

HSP40



Intro to the Social Sciences

What is Social Science?

- Provides us with life skills as a way of looking at the world around us
- It is the study of people, their actions and customs in relationship to others
- Includes Anthropology, Psychology and Sociology

Why is Social Science Important?

- Scientists and doctors can show us the medical consequences of stress (ie. high blood pressure, heart attacks and death)
- But, social scientists can analyze the factors that lead to stress

In the workplace...

- Studies have shown that employees become stressed when they feel they have little control over the pattern of their daily work lives
- Often seen in assembly-line workers in car plants
- Workers experienced abnormally high rates of absenteeism, substance abuse and marriage breakup

Concerns...

- Workers & Unions – stressful conditions at the car plant workplace
- Management – production costs were rising due to declining worker productivity

Social Science Intervention

- First – observe existing production lines in operation
- Second - Questionnaires to workers
- Third – Conducted experiments in the assembly lines

Results showed...

- Workers felt rushed to keep up with the cars coming down the line
- They got bored doing the same task all day long
- This resulted in mistakes in assembly process that were expensive to fix later on

Recommendations

- Teams of 6-10 people could decide among themselves how to complete the steps and how to divide the steps among team members
- They could agree to rotate steps every hour/day/week
- As long as steps were completed in the amount of time given, and met quality-control standards, teams could virtually decide anything for themselves

Results of Implementing the Recommendations

- Honda Canada assembly plant in Alliston ON was a pioneer in the team concept
- Had higher worker satisfaction
- Quality control was better
- Absenteeism was lower

- As a result – this plant was more profitable, so a new production shift was added, which created more jobs
- Economy of Alliston expanded as houses, schools and stores were built to accommodate workers' families
- Consumer satisfaction with vehicles assembled in the plant was higher than elsewhere
- Customers were also more likely to buy a similar vehicle later on

Resolving Issues

- Social Sciences can also help people make informed decisions about issues (ie the Death Penalty)
- Canadians are divided on this issue – some in favour some opposed

Supporters may argue:

- Anyone who deliberately kills someone has lost their right to live (retribution argument)
- Claim that murders deserve the death penalty for the evil act they committed
- Murder is a violation of society's moral order, and punishment is justified as a means of re-establishing this moral order
- Think death penalty is a deterrent – serving as an example to society and will encourage others not to commit the same act

How Social Scientists can help

- Help people understand that the meaning of crime is dependent on one's perspective
- How people respond to data depends on the perspective they bring to crime
- They also actually provide factual data – the statistics – that bear on the issue

Anthropology, Psychology and Sociology

- Although each have different perspectives and approaches, together they create a foundation for understanding human behaviour, cultures and societies

What are the Social Sciences?

- Anthropology – the study of the origin, the behaviour, the physical, social, and cultural development of humans



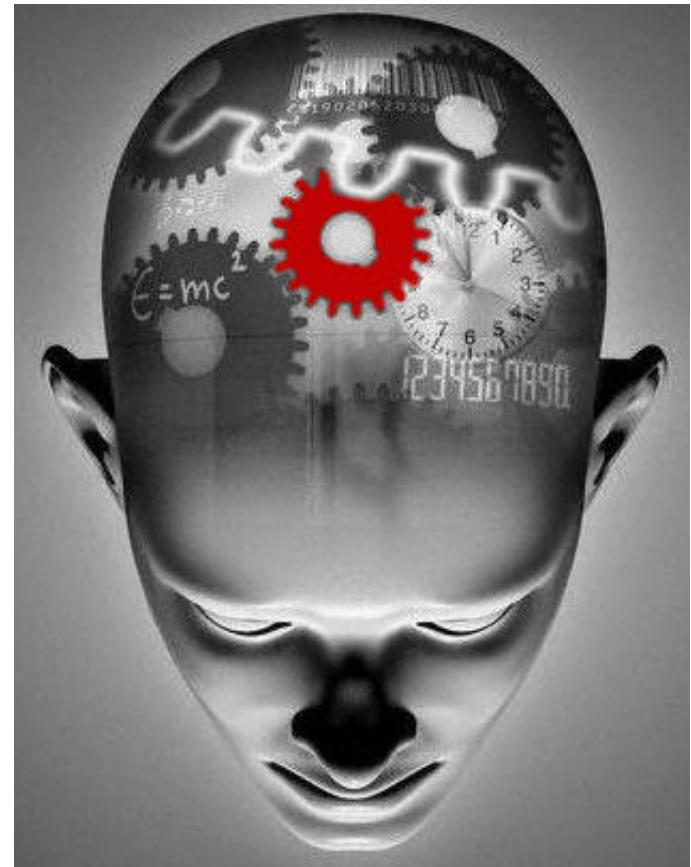
What are the Social Sciences?

- Sociology – the study of human social behaviour and the institutions and organizations that form society; the study of how groups of people who share common characteristics function



What are the Social Sciences?

- Psychology – the study of mental processes and human behaviour



Considering Each Approach

The OC Transpo Killing



The OC Transpo Killing

- On Tuesday April 6, 1999, former OC Transpo employee Pierre Lebrun shot six people, killing four, in a shooting spree at OC Transpo's St. Laurent Boulevard garage, before killing himself. Lebrun had been fired in August 1997 but was later reinstated, and quit in 1998.
- Lebrun had made 50 visits to doctors complaining of stomach cramps, insomnia, depression, diarrhea and other ailments and he had suffered from delusions
- An inquest into the shooting revealed that Lebrun had been the subject of teasing for his speech impediment and that his complaints to management had not been investigated. The inquest revealed an "atmosphere of bullying" described as a "poisoned" environment by an employment equity manager.
- In response, OC Transpo instigated zero-tolerance policies regarding workplace harassment, a new employee-management communications program, and increased training on workplace respect. However, studies in 2003 and 2004 found there to be lingering elements of a negative work environment, and employee-management communication was reported to be strained following the 1996 strike.

A Psychological Explanation

- Psychologists would examine his life in detail in order to answer:

What factors in his personality led Lebrun to commit this crime?



A Psychological Explanation

- Assume that personality is moulded by a combination of biological factors as well as prior experiences
- Lebrun had made 50 visits to doctors complaining of stomach cramps, insomnia, depression, diarrhea and other ailments
- He had suffered from delusions
- He had been bullied at work for a speech impediment

A Sociological Explanation

- Sociologists would be interested in answering:

What common sociologic factors are there in the lives of people who have gone on shooting sprees at their former place of work?



A Sociological Explanation



- Some *common characteristics* of people who have gone on shooting rampages are:
 - unpopular loner
 - low tolerance for frustration and anger
 - harassed at work
 - low self-esteem
 - own/possess rifles and other guns

An Anthropological Explanation

- Anthropologists would be interested in:
What were the values of the culture in which he grew up & later worked?



An Anthropological Explanation

- Assumption is that there are factors in Canadian culture and the “subculture” of OC Transpo that encouraged Lebrun’s behaviour
- Powerful images of violence are widespread in today’s Canadian culture (sports, media, video games)



An Anthropological Explanation

- Evidence at the OC Transpo inquest revealed a poisonous environment, characterized by hostility and aggression
- There was little respect between managers and employees
- “Macho” behaviour was reported with much talk about women and teasing Lebrun for his stutter

Apply Your Knowledge



How might an anthropologist, psychologist and sociologist, explain the following incidents?

- 1) A group of thugs attack and injure two men they see coming out of a gay bar
- 2) A church group sponsors a refugee family from a war-torn country
- 3) Canadian peacekeeping troops put their lives at risk in a foreign country, where a civil war may break out again
- 4) Soccer fans overseas riot and get in fist fights with opposing fans after a World Cup qualifying game