

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY NOTES

UNIT 1: Foundations of Sociology

Sociological imagination is closely related to the sociological perspective: the way in which sociologists look at, and try to find meaning in, the world around them. A central dictum of this perspective, espoused by Peter Berger (1963).

C. Wright Mills, who coined the term the **sociological imagination** in 1955, defined it as "the vivid awareness of the relationship between personal experience and the wider society." Mills argues that sociological imagination involves changing one's perspective and requires "the capacity to range from the most impersonal and remote transformations to the intimate features of the human self—and to see the relations between the two" (Mills, 1955).

To conduct research on these topics, sociologists follow a rigorous process. First, they formulate a question that is narrow enough to be answered by evidence. Second, they conduct background research to find out what other sociologists have discovered about the question. Third, they construct a hypothesis that states the researcher's idea about the topic. Fourth, they gather and analyze evidence in order to determine if the hypothesis is correct. Fifth, they report the results, usually by publishing an article or book.

Sociology can best be summed up as the systematic study of social life and human society. The sociological perspective looks for the "general in the particular" (Berger, 1963).

Émile Durkheim was one of the first sociologists to specify what exactly is "social" about our individual actions and decisions.

Sociologists see the "general" in the "particular."

Social facts are ways of thinking and behaving which are external to us and constrain us as individuals.

The **sociological imagination** is recognition of how social forces shape individual behavior.

The term "**sociology**" was first used by **Auguste Comte** when he proposed a science that would unite everything we know about human beings.

Sociology was born with the **Industrial Revolution**. In the 19th centuries, things were changing rapidly; people were flocking to the cities, cities were growing exponentially, there was a lot of overcrowding, there was no indoor plumbing.

Auguste Comte (PD). Considered the founder of sociology as a method of study, Auguste Comte (1798–1857), was different than his philosophical predecessors, such as Confucius and Plato.

Positivism asserts that humans must understand the world around them by using observable facts derived from direct experiences with the senses.

Sociology A Students Introduction

L Darling-Hammond



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