

Concepts of c. wright mills' the promise of sociology essay sample

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C. Wright Mills was an astounding sociologist, social critic, and idealist. His writings and character sparked debate within the sociological community. He advocated that one key purpose of a sociologist was to create social change against the oppression of government. In *The Promise of Sociology*, C. Wright Mills explores the imagination of a sociologist through the understanding of social analysis and the idea that society interrelates with an individual's life. The sociological imagination gives a person the ability to understand the factors such as biography, history, and lifestyle that impact and influence the individual. It allows the study of how a person's surroundings change their perception of the society around them. To comprehend the sociological imagination is to understand the principles of personal troubles and public issues. Modern sociologists do not study society to merely maintain it, but also to correct it through social change. What allows modern sociologists to gather, analyze, and correct the pillars of civilization?

In Mills' view, a person must have the sociological imagination in order for any change to occur. If Mills' assertion is correct, one cannot be a true sociologist without this imagination. According to Frank Elwell, the sociological imagination is "a term referring to the application of imaginative thought to the asking and answering of sociological questions. [It is] the ability to see the effects of social patterns and history on human behavior." Therefore, the sociological imagination must be the thought process all sociologists experience at some moment in order to question and change society for the better of all people. If I were to imagine the complexity of my society, I would be able to better understand the world I live in. I would better understand groups of people I know on a personal level. My

perspective on the world would change dramatically. There are many occasions on which I do not understand the reasoning of some world leaders or the purpose of their governments. To possess the sociological imagination is to possess the understanding of the self, biography, and history of the individual's society.

Included with the sociological imagination, Mills introduces what he calls, "issues" and "troubles." In many ways, issues surpass an individual's surroundings and personal life. Coming from California, I have seen many of my friends' parents lose their jobs. Thus far, two million people in my home state have lost their jobs. In my opinion, unemployment is the most prominent issue I have personally experienced. I often wonder if perhaps in the past the government has hid and readen or failed to present these public issues for what they were. Issues such as unemployment could have been misconstrued as private troubles. In the past, many people tended to blame individuals for their unemployment.

Additionally, given the social nature of many affected jobs, it is quite easy to become involved with the direct issue or trouble. Nowadays, as more people lose their jobs to the crumbling economy, structural or political arrangements may be to blame. Furthermore, "troubles" are associated with the personal level of the individual's character and the direct relationships with those around them. It is with troubles that the self is heavily involved. One's consciousness is the private matter that defines a trouble. As an example, I once knew a father that was afflicted by alcoholism. It reached the point at which it affected his job performance. He was later fired from his

job. His alcoholism was his personal trouble, and his unemployment became part of a statistic or issue. It is with this scenario that one can see how easily a personal trouble can become a public issue.

Solutions to both of these public issues and private troubles are discussed at great length by economists, physicians, psychologists, and sociologists.

There are many possible solutions to these problems of alcoholism and unemployment; however, a permanent working solution is yet to be discovered. Alcohol awareness and prevention can stem the rise of alcoholism, but it is not absolute. However, statistics have shown them to be adequate temporary solutions to a permanent problem. It is uncertain whether there is an effective tool against unemployment. Ever since the division of labor was created, there has been unemployment. The United States government hopes that a trillion dollar stimulus package can bring the country out of a recession and bring unemployment rates down.

Only time will tell if this one possible solution will be enough to save the country. Our government's solutions to both alcoholism and unemployment aim to help a group, which as a result, eventually helps an individual. Though they differ on the personal and public levels, both attempt to reinforce society and its faults by working on the individual's level. Inversely, a solution to a personal trouble may in fact lead to a solution to a public issue. If an individual is without troubles then it can be concluded that the individual will be able to contribute to the benefit of society, which ultimately solves public issues.

As stated, unemployment is the largest social issue that society faces today. I believe the root of the problem lies with the financial market. It has been proven that many of the major banks have wasted large sums of cash over the years on extravagant parties and poor investments. It seems only fair that the CEO's responsible for these mistakes should take the blame and be punished to make an example to those who believe they are too rich or powerful to be above the law. The banks should only receive the bailout after the corrections have been made. This solution would be effective immediately and have a lasting effect on how banks do business in the future. C. Wright Mills was not only an astounding sociologist, social critic, and utopian, but he was also an anti-authoritarian, controversial, and vocal American pioneer. He understood class conflict, power and social structure like few could.

In *The Promise of Sociology*, C. Wright Mills explores and outlines social analysis through the sociological imagination, troubles, and issues. He left his everlasting contribution to American sociology with these words of advice: "Know that many personal troubles cannot be solved merely as troubles, but must be understood in terms of public issues - and in terms of the problems of history making. Know that the human meaning of public issues must be revealed by relating them to personal troubles - and to the problems of the individual life. Know that the problems of social science, when adequately formulated, must include both troubles and issues, both biography and history, and the range of their intricate relations. Within that range the life of the individual and the making of societies occur; and within

that range the sociological imagination has its chance to make a difference in the quality of human life in our time” (Mills 1959: 226).

References:

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