Emile Durkheim (1858-1917)

First official sociology professor (1913)

Key books:

*The Division of Labor* (1893) (doctoral thesis)
- Mechanical solidarity vs. organic solidarity
- Anomie: absence of clear rules of behavior, normlessness, unrealistic aspirations and expectations
- Anomie is the major “pathology” of modern (organic) society

*The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895)

*Suicide* (1897)

*The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912)

Influences of Durkheim’s work:

As interpreted by Parsons, his work shaped structural-functionalism. Parsons helped Durkheim become a major influence on U.S. sociology.

*Elementary Forms* influenced sociology of religion and interactionist tradition.

*Suicide* is exemplar of sociological research.

Concept of “social fact” has helped define discipline.
Social Facts

Durkheim attempted to differentiate sociology from philosophy and psychology.

Sociology is empirical (unlike philosophy)

Sociology deals with “social facts” (unlike psychology)

Social facts are external and coercive

“Here then, is a category of facts with very distinctive characteristics: it consists of ways of acting, thinking, and feeling, external to the individual, and endowed with a power of coercion, by reason of which they control him.” (p. 60)

Coercion may not be felt unless social facts are resisted. Successful socialization may lead to a lack of perceived coercion because social facts are internalized.

Social facts may be material or nonmaterial:

Material: technology, housing arrangements, population distribution, etc.

Nonmaterial: norms, values, roles (ways of acting, thinking and feeling), systems (language, currency, professional practices)
Social facts?

The English language
The grading scale (A-F)
U.S. violent crime rate
Most common baby names
Serotonin levels in the brain
Men’s greater physical strength than women
Your life plan
Cancer rates
Positive mental attitude
Clothing fashions
My state of mind
Dollars
The internet
ADHD
Addiction