Sociology and other social sciences focus on the study of certain aspects of human behavior. Yet human behavior is something with which we all have experience and about which we have at least a bit of knowledge. In our daily lives, we rely on common sense to get us through many unfamiliar situations. However, this knowledge while sometimes accurate is not always reliable because it rests on commonly held beliefs rather than systematic analysis of facts.

Common sense is knowledge and awareness that is held communally (shared by majority of people). It does not depend on specialist education and in some respects states the obvious. Sociology is study of society and of people and their behavior. Positivists claim that it produces scientific knowledge.

Many people argue that sociology merely state the obvious by reporting what common sense already tells us. In other words, sociology is criticized for being merely common sense and stating the obvious but in more detail than what we already know. Many sociologists have responded that common sense is wrong and obvious truths are not so obvious.

Common sense ideas and explanations represent a form of social perspective since they claim to represent the things that everyone knows about the social world and / or human behavior. These ideas are not necessarily incorrect but they seem to be different from sociological forms of knowledge.

Differences between sociology and common sense:

1. Common sense views are based on people’s immediate and often limited experiences. This leads to a distorted view of reality. Hence common sense knowledge is statement of the obvious which is simply based of assumption.

Sociological views are based on rigorous research and therefore evidence based. This can either be based on large scale quantitative research or in-depth qualitative research. Sociology knowledge is, therefore, the product of theory development and testing.

2. Common sense views tend to reflect social traditions and conventions and therefore tend to reinforce the status quo and resist social change.

Conflict approaches in sociology raise serious questions about the status quo and call for social change.

3. Common sense views tend to be historically and culturally specific and are often based on stereotypical images.

Interactionist / social action theories recognize that social life is socially constructed and relative to time and place. It actively challenges stereotypes.

4.  Common sense views lack validity and reliability.

Sociological knowledge has relatively greater reliability and validity. Sociological views based on quantitative data are high in reliability and those based on qualitative data are high in validity

Durkheim's analysis led him to identify four distinct patterns of suicide. The three patterns most commonly referred to are ***egoistic suicide, altruistic suicide and anomic suicide.***

**Egoistic suicide** is committed by people who are not strongly supported by membership in a cohesive social group. As outsiders, they depend more on themselves than on group goals and rules of conduct to sustain them in their lives. In times of stress, they feel isolated and helpless.

**Altruistic suicide** is committed by people who are deeply committed to group norms and goals and who see their own lives as unimportant. Basically, these suicides involved dying for a cause.

**Anomic suicide** is committed by people when society is in crisis or rapid change. In such times, customary norms may weaken or break down. With no clear standards of behavior to guide them, many people become confused, their usual goals lose meaning, and life seems aimless.

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