influences the course of any research venture he undertakes, and his actions are in turn structured by the broader society in which he lives. To understand and objectify the impact of the scientist upon the research design, some version of the sociology of knowledge perspective is essential. This leads us to examine the researcher’s role in cross cultural context, for the manner in which he applies his methods and analytical tools varies somewhat according to which sociocultural system he belongs to as well as the system under study.

But even within a particular sociocultural setting, sociologists may carry out divergent and conflicting roles. The researcher must often identify with both the “scientific community” and the broader society or segments thereof. But the norms and demands of these reference groups are frequently at odds with one another. Consequently, the scientist may find himself compromising his scientific ideals in order to satisfy other demands—for example, to protect his social position or the image of the discipline itself. These compromises frequently result in modifications in the ideal research procedures, some of which may become regularized and standardized. These discrepancies between the “ideal” and the “actual” norms in research give rise to a broad range of problems having far-reaching theoretical implications for social science.

Then too, the researcher himself is a variable in the research design. He

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As we observed above, we believe scientists should search for objective knowledge. Moreover, we assume that the scientific method, in its abstract principles, is unvarying regardless of the kind of data under study. However, for us these principles are of a rather different sort than those enunciated by the positivists (see Chapter 2). Then too, we recognize that fundamental differences between natural and social data affect the way in which the broader principles are applied and that specific research methods and analytic procedures must be adapted to fit the differing kinds of data. Although some positivists admit this at least implicitly, they have neglected to examine the manner in which the scientist necessarily modifies his research procedures when he studies social phenomena.

The social scientist must cope with a far greater range of variables than the natural scientist. Furthermore, the relationships among the variables in the social order are not as "stable" over time and space as those in the natural one. And what is especially significant for us, the social scientist's relationship to his subject matter differs appreciably in degree, if not in kind, from the natural scientist's. These propositions are hardly novel. Herbert Spencer advanced some of them in his *The Study of Sociology* when he wrote:

> Here, then, is a difficulty to which no other science presents anything analogous. To cut himself off in thought from all his relationships of race, and country, and citizenship—to get rid of all those interests, prejudices, likings, superstitions, generated in him by the life of his own society and his own time—to look on all the changes societies have undergone and are undergoing, with reference to nationality, or creed, or personal welfare; is what the average man cannot do at all, and what the exceptional man can do very imperfectly.  

What is unique about our formulation is the effort to detail the manifold implications of these issues for social research and, moreover, to accomplish this within an explicitly sociology of knowledge orientation. In addition, we utilize this analysis as a means for suggesting improvements in various research procedures.

The positivists tend to assume, as do some neo-idealists as well, that simply stating that a scientist *qua* scientist must be objective is sufficient to attain this goal. Thus Lundberg, Schrag, and Larsen argue:

> It is not the business of the sociologist, in his work of arriving at scientific laws of group behavior, to permit himself to be influenced by considerations of how his conclusions will coincide with existing notions or what will be the effect of his findings on the social order. However, the sociologist can exert his influence *as a citizen* to ensure that scientific findings will be used only for the benefit of the community.  

But they do not effectively demonstrate how this objectivity (specifically the separation between the scientist role and the citizen role) can be achieved.

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15 William R. Catton, Jr., *From Animistic to Naturalistic Sociology* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966). Catton, a contemporary exponent of the heritage of positivism, also fails in this text, except in passing (342–343), to examine the issue of how objectivity can be attained in the social sciences.

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The Sociology of Knowledge Orientation

Inasmuch as we rely so heavily upon this particular theory, some explication of our use of it seems in order. Although this viewpoint was in greater or lesser degree expressed in the writings of Spencer, Durkheim, and Marx, among other early social scientists, we shall, for purposes of our own analysis, rely upon the works of Mannheim, who generally is credited with the first full-scale exposition of the sociology of knowledge perspective.\(^{20}\)

Mannheim's work on the nature of knowledge has been a source of pride and consternation to social theorists, for his theory both resolves problems and creates others of its own. Mannheim, although influenced considerably by Marx, also drew upon the Geisteswissenschaften school of Dilthey and others, particularly in his methodology and his development of the notion that knowledge is a product of one's social and cultural setting. More specifically, for Mannheim knowledge is a product of one's social class within a society.


Our solution to the difficulties posed by the sociology of knowledge perspective differs from Mannheim's. We shall utilize this orientation not as an end in itself but rather as a methodological device. Our main hypothesis is that with this tool the scientist can move beyond his own system to a degree, provided he employs the sociology of knowledge as a mirror in which to examine himself in crosscultural perspective. If the researcher compares his own actions with those of scientists in other sociocultural settings or in an earlier era within his own society, he can attain an understanding of the universal problems that face anyone who seeks to analyze human action.

By examining the social forces that impinge upon the social researcher, we can at the very least objectify them and thus bring them to the level of consciousness. This objectification of the social pressures upon the scientist is a necessary, if not a sufficient, condition for achieving some measure of control over them. Sheer knowledge of the hidden biases makes it possible to bypass them or eliminate them completely from the research design. This procedure is in one sense analogous to the eidetic method of the phenomenologists whereby one peels away the many layers of bias in the search for objective knowledge.

That knowledge is to be preferred to ignorance is an underlying postulate of this study. If this assumption is accepted, the sociology of knowledge perspective can be employed as a tool to further rationality as opposed to irrationality. Viewed as a methodological tool, the sociology of knowledge perspective not only prevents any lapse into an antiscientific, historicist position but permits one


\(^{22}\) Mannheim, op. cit., 136–158.

12 A Methodology for Social Research

| to avoid, at least to a degree, becoming a captive of one's own time and place. |