

WEEK 1: THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

1. Learning objectives. This week you will be able to:

- a. Explain what is meant by 'the sociological imagination', outlining the importance of the relationship between 'public issues' and 'private troubles'.
- b. Define the basic sociological concepts of social construction, social structure, culture, agency, socialisation and identity, modernity, colonialism, settler-colonialism and postcolonialism, and globalisation

2. Video lectures and other videos

Located in the Week 1 Content folder.

3. Reading

Ch.1, What is Sociology?, pp. 1-10

4. Online Quiz

No quiz this week

5. Define/take notes on these key concepts/terms.

Sociological imagination	Sociology's core task of pointing out the connections between individual behaviour and the social forces that shape it
Social construction	Sociologists place more emphasis on the ways in which human behaviour, interaction and social institutions change over time and vary across different social and cultural contexts, rather than considering it as based on biology
Culture	Refers to shared values, norms and everyday practices among a community - emphasises the importance of the processes by which meaning is created within a community, which is expressed in a set of values and a way of life - unique to that community - distinguishes it from other communities
Agency	- Understanding how people interpret their situation and negotiate with those around them according to that interpretation and the opportunities available to them - people construct their own interpretation of their situation and often respond in ways that cannot be reduced to the dull weight of external social forces.
Socialisation	Refers to the transmission or reproduction of culture from one generation to the next - captures the way in which human beings learn to develop patterns of behaviour, experiences and identities relevant to their culture - a continuous process that takes place from the moment of every individual's birth until their death
Identity	The constellation of characteristics that people regard as part of their self, including the way they present themselves to others - it's often assumed that people's identities are derived from a combination of their genetic inheritance and their psychological development
Modernity	Used to describe the features that characterise modern, Western social formations, which include an economic system based on capitalism, democracy and the rationalisation of all aspects of social life Central components of modernity: - an economic structure that is both industrial and capitalist, based on making profits and consumption - nation-state becomes the principal form of political organisation - an increasing adherence to the principles of rationality

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	- a belief in progress - a growing focus on individualism, a development of bureaucracy - exporting these characteristics of modern society from Western Europe to the world
Colonialism	Refers to the ways in which European modernity has been associated with the spread of empire by the English, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Germans, Dutch and Belgians in parts of Asia, Africa, Australasia and North and South America
Settler-colonialism	- Refers to situations where Europeans take up a more permanent presence in the non-European land and make it more absolutely their 'own' - tend to outnumber the indigenous inhabitants and appropriate more land through 'settlement', at times effecting dispossession through genocide
Post-colonialism	Refers to former colonial situations - the effects of colonial relationship did not simply end but continued in various forms into postcolonial period
Globalisation	The process by which people's daily lives are increasingly influenced by the growing technological and economic, political and legal, social and cultural integration of people and communities around the world - it includes ideas about mass culture, the effects of information technology, the power of global corporations and the growing web of international agreements that change the nature of national sovereignty
De-globalisation	The ways in which globalisation processes can also change direction and go into reverse, so that there are times when the world can become less integrated across the dimensions of economics, politics and culture e.g. the period between the two world wars

6. Reflection questions

a) Do you think the world is being McDonaldised? Can you think of your own examples?
Yes, because McDonald's is everywhere in the world and it is the empire of the fast food industry.

e.g. peace organisation, WGO

b) Outline some examples of how particular concerns such as, for example, unemployment, divorce, or social inequality, have both a 'public issue' and 'private trouble' dimension, and explain what difference it makes to connect the two.

It's a private trouble as these issues certainly affect people's daily life either financially or emotionally; and it becomes a public issue when the matter is getting more serious, i.e. high unemployment rate, which affects the entire productivity of the society and hence groups and individuals, and therefore it becomes a public concern.

c) What are some examples of a tension between explaining how people behave in terms of 'structure' or 'agency'?

e.g. financial desire?

7. Questions for clarification/interesting examples

- *List any questions or suggestions for interesting examples/sources you have here.*