CHAPTER III

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS METHOD

3.1 Literature Survey and Analysis Method

The present study is based on literature survey and analysis, as such, all the steps involved in a social survey are not applicable in this case. However, the methods adopted can not be termed fully descriptive, as instead of data collection from the social field, the data collection in this case is from the secondary sources. The secondary sources used as data are dictionaries of sociology, textbooks of sociology, and bibliographic information retrieval tools. The remaining steps adopted in a research survey like method of obtaining the data, processing the data, comparative study of data, and descriptive analysis of the variables studied are similar.

Main concepts of sociology identified with these methods can be deemed to have been collected through a questionnaire served to 87 sociologists, as to what they consider as the main concepts of sociology. The method is even better than the questionnaire method, as it eliminates the bias, which the respondents might have shown, if they were served a questionnaire, since they get the chance to reconsider their priorities. Secondly, the non-response possibility is also eliminated.

3.2 Alternative Sources Considered

3.2.1 Terms used in the Dictionaries

All the terms given in 5 dictionaries of sociology and 3 dictionaries of social sciences were taken and arranged in an alphabetical sequence. The arrangement shows, the number of dictionaries having a term, the form of term used by them,
and the scattering of terms in various dictionaries for a single concept on account of the use of synonymous terms. Each unadopted term along with 'see' reference, has also been shown in the index, such entries being shown in smalls. Second column of the alphabetical index shows the class number available for these terms in the sociology schedule of the three general classification schemes: Decimal Classification, Universal Decimal Classification, and Colon Classification, Any significant term not used in any dictionary but used in any classification scheme also appears in the index in smalls. A term not used directly against the class number but appears among many other terms in the scope note in the classification scheme, is underlined to identify it. The arrangement in the alphabetical index is word by word. The subdivisions of a term are brought together and shown after the term with indentation, however, in some cases, where the subdivisions run into several pages, all subdivisions carry the main term also, for convenience of consultation, as in the case of terms starting with 'social!.

The alphabetical arrangement provides about 5000 terms. These terms represent the discipline of sociology to a great extent, and also represent some of the main concepts of allied disciplines used in sociology. The index tells the number of dictionaries that have provided a term. The terms used by all the 8 dictionaries is not more than 20. The index shows the term-wise provision in classification schemes, and also the terms used in classification schemes, but not provided in the dictionaries.

This term bank was, however, not found of much use, to decide the relative significance of the terms for use as main terms in the information retrieval tools, merely on the basis of the number of dictionaries using a term. On account of the use of many synonymous terms for a single concept by the authors, the terms for a single concept get scattered
and any comparison is impossible, up to the time all the terms provided in the dictionaries are classified. The effort provides a good amount of information about terms used in sociology, but mere identification of the terms used in a discipline can hardly help, regarding their suitability to be used as main headings in a classification scheme or other information retrieval tools.

3.22 Sociological Abstracts as a Source of Terms

Sociological Abstracts includes a journal in tit, on the basis of some sociological article published in a journal. Once it is selected, all articles published in the journal get included in the abstracts. In this process, articles on other social sciences appearing in these journals are also included. Moreover, the Sociological Abstracts represents the literature appearing during a certain period, that cannot be treated as full representative of the main concepts of sociology.

3.23 Views of 'Founding Fathers'

This is a criterion considered among some other alternatives by Alex Inkeles. Even if some decision could be taken, as to whom to treat as founding fathers, it may not be easy to decide which concepts to use as the main concepts of sociology. The method is suitable to identify some individual aspects pertaining to sociology, but not for deciding the relative significance of the concepts.

3.3 Terms used in the Textbook - Chapter Heading

As the sources enumerated above were not found suitable, it was decided to use the chapter headings in the textbooks of sociology, for identifying the main concepts of sociology. For this, one hundred introductory textbooks of sociology, bearing the title introductory sociology, basic sociology, principles of sociology, fundamentals of sociology, handbook of sociology,
aspects of sociology, society and human society were selected. After screening the contents, 13 titles were not found relevant, and the chapter headings in the remaining 87 titles were classified. All the chapter headings bearing a concept on which at least 3 authors had devoted some part of their book, were classified. Thus, the chapter headings used by any one of the 87 authors on a specific concept were arranged chronologically, along with the surname of the author, the chapter number used for that concept and the total number of chapters in the book of that author.

3.3.1 Reasons for Selecting Textbooks as a Source

Textbooks generally try to represent the literature appearing in a discipline in the following way:

1. They include the concepts, that are generally prescribed in the syllabi of sociology courses in the academic institutions;
2. Textbooks assimilate and disseminate the ideas appearing in the form of articles in periodicals, and also in the form of books published in a field of study, on very specific topics;
3. Textbooks present a cumulative and consensual view of the field of study, and are generally supposed to represent all the main concepts of a discipline;
4. Textbooks generally try to include the views of majority of the 'founding fathers' and the personal views of the author are subsidiary.

3.3.2 Implications of Classified Chapter Headings

The exercise helped in identifying 100 concepts, out of which some were used by up to 60 authors and others by only 3 authors. The arrangement enabled to get the following information also:

1. Number of textbooks having a chapter on a particular concept of sociology;
2. Various terms and their synonyms used by these authors for a
concept in the chapter headings;

3. Consensus, uniformity, diversity and changes visible in the use of terms for a concept, over a period of time;

4. Some concepts are always used in pairs by sociologists, like, authority and power, status and role, values and norms, evolution and progress etc. and such pairs can be identified to be placed in filitary sequence in information retrieval tools;

5. The year when the textbooks started including a chapter on a particular concept, the period during which maximum authors include chapter on that concept, and the year since no author included a chapter on the concept.

While classifying the chapter headings, it was observed that in many cases the textbook authors make a combined chapter headings for some concepts. Classifying such headings was not easy, as such, these headings were placed under all the terms appearing in a heading. Such multiple terms have been, wherever placed elsewhere also, shown by a star (*). As follows:

53. SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

9. 1959. Social differentiation and stratification (Merton 19/25)

As this chapter heading includes two concepts, it is included in both the places i.e. in social differentiation and in social stratification also, and the star (*) above social differentiation indicates the inclusion of this chapter heading under that term also. In case of division of a book by an author into major sections and then into chapters, sections are shown distinctly through underlining, to indicate that these headings are mostly significant concepts or major sections of the books. For calculating the proportion of the book devoted to each concept, in the case of combined headings as above, half of 1/25th part of the book is counted for each concept.
3.4 Sources used to decide the Relative Placement of a Concept

The identified concepts were arranged and placed in relation to each other, on the basis of their definition, explanation and usage, and for this, these sources were used:

a. Dictionaries of the Subject

Those definitions from 8 dictionaries of sociology or social sciences were taken into consideration, that provided scope of a term, use of other terms in explaining a term, and the views expressed by noted authors while defining or using a term.

b. Analysis of Chapter Headings

Most of the textbook authors divide their books, first into some major sections and then these sections are sub-divided into chapters. How they subdivide a major section of their book, provides valuable information about their views on the broader and narrower concepts to a particular concept. With this data, it was possible to show each concept, as to how, it has been subdivided by all the authors using it as a section and also under which major section a concept has been placed by these authors, who made it a chapter of some major section of the book.

c. Provision in the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH)

For deciding about the subject headings in the catalogue, most of the libraries use LCSH. The list provides 'broader', 'narrower', 'related', 'use', and 'used for' terms for all the terms used in the catalogue of the Library of Congress. The list cannot be treated as a perfect guide, but in most of the cases the relations of the concepts are well decided. Moreover, the results obtained from literature analysis, can be compared with the list, to find out the difference and unanimity.

d. Related Terms used by Sociologists

Dictionaries of sociology provide 'see also' terms at the end of definition of a term. These 'see also' terms were
collected from all the dictionaries for all the main concepts identified, and it was treated as the list of the terms shown by sociologists as related terms to a concept. It may be noted that, most of the contributions to dictionaries of sociology are generally by well known sociologists or the compilers themselves have been/ are sociologists.

3.5 Method used to decide the Relative Significance of a Concept

The number of chapters in the textbook written by an author and the chapter number for each heading was also noted while arranging the chapter headings under various concepts. This was deemed necessary, as some authors had devoted one fifth (1/5) of his book to a concept and giving it a very significant position of a major section, while on the other hand, another treats the same heading as one thirtieth part (1/30) of his book. While adding the proportion of a book devoted to a concept, the chapter or section heading shown as major section of a book, by an author has to be given more significance. Thus, the number of authors having a chapter on that concept, as well as the proportion of the book used by them for that concept is taken into account, while deciding the relative significance of a concept.

3.6 Scope including Limitations of the Data used

The dictionaries included pertain to the period 1955 to 1989, and textbooks taken are for the period 1939 to 1990. No selection was made of the title according to the eminence of the author, country of origin, or the type of presentation of the subject matter. The terms selected finally among the synonyms, is not necessarily the one used by maximum authors, although, it is so in a maximum number of cases. Out of various synonyms used in the headings, a term was selected, that was adjudged to be most accepted or acceptable as heading. Most of the books included in the study have undergone several
editions, and wherever available latest edition was used, but for showing in the chronological table, the year of the first edition has been taken into consideration, if it was mentioned in the latest edition.

While calculating the proportion of books used for a concept by an author, it has been assumed that all the chapters in a book occupy equal number of pages, or have been given equal importance by an author, which may not be true. Generally, textbook authors devote more pages to a chapter in the beginning of the book, and less at the end. The method of counting the number of pages for each chapter could be a further step to decide about more accurate relative value. But the method adopted also enables us to place all the concepts in the relative significance categories, and the concepts with less number of pages, automatically have shown lesser significance values. However, further studies could be taken up to see, as to whether, counting the number of pages for a chapter or for a concept, changes the relative position of the concepts as obtained through the present study.