

8

6

Research Methodology

A Trend Report

By

T. N. Madan

Purpose and Scope

THE PURPOSE of this paper is briefly to survey publications on 'research methodology' in the cognate fields of sociology and social anthropology in India with a view to examining their scope and limitations. It is based on books and papers in English by Indian and foreign scholars, whether published in India or abroad, dealing with methodological problems. Since the volume of such writings is by no means large, occasional reference has been made to some substantive works which seem to be significant in terms of their methodology. Besides, an attempt has been made to survey a fairly large number of publications so that research techniques in use may be identified.

The period covered in the paper is ~~two decades~~ from 1950 to 1970. More sociological and social anthropological research on India has been done, written about and published during these two decades than during any comparable period in the past.

In what follows, no attempt has been made to distinguish between sociology and social anthropology, though some of the authors whose views are discussed do so. The distinction is not relevant here as contributions from both fields have been examined. Moreover, it is clear from a perusal of the literature that sociologists or social anthropologists working on India have not exclusively relied upon certain techniques. Boundaries set up in the name of methodology seem to have been respected much less in the field of study under review than probably elsewhere. Thus, G. S. Ghurye, one of the founding fathers of academic sociology in India, has not been content to remain an arm-chair scholar, but has done fieldwork to collect

data for some of his studies (Ghurye, 1957 and 1963). Similarly D. N. Majumdar (1903-1960), one of the foremost anthropologists of his time, was also one of the first social scientists in India to undertake a survey of a city and to employ statistical concepts and tools for the purpose (Majumdar, 1960).

Definitions

It would seem proper to draw attention, at the very outset, to the fact that there are at least three different meanings of the word 'methodology' which one encounters in social science literature.

Thus, 'methodology' may be used to refer to theoretical discussions on the nature of social science, and the consequent implications for the foundations of social research. In other words, 'methodology' may be used to designate analytical studies of such problems as:

What is the meaning, nature and scope of, say, objectivity, experiment, prediction, laws, or explanation in social science? or

Is sociology, or social anthropology, a natural science of society or is it a kind of historiography? One could cite many well-known examples of such discussions but two should suffice. These are: ~~Max Weber's *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*~~ and Felix Kautmann's *Methodology of the Social Sciences*.

'Methodology' is also often used in a narrower sense to refer to the methods, techniques, or tools, employed for the collection and processing of data. Verbal or mechanical procedures, or both, may be involved in the process of data collection and analysis. As examples of this kind of literature, one may mention the Royal Anthropological Institute's *Notes and Queries on Anthropology*, John Madge's *The Tools of Social Science*, and William J. Goode and Paul K. Hatt's *Methods in Social Research*.

Finally, 'methodology' is sometimes used to designate the concepts and procedures employed in the analysis of data, however collected, to arrive at conclusions. The use of statistical techniques, such as correlation analysis, is an example that comes readily to mind. There are also books and articles dealing with 'methodology' in this sense: for example, ~~William~~ Cohen's *Statistical Methods for Social Scientists*. It may be added, however, that the separation of the methods for the processing of data from the techniques for their collection is often neither possible nor, indeed, desirable. They will be, therefore, treated together in the present paper.

Methodology: Basic Considerations

A survey of the available literature shows that there has not been

much general concern on the part of those engaged in social research in India about problems of 'methodology' in the first sense of the term described above. The only notable exceptions seem to be the three empirical sociologists (Radhakamal Mukerjee, D. P. Mukerji and A. K. Saran) who have not been concerned with this problem.

Though reference could be made to many of Radhakamal Mukerjee's works, the most relevant would seem to be *The Philosophy of Social Science* (1966). He declares his intention to be "the analysis, description and clarification of the foundations of the existing social sciences" (*ibid.*, vii). He attempts to transcend the old division between natural sciences and humanities by working out a new synthesis in terms of a triangular interaction between the physical sciences, philosophy and the social sciences.

Referring to the revolutionary changes in the classical physicist's view of nature as a result of the development of quantum mechanics, Mukerjee maintains: "Thus the abrupt and rigid dualism between the objectivity of natural science and the subjective character of social science, between existence and validity or between fact and value is no longer applicable..." (*ibid.*, 55).

Mukerjee opts for what he elsewhere calls 'multi-dimensional analysis' (Radhakamal Mukerjee, 1955), trying to combine the best in the empirical rationalistic approach of Western social science with the metaphysical and intuitive approaches of the East.

It may be pointed out here that Mukerjee's views on the nature of social science began to shape early in his intellectual career when he attempted to re-define economics in terms of biological, ecological, psychological and sociocultural factors (see, particularly, his *Principles of Comparative Economics* (1922) and *The Institutional Theory of Economics* (1941)). Thus began a lifelong concern with cultural norms and values and with the notions of 'hierarchy', 'level' and 'gestalt' on which the multi-dimensional approach was sought to be built.

Mukerjee's philosophy (or view) of social science raises serious problems which have been briefly, but sharply, pointed out by Saran (Saran, 1958).

Compared to Radhakamal Mukerjee, D. P. Mukerji's output on problems of methodology was very slim but his interest in them was abiding. What is more, he was more influential as a teacher than Radhakamal Mukerjee (T. B. Bottomore, 1962: 101). Though his views underwent some change during the period under review, throughout he emphasised 'holism' and 'contextualization' as the cardinal principles of the sociologist's method (e.g. Mukerji, 1945: 9-48). For him there was no escape from encyclopaedism.

For the present purpose, it should suffice to mention his presidential

address to the first Indian Sociological Conference (1955) on 'Indian Tradition and Social Change' (D. P. Mukerji, 1958). It was his last major statement on methodological issues.

Though certainly not opposed to empirical social research, he complained that he found empirical social science monographs socially irrelevant and devoid of any 'life-meaning'. So, he pleaded for a return to philosophy but without abandoning empiricism.

From this he proceeded to emphasize the importance of the study of tradition for Indian sociology. (Incidentally, he did not accept sociology and cultural anthropology as one and the same inquiry, insisting that a 'social system' and a 'system of culture' are different orders of abstraction.) He maintained that the failure of economic and political action was chiefly the result of their 'unrootedness in India's social reality'. He added:

Traditions have great powers of resistance and absorption. Unless the economic force is extraordinarily strong—and it is that only when the modes of production are altered—traditions survive by adjustments—Thus it is that I give top priority to the understanding (in Dilthey's sense) of traditions even for the study of their change (D. P. Mukerji, 1958: 232).

Is the cause of spirit, which functions in the context of traditions, really a lost cause? Is the method of insight an altogether decadent, futile method? Is interpretation useless in modern human knowledge? ... If it is not, then Indian sociologists should take courage in both hands and openly say that the study of the Indian social system, in so far as it has been functioning till now, requires a different approach to sociology because of its special traditions, its special symbols and its special patterns of culture and social actions. The impact of economic and technological change on Indian traditions, culture and symbols, follows thereafter. In my view, the thing changing is more real and objective than change *per se* (D. P. Mukerji, 1958: 241).

Unlike Radhakamal Mukerjee and D. P. Mukerji, A. K. Saran does not attempt any synthesis but unambiguously rejects not only positivistic sociology but the very notion of a social science, as defined at present, particularly in so far as the study of archaic, traditional, or 'tradition-haunted' societies is concerned. For him, sociology, if at all possible, has to be a species of metaphysical inquiry for which the techniques of empirical science are not relevant. Of his several papers bearing on this problem, the most important would seem to be the following: (i) 'The Natural Sciences and the Study of Man: The Problem of their Synthesis in Contemporary

Culms" (1961); (ii) "For a Sociology of India" (1962a); (iii) "Some Aspects of Positivism in Sociology" (1962b); (iv) "Sociology of Knowledge and Traditional Thought" (1964-65); and (v) "The Concept of Social Science" (1968).

A summary of Saran's more important writings will not be attempted here. Suffice it to say that for him, the real problem of synthesis lies in maintaining the wholeness of life, and this, according to him, can be done and understood only in terms of Primordial Tradition. Tradition, thus, must supply the first principles of sociological understanding, which is truly arrived at dialectically and deductively. The purely traditional interpretation of sociological phenomena necessarily involves the abjuration of the positivist standpoint.

A positivist sociology raises numerous problems which some front-rank sociologists have recognized but none has solved. No solution is in fact possible within the existing frames of reference. Thus, the value neutralism or the idea of studying norms and values as behavioural facts which contemporary sociologists adopt is neither tenable nor consistent with their positivism which... admits (for investigation) both a world of facts and a world of values" (Saran, 1962b: 250). His criticism of the Marxian theory of social change is in the same vein: its conceptual confusion is regarded as irresolvable within the given framework (Saran, 1963).

Further, Saran maintains, "most of our current sociology has no theory of human action. What it deals with is human events and their manipulation, not human beings and human life" (Saran, 1968: 34).

Saran's position has been compared to that of the nineteenth century German critics of positive sociology, for example, by Bottomore (1962: 102). This he denies, of course, pointing to the important differences which he has with the position of the neo-idealists and of the linguistic philosophers (Saran, 1963a) and even with that of D. P. Mukerjee (Saran, 1965b).

Saran's emphasis upon the 'unitary consciousness of traditional society,' and his rejection of any 'external' viewpoint in addition or opposition to an 'internal' viewpoint 'self-interpretation' (Saran, 1962a), were partly developed in criticism of Dumont's definition of the scope of Indian sociology.

Dumont's starting point, and central thesis, is: "It should be obvious, in principle, that a sociology of India lies at the point of confluence of Sociology and Indology" (Dumont, 1957: 7). From this it follows that the sociologist, who observes things 'from without' must also take into account 'the principles that the people them-

selves give' (*ibid.*: 12); 'we must learn from the people themselves which modes of thinking we have the right to apply and which we should reject' (*ibid.*: 11).

Having stressed the importance of the 'principles that the people themselves give', Dumont is at pains to emphasize the importance of objectivity and comparison in the development of a general sociology, or, in other words, in the 'endeavour to constitute an adequate idea of mankind' (*ibid.*: 9) through the study of Indian society. He emphatically declares that a Hindu sociology is a contradiction in terms (Dumont, 1966: 23).

Dumont's views have given rise to a controversy. His views have been discussed by F. G. Bailey (1959), Saran (1962a), and T. N. Madan (1966). While Dumont has replied to criticism, (Dumont and D. F. Pocock, 1950 and Dumont, 1966), Madan has made a further comment (1967a).

A firm grounding in Indological literature has also been a characteristic of the works of several scholars associated with the Department of Sociology of the University of Bombay. Ghurye's work on caste (Ghurye, 1930), Irawati Karve's on kinship (Karve, 1953), and N. M. Kapadia's on marriage and the family (Kapadia, 1955) are particularly notable examples.

Some Bombay University sociologists have not drawn upon the data and insights of Indology. Nevertheless, they have retained the historical perspective in the study of contemporary sociological problems (e.g., Desai, 1954).

It may be pointed out here that the common element in the views of D. P. Mukerji, A. K. Saran and Louis Dumont is their insistence that the sociology of India is impossible without reference to traditional principles. Employing currently fashionable jargon, we may say that they emphasize *emic* rather than *etic* categories. Though the similarity seems to end there, it is noteworthy. Several other scholars also have written about the importance of the study of tradition for Indian sociology; e.g., Ramakrishna Mukherjee (1965) and (1970) and R. N. Saksena (1965). There are, however, many more who, explicitly or implicitly, reject such an approach, and emphasize that observation of contemporary social life, with the help of well-known empirical techniques, is sufficient for our understanding of Indian societies and cultures. The most forthright among those who hold this viewpoint is F. G. Bailey.

Bailey has developed his point of view partly as a reaction to Dumont's. He writes: "A valid sociological understanding can be achieved, given certain problems, by making abstractions immediately from behaviour or from other non-verbal information, and by using

only our own i.e. the sociologists' concepts and evading the ideas of the people (supposing they have any ideas, which is not always the case)" (Bailey, 1959: 90).

Earlier (in 1957), however, Bailey had adopted a somewhat less rigid position, and it is important to take note of that also. He had written:

"... the Hindu culture which helps us to sharpen the dissecting knives of sociology is not, on the whole, the distillation and systematization which appears in the sacred books in the Sanskrit language... Our knowledge of the 'little tradition' we acquire partly from reading about the manners and customs of the people of India, and partly (and more satisfactorily) by seeing how people behave and listening to the explanations they give of that behaviour" (Bailey, 1964: 61).

M. N. Srinivas also seems to stress observation, at least as the starting point: "... the study of a village or a small town or a caste provides a strategic point of entry for the study of Indian society and culture as a whole. It forces the young scholar to keep his mind steadfastly on the existential reality as contrasted with the book-view of society. It also poses the all-important question, 'What is the relation between the sacred literature and the existing institutions during various... periods of Indian history?' A satisfactory answer to this can only be provided after years of painstaking research into regional history and culture" (Srinivas, 1966: 158).

Among those who do not think that the study of Indian societies and cultures poses any really special problem, necessitating a distinctive methodology, mention may be made of Y. B. Damle. He contends that it is perfectly possible to analyse the problems of stability (tradition?) and change, so far as Hindu society is concerned, in terms of an empirically grounded sociology such as that based on the theories of Talcott Parsons (Damle, 1965).

None of the approaches considered above would completely do away with the need for the collection of empirical evidence, whether from fieldwork, or from literary sources, or from both. They do, however, entail different degrees of emphasis upon the one or the other source of data, because they lead to different formulations of what the really significant problems are. Finally, and consequently, they adopt different logics. An examination of the sociological and social anthropological literature on India during the 1950's and 1960's shows that the great bulk of it was fieldwork based and im-

PLICITLY followed the approach of scholars like Bailey and Damle. We will return to this literature in a subsequent section.

The widespread acceptance by Indian sociologists and social anthropologists of the methodological foundations and the research techniques of Western social sciences has been seriously questioned also on political (as well as on intellectual) grounds by some Indian scholars. Thus, the warning has been given that "most of the modern research methods and tools which... foreign experts are using' have been implicitly designed to serve commercial purposes and are now being adapted to military objectives" (Saran, 1958: 1031). J. P. S. Uberoi takes up a similar position arguing that, though the aims and methods of science are universally uniform, "the problem of science in relation to society is not" (Uberoi, 1968: 117). He proceeds to warn that unless Indian social scientists learn to nationalize their problems, they can hardly hope to provide convincing solutions to them. Shatish Saberwal draws attention to the problem of "academic colonialism" (Saberwal, 1968) and highlights the political ramifications of international social science (Saberwal, 1969). That the dangers are not imaginary would seem to be confirmed by the notorious Project Camelot (I. L. Horowitz, 1967; also see Ralph L. Beals, 1969).

S. Shukla raises the related problem of the "limited validity" of Western social science (e.g. of the Parsonian framework) in dealing with the problems thrown up by the socialist movement to which large numbers of people are committed (Shukla, 1970). This kind of reaction to Western social sciences seems to be fairly widespread in Asia (Syed H. Alatas, 1969 and R. Pieris, 1969).

Before we conclude this section, attention may be drawn to the position of the Indian philosopher Daya Krishna who has written on the problem of methodology in social sciences and humanities (Krishna, 1964 and 1965). He argues that social systems are neither like natural objects, whether given in nature or created by man, nor are they like man-made works of art; they rather are "a third order of creation which has some of the characteristics of both, yet differs from them in essential respects" (Krishna, 1965: 94). The implications for methodology are that neither the scientific-causal nor the intuitive-emphatic approach is adequate. "The causal, the functional, the aesthetic and the valuational are intertwined in the life of society and any attempt to understand it must unravel all these aspects and approach each in the appropriate manner—(without forgetting, however, that) society is a unity both at the causal/functional and the logic-meaningful levels" (*ibid.*, 190).

i. i.e. in their research on India.

Techniques of Data Collection and Analysis

During the period under review at least two books, two monographs, one report on a seminar, and a number of papers, dealing with techniques of data collection and with the analysis of research materials, were published by social scientists working on India.

M. N. Basu's Field Methods in Anthropology and Other Social Sciences (1961) is based on the author's experience of fieldwork among several tribal communities in Assam, Bengal and Bihar. This manual of 108 pages suggests the kind of topics on which data may be collected and how they may be collected and arranged. The emphasis is upon the study of material culture, though other topics (kinship, social life, religion, political organization and recreation) also are dealt with.

Basu's suggestions are primarily addressed to cultural anthropologists studying village-based small communities. Though he gives examples from his own fieldwork in India, which is useful, he does not enter into any detailed discussion of the topics and methods suggested. In any case these are no different from what one would find in Notes and Queries on Anthropology.

Incidentally, an interest in material culture has characterised the work of many scholars trained in anthropology at the University of Calcutta and of the Anthropological Survey of India, particularly under the directorship of N. K. Bose. Thus Peasant Life in India (1962) contains descriptions and drawings of cottages, oil presses, men's and women's dresses, footwear and bullock carts. The Census of India (1961) Village Survey Monographs also contain descriptions of material culture. It is obvious that such a research interest entails the use of particular techniques of data collection and presentation, e.g., photography (P. R. Das, 1968).

M. H. Gopal's An Introduction to Research Procedure in Social Sciences (1964) is a much more substantial work than Basu's. Gopal is an economist but his book is generally addressed to social scientists. A little more than half of the book is devoted to a few broad issues, and the rest to techniques of data collection and analysis.

His observation on general issues stem from his affirmation that social sciences are sciences, though they suffer from "certain important limitations compared with physical sciences" (*ibid.*, 13). He, however, proceeds to define social research as "the scientific analysis of the nature and trends of social phenomena of groups, or in general of human behaviour so as to formulate broad principles and scientific concepts" (*ibid.*, 15).

Probably the most useful chapter in the first part of the book is that dealing with social surveys, as he has made an effort to discuss

the role and development of this technique in India. He briefly describes the objectives of various surveys conducted in India since 1916 and the techniques adopted by them. Unfortunately he does not subject any of these surveys to critical scrutiny. He does, however, after a brief review of surveys in U.K. and U.S.A., draw "attention to the existence in underdeveloped countries of certain limitations associated with techniques, problems and environment: from the first standpoint, the inapplicability, at least to the some extent, of some of the advanced techniques of data collection; from the angle of problems, the intertwining of a multitude of different issues; and from the point of view of environment, the vague, hesitant and slow response arising from an illiterate and conservative tradition" (*ibid.*, 55).

The second part of the book, dealing with collection of data, has chapters on bibliographical data, field data, the schedule and the questionnaire, the interview, observation, the case study, the experimental technique and measurement of qualitative data. The author occasionally refers to the limitations which social research in the "underdeveloped setting" imposes upon these techniques.

N. A. Thoiti's Methods of Social Research, though published in 1966, was written in the early 1920's and originally incorporated as Part II in the author's The Vaishnavas of Gujarat (1955). It is partly an autobiographical essay, dealing with what the author calls the scientific and the biological and regional approaches in "human investigation". The author touches upon a number of themes, including the nature and forms of society, the scope of sociology, and, almost casually, on some techniques of fieldwork, such as how to establish rapport with the people one wants to study. The essay also contains observations on various elements of social research and their mutual relationship. Thus, "After having completed the initial inquiry of classifying the relevant facts and sequences in terms of 'whats' and 'hows' and correlating the 'whats' and 'hows', in terms of a system, the scientist proceeds further in his analysis wherein the 'whats' and 'hows' are related to place and time" (Thoiti, 1966: 450).

Thoiti's monograph is an interesting document for the student of the development of sociology in India and has been included here for that reason (even though it was written well before 1950), rather than because it was thought to be of much use as a guide to the collection and analysis of data. For the same reason mention may be made of a remarkable short essay by S. C. Roy, one of the founding fathers of ethnography in India. Writing in Men, in 1938, under the title of "An Indian Outlook on Anthropology", Roy defines the aims of anthropological research thus: "The cul-

5 Field Methods
10 Observation
methods

ture of a particular human group needs to be described for its own sake—both functionally and historically. But it also needs to be studied in its setting of culture as a whole viewed throughout mankind." He criticizes the functionalists' ahistorical approach:

"To picture a group at work is a worthy aim. To picture it, without drawing attention to evidences of evolution within, or borrowings from without, may lead to misconceptions. Moreover, the functionalist has given special significance to the study of lowly cultures as exhibiting the ground-plan whereon 'civilization' has been built. But there are probably few lowly groups without borrowing from those who have gone further along the way—borrowings that may persist within a lowly group in an imperfect (even a decadent) form."

He proceeds to suggest, among other things, the application of psychoanalysis to the study of tribal cultures and the intensive analysis of dreams.

Commenting on methodology, Roy, like Theoti, strikes a personal note. "It is through concentrated contemplation of facts, scenes, and incidents as well as outstanding personalities, that we may develop an *intuition* of the direction of the vital impulses of a people's life—the particular *Dharma* or spiritual nexus that integrates, sustains and nourishes that culture." The vital facts of human culture are described as being the facts of 'spiritual experience'. And, therefore, he concludes:

"Thus the objective methods of investigation of cultural data have to be helped out, not only by historical imagination and a background of historical and geographical facts, but also by a subjective process of self-forgetting absorption or meditation (*dhyana*), and intuition born of sympathetic immersion in, and self-identification with, the society under investigation."

G. D. Berreman's *Behind Many Masks* (1962) is an excellent monograph stressing the element of subjectivity that inevitably enters into ethnographical fieldwork. The ethnographer, his assistants, and his informants are all shown playing at certain roles *vis-a-vis* each other. The information that results from such interaction tends to be variable; a change in any one role bringing about changes in the others also and in the nature of the inflowing data. Informants hide behind masks, as it were, reporting things to be what they ought to be rather than what they are. Or, they simply refuse to say anything worthwhile. Berreman mentions several ways of dealing with the

situation. The art of obtaining suitable responses from informants through the careful choice of one's own role is called 'impression management' by him. He acknowledges the influence of E. Goffman (1959) on his approach.

Several papers in *Regional Seminar on Techniques of Social Research: Proceedings and Papers* (1959) bear upon the collection and processing of data by social scientists. R. Balkrishna, D. T. Lakdawala and P. S. Lokanathan (all three are economists) write on surveys, and so do A. F. A. Husain and A. Farouk of Pakistan; Rose and D. G. Mandelbaum write on the study of caste, the former drawing attention to the proceedings of caste panchayats and the latter to concepts and methods; K. P. Chattopadhyay discusses some points regarding the collection of statistical data, and Mukherjee uses sophisticated statistical techniques to analyse data leading to the classification of family structures; Saksena pleads for the interdisciplinary approach; K. Chowdhry employs the case study method in the area of industrial sociology; Srinivas analyses particular cases to illustrate how disputes in rural India may be studied. Srinivas has published two more essays (Srinivas, 1952a and 1954) which are an excellent guide to the meticulous collection, recording and analysis of data on village disputes.

Social research through surveys is prominently discussed in the volume under reference. The problems connected with such research are said to be the difficulties in meeting the need for adequate trained staff, satisfactory sampling, meaningful communication between investigator and respondents, supplementary evidence (particularly such as would provide depth to the findings), ensuring reliability, and so forth.

A most important and useful paper, bearing upon the problems of conducting social research in India through surveys, is Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph's "Surveys in India: Field Experience in Madras State" (1958). They point out that certain assumptions that underlie such research in Western countries do not seem to be applicable in India. Thus: (i) Most people in India do not hold opinions on a broad range of issues and are not capable of articulating them. (ii) The unit or source of opinion in India generally happens to be some kind of a group (e.g., the extended family, subcaste, the village) rather than the individual. (iii) The assumption "that for purposes of a sample survey, all opinions are equal" is questionable in a society based on the principle of hierarchy. (iv) The assumption "that a clinical or neutral stance on matters of concern to social science is possible or legitimate" is challenged in India. "For a number of reasons, many Indian social scientists quite explicitly believe that social science should not be value-neutral, but should

serve a moral purpose. As a result, social science research in India tends to have strong normative overtones" (*ibid.*, 239). (v) Social scientists in India have a generally low status; therefore, any assumption that their researches will be given serious attention by the general public and by public officials, and that they will receive the cooperation they need, is open to challenge. (vi) The assumption that a climate of commitment to and understanding of professional standards in the social sciences exists in some measure" is also open to challenge in India.

The implications of the above six caveats, according to the authors, are that the objectives and methods of surveys in India should be reoriented in such manner as to take the caveats into account. They have stated how they themselves did this. They also are of the opinion that certain types of problems which generally are the subject-matter of survey research in the West are better tackled in underdeveloped areas by the methods of the anthropologists who not only ask questions but also observe events. However, the authors maintain that there still are broad and important areas of research in which survey methods are both feasible and desirable. One example of such an area of research is the growth of public opinion in underdeveloped areas (*ibid.*, 244).

It may be here added that the Rudolphs believe that the conditions have considerably improved since their paper was written. (Personal interview with Lloyd Rudolph in November 1969.)

In connexion with the fourth of the Rudolph's six caveats Bose's "Some Methods of Studying Social Change" (1967) is relevant. He regards personal knowledge of the society, and active participation in and commitment to bringing about social change in it, as essential requirements for such studies. The efforts to ensure objectivity, through the use of mathematics, for instance, have to be placed within the broader framework of personal knowledge and participation.

The last of the Rudolph's six observations is also discussed, among other things, by Madan in "Political Pressures and Ethical Constraints Upon Indian Sociologists" (1967b). Under 'political pressures', Madan discusses the impact of politicians, bureaucrats, sponsoring agencies, the people under study, and the scientific community on the conduct of sociological research. Ethical considerations are said to be both personal as well as collective.

Max Ralis, E. A. Schuman and R. K. Goldsen in their "Applicability of Survey Techniques in Northern India" (1958) have warned that the results of a survey are markedly influenced by the interviewer's affiliation even when all other elements in the situation, including the wording of questions, remain unaltered.

Another useful commentary (supported by empirical evidence) is Joseph W. Elder's "Caste and World View: Application of Survey Research Methods" (1968). He points out that field surveys enable the researcher to deal with "sufficiently large numbers of people to permit controls." Further, they help him to identify genuine associations and to choose between alternative explanations. But "A major drawback of survey research methods is that one loses the clarity of detail and the supplementary interpretative information that one obtains in a case study" (*ibid.*, 161).

Case studies and intensive fieldwork among small groups are widely used techniques in India. They are particularly, but not exclusively, associated with social anthropology. Two essays on methodological problems in anthropological fieldwork (those by Roy and Berreman) have been already noted. Some more discussions may be referred to now.

In an early essay, "Social Anthropology and Sociology" (1952b), Srinivas dwells on the importance of intensive fieldwork, preferably among two or more culturally distinct communities, as an essential part of the training of social anthropologists. It enables them to adopt the holistic view of social systems and thus gives them an advantage over sociologists.

T. R. Oommen, in his "Data Collection Techniques: The Case of Sociology and Social Anthropology" (1969), draws attention to what he regards as the weaknesses of the research methods of social anthropologists when applied to complex societies. He points out that the substantive concerns of a discipline, and the type of society it studies, are crucial determinants of the data collection techniques which it employs. From this he proceeds to argue that social anthropology and sociology are two distinct types of social inquiry: the former has been traditionally concerned with simple, integrated and homogeneous societies with a view to describing them, while the latter has been concerned with the explanation of various aspects of heterogeneous, complex social systems, including their 'pathology', and with establishing generalizations.

Oommen regards the technique of intensive fieldwork through participant observation as unsuited to the study of urban society, particularly if one is studying one's own society. He criticizes the social anthropologists' reliance on unsystematically selected information, maintaining that this adds the dangers of 'informant bias' to those of 'observer bias'.

Bailey, in "The Scope of Social Anthropology in the Study of Indian Society" (1962), is not as pessimistic as Oommen. While he admits that the structural approach and concepts like 'structure' and 'system' are inadequate for studying the contemporary social situa-

tions in India, he thinks that the techniques and concepts of social anthropology can, after suitable modification, still be useful.

A. C. Mayer, in "Systems and Network: An Approach to the Study of Political Process in Dewas" (1962) takes up the same position as Bailey. He poses the question as to "the way in which anthropological techniques can be used in the study of peasant and urban India" (*ibid.*, 266). To tackle the relatively complex situation which confronts the student of peasant and urban society in India, Mayer suggests 'teamwork', as a possible approach, "in which several workers can deal with the same problem over a large area." Alternatively, he recommends the technique of the 'village-outward' type of study. "This consists of studying the population of a single village in its intra-village and inter-village activities, and in then trying to abstract the structure of those activities reaching outside the village" (*ibid.*, 267). In this connexion Mayer refers to the concepts of 'region' and 'field'. (The latter is mentioned by Bailey also.) However, the techniques and methods which prove useful at the level of the 'village-outward' study would not be so in a 'town-outward' study. Here the investigator may be forced, by his subject matter, "to focus research on a relatively small area of activity." As an illustration, Mayer employs the notion of 'system' and 'network' to study political processes in the town of Dewas.

In a later paper, "The Significance of Quasi-Groups in the Study of Complex Societies" (1960), Mayer employs the notions of 'action-set' and 'quasi-group' to analyse political processes. He concludes: "It may well be that, as social anthropologists become more interested in complex societies and as the simpler societies themselves become more complex, an increasing amount of work will be based on ego-centred entities such as action-sets and quasi-groups, rather than on groups and sub-groups" (*ibid.*, 119).

Mayer points out that the kinds of concepts he has suggested necessitate the collection of quantitative data. C. Radhakrishna Rao makes a similar plea in his paper, "Quantitative Studies in Sociology: Need for Increased Use in India" (1959). After pointing out that the essence of the statistical approach is to test hypotheses in order to arrive at generalizations, Rao suggests that the association of the statistician should begin with the commencement of a piece of social research so that his skills are available at all stages of work: in the collection, ordering and analysis of data as well as in the testing of hypotheses. He points out that sociologists also could likewise be of great help to statisticians in some of their own undertakings, such as the National Sample Survey. He thus calls for interdisciplinary teamwork as well as the imparting of training in statistics to social scientists.

The importance of gearing social research to hypothesis-testing, generalization and prediction is stressed by Ramakrishna Mukherjee also. In various papers, such as "Some Considerations on Social Research" (1960), "A Note on Village as Unit or Variable for Studies of Rural Society" (1961), "On Classification of Family Structures" (1962) and "A Note on the Measurement of Kindship Distance" (1965), he discusses when, how and why statistical concepts and tools should be employed in social research.

A most useful essay, dealing with the collection of statistical data, is T. S. Epstein's "The Data of Economics in Anthropological Analysis" (1967). She draws her examples from various parts of the world including India. She gives suggestions on how to prepare schedules (e.g. time, budget and property schedules), what production and consumption statistics to collect, and how to calculate household income and expenditure from interviews.

A very special problem concerning the collection and interpretation of data which Indian sociologists face is that stemming from the fact that they are trying to study their own society rather than 'other cultures'. Madan briefly mentions "the lack of social freedom which an investigator faces in the study of his own society" (1965: 11f).

It is, however, Srinivas ("Some Thoughts on the Study of One's Own Society", 1966) who discusses this problem at some length and perceptively. He points out that whatever the problems attendant upon the study of one's own society, they certainly have not been so insurmountable as to prevent the emergence of the discipline of sociology. More positively, he writes:

"The sociologist who is engaged in the study of his own society is likely to be influenced by his social position, not only in his observations but also in the problems he selects for study. But this need not always be a source of error—it might even be a source of insight! Insights, however, have to be subjected to rigorous testing before they can become valid generalizations" (*ibid.*, 154). But: "The study of one's own society while it is changing rapidly... poses a challenge that calls for the mobilization of all the intellectual and moral resources of the sociologist. The changes might seriously threaten his own social position and sense of security, and the difficulty of retaining a measure of detachment under these circumstances can be imagined" (*ibid.*, 159).

Finally, Srinivas discusses the problem of commitment to one's

2. Bose (1967) and Radhakrishna Mukherjee (1960) take up a similar stand.

academic discipline as also to one's country.

He also suggests during the course of his discussion ways and means of ensuring scientific objectivity in the study of one's own society. He thus recommends that intensive fieldwork should be regarded as desirable preparation for macro-studies which themselves could be interdisciplinary in nature. He also recommends the study of more than one society, with the researcher beginning with the less familiar society and later on moving to the more familiar (his own) society as mentioned earlier.

Research Techniques in Use

Since 1950 a large number of monographs, books, collections of papers, and articles in journals has been published by sociologists and social anthropologists working in India. It would be of interest to find out from these published materials what techniques are most frequently used, by whom, for what kind of study, and with what measure of success. Unfortunately it is not a common practice for authors to write about these matters in their monographs or separately in papers. A few such discussions are available, of course, but their number is limited. Reference has already been made to Berreman's monograph and to several relevant papers. Two more papers are noteworthy.

K. A. Hasan writes on the techniques employed by him in collecting 'field data' on the role of cultural factors in rural health (Hasan, 1966). He points out that the selection of specific field research methods depends upon: (a) the nature of the problem to be investigated; (b) relevant social conditions of the people to be studied (e.g. the level of literacy among them); and (c) the theoretical framework of the proposed study. He proceeds to describe how he conducted his own fieldwork.

K. C. Panchanadikar and J. Panchanadikar report on the problems they faced in the course of their study of rural communities in four sub-regions of Gujarat (Panchanadikar and Panchanadikar, 1970). They discuss various problems including: (a) criteria for the choice of a village for study; (b) the researcher's entry into the village and establishment of rapport; (c) choice of suitable techniques; (d) choice of informants and interviewees; and (e) proper utilization of available documentary evidence.

The scarcity of direct discussions of research techniques notwithstanding, it is often possible to find out, through a perusal of various publications, particularly monographs, what particular techniques of data collection and analysis have been fruitfully employed by their respective authors. A few examples may be given:

Bailey (1957), Oscar Lewis (1958), Epstein (1962) and Richard G. Fox (1969) are good guides to the kind of data that those interested in studying economic activities should collect. Lewis's discussion of *patwari* records (Lewis, 1958: 329-47), indicating their scope and limitations, is very useful.

Bailey's attempt (1960) is an excellent example of the possibilities of the case study method.

Vidyarathi (1961) was able to obtain much useful material and gain good insights into family life and occupational culture by collecting biographical details from his informants. Similarly, M. L. P. Patterson (1968 and 1970) shows how social change may be studied through an examination of written family histories. Madon (1965) employs the notion of 'developmental cycle' to analyse data on family composition.

A. M. Shah and R. G. Shroff (1959) examined genealogies to reconstruct the social and economic history of a village. Shah (1959 and 1964) also demonstrates the use which the social anthropologist can make of various kinds of historical records about a village.

Whereas Andre Beteille (1966: 9-12) gives his reasons for underplaying the quantitative dimension of social relations, Ramakrishna Mukherjee (1957 and 1959) highlights them. That sophisticated statistical techniques of analysis can be very fruitfully and effectively made use of in social anthropological studies of village communities is brilliantly demonstrated by McKim Marriott (1968).

The use of sampling on a national basis and of inferential statistics is illustrated in Lalit K. Sen and Prodipto Roy (1966), P. Roy *et al.* (1968) and in *Perception of National Emergency in Village India* (National Institute of Community Development, 1965).

T. Fukutake *et al.*, (1964) demonstrate what can be achieved through field surveys in villages in limited time. Fox (1969) employs the same technique in a town for specific purposes and alongside of intensive observation.

S. C. Dube (1955 and 1958) has pioneered group research in India and has also written about the methodological problems involved in it (Dube, 1960). Lewis (1958) is another notable example of group research.

The technique of content analysis has been employed by Khare (1970) to study the activities of a caste association. He subjects the association's journal to intensive analysis to throw light on its role in a changing situation.

Bose (1968) employed a geographical technique to present a micro-study of the process of urbanization in Calcutta. Maps on the pattern of land use, on economic functions, on the distribution of

linguistic groups, etc. were prepared to portray the situation at two points of time half a century apart.

The above references are merely illustrative of some of the techniques that have been in use in sociological and social anthropological research on India during the last two decades. For the purposes of this paper, it will be more useful if we can form some idea of the frequency with which a particular method is employed and the kinds of research situations in which it is employed. This is attempted below.

An examination of 50 monographs, reports on surveys, and books, chosen at random, reveals that 51 (or 62%) of them are based on fieldwork (i.e. observation and interviewing) in a peasant village or among a tribal community; 9 (or 18%) are based mainly or wholly on secondary sources and dealt with caste, kinship, the family, marriage, social change or nationalism; 10 (or 20%) have employed sampling, interview schedules and questionnaires to study a particular community, city, or organization (factory). Since the total number of books published during the period under review is unlikely to be very much higher than about a hundred, the above breakdowns should not be very misleading so far as major publications are concerned.

A similar scrutiny of 532 social anthropological and sociological research papers was undertaken. The sources of these papers are:

(i) <i>Man in India</i> all relevant articles between 1956 and 1968 (vols. 36 to 48)	252 articles
(ii) <i>The Eastern Anthropologist</i> all relevant articles between 1954 and 1969 (vols. 4 to 20)	127 articles
(iii) <i>Sociological Bulletin</i> all relevant articles between 1952 and 1967 (vols. 1 to 16)	106 articles
(iv) <i>The Economic Weekly</i> articles on village studies between 1950 and 1964 (vols. 2 to 16)	15 articles
(v) <i>The Economic and Political Weekly</i> all relevant articles between 1965 and 1968 (vols. 1 to 4)	48 articles

(vi) <i>Indian Journal of Social Research</i> articles on methodology between 1959 and 1968 (vols. 1 to 9)	3 articles
(vii) <i>Journal of Social Research</i> articles on methodology between 1962 to 1968 (vols. 5 to 11)	1 article
Total:	532 articles

It was found that authors of papers seldom mention anything about the techniques employed by them to collect and analyse data. It is possible, however, in most cases to infer with reasonable certainty as to how the data must have been collected. Nevertheless, it was not at all possible to say anything definite about 35 of the 532 papers that were examined by us.

The breakdowns of the remaining 497 articles in terms of the technique or techniques that seem to have been principally used are given in Tables I and II. The techniques are correlated with subject matter in Table I and with the spatial dimension of the group or institution studied in Table II. The results are of considerable interest.

The breakdown shows that, in an overwhelmingly large proportion of the cases examined, data have been drawn from secondary sources or collected through observation and interviews. No claims regarding the scientific precision of the foregoing conclusion are made here. The exercise was undertaken to form a general impression of the situation in sociological and social anthropological research in India with regard to the use of research techniques. Limitations of time and the paucity of available information precluded a more thorough investigation.

Concluding Remarks

Though an impressive body of sociological and social anthropological literature on India has been published since 1950, an interest in the critical examination of basic methodological issues and in the refinement of available techniques of research is generally lacking. Thus, only two scholars, namely, Radhakamal Mukerjee and A. K. Saran, seem to have discussed the nature of social science in general terms. To a certain extent this may not be wholly unwelcome because social scientists have long been criticized for being interested more in discussing methodology than doing research on substantive problems. Nevertheless, a lack of self-awareness and of a critical examination of our tools of research can only lead to unsatisfactory results.

Table I

SOCIOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH: TECHNIQUES AND SUBJECT MATTER

	Tribal ethno- graphy	Village studies	Caste	Kinship Family and Marriage	Religion	Economy	Politics	Demo- graphy	Social change and social problems	Theory and Methodo- logy	Total	Per- centage
Analysis of Secondary Sources	6	6	17	18	10	8	6	11	14	25	121	22.8
Observation (including Informal Interviews)	15	16	9	9	15	5	17	1	14	4	103	19.5
Observation plus Formal Interviews	6	11	11	11	5	5	5	1	11	2	64	12.0
Formal Interviews	2	2	6	15	—	5	3	2	12	4	51	9.6
Secondary Sources plus Observation	6	6	3	5	5	—	3	3	5	4	42	7.9
Case Studies	—	—	2	1	5	—	—	—	1	2	9	1.7
Schedules	—	1	1	4	—	—	1	—	2	—	9	1.7
Questionnaires	—	—	—	1	—	2	1	1	2	2	9	1.7
Miscellaneous	9	1	7	16	2	—	6	1	10	2	54	10.1
Theoretical Analysis	—	2	3	1	—	1	3	—	4	21	35	6.6
Not Clear	7	5	11	3	3	1	5	—	2	—	35	6.6
Total	51	50	70	82	39	25	48	20	81	66	532	100.0

Table II

SOCIOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH: TECHNIQUES AND UNIT OF STUDY

	Tribe	Village	Group of Villages	City	District	State or Province	Country	Others	Total	Per- centage
Analysis of Secondary Sources	8	2	4	7	1	22	42	35	121	22.8
Observation including Informal Interviews	9	39	9	12	5	10	9	12	105	19.5
Observation plus Formal Interviews	3	29	10	8	7	5	1	1	64	12.0
Formal Interviews	1	11	11	14	4	5	1	4	51	9.6
Secondary Sources plus Observation	4	5	2	3	1	10	11	6	42	7.9
Case Studies	—	5	1	1	—	1	—	1	9	1.7
Schedules	—	2	2	2	2	1	—	—	9	1.7
Questionnaires	—	1	—	3	—	1	1	5	9	1.7
Miscellaneous	2	21	5	8	6	7	5	2	54	10.1
Theoretical Analysis	—	—	—	—	—	—	7	28	35	6.6
Not Clear	—	11	6	9	3	4	1	2	35	6.6
Total	27	126	49	67	27	66	76	94	532	100.0

The central issue in available general methodological discussions is the relevance and epistemological status of the so-called 'native models' of Indian societies generally and of Hindu society in particular. How best may one attempt to study Hindu society: (1) by 'classifying' it with other structurally similar societies? (2) Or, by 'typifying' it (the expression is Dumont's; see Dumont, 1967: 318), through a consideration of its idea- and value-systems alongside of its structure? (3) Or, does one derive the understanding of Hindu society by altogether abandoning the perspectives of Western social science and going back to its 'primordial traditions' and treating them as the only valid first principles (in which case understanding could not be divorced from acceptance)?

Though the above problem has been posed, its discussion does not seem to have attracted the attention of more than a very small number of scholars. In the absence of a general interest in it, the problem inevitably still remains clouded, and calls for intensive and serious discussion.

What gives added urgency to the need for such a discussion is the doubts that have been raised regarding both the objectives and the research techniques of Western, or the so-called international, social science in relation to India and the developing countries generally. This aspect of the methodology of social science research in India also has been merely broached so far. Though the available statements on it tend to be sharply worded, they are not always well argued. There is room for an informed and objective inquiry into this problem.

The available discussions on techniques of data collection seem to be principally concerned with the problems of first-hand observation and of research through surveys.

Two types of problems connected with first-hand observation have been commented upon. First, how best may this technique be employed for the study of small communities? What are the biases to be overcome? What are the obstacles to the collection of data and how best can these be eliminated? How is the reliability of the collected data to be assessed? And so on.

Second, is first-hand observation a feasible and useful technique in the study of complex and urban social situations? Does it have to be modified or should it be abandoned in favour of other techniques?

Discussions of survey techniques draw attention to their limited applicability in India, particularly in rural areas. Their usefulness is nevertheless widely attested.

As has been indicated above, some other problems also have been raised, notably the need for quantification and the use of statistical concepts and tools.

It is clear, however, that not only is the range of problems discussed limited but the available discussions also are generally inadequate. The scope of research into problems of research methodology in India is, therefore, immense.

Much progress in the refinement of research techniques is not likely to take place unless sociologists and social anthropologists engaged in research on India write about their experiences in the use of various techniques, highlighting the problems they faced and the solutions they devised.

Also required is a careful examination and reformulation of the relevant syllabuses of various university departments of sociology and of anthropology/social anthropology. At present not all universities prescribe a course on methodology, which is very unfortunate. Moreover, training in research techniques must include practical exercises. Thus, alone can a critical approach be cultivated. The University Grants Commission and the Indian Council of Social Science Research also can help by organizing summer schools and workshops on advanced research techniques. It is not suggested here that every social scientist must take recourse to the computer; it is equally important to take note of the new techniques that are being employed elsewhere for study of the qualitative aspects of social action.

Reference

Madan, T. N.
1974. "Research Methodology
: A Broad Report, A Survey
of Research in Sociology
and Social Anthropology
Vol. III, Popular Prakashan,
Bombay pp-282-305"