What is Sociology?
What is Sociology?

- **Sociology** is an attempt to understand how membership in one's social group affects individual behavior.
Working Definition

• Hess, Markson and Stein (1990) - sociology is:
1. The systematic study of human behaviour,
2. The groups to which one belongs,
3. And the societies that human beings create,
4. and within which their lives unfold.
Social Sciences study patterns of behaviour

- **A Quest** to understand patterns of behaviour found in other disciplines

1. Psychology,
2. Anthropology,
3. Political science,
4. Criminology.
Sociology is:

1. Concerned
2. Scientific
3. Systematic
4. Informed
We all display Social Sensitivity

We are Curious about our own behaviour and the behaviour of others.

1. Why do we act as we do?

2. How are we the same as others?

3. How are we different?
3 Sample Questions

• Why are divorce rates higher among less educated?

• Why are more residents of BC alcoholic compared to Newfoundland?

• Why do Francophones currently place more emphasis on economic achievement than Anglophones?
Emergence OF SOCIOLOGY as a Discipline

• **Sociology** originated in the wake of the French Revolution.

• **Late eighteenth/ Early nineteenth centuries= TURMOIL...**

• SOC **Emerged in Europe** during a period of profound **social change**.
Sociology Emerges...

- **Three revolutions** had to take place before the sociological imagination could crystallize:
3 Revolutions

- The **scientific revolution** (16\textsuperscript{th} c.) encouraged the use of evidence to substantiate theories.
- The **democratic revolution** (18\textsuperscript{th} c.) encouraged the view that human action can change society.
- The **industrial revolution** (19\textsuperscript{th} c.) gave sociologists their subject matter.
Sociological Thought
see Marx, Weber, Durkheim

• Late 18c and 19thc - URBANIZATION AND INDUSTRIALIZATION =

• 1. Impersonal
• 2. Competitive
• 3. Contractual
• 4. Superficial
• 5. Specialized
August Comte (1798-1857)

- WAS SOCIOLOGY’s FOUNDING FATHER

- He believed society can be studied in the same way as the natural world... (empirically)

- He called Sociology – social physics.
A. COMTE

- Divided mankind’s progress into three historical stages:

1. **Theological**: relies on supernatural agencies to explain what man can't explain otherwise.

2. **Metaphysical**: man attributes effects to abstract but poorly understood causes.

3. **"Positive"**: because man now understands the scientific laws which control the world.
Sociology and Science

- Nigel (1961) posits 7 differences between science and commonsense:

  1. **Commonsense** refers to one set of methods science another

  2. **Science** grows out of commonsense concerns for daily life, but science has more involved
Science vs. Common Sense

3. **Science** seeks to provide generalizations regarding disparate types of phenomena.

4. **Science** seeks to remove inconsistencies incompleteness (valid and reliable).

5. **Scientific theories** tend to last for shorter periods—subjected to criticism.
Science vs. Common Sense

• 6. Sciences **seeks explanation** of wide range of phenomena—not immediate, short-term

• 7. Science seek **repeated criticism**—nothing is ‘taken for granted’ like common sense
Positivism-the sociological root

1. Sociology uses an approach called **Positivism** – August Comte

2. **Society should be studied by empirical proof.**

3. **The scientific method** includes:
   - Objective, hypothesis, methodology, analysis, conclusion.
TWO KEY SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES

1. EMILE DURKHEIM (1858-1917) - SUICIDE

2. C. WRIGHT MILLS (1916-1962) - SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION
According to Durkheim: Suicide rates

- Are determined by group’s level of social solidarity:
  1. the frequency with which its members interact &
  2. the degree to which they share beliefs, values and morals
Durkheim’s Theory of Suicide

Suicide rate

High

Low

Social solidarity

Low

Intermediate

High

Egoistic and anomic suicide

Altruistic suicide
Suicide: A study of Social Forms

- **Suicide rates** =
  - **Lowest** at intermediate levels of social solidarity
  - **Highest** at low and high levels of social solidarity.
C. Wright Mill (1959)

- C. Wright Mill (1959) maintained that good sociologists require a **sociological imagination**

- **SOCIIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION** IS...
  an awareness of the relationship between personal experience and the wider society.
Sociology vs. Psychology

• Psychology has more differences between **academic** and **applied** branches

1. **Therapy** more pronounced in **psychology**
2. **Psychology** places more emphasis on understanding the **individual**
Sociology vs. Psychology cont..

3. Some psychologists place emphasis on animal behaviour

4. Psychology is more concerned with the physiology of the brain-

5. It shares with sociology a branch known as social psychology but moves towards the individual.
Sociology

- **Sociology** is the scientific study of **human society** and **social** behaviour.

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What is Sociology?

- **Sociology** is an attempt to understand how membership in one's social group affects individual behavior.

- Sociology **relies upon paradigms** to investigate society: Theory, Data, Analysis.
WHAT IS A SOCIOLOGIST?

- He/she is an academic who studies human society from a scientific point of view.

- THE SOCIOLOGIST-Operationalizes:
  1. Concepts
  2. Theories
  3. Paradigms
  4. Methods
- Functionalism
- Conflict theory
- Symbolic interactionism
- Post modernism
- Feminism
Main Methods of Sociology

• Are **four main methods** in sociological research:

1. Field methods (e.g., participant observation)
2. Experiments
3. Surveys
4. Analysis of existing documents and official statistics
OVERALL Definition

• Hess, Markson and Stein (1990)
  1. sociology is the systematic study of human behaviour...
Sociology is the study of the powerful social forces that influence social relations and personal lives.

Sociology emerged at the time of the Industrial Revolution, an era of massive social transformations accompanied by new social problems.
Sociology is the systematic study of human action in social context.

It is based on the idea that our relations with other people create opportunities for us to think and act but also set limits on our thoughts and action.
SOCIETY

A SLIDERULE METHOD
I.E

• **W. SHAKESPEARE** said that,-**ALL THE WORLD IS A STAGE!**
Society is a....

• PERFORMANCE
SOCIETY AS

- POLITICS
- ECONOMICS
- RELIGION
- FAMILY
- ORGANIZATIONS
- RECREATION
- MASS MEDIA

ACTION-play
NEOLIBERAL Ideology
CHURCHES
EDUCATION
Summary

1. Sociology is a **scientific** discipline
2. Many approaches and **paradigms**
3. **Concepts** are the building blocks of sociology.
4. Sociology looks at society in many ways **using concepts**. I.e. social scripts, performance, institutions.