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SOME RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROPEAN
SOCIOLOGY

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This paper is not a survey of European sociology. It is merely a summary of some personal observations buttressed by limited references to published materials. It therefore is subject to many limitations. The cultural and personal biases of the reporter and the problems of sampling both in the experiences of participant observation and in the selection of items to report indicate the need for caution in the interpretation of the developments that are reported. The paper is based primarily upon experiences while a Fulbright lecturer in sociology at the University of Groningen, The Netherlands, in 1957-1958. That position provided opportunity to make contacts with sociologists from many nations, especially in Northwestern Europe.

The two main divisions of this report indicate its content. First is a brief sketch of some general observations on sociology and sociologists of the Old World; then follows a description of the educational program which produces sociologists. Only passing attention will be given to nations in which the writer had few contacts; The Netherlands will receive a lion's share of the allotted time and space.

SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGISTS IN EUROPE

A prominent American sociologist once stated that the emphasis of American sociology is upon the question, "Is it true?" while that of European sociology is upon the question, "Is it significant?" This observation appears to be as true as most sociological generalizations. When hedged properly by exceptions and qualifications it summarizes neatly a basic distinction between typical orientations of the New and Old Worlds.

The American sociologist is much concerned with the "truth" of conclusions of studies. This "truth" is checked through tests of reliability and validity and through other scientific procedures. He tends to be much concerned with statistical measures of sample variations, tests of significance of differences, and indicators of bias in observation. He stresses the use and need for refinements of instruments for the measurement of social phenomena, the construction and application of operational definitions, and the widespread application of the scientific method. His work and its results consequently have been labeled "fads and foibles" by European-oriented sociol-

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ogists, for they believe the results of this procedure are of only trifling importance.

The European sociologist, on the other hand, is involved in problems which concern the basic traits and trends of his society or even of all civilization. American empiricists are convinced that such endeavors are primarily philosophical and metaphysical, not worthy of the name "science" at all. They seek objective evidences of the "truth" of the conclusions and usually as a result label the Europeans' work with the great problems of mankind as idle speculation or personal philosophizing by the scholar.

European sociology does have an authoritarian tinge: the viewpoints and subjective opinions of recognized intellectual leaders are accepted as if they were facts. This contrasts with the democratic tinge of American sociology in which the study of individuals, cases, detailed statistics, and other objectively observable material is undertaken with an emphasis upon reporting the methods of research in such detail that other competent scholars may repeat the observations and check them and the patterns of logical reasoning involved in their analysis to determine the validity and reliability of the conclusions.

The preceding generalizations, although still valid as depicting an ideal type of European in contrast to American sociology, are gradually losing their validity. European and American sociologists are moving closer toward one another as both increasingly work with similar methods and techniques. Both are turning their attention to theories of the middle range between the extremes of all-inclusive speculative theories and minute working hypotheses that are unrelated to a larger body of sociological theory.

As the following evidence about European sociologists and sociology will verify, European and American sociology are in an advanced stage of courtship and engagement in Western Europe if they are not already wedded to each other.

*The UNESCO Institute for Social Sciences:*¹ One of the chief influences bringing sociologists together within Europe as well as from all parts of the world has been the UNESCO Institute for Social Sciences which has its headquarters in Köln (Cologne), Germany. Established in 1951 with the special purpose of working on problems in Germany and helping Germany to reestablish contacts with other countries, the Institute's work is of world-wide significance.

Founded in a period of rapid change and reorientation in Europe, the Institute's immediate and long-range objectives are summarized in four statements from its constitution:

1. To develop, without prejudice to national, racial or cultural differences, activities designed to promote cooperation between social scientists and to create a living center for international contacts which would enable social scientists from different countries to compare and exchange ideas, methods and experience in their respective fields of social science;

¹ The data in this section are based upon personal conversations with Dr. Nels Anderson, Director, participation in the Family Seminar and a descriptive pamphlet, "Work and Objectives," UNESCO Institute for Social Sciences, Cologne, Germany, 1957.

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2. To develop social science research, giving primary emphasis to objective studies and social problems of practical importance, particularly to youth, and to the elaboration of new research methods;
3. To provide a permanent link in Germany between those engaged with social science problems, and social science theory and practice in various countries; and
4. To secure the full support of social scientists for UNESCO's efforts to further international understanding, and to induce them to educate youth in the spirit of peace and international cooperation.²

By the third year of the Institute's existence the rapid recovery of German social science led to the recognition that its international role was more urgently needed than its task of meeting the more specifically German research needs. It hence became a new type of agency in social research, an agency which not only held meetings for the discussion of research of international importance, but which also initiated and undertook such research itself, coordinated research on problems common to more than one nation, promoted cross-border research projects, and assisted in the planning and operation of such projects. Its emphasis has not been upon supervision of international research projects, for supervision implies inequality between those engaged in the work. Instead it has stressed coordination which recognizes clear understanding and agreement of purpose between equals, none of whom is subordinate to another. As a neutral agency serving as a middleman not linked with any one nation it has made possible cooperative enterprises by research institutes which could not have been performed effectively by isolated agencies.

Research projects completed under the direct action of the Institute include studies of the social and political status of women in Germany, the integration of foreign ethnic groups in Germany, rural villages under the impact of industrial change, the social profile of the German adult population, statistical characteristics of rural families in the German Federal Republic, social aspects of labor mobility in Western Europe, the evaluation of small international seminars, and the study of leisure in the industrial-urban society. Topics on which work is currently in progress include leisure in modern society, the study of the aging population, "common ideas about foreign peoples," social problems in cultural border areas, and study of the modern family.

In addition to sponsoring and coordinating research, the UNESCO Institute for Social Sciences has organized small specialized seminars for experts. Conducted on an informal basis, these have brought together specialists from many nations in Europe and other continents, thus working toward global awareness by researchers of what others are contributing to the methodology and substantive knowledge of their respective disciplines. Cooperation between research groups in the various nations is stimulated by these seminars, and many inter-

² "Work and Objectives," *op. cit.*, p. 2.

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national personal friendships have been created and cultivated by them. At least three such types of seminars, each on a relatively continuing basis with a membership that endures beyond the brief periods of actual meeting, have been established.

One of these is the Seminar on the Social Problems of Cultural Borders. Institutes from at least seven European nations have participated. The purpose is to conduct and coordinate research dealing with the social problems of cultural boundary zones, areas which sometimes also include political borders. Each research project connected with the program includes study of a border community which has several thousand inhabitants, one-fourth or more of whom are a minority cultural group in the area. Cultural tensions on the community level are a central concern of these studies. Agreement on basic hypotheses, definitions, methods of study, and use of a common questionnaire has resulted from the seminar's work. Each research project is financed by the participating institute.

A second seminar deals with leisure in the industrial urban society. Initiated by three German institutes, work on this topic immediately indicated that German problems of leisure were much like those of other nations. The project of study and research planning therefore was soon shared by research institutes from eleven nations. Agreements have been reached on the design and objectives of an international program of study of the phenomena of leisure in modern society. Each cooperating institute provides its own funds for the conducting of a study of leisure in an industrial city of 50,000 to 100,000 population. Periodic meetings of the researchers take place for the discussion of methods, objectives, and problems. The ultimate objective of the seminar is expected to be comparable data available for educators and youth leaders in the various nations and for those who develop public policy with respect to the problems of leisure.

The third of these seminars deals with family research. It was the writer's privilege to participate in the fourth of the seminar's meetings and thus to become a member of UNESCO's International Seminar on Family Research. The Seminar has met annually since 1954, with a total of about sixty different persons participating at all meetings to 1958 and about fifteen to twenty at any given meeting. Researchers are enabled to meet colleagues from other nations, to learn the projects on which others are working and the methods they use, to share in the findings of research in other lands, and to get constructive criticism for the guidance of their own research work. Most of the discussion at the seminar's meetings is in English, although interpreters translate from and into French and German for participants who either cannot understand or cannot speak English.

At the fourth meeting of the family seminar in 1957 ten European nations, including Poland, were represented. In addition, one representative was from India (a scholar at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague), one from Togo (a scholar at the Seine in France), and four from the United States (Fulbright research scholars and lecturers in The Netherlands and Denmark). Most of the participants were sociologists, although architecture, geography, and a few other

disciplines concerned with study of the family were also represented. Informal summaries of research completed or in progress were given by several participants, and five small sub-sections met and brought summary reports to the plenary sessions of the seminar during the five-day meeting. These dealt with such topics as old age, fertility, ecological studies, the social milieu of the family, and cultural models.

Although no perfect seminar in which all members work simultaneously on the same research topic is possible because of the variation of interests among participants and the broad scope of problems covered in family research, the seminar does much to acquaint lone researchers with one another, to promote informal association among them both during and between sessions, to stimulate interest in family research, and to increase the competence of the researchers and the soundness of their conclusions. Decisions on what to study and how to study it are facilitated. Suggestions are received on what data ought to be collected, how they should be classified, and in what manner it is best to report the findings. The interpretation of data is made easier by the sharing of hypotheses and of tentative implications of the findings for policy.

Three volumes reporting the papers presented to the Family Seminar have been published.³ Each of these is in three languages; the paper itself is in the language used by the author, which may be either English, French, or German, and abstracts are presented in the other two languages.

At least five additional books have been published by the UNESCO Institute for Social Sciences, the most recent of which is an international analysis of urbanism by Nels Anderson, its director.⁴

The Employment of Sociologists: As has been the case in the United States, most European sociologists have been employed in the teaching profession in the universities. As the programs of universities are expanding and sociology is becoming recognized as a separate discipline, opportunities of sociologists for academic employment are increasing.

The contributions of European sociologists to the development of their discipline in the New World is well known to us, but often overlooked is the fact that many of the pioneers of sociology worked under titles that did not directly betray their interest in the emergent field of sociology. The academic tradition which recognizes only a limited number of established faculties causes sociologists even today to serve as members of the faculties of law, economics, or philosophy.

Furthermore, the specialized subdivisions so prominent in American sociology are often treated as separate disciplines, if they are recognized at all. Thus in The Netherlands criminology is considered

³ Each is entitled *Recherches sur la Famille* (Studies of the Family). Vol. I was published in 1956 in Tübingen by J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck); Vol. II in 1957 and Vol. III in 1958 were published in Göttingen by Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht.

⁴ Nels Anderson, *The Urban Community: A World Perspective*, New York, Henry Holt and Co., 1959. The others are G. Wurzbacher and R. Pflaum, *Das Dorf im Spannungsfeld industrieller Entwicklung*, Stuttgart, Ferdinand Enke Verlag, 1954; Erich Reigrotzki, *Soziale Verflechtungen in der Bundesrepublik*, Tübingen, J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1956; Gabriele Bremme, *Die Politische Rolle der Frau in Deutschland*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1956; and Renate Mayntz, *Soziale Schichtung und sozialer Wandel in einer Industriegemeinde*, Stuttgart, Ferdinand Enke Verlag, 1958.

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a branch of law distinct from sociology; research in medical sociology is one aspect of social and preventive medicine and hence is widely separated from other sociology, and population problems are dealt with chiefly by governmental employees who have had little or no sociological training. Social work which is based so heavily upon sociology in America is not even a graduate study in The Netherlands; few persons study sociology as a means of entering that profession. (Here, too, however, American influence is becoming evident.)

The research of European sociologists typically, although with some notable exceptions, has been anti-empirical, based upon broad theoretical and philosophical generalizations and upon deductive reasoning more than upon inductive analysis of statistical facts and the testing of specific hypotheses. The empirical research that has been undertaken has often been of the variety called sociography, which is closely akin to descriptive ecological analysis. This work has often had an immediate practical goal associated with the planning of public policy, church strategy, city planning, or industrial development.

Since World War II American influence on European sociology has been very strong in Western Europe. Not only UNESCO's Institute for Social Sciences, but also the Fulbright exchange program, Smith-Mundt lectureships, and various foundation-sponsored research grants have brought large numbers of American sociologists and sociological graduate students to Europe, as well as many Europeans to America. American sociological books and periodicals are prized highly in Europe, and in general much respect is given to professional developments in America. Empirical research is thus gaining an increased number of practitioners, especially among the younger generation of sociologists.

The "internationalization" of sociology within Europe is accompanied by increasing cross-fertilization between continents. Periodicals such as *Current Sociology*, until recently published by UNESCO, *Acta Sociologica* in Scandinavia, *Sociologische Gids* in The Netherlands, and the *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* in Germany are especially prominent promoters of the American type of empirical research. The International Congresses of Sociology which have been held since the war are also contributing to an exchange of knowledge and of methodological techniques which is conducive to the growth of empirical research.

THE EDUCATION OF EUROPEAN SOCIOLOGISTS

The teaching of sociology in Northwestern Europe takes place in institutes of sociology or of social science which have been established alongside the traditional faculties of theology, law, letters and philosophy, science, medicine, and in recent decades economics. Like the other institutes of the universities, the sociological institute is loosely tied to the rest of the program through the professional status of the director. Thus Professor Pieter J. Bouman, the writer's host professor at the University of Groningen in The Netherlands, is a member of the united faculties of letters and philosophy, law, and economics.

The institute in which the student studies is so directly linked with

the professor at its head that he indeed goes to the university to study under *the* professor. To be sure, there will be lecturers or docents, assistants, and a few colleagues from other institutes who direct his studies in certain courses, but the entire program clearly bears the imprint of the dominant professor. The sociological student comes in order to learn what the professor tells him; in most institutes he is not encouraged to read and think critically, as is the case in all programs of the European university.⁵ The professor is a respected expert who writes his opinions in books and articles and whose opinions then must be learned as "the truth" by his students. As one who "knows everything" in his discipline, he is respected highly and must not be criticized, for he cannot make a mistake! Where "insight" more than empirical research is the source of knowledge, this condition may be inevitable. It undoubtedly has much to do with the low esteem of Americans for much contemporary European sociology.⁶ As American patterns are adopted, this condition changes.

Each sociological institute is relatively autonomous. The professors, within broad limits, initiate or choose their own courses, determine course content, set the standards demanded of the students, and even do most of their own scheduling. Teaching hours are generally low, the academic year is short, and vacation periods are long. The professors' salaries are high, and no occupational group has higher social status.

From the students' viewpoint, the university program is light and easy, except in the period immediately preceding examinations, of which there are few. Before each of his exams the student typically discontinues attendance at *all* lectures for three or four weeks "for the sake of his studies." The student has high social status. Tuition costs are very low in terms of American standards. Few students (but an increasing number) work while actively enrolled in the university, for most of them are supported by their families. All who complete their studies are assured of a position, for the primary qualification for many professional and semi-professional positions is a university degree, with little regard for other indicators of competence.

The road to admission to the university is a hard one. The student must complete work at a secondary school (*gymnasium*, *lyceum*, or equivalent) and pass difficult final examinations. His program on the secondary level includes several foreign languages (English, French, and German as a minimum in The Netherlands), physical and biological sciences, literature, history, geography, mathematics, music, art, and other subjects. (The exact content of the program varies with the type of school in which he is enrolled.) Only a selected segment of the population attend the secondary schools that qualify their graduates for admission to the universities, and a substantial number of those who reach the final examinations are flunked.

The secondary school pupil studies his homework long hours at

⁵ This was one of the major criticisms of European education by Perry Miller, Professor of American Literature at Harvard University, after his Fulbright lectureship in The Netherlands. ("What Drove Me Crazy in Europe," *The Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 187, no. 3, March 1951, pp. 41-45).

⁶ For intimations of the status of European sociology in terms of American standards, see book reviews of European works in professional American journals.

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night, seldom finishing it before 10:00 p.m. on school nights. The European student works as hard in secondary school as the American student works in college; he seems to study as little in the university (except just before his examinations) as the American pupil does in high school! Between the two, it is likely that the completion of a university program in either system is the result of comparable total amounts of effort.

A Dutch University Program: To illustrate the specific content of a typical sociological program of study, an attempt is made to describe the requirements for various levels of training at the University of Groningen, The Netherlands, as of the school year 1957-58. The program has three natural terminal points, the candidate's examination, the doctoral examination, and the doctor's degree.⁷

The studies for the candidate's examination (*kandidaatsexamen*) normally take three years. After the first year of studies three preliminary examinations (*propaedeutische tentamen*) are given covering the fields of introduction to sociology, the theory and methods of social research (sociography), and statistics. During the second year individual examinations are arranged in social and economic history and introduction to jurisprudence. Toward the end of the second year an examination over sociological literature may be taken. The student takes a test in either economics, philosophy, or psychology during his third year. A paper (*scriptie*) of 25 pages must be turned in before admission to the candidate's examination is granted, and the student must also have turned in reports of one major or two smaller excursions. The candidate's examination covers 1. the field of sociology, including the methods and theory of social research, 2. the two subjects of economics, philosophy, or psychology in which the student was not previously examined, and 3. any areas in which previous examinations were not satisfactory.

Upon successful completion of his candidate's examination, the student may work toward the doctoral (*doctoraal*) examination. Normally this takes two additional years. It covers the areas of empirical and philosophical sociology, social justice (*sociaal recht*), social psychology, and one subject of the student's own choice from such subjects as social pedagogy, criminology, constitutional law, economics, cultural anthropology, and statistics. In either or both social justice and social psychology and in the subject of choice individually arranged examinations may be taken. The doctoral examination itself can be taken only after three conditions have been met: 1. a period of at least three months' probation in practical experience (*de praktijk*), 2. proved ability in theory and methods of social research, and 3. the submission of a paper (*scriptie*) of about 60 pages. This paper normally includes both references to literature pertinent to its subject and the reporting of direct personal observation or research. Formal course work is completed when the student has passed the doctoral examination.

⁷ This description is based chiefly upon *Groninger Universiteits Gids, XXVI, Academiejear 1957-1958*, Groningen, J. B. Wolters, n.d., pp. 213-217, and "Rijksuniversiteit te Groningen, Verenigde Faculteiten voor de Sociale Wetenschappen, Studiejear 1957/58," mimeographed.

The doctor's degree is granted only after a formal public examination called a promotion (*promotie*). The prerequisites for this test are successful completion of the doctoral examinations, the writing and publishing of a dissertation, and payment of the necessary fees. The promotion usually takes place only after several years have elapsed since the last active period of study at the university. Approval by the sponsoring professor, which is necessary for admission to the examination, is the equivalent of passing, for failing is the equivalent by the examining committee of telling the professor that his colleagues lack confidence in him and is likely to result in his own demotion. Medieval professorial garments and ceremonial make these examinations colorful and interesting to observe. The examiners include the rector of the university and professors from its various faculties. The examination is timed to last one hour. It involves defending the dissertation, copies of which have been given in advance to all members of the examining committee. A formal reception follows, and in the evening the new doctor gives a dinner party for his sponsoring professor, relatives, and friends.

The costs of publication of the dissertation, examination fees, and socially expected receptions connected with getting the doctorate are often the equivalent of a thousand dollars or more. Few persons who have passed the doctoral examination complete the work for the full doctorate because of the expense as well as the effort involved. The title of *doctorandus* (doctoral candidate?) is hence gradually taking on a more and more independent status; in time it may evolve into the position of a parallel degree similar to our master's degrees.

For each level of examination the Sociological Institute lists explicit requirements in terms of lectures to attend and books to read. Most of the readings are published in the Dutch language, but a significant number are also from English, French, and German sources. American books included on the reading list for the candidate's examination include Pauline Young's *Scientific Social Surveys and Research*, P. A. Samuelson's *Economics*, and H. E. Burtt's *Applied Psychology*. The literature list for the doctoral examination includes R. K. Merton's *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Talcott Parsons' *Essays in Sociological Theory, Pure and Applied*, W. F. Ogburn's *Social Change*, Gist and Halbert's *Urban Society*, Burgess and Locke's *The Family*, and Miller and Form's *Industrial Sociology*. American and other foreign influences are hence very obvious at all levels of Dutch sociological education. Perhaps an international flavor is easier to impart in small nations in which the discipline has fewer personnel, less national published material, and students who are capable of reading foreign languages.

CONCLUSIONS

American influences on Dutch sociology have been very pronounced since World War II. During this post-war period sociology has grown rapidly, America has had high respect, many American exchange scholars have been teaching and doing research in The Netherlands, and several Dutch sociologists have visited America.