

Imagination is Intelligence with an Erektion:

An essay defining C. Wright Mill's "sociological imagination," identifying two social issues which exemplify this topic, and interpreting the concept as it applies to my life

Some say that as a young child, you have a better imagination than you do as an adult. You could create vivid worlds, people, and stories that others might not be able to witness. One type of imagination, however—the sociological imagination—develops as you age. The sociological imagination, defined as the capacity to recognize the correlation “between individual experiences and the larger society” is C. Wright Mills’ macrocosmic outlook that attempts to explain every social issue ranging from behaviors, to domestic disputes, to segregation. (Kendall)

The significance of this concept lies in the ability to utilize it effectively. As merely an abstract theory, the sociological imagination is nothing more than a term to memorize for a college exam. However, when put into practice, Mills’ idea can help one learn from mistakes, repeat beneficial activities, and discourage destructive habits.

Two important issues that are better understood by a strong sociological imagination are abortion, and the seemingly less serious, gasoline price inflation with relation to sport-utility vehicles. When looking at these two issues, it is important to realize that they not only have personal repercussions, but also affect the “larger society” as well. (Kendall)

Firstly, abortion is an issue that greatly affects both the individual as well as the society as a whole. Aborting a child negatively affects the mother of the child, the child itself, the families of the mother, and possibly the father as well. The mother may initially think that not having the child will be the easiest way out of a bad situation, but the majority of women either regret having the abortion, or suffer from more severe aftereffects. According to Dr. David C. Reardon at the Elliot Institute, approximately 61% of women feel guilty about their decision to abort, and, even more shockingly, about 54% said they wouldn’t be able to forgive themselves. Abortion, therefore, clearly damages the individuals involved, but does it affect the broader society? Yes it does. There have been, and continue to be, several groups in our culture and others that are either pro-life or pro-choice. Those groups tend to be very forward and passionate about their opinions as it

is a very sensitive issue. Abortion airs in the nightly news, affects the presidential election, and remains a moral dilemma separating churches and deeply devout from the extreme liberals and humanitarians.

Secondly, gasoline price increases affect everyone as individuals, but they also affect the economy, thus affecting our society as well. The prices affect all of us in that it costs us more to fill our tanks, yet we don't receive any further compensation from our employers to cover these extra costs. Gasoline prices are not only affected by prices per barrel of crude oil increases, high import taxes on those barrels, and price gouging from each filling station, but also by the people using the gasoline. People, for example, driving large sport-utility vehicles (SUVs) consume much more gasoline than a person driving a Honda Insight[®]. Their consumption puts the economic value of petroleum in flux; it creates a higher demand, and therefore, a price hike. According to the United States Department of Energy, a 2005 Cadillac Escalade ETS gets a whopping 13 miles to the gallon (MPG), while the American Honda Motor Company states that utilizing a turbonetics kit pumping 2 PSI of compressed air into the engine block, a 2005 Honda Insight CVT is capable of a monstrous 97 MPG. At first glance, that may not seem like too big of a deal. However, given that the current average prices in Missouri are \$3.36 USD per gallon of premium unleaded gasoline, that adds up very quickly. (AAA) When calculating the difference in price, one can assume that the average person drives around 24,000 miles per year. Given the EPA mileage statistics, that would mean the price to fill up a 2005 Escalade for a one-year period would be approximately \$6203 USD, while the Insight would only require about \$831 USD. That is a drastic difference of \$5372, thus creating a large flux in the economic value of gasoline. Therefore, gasoline consumption is not only an individual's problem, but, through utilization of the sociological imagination, one can clearly see the affect fuel consumption has on the overall society.

One's imagination may start to play a lesser role in life as one ages, but the sociological imagination takes its place and develops throughout adulthood. This concept allows for the interlinking between what may seem to be individual matters and their overlying societal implications.

Works cited:

AAA Insurance Group. "The Daily Fuel Gauge Report." AAA Insurance. 6 September 2005.

<<http://198.6.95.31/MOavg.asp>>

American Honda Motor Company. "97 – Not the Year, the MPG." Honda International.

6 September 2005. <http://automobiles.honda.com/models/model_overview.asp?>

Kendall, Diana. Sociology in our Times: The Essentials. Fifth Edition. Belmont: Thomson

Wadsworth, 2006.

Reardon, Dr. David C. "Psychological Reactions Reported After Abortion." Elliot Institute.

Fall, 1994. 05 September 2005. <<http://www.afterabortion.org/Survey2.htm>>.

United States Department of Energy. USDE. 06 September 2005.

<http://www.fueleconomy.gov/feg/bymodel/2005_Cadillac_Escalade.shtml>