

Sociology is the study of society.	Sociology is the study of social facts.	'A social fact is every way of acting, fixed or not, capable of exercising on the individual an external constraint; or again, every way of acting which is general throughout a given society, while at the same time existing in its own right independent of its individual manifestations' (Durkheim 1895/1982: 13).
	Sociology is the study of social interaction.	'Society exists where a number of individuals enter into interaction. This interaction always arises on the basis of certain drives or for the sake of certain purposes. [...] The significance of these interactions among men lies in the fact that it is because of them that the individuals, in whom these driving impulses are lodged, form a unity, that is, a society' (Simmel 1908/1971: 23).
Sociology is shaped by the sociological imagination.	Sociology understands individual lives through their larger social context.	'The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society' (Mills 1959/1967: 6).
		'Perhaps the most fruitful distinction with which the sociological imagination works is between "the personal troubles of milieu" and "the public issues of social structure". This distinction is an essential tool of the sociological imagination and a feature of all classic work in social science' (Mills 1959/1967: 8).

Figure 1.1 What is sociology? An initial approximation

(Nehring, 2013: 26)

Source: Nehring, D. (2013) *Sociology: An Introductory Textbook and Reader*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.