

# Sociological imagination essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Definition of sociological imagination**

Sociological theories describe causes and effects of human behavior; study the social life, and society. Above definition displays two concepts: human being at the micro level and society at the macro level. Sociological imagination is a sociological theory that encapsulates these two concepts: individual, and society (What is Sociology). An individual is an element of society. The society acts forces on this element. Sociological imagination enables the individual to identify these forces, their impacts. Sociological imagination is the ability of connecting micro level to the macro level, and distinguishing personal troubles and social issues.

### **Importance of sociological imagination**

External act of an individual displays what one does, which is the result of cause and effect. The cause aspect defines why one acts in a specific way. Individual act also displays the structural arrangement of a society at a location and a historical point of civilization. Individual act, history, and location are intertwined. Sociological imagination demonstrates how an individual perceives the social forces, as well as the cause and effect relationship of an individual or group of individuals with social issues or social forces. This is why we should care for sociological imagination.

### **Examples**

In India, many centuries ago, widow women used to commit ritualistic suicide by being burnt alive along with the dead husband. The act of widow women was the result of social forces that existed during that time in India

(Deducing with sociological imagination). In John Grisham's novel *A Time to Kill*, the African American Carl Lee Hailey kills two white men who raped and killed his little daughter Tonya. Acts of the white men and Carl Lee Hailey were the result of social forces that existed in social groups in the USA at that time. The social force in this case was racism. Two white men raped and killed Tonya because she was black. Carl Lee killed the white rapists because he knew justice would not prevail for white men (*A time to kill* 2008).

### **Thesis statement**

When I analyze my own life through sociological imagination, I am able to explain my acts and social forces behind them. If I can distinguish, good and bad acts using wisdom then I can change my behavior and worldview.

Conflict theory envisioned a society as fragmented into groups. More powerful social groups exert forces on less powerful groups. Social imagination discloses the characteristics of social forces when and only when individuals interact with these forces.

### SOCIAL CONTEXT

#### **Definition of social context**

In a net shell, sociological imagination is an interaction between an individual and social forces. This abstraction points towards the concept of existence of correlation between psychology and sociology. Social context theory reveals this relationship and show societal and social changes over the passage of time, explains the causes that brought changes and offers future change patterns. The model includes three factors: micro socialization process through the behavior of individual and collective of individuals, macro social

forces through the social structure, and time (Social context theory). Social context theory is analyzed through social environment dimension and time dimension. Social environment dimension consists of social structures that shape the behavior of individual or group of individuals, social process demonstrates how individuals perceive, interpret and interact with the social structures, and social behavior represents the social realities through behavior of individuals. Time dimension enacts the power of the existing societal forces in maintaining social behavior patterns (Social context theory). Social imagination acknowledges the existence of interaction between individual or group of individuals and social forces. Social context theory explains how and why the relationship emerged and what changes the relationship could bring over the passage of time.

### **Specific socio-historical force – 1**

I lived in Russian part of the Ex-Soviet Union. During mid 1980s, country's economic conditions started deteriorating. By late 1980s absence of adequate commodities started hurting public. Bad economy as a social structure shaped individuals behaviors with the concept that Russian Federation was feeding the parasites, non-Russians, so Russians must abandon "them," the non-Russians. When social structure (bad economy) and social process (individuals interaction) came into conflict, it resulted the break up of the country.

### **Specific socio-historical force – 2**

I was born and raised in Palestine. Social structure was poor economy, poor living conditions, fundamental religious belief, and constant aggression from Israel. Social process was my perception about Israel and their politics

towards Palestine. Poverty, religion, and bad living environment shaped my behavior. My perception was to change living environment, which I found in cooperation with Israel. I voted for peace roadmap with Israel.

## **How your social context could be different**

Imagine I am living in the USA during the period of segregation. I am an African American. The social structure created by European whites suppressed my rights; I cannot get proper education, proper job, and even a decent place to live. Now, guess I live in the USA when the country has a president who is an African American. It took a long time to make this change, however, now I have equal rights as whites.

### SOCIAL LOCATION

## **Definition of social location**

The concept social imagination assigns two attributes: an individual or group of individuals and social forces. Social imagination defines the interaction of an individual or group of individuals with social forces. At the same time, the individual is a character located at a certain place in the society. In American society, white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, male, heterosexual, upper middle-class, educated, older defines social location of a person (Social location). Social location defines a person's place in their particular social order. A person's bias, belief, and values are shaped based on social locations. Gender, color, economic level, coming from the village or town, healthy or sick, young or old; these are some of attributes of social location. Individuals from similar social location create their own social hierarchy. Social hierarchy

classifies individuals in a group based on esteem, prestige, economic success, and accumulation of wealth into social classes.

## **Description of social location**

I am from India, a country with 1.22 billion populations. I am male, less than 25, from town, literate, which respectively corresponds to 50 %, 51 %, 75 %, and 28 % of the total population. From the economic standpoint, 18 % constitutes rich and upper middle class, 23 % constitute middle class, and 59 % of the total population are poor. I belong to the 18 % social class (India's middle class population 2011; India's population 2012).

## **Personal experience #1**

My childhood social location should be classified than middle class. I faced absence of money in fulfilling a child's desire of purchasing toys.

## **Personal experience #2**

Teenage years were financially little better, but my parents still were unable to pay tuition for schools with better teachers, and technology. I studied in schools for children from underprivileged families.

## **Personal experience #3**

In college years, I became interested in Marxism and concept of conflict theory. Years of impoverished economic conditions contributed social imagination that rich and upper middle class are greedy and want to keep the middle class economically handcuffed forever.

RELATIVE CULTURE

## **Personal beliefs, values, or attitudes #1**

Edward Taylor defined culture as a complex of behavior pattern and perception which includes knowledge, beliefs, morals, customs, ethics and any other skill and habits acquired by man as a member of society (What is culture?). At the same time, belief, customs, and ethics are relative to individual within his own social context. This is how anthropologist explains comparative culture concept (What is culture relativism?). Sociological imagination is interaction between individual or group of individuals' acts and social forces. Individual act is a function of social process; hence, it characterizes consciousness of individuals. Perception, on the other hand, is a function of relative culture. Belief, morals, ethics form the foundation of human perception and its value varies from one social context to other. Social imagination relates to the culture.

## **Personal beliefs, values, or attitudes #2**

My social location is poor class in India. Belief, morals, customs relate to orthodox Hindu religion. This culture determines my social context. Hindu religion believes cows are sacred animals. On the other hand, Muslims of the society sacrifice cows in the name of their religion. Social imagination is to make protest to this practice and stop sacrificing cows in the name of religion.

## **Personal beliefs, values, or attitudes #3**

I am a Palestinian youth, spend the life in the ghetto in poverty; this is my social location. Belief, morals, customs and ethics relate to fundamental Muslim culture. Social context is formed by the fundamental culture. I perceive that Israel is the cause of my personal problems. Social imagination

is to change Israeli attitude toward Palestinians. That is way; I am a member of Hamaz political party.

### **Personal beliefs, values, or attitudes # 4**

Social location rich, male, middle aged, an Arab, and an owner of an industry that feeds 300 families. I believe my financial position is vital for the well being of employees. However, due to the economic downturn, the plant has stopped several employee support activities and has reduced salary by 15 %. Employees are blaming me for their personal financial problems.

Employees are also blaming that the owner has not reduced own expenses.

Employees have taken vows to fight me back. My social imagination is to suppress these new social forces with the help of country's law enforcement agency.

### **CONCLUSION**

Sociological imagination to a certain extent accepts Marx's conflict theory and agrees that society is divided into fragmented classes with respective social, political and economic power. Conflict arises when a class or group feels social forces from other classes. Social imagination theory recognizes that social behavior is a result of social culture.