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TRENDS IN SOCIAL SCIENCE¹

By Professor WILLIAM FIELDING OGBURN

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

A COMPARISON of articles in the social science journals in the United States over the past third of a century reveals many differences. These differences are in both method and subject-matter. Similar changes are shown by the books published, the programs of the annual social science association meetings, as well as the various periodic reports of research in progress. These changes have varied in the different social sciences, sociology, economics, political science and statistics. A discussion of only a few of the changes will be presented in the brief space allotted this paper. It will not be possible to present changes systematically nor to record here the considerable volume of evidence.

DIFFERENTIATION

A very useful guide to follow in observing trends in the social sciences is the lines of their differentia-

¹ Address of the retiring vice-president and chairman of Section K—Social and Economic Sciences, American Association for the Advancement of Science, Boston, December, 1933.

tion. Herbert Spencer used to describe this as a process from the simple to the complex, from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous. Without accepting the universality of the principle that Spencer claimed for it, it is certainly true that in all the various social sciences much differentiation has occurred in the past quarter of a century. It has proceeded so far indeed in statistics that one statistician now has difficulty in understanding the language of another. The eugenist and the monetary expert speak a different language. A zygote means little to the student of money, while the eugenist is not expected to understand the relation of devaluation and inflation. All this leads to such specialized publications as the *Journal of Juvenile Research*, or the *Bankers' Insurance Managers' and Agents' Magazine*, and (in all countries) to 4,500 social science journals and serials.

One of the consequences of this specialization is a smaller proportion of general articles and general works. Synthesis becomes more difficult. The recent