, but they do so with different primary focuses. Political Science traditionally concentrates on the state, government, political institutions, power, and policy. Sociology, on the other hand, offers a broader lens, studying all forms of social interaction, social groups, social institutions (including the state), social stratification, culture, and social change. By understanding the relationship between these two disciplines, we gain a more holistic perspective on human life. We can see how political phenomena are shaped by social forces and, conversely, how political decisions and structures impact social life. This integrated view is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of human societies. For instance, analyzing voting patterns requires not just understanding electoral systems (Political Science) but also the social characteristics of voters (class, ethnicity, religion - Sociology) and how these factors influence political choices.

Sociology and Political Science act as crucial nodes within the broader network of social sciences. Sociology's insights into social structures, culture, and behavior are fundamental to fields like criminology, education, social work, and communication studies. Similarly, Political Science's understanding of power, governance, and policy is vital for fields like public administration, international relations, and law. Recognizing the close relationship between Sociology and Political Science helps us appreciate how these two core disciplines connect with and inform other social scientific inquiries. For example, understanding the social roots of political ideologies (Sociology) is crucial for analyzing political movements



(Political Science), which in turn has implications for policy (Political Science and Public Administration).

Contemporary social science increasingly emphasizes multidisciplinary approaches to tackle complex issues. The problems facing humanity today – such as inequality, climate change, social unrest, and global pandemics – cannot be adequately understood or addressed by a single discipline in isolation. The relationship between Sociology and Political Science exemplifies the need for this interdisciplinary perspective. Sociological insights into social inequalities and power dynamics can enrich the analysis of political power and policy outcomes. Political Science's focus on governance and institutions can provide a framework for understanding how social problems are addressed (or not addressed) through political action. Combining their perspectives allows for a more nuanced and effective analysis of these multifaceted challenges. For instance, studying social movements requires understanding their social origins and mobilization (Sociology) as well as their political goals and impact on the state (Political Science).

Human behavior is not compartmentalized. Our political attitudes and actions are influenced by our social class, gender, ethnicity, religion, education, family background, and a myriad of other social factors. Similarly, our social interactions and opportunities are shaped by the political system, laws, and government policies. Individuals do not exist solely as "political beings" or "social beings"; they are both simultaneously. Therefore, understanding human behavior in its totality necessitates considering both the social contexts that shape political actions and the political structures that influence social life. Ignoring either dimension leads to an incomplete and potentially inaccurate understanding of human behavior. For example, understanding political apathy in a particular community might require examining social factors like alienation and lack of social capital (Sociology) as well as political factors like perceived lack of representation or responsiveness of the political system (Political Science).

6.3 Relationship between Sociology and Political Science

Political Science focuses specifically on the exercise of power, the functioning of the state and government, and the processes of political decision-making within organized social groups. It examines how societies organize themselves politically, how rules and laws are made and enforced, and the nature of authority and legitimacy. The eminent political scientists cited (Laski, Gettell, and Gilchrist) highlight that the core concern of Political Science is the study of both the state (the overarching political entity) and the government (the machinery through which the state's will is expressed). According to Oommen:

Core areas of Political Science include the historical development of the state, its various forms and functions, the nature of constitutions, public administration, legal frameworks, legislative processes, international relations, methods of



representation (like elections), political movements (such as social movements with political aims), and the diverse range of political ideologies that shape political thought and action.

Garner's argues that political science is so deeply intertwined with sociology that its distinctiveness lies more in the specialization required due to the vastness of the field rather than in any fundamental, well-defined boundaries. Both disciplines are mutually supportive. Political activity is seen as a specific type of social activity, suggesting that Political Science can be viewed as a branch of the broader field of Sociology.

Political Activity is influenced by and influences Social Life. This statement highlights the dynamic and reciprocal relationship between the political and the social. Political decisions, laws, and policies have profound impacts on social structures, norms, and interactions. Conversely, the social context – including cultural values, social inequalities, and public opinion – significantly shapes political attitudes, voting behavior, and the nature of political movements. For example, laws prohibiting discrimination (political action) can lead to changes in social attitudes and behaviors (social life). Conversely, widespread social movements advocating for LGBTQ+ rights (social action) can influence the passage of more inclusive laws (political action).

The adage "people have the government which they deserve" underscores the idea that the political system, in many ways, reflects the underlying social values, norms, and power dynamics of a society. A society characterized by deep inequalities and social divisions might be more prone to political instability or authoritarianism. Conversely, a society with strong civic engagement and a commitment to democratic values is more likely to have a responsive and accountable government. This highlights how the social fabric shapes the political landscape.

Political Science Provides Sociology with Facts About the Organization and Functions of the State and Government; Sociology Provides Political Science with Knowledge of the Origin of Political Authority: This describes a crucial exchange of information and insights. Political Science analyzes the formal structures and operations of the state (legislatures, judiciaries, executive branches) and government policies. Sociology, in turn, examines the social origins of political power and authority. It explores how power relations emerge within social groups, how certain individuals or institutions gain legitimacy, and how social norms and cultural beliefs contribute to the acceptance or rejection of political authority. For instance, sociological studies of social stratification can explain how certain groups gain disproportionate political influence.

Sociology Studies the State as One of the Human Associations; Early State as a Social Institution: While Political Science has the state as its central focus, Sociology also examines the state as one type of social institution among many



(e.g., family, religion, education). Sociology analyzes the state's role in society, its relationship with other social institutions, and the social forces that shape its development and functioning. Furthermore, the text points out that the earliest forms of the state were often more deeply embedded in social structures and customs than they were distinct political entities. Understanding this historical context, often explored by sociologists and historical sociologists, provides a richer understanding of the evolution of political organization.

Political Scientist Must Also Be a Sociologist; Laws Based on Customs and Traditions (Sociology's Concern); Family as a Social Institution (Sociology) Regulated by Marriage Laws (Political Science): This emphasizes the necessity of sociological understanding for political scientists. Laws are not created in a vacuum; they often reflect and attempt to regulate existing social customs, traditions, conventions, and usages, which are the core concern of sociology. Understanding the social context of laws is crucial for analyzing their effectiveness and impact. The example of family and marriage laws perfectly illustrates this interconnectedness. The institution of family is a fundamental element of social life studied by sociologists, but the legal framework governing marriage, divorce, and inheritance falls within the purview of Political Science. Effective policymaking in this area requires an understanding of both the social dynamics of family life and the legal structures that regulate it.

There is common foci of attention such as war, mass movements, revolutions, government control, public opinion, propaganda, leadership, elections, voting, political minorities, social legislations like civil codes – clearly demonstrates the significant overlap between the two disciplines. These phenomena have both political and social dimensions that necessitate analysis from both sociological and political science perspectives for a comprehensive understanding. For example, studying mass movements requires understanding their social origins, mobilization, and collective behavior (Sociology) as well as their political goals and impact on the state (Political Science).

6.4 Sociology Has its Roots in Politics

Historical Origins in Politics and Philosophy of History (Morris Ginsberg): Ginsberg's observation is crucial. Early intellectual inquiries into society were often intertwined with political philosophy and attempts to understand the trajectory of human history, which was frequently linked to the rise and fall of political regimes. Classical works like Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics* were not strictly confined to what we now consider "political science" but offered broader analyses of social order, justice, and the ideal state within a social context. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* and Cicero's works similarly blended political, economic, and social considerations. The clear distinction between Sociology and Political Science as separate academic disciplines is a relatively recent development.



The Enlightenment (roughly the 18th century) was a period of profound intellectual ferment that emphasized reason, individualism, and the questioning of traditional authority, including political authority. Thinkers like John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Montesquieu challenged the divine right of kings and advocated for concepts like natural rights, social contracts, and the separation of powers.

These political philosophies directly influenced the development of sociological thought by introducing the idea that social order was not divinely ordained but rather a product of human agreement and social arrangements. The focus shifted towards understanding the principles that should govern just and equitable societies. Early sociological thinkers were often grappling with the implications of these political ideals for the existing social structures.

The French Revolution as a Catalyst for Social Inquiry: The French Revolution (1789-1799) was a watershed moment that dramatically illustrated the potential for radical social and political change. The overthrow of the monarchy, the rise and fall of different political regimes, and the ensuing social upheaval deeply impacted intellectual thought. This period highlighted the fragility of social order and the powerful interplay between political action and social transformation. Early thinkers were compelled to understand the forces that could lead to such dramatic societal shifts, the dynamics of revolution, and the challenges of establishing a stable and legitimate political order in the aftermath. Thereby, these questions about social order, stability, and change became central to the emerging field of sociology.

In essence, sociology did not emerge in a vacuum. It arose from a context where fundamental questions about social order, justice, authority, and the nature of the state were being intensely debated, often in the wake of profound political transformations. The desire to understand the social forces that shaped political events and the social consequences of different political systems was a key driving force behind the early development of sociological thinking.

While sociology eventually carved out its own distinct focus on the broader study of social life, social institutions, and social processes, its initial intellectual DNA was undeniably shaped by the political questions and upheavals that preceded and accompanied its emergence as a formal discipline. The legacy of this connection continues to influence sociological inquiry into power, inequality, social movements, and the relationship between the state and society.

Difference Between the Two Disciplines:

Sociology

Political Science



Subject Matter	Science of society	Science of state and government
Scope	Studies all kinds of societies (organized and unorganized), wider scope	Studies only politically organized societies, narrower field
Focus	Studies man as fundamentally a social animal	Studies man as a political animal (ruler and being ruled)
Nature	General social science, studies all social relationships generally	Special social science, concentrates only on political human relationships
Approach	Sociological approach, diverse methods beyond scientific methods	Political approach, specific methods like historical, philosophical, comparative
Age	Comparatively young	Older science comparatively to sociology

These distinctions highlight that while both fields study human behavior in social contexts, Political Science has a more specific focus on power, governance, and the state, often employing distinct methodologies. Sociology offers a broader lens on all forms of social interaction and social organization, often delving into more abstract and qualitative aspects of social life.

6.5 Relationship Between Sociology and Economics

John Stuart Mill (1844) defines the subject of economics in a social context as:-
 “The science which traces the laws of such of the phenomena of society as arise from the combined operations of mankind for the production of wealth, in so far as those phenomena are not modified by the pursuit of any other object.”

According to Alfred Marshall, who was a neo-classical economist: “Economics is the study of mankind in the ordinary business of life; it examines that part of individual and social action which is most closely connected with the use and attainment of material requisites of well-being.” The recent interest in the motivations behind economic action suggests a growing recognition of the influence of social and psychological factors.

Economic relationships are deeply intertwined with social activities, and vice versa. Social relationships influence economic behavior, and economic changes can lead to significant social transformations. While acknowledging Economics as an independent science, it underscores the crucial role of sociological understanding in comprehending economic phenomena.

Sombart, Weber, Pareto, Oppenheimer, Schumpeter have argued that economic changes are not solely driven by purely economic factors but are also shaped by social, cultural, and political contexts. These thinkers emphasized the importance



of understanding social structures, values, and institutions to fully grasp economic development and transformations. Max Weber's work on the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism is a classic example of how religious beliefs (a social and cultural factor) can influence economic behavior and the rise of capitalism. His comparison with the "fatalistic approach" of Hinduism and Buddhism (a generalization that has been debated but highlights his sociological approach) aimed to demonstrate the influence of cultural values on economic development.

In contrast to the sociological interpretation of economic change, thinkers like Marx and Veblen argued for the primacy of economic forces in shaping social phenomena. Marx's concept of the "infrastructure" (economic relations) determining the "superstructure" (social, political, and cultural institutions) is a key example of this economic determinism. Veblen also emphasized the role of economic factors and technological development in driving social evolution.

Sociology provides valuable insights into the social context of economic activities. It studies the social organization of work (division of labor, occupations, industrial organization), the social aspects of property systems, labor relations, standards of living, employer-employee relations, social classes, and the social dimensions of economic planning and reforms. These sociological perspectives enrich the purely economic analysis of production, distribution, and consumption. Economists are increasingly recognizing the importance of social factors in economic growth and are working with sociologists to study the complexities of economic development, particularly in underdeveloped countries. The use of sociological concepts and generalizations in economic analysis is becoming more common.

Many pressing social problems, such as poverty, beggary, unemployment, overpopulation, and unregulated industrialization, have both significant social and economic dimensions. Addressing these challenges effectively requires a combined understanding from both sociological and economic perspectives. Interdisciplinary studies involving experts from both fields can lead to more comprehensive and practical solutions.

- **Marx** saw the economic system as the primary driver of social structure and change.
- **Weber** emphasized the reciprocal influence between cultural factors and economic behavior, advocating for interpretive understanding.
- **Durkheim** highlighted the social foundations of economic life and the social consequences of economic organization, particularly the division of labor.

Their work laid the groundwork for the field of economic sociology, which continues to explore the complex interplay between economic activities and social structures, institutions, and processes. Modern economic sociology draws upon these classical insights to analyze phenomena like markets, organizations, consumption, inequality, and economic development from a sociological perspective.



Difference Between Sociology and Economics

	Sociology	Economics
Focus	All kinds of social relationships	Only social relationships that are economic in character
Nature	General social science	Special social science
Scope	Wider scope, comprehensive viewpoint, younger science	Narrower scope, less comprehensive viewpoint, more mature science
Abstraction	More abstract, social variables harder to measure and quantify	More concrete, economic variables easier to measure and quantify

These distinctions emphasize that while both disciplines study human behavior within social contexts, Economics has a more specific focus on economic activities and often employs more quantitative and mathematical approaches due to the nature of economic variables. Sociology offers a broader and more qualitative understanding of the diverse range of social relationships and structures that shape human life, including but not limited to economic behavior.

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