



Sociological Imagination

Examples of Sociological Imagination

Sociological imagination is one of the interesting concepts in sociology that interlinks the personal and social lives of people. This article provides you with some of the examples, so that you can understand the concept better.

In 1959, C. Wright Mills, released a book titled 'sociological imagination' in which he introduced a new concept to social sciences by the same name as his book. In this book he provided a new perspective on how to analyze the society. The ability to see the relationship between large-scale social forces and the personal actions of individuals was named as sociological imagination by Mill. In his own words, "it is the capacity to shift from one perspective to another...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." In short, social imagination is all about determining the relationship between ordinary lives of people and the wider social forces. This article provides you with some of the most comprehensive examples so that you connect with the term in a better manner. Given below are two different examples that would unfold the concept clearly for your understanding.

Example #1

We will start with a simple and common example. Imagine there is a girl who wishes to look thin and fair but somehow she cannot achieve this look. Now this girl goes into a chronic depression and suffers from inferiority complex. In order to be thin she becomes anorexic and faces severe health problems. Now, if we see this case in isolation, we will think that it's her personal problem and she is spoiling her life on her own. But if we apply sociological imagination, we would realize that it's the obsession of society in general for the fair skin and thin body that has indirectly affected this girl. It is the media, that represents society, portrays beautiful and desirable girls as thin and fair. This kind of representation affects many people directly or indirectly, as it happened in case of this particular girl. If only few girls suffered from anorexia in society then we could have called it individual or personal problem. But, when there are many girls suffering from the similar problem then it becomes a social issue where stereotypical attitude towards women and social media needs to be scrutinized.

Example #2

Lets take one of the other prominent examples. Suppose, there is a boy who is not getting a job and is burdened with loan that he needs to pay back. He tries very hard to get a job but fails. Now he joins the underworld gang and engages in illegal and criminal activities. If you analyze this case individually, then you may say that this boy did not try hard enough to get a job and performed illegal activities to get easy money. But if you see this case with the sociological imagination perspective, then you would see that the larger forces such as, economic meltdown, unemployment, and the lack of regulation in the subprime mortgage industry, etc. had a direct impact on the life of this guy. We could have blamed the personal character of the individual if very few guys went through the similar situation. But when there is a significant number of youth facing the same problem then it becomes a social or public problem where government policies about employment and banking need to be looked at.

Similarly, you can take any individual problem or situation and try to trace the root cause of the problem in the society and find how this particular issue developed. Increasing number of divorce cases, many farmers committing suicide, children becoming delinquent due to poverty, etc., are some of the classic examples. You would also realize that many of the so-called personal problems are directly or indirectly affected by the large-scale social forces, be it government policies or regulations, globalization, or consumerism. It is clear from the examples of sociological imagination that this concept tries to study how large social forces influence the individual behavior and actions of people living in that society.

So the next time you come across a personal problem or situation you know how to connect it to the wider social phenomena. This process would help you find out the long term, permanent, and promising solutions to some of the grave individual problems.

- Not getting a job straight out of college and choosing to change careers
 - Impersonal View:
 - Soc. Imagination view:
- A student is sleeping in class all of the time
 - Impersonal view:
 - Soc. Imagination view:
- A person starts to act out randomly towards friends and teachers.
 - Impersonal view:
 - Soc. Imagination view:

Social Sciences

- Social Sciences- are the disciplines that study human social behavior or institutions and functions of human society in a scientific matter.

Anthropology

- Anthropology- the comparative study of past and present cultures.
 - Most similar to sociology in its subject matter.

Psychology

- Behavior and thinking of organisms
- Different from sociology in that psychology deals with individual behavior rather than group behavior.

Economics

- The study of the choices people make in an effort to satisfy their needs and wants.

Political Science

- Examination of the organization and operation of governments.
 - Sociology and Political Science overlap when it comes to voting patterns, political power, and the formation of political groups.

History

- Study of past events.

WWI

Can apply any of the Social Sciences to any one event in history. All intertwined.

- **Anthropology** —Following the end of World War I, many of Europe's borders were redrawn, often influenced by racial and eugenic ideologies. The decision behind this was that, "...territories remain stable and peace be guaranteed,". The redrawing of Europe's map was through the project known as the Inquiry, and in doing so helped to determine what the territory and identity of people in Europe would be. Consequently, the redrawing of Europe's map after World War I was directly influenced by the knowledge of racial purity.
- **Psychology**— Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Shell Shock from the trenches. Psychological effect from trench and chemical warfare.
- **Economics**— The Treaty of Versailles' terms embarrassed Germany and destroyed its economy with the required war reparations. It set the tone for the beginnings of World War II.
- **Political Science**— World War I was begun because of different governments agreements to become allies even though they didn't want to go to war but were required to.
- **History**— Look at the overall effects of World War I and what occurred. Cause and effect.