

# The Sociological Imagination

by Sophia Tutorial



## WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial will cover the following topic of sociology:

1. The Sociological Imagination

## 1. THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

The **sociological imagination** is defined as the ability to connect personal troubles with broader social trends, a concept developed by sociologist **C. Wright Mills**.

C. Wright Mills was a prominent sociologist, noted for his lasting impacts on the field of sociology, despite his short life span (1916 to 1962). To this day, we still read his book, *The Sociological Imagination*, written in 1959.

C. Wright Mills felt it was critical and imperative for the sociologist to explore the connections between an individual's personal biography and larger social forces and historical trends.

### IN CONTEXT

Many Americans lost their jobs in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s due to the outsourcing of these jobs overseas. They weren't 'bad' people--i.e., their personal qualities didn't cause their firing--but it was simply that the economy was moving in a certain direction. It was cheaper for these jobs to be done overseas, and the capitalists sent the jobs there to gain an advantage.

If you were one of these people, you'd likely feel disgruntled when you lost your job. You might feel like it was your fault. But in this case, it really wasn't. Your personal trouble stemmed from the globalization of the economy, something over which you had no control. It didn't mean that you were a bad person or incapable; it's simply that these broader social forces and historical trends were moving in a certain direction which caused you to lose your job.

How would someone with a **sociological imagination** view this situation? If you have a sociological imagination, you are able to connect the broader social issue--that it's much cheaper for these jobs to be produced overseas--with the personal issue, the loss of jobs.



**BIG IDEA**

The sociological imagination involves being able to connect your personal troubles with broader social forces. This is a skill that takes time for you to refine: connecting the general with the particular, personal problems with historical transcendent trends.



#### TERM TO KNOW

### Sociological Imagination

The process or skill of connecting individual personal troubles to broader societal issues.



#### PEOPLE TO KNOW

### C. Wright Mills

Famous American sociologist who saw personal problems as societal issues.



#### SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about the **sociological imagination**, a concept developed by American sociologist C. Wright Mills. The sociological imagination is the process of connecting personal troubles to broader social trends.

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia author Zach Lamb.



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