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Q1(b)

Discuss the relationship between sociology and political science

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · Sociology GS 1 · 10 marks · Sociology as Science

Sociology as Science: Science, scientific method and critique; Major theoretical strands of research methodology; Positivism and its critique; Fact value and objectivity; Non-positivist methodologies.

Core demand of the question

- Discuss the relationship between sociology and political science
- Keep the discussion within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Both disciplines study power. Political science centres the state. Sociology centres groups and everyday domination.

Marx, Weber, Pareto, **Michels**, and Mills already joined class, party, and elite.

Durkheim and Parsons treated the polity as part of a wider social system.

Indian elections, Mandal, and civil society research fail if the two fields are sealed.

The relation is complementary, not a hierarchy of sciences.

Introduction

Sociology and political science both study power, order, and conflict. They differ in the unit they treat as primary. Political science centres the state, law, and organised government. Sociology centres groups, classes, status, and everyday domination that may never appear in a constitution.

Body**Shared field**

- **Karl Marx** treated the state as condensed class relations, so political rule could not be studied apart from the mode of production.
- **Max Weber** defined the state as the body that claims a monopoly of legitimate physical force, and he placed class, status, and party on one map of stratification.
- Vilfredo Pareto and Robert **Michels** studied elites and oligarchy inside parties, which is political science's object written in sociological form.
- **C. Wright Mills** joined biography and structure in the power elite, a direct meeting of the two disciplines.

Division of labour

- Political science asks how governments are formed, how constitutions allocate offices, and how votes and policies are made.
- Sociology asks how caste, class, gender, and ethnicity shape who can enter those offices and whose issues become public.

- **Emile Durkheim** studied the state as a moral organ of a differentiated society, not only as a machine of command.
- Talcott Parsons placed the polity as one subsystem that produces goal attainment for the wider social system.

Relationship in research

- Election studies that count votes without caste and class miss the social base of the party.
- Studies of village power that ignore panchayat law miss the institutional form of that power.
- Indian work on the Congress system, the OBC vote after Mandal, and civil society after the Right to Information Act, 2005, is unreadable if the two fields are sealed.
- **The useful relation is complementary:** the state is a social institution, and society is politically organised.

Flow diagram

Political science -> State law office vote

Sociology -> Class status caste gender

State law office vote -> Power as organised domination

Class status caste gender -> Power as organised domination

Weber Marx Mills -> Power as organised domination

Conclusion

Sociology and political science share power and conflict. Political science specialises in the state and formal rule. Sociology specialises in the social bases of that rule. **Marx, Weber, Pareto, Michels**, and Mills already worked on the joint map. Indian democracy cannot be described from one side alone.

Facts & figures

Weber on the state

The state claims a monopoly of legitimate physical force within a territory.

Class, status, party

Weber's three orders of stratification, which bind market, honour, and political organisation.

Michels

Iron law of oligarchy: organisation in parties produces a ruling minority.

C. Wright Mills

The Power Elite treated military, corporate, and political command as one social formation.

RTI Act, 2005

Indian statute that made state files a field for both legal-political and sociological study of accountability.

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