

# **What is Sociology?**

INTRODUCTORY SOCIOLOGY  
1010C & G

# 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<sup>th</sup> c.) encouraged the use of evidence to substantiate theories.
- The **democratic revolution** (18<sup>th</sup> c.) encouraged the view that human action can change society.
- The **industrial revolution** (19<sup>th</sup> 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**

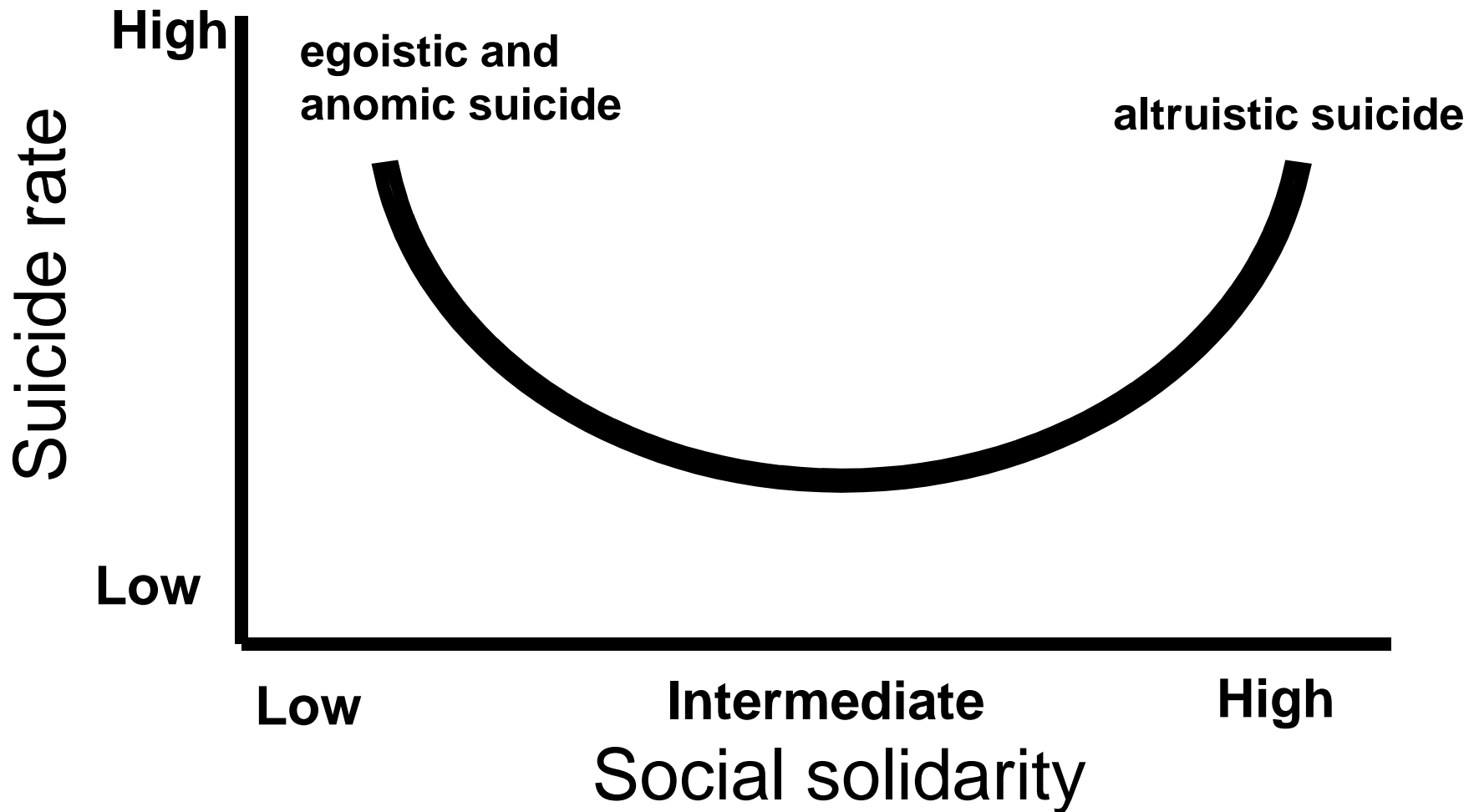
# According to Durkheim: Suicide rates

- 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: 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**
- **SOCIOLOGICAL 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**  
**P.E.R.F.O.R.M.A.N.C.E**

- **P**OLITICS
  - **E**CONOMICS
  - **R**ELIGION
  - **F**AMILY
  - **O**RGANIZATIONs
  - **R**ECREATION
  - **M**ASS MEDIA
- A**CTION-play
- N**EOLIBERAL Ideology
- C**HURCHES
- E**DUICATION

# 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.

NELSON

# SOCIOLOGY

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