

Sociology and suicide

Sociology



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Introduction to Sociology Performance Assessment

Task #1: Sociology&SuicideAmy M. Ehlert Northcentral Technical College

Abstract In this paper, I introduce Emile Durkheim's ideas of suicide and the four types. I also discuss the sociological perspectives of the variations in suicide rates that Durkheim's theory is able to explain. Finally, in conclusion, I offer my own personal views on the topic of suicide and propose ways that society could prevent suicide. Emile Durkheim was a French sociologist who published one of many books, entitled, " Suicide". In it, he showed the different suicide rates between Protestant and Catholic people. This book was published in 1897, so, it reflects his findings at that point in time.

Some of the theories that Durkheim established about suicide being at a higher rate include the following:

- Men than women
- Single than married
- Childless than with children
- Protestants than Catholics/Jews
- Soldiers than civilians
- Times of peace than in times of war
- Scandinavian countries
- Higher education level
- The four subtypes of suicide that Durkheim recognized were: egoistic, altruistic, anomic, and fatalistic.

Egoistic suicide resulted from a feeling of not belonging or having no sense of meaning. Altruistic was being overwhelmed by a society's beliefs and they

feel less important. Anomic was from a person's basic lack of not knowing where they fit in. Finally, fatalistic suicide, which is the rarest, is when a person's future or what they are passionate about are oppressed by harsh discipline. The longitudinal variation in Durkheim's theory is pretty much constant in that during each decade, the rates stay about the same. They range from a low of 10.6/100,000 in 1960 to a high of 12.4/100,000 in 1990. The average rate remains around 11.39/100,000. No matter the difference in integration, social ties, or freedom, the suicide rates remain about the same. Suicide rates are higher among college students because they tend to have more stress in their lives or more things to worry about. They have all new things to worry about and do not have the closeness of their parents to help them as they did before. Some occupations can increase suicide rates and they include dentists, artists, teachers, etc. The type of work the person does and if they are depended on by others for their work can push these people to suicide.

Single people tend to have higher suicide rates than married. When you are married, you are part of a functioning unit and dependent upon each other. Adding children into the mix does and can add stress but also makes one happier, in my opinion. Single people are more isolated and less likely to have such close bonds. As for those with advancing age, they just seem to have given up. They think they have lived their lives and what more can they do? The late Dr. Kevorkian tended a lot of assisted suicides requested mostly by elderly people. The median age of Dr. Kevorkian's patients was 74. That really shows how the elderly just seem to want to give up and pass on. Among the black and white youth population, Durkheim showed it was more

likely for white youngsters, especially those who were wealthy, to take their own lives. This seemed to be due to even though these white youths had more economic advantage, they were often socially isolated. However, black youth suicide is on the rise in our country. I read that this is due to the breakdown of the family and easier access to alcohol and drugs.

However, the biggest factor is the increase of the black middle class, which puts more stress on these kids from their new social surroundings. In conclusion, I believe a lot of suicides generally stem from a cry for help. In my past, I have had these types of thoughts and am currently on an anti-depressant. There should be more literature available, especially for our youth, so they can be thoroughly educated on suicide. From my own personal experience, most attempted suicides are a cry for help. These people want help but not in a condescending way. They don't want to be made fun of or made to feel like crap for their feelings. They just want to be understood. At least that is how I always felt. I believe there should be more youth groups or places youngsters can go and get involved in a healthy manner. Even for those who feel isolated by the normal groups in schools like athletics, choir, etc. There should be a community center specializing in groups of different interests; that is not offered in a typical educational environment. So, overall, I propose more education on suicide, a better understanding of those who are suicidal or depressed, and a place for the community to help them, not just our youth but all of our society.

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