

Sociological conflict theory

[Life](#), [Emotions](#)



Teenage suicide, the third leading cause of death for those 13-18 years old, is a complexity of issues which culminates in a catastrophic action, the causation of which can only be partially examined or explained by the 3 main sociological theories. Functionalism would attempt to illustrate suicide as a working part of society—the weak and possibly the unsuccessful eliminate themselves, allowing society to devote resources to other issues. A con of this theory is that it does not address the issue; what motivated suicide may be a significant issue within society.

Another con of this theory is that it fails to see global perspective and even a family view, thereby forcing society to use resources on family; this could be more costly than assisting the anomie. Another theory why teenage suicide is functional to our society is that failed suicide attempts give us invaluable information into the minds of those in this desperate state. A study was taken of teenagers who had attempted suicide in British Columbia. It found common denominators such as problems in their family situations, the pressure to excel, and low self-esteem.

The data collected shows an example of functionalism because it can prevent future suicides. Although suicide is perceived as a completely personal act, it creates negative latent functions that echo throughout society as a whole. When economic times are tough, some social welfare programs may be cut leading to higher suicide rates. One example is that in Europe suicide can affect how economic decisions are made by the government's welfare programs (International Journal of Social Welfare Article published online: 9 FEB 2011). This ultimately decreases the size of the work force possibly negatively effecting economic recovery.

The Marx Conflict Theory does an exemplary job in outlining the precursors for teenage suicide by exposing the underlying conflict existing between classes. This class conflict can be easily seen in American high school today. There are several factors which increase the risk of teenage suicide which vary slightly from survey to survey, but all include stress over relationships and/or performance expectations. The Conflict Theory, however, does little to address the underlying individual motivations involved in teenage suicides.

For example, it does not address warning signs or the fact that a predominance of those committing suicide or attempting to commit suicide has at least one, often more than one emotional or psychological disorder. Children from the ages 15-24 are more prone for suicide due to the major changes that are occurring at this stage of life. There are many images and labels associated with teenage suicide, which coincide with the symbolic interactionism theory. Studies show that "goths" are more likely to commit suicide than "normal" teens (<http://www.cvpy.org/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/goth-teens-dhr.df>). The reasons behind a teen's suicide or attempted suicide can be complex; some may even see it as a solution. Feelings of rejection, hurt, loss, anger, shame, or guilt can be contributing factors. Concern over disappointing friends or family members, feeling unwanted, unloved, victimized, or like they're a burden to others can lead to suicidal thoughts. Labeled teenage subcultures are often targets for bullying and teasing, which can lead to a teen's suicide (<http://alterophobia.blogspot.com/2008/05/tempest-smith-another-victim-of-hatred.html>).

Often, suicidal teens are seen as alienated or unduly stressed, unable to cope with the demands placed on them by their parents, peers, and the media. Within some subcultures, suicide itself may be seen as glamorous, noble, a way to lighten the burden on others, or a way to reject the norms of society. Each theory can contribute to the sociological causation and explanation of teenage suicidal tendencies; none stand alone in providing a thorough explanation of this societal woe, though symbolic interactionism provides the most adequate examination of the issue, due to the many images and labels that are associated with teenage suicide.