Sociological Imagination And Utopia

Sociological Imagination, a term coined by C. Wright Mills, is defined as the awareness of the relationship of personal interactions and society. In his book, The Sociological Imagination, Mill emphasizes without the context of society, history and a person's life, one cannot truly comprehend any individual of the three. Sociological imagination helps sociologists analyze personal circumstances and even societal trends through the deeper interpretations of interactions between society and an individual.

Often problems overlooked as personal may have an underlying cause within society. For instance, with the recent outbreak of the Corona virus a person contracting the virus and still going to work may be attributed to irresponsibility. However, due to the fact that it is not mandatory for businesses to provide sick days to their employees, that person may not be able to afford to take unpaid leaves. This concept can also be seen in other personal decisions such as a person buying the latest model of the iPhone. Although, this action may seem like a personal preference, societal influence may impact this decision. This person may have been influenced by increased pressure to keep up with mobile trends, peer pressure among friends and even material culture within the US may have affected this decision.

Since I was a child, I knew that I was going to pursue a higher education. Therefore, it did not come as a surprise that I have been applying to colleges for the last couple of months. One of the main reasons I applied is because of my career aspirations (Physician's assistant) require me to attend university. Also, I am not educated in fields that can be entered with only a high school diploma. Although money is not a driving force for my future aspirations, I would like to be able to support myself without having to worry about being able to afford necessities which is another main reason why I would like to attend a college.

In spite of all the reasons I may have thought this idea to be based on solely my life choices, there is sufficient evidence to prove otherwise. My parents have been influencing me to attend college since I have entered high school and even my friends have certain set expectations of me about the college that I am going to attend. Moreover, this decision is influenced by the push towards higher education by middle and high schools. It is present in middle schools by the opportunities to earn high school credits in middle school. This can be seen in high schools by higher-level classes such as AP classes that can be used to achieve credit for colleges if requirements are met. In fact, some high schools offer courses that can be taken through a community college that also counts as a college credit. The push towards college is not just from school and family pressure, society as a whole encourages young adults to attend higher education. This is seen through the encouragement of students to apply for student loans and the offering of scholarships by organizations or corporations.

According to CNN, in the article "The student loan debt is $1.6 trillion and people are struggling to pay it down", as of the January 19th, 2020 the student loan debt is $1.9 trillion and rising. This is a clear indicator that people in society are encouraged to pursue higher education within the face of debt; CNN also reports higher college rates which is a result of societal pressure on individuals to obtain a college degree. It is clear that society has influenced my personal decision of applying and eventually attending a college.

A utopia, translated as “no place”, is a perfect society in which members of it are freed from suffering. This term was first coined by Sir Thomas More in 1516 within his book, Utopia. This book was a satirical fictional book intending on condemning the English government at that time. Throughout the history of mankind, there have been multiple attempts to create a utopia. Many societies have gotten close, unfortunately those societies were not perfect. For instance, in 2001 during Argentina’s economic collapse, abandoned factories were occupied by former employees in an attempt to provide more jobs to these so called “ghost towns”.

In a self-created utopian society, my first priority would be to make higher education free. This will enable people that currently are not able to afford college to attend it. People within this society that would like to be educated on topics that they find interesting could attend college with the sole purpose of learning. However, this decision will not impact college admissions. Students that may not qualify for a certain university may not be accepted into it. This will ease the problem of student loan debt as well as make a college degree more obtainable to people considering this option. Society also greatly benefits from having a well-educated population; jobs that require a college degree that need more people in the field may have an increased workforce due to the easy accessibility of the necessary educational requirements.

Secondly, I will require businesses to pay their workers a living wage. Hopefully, this will reduce stigma around jobs that are deemed as “inferior” to other careers. With the newly improved salaries, many people that previously thought that college was their only option in regards to finding a job with a livable wage will reconsider attending one. More jobs will be considered as options instead of fall back plans. Also, with the livable salaries, the working class has more spendable money which can in turn impact the economy. Moreover, this may reduce societal pressure towards attending college; this may even decrease the push of middle and high schools towards the sole pursuit of higher education. Society, as a whole, has more to gain than lose with livable salaries.

Lastly, my final priority would be free universal healthcare. In today’s American society, healthcare is often limited to those who can afford it, people without the money often have to make ends due. This may be as simple as skipping out on annual checkups to avoiding surgeries or other treatments. To prevent this from occurring, in my utopian society, healthcare would be accessible to all. Although universal healthcare seems to only benefit the individual it also can benefit society. It provides for a healthier population which will positively impact the economy.