

Connecting sociological theory and social issues

[Sociology](#), [Social Issues](#)



Running Head: Connecting Sociological Theory and Social Issues Connecting Sociological Theory and Social Issues The topic of choice is the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the United States and around the world. HIV/AIDS has been a main concern for the world since its emergence in the 1980's. " The prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the United States through 2009 was about 1 million cases. Worldwide, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS varies from less than 0.1 percent to 15-28 percent of a country's population". (Schaefer 394)

This essay will explore the three major socialization perspectives on this issue; the interactionist perspective, the conflict perspective, and the functionalist perspective. Each perspective will give a greater insight on how society reasons. The functionalist perspective is described as " a sociological approach that emphasizes the way in which the parts of a society are structured to maintain its stability". (Schaefer 440) On the topic of HIV/AIDS, a functionalist will most likely focus on how this issue has affected healthcare for those infected with the disease.

Without proper healthcare, there will be a sociological imbalance. So in order to bring back balance and stability, other alternatives have to be established. A functionalist will emphasize that " if established social institutions cannot meet a crucial need, new social networks are likely to emerge to perform that function. In the case of AIDS, self-help groups have organized, especially in the gay communities of major cities, to care for the sick, educate the healthy, and lobby for more responsive public policies". Schaefer 395) On the other hand, the conflict perspective is focused on the tension that comes about with the HIV/AIDS epidemic. For a long time AIDS was seen as a homosexual, drug user, African American disease. From the conflict

viewpoint this could be a reason why the government did not respond as quickly as they should have. " Studies show that African Americans and Latinos are diagnosed later and are slower to receive treatment than other racial and ethnic groups. " (Schaefer 395) However, to correct the injustice there has been new programs to reach out to minorities and those less fortunate to receive treatments. An interactionist perspective looks at an issue on a smaller scale (micro) than the conflict and functionalist perspective. The interactionist is defined as " a sociological approach that generalizes about everyday forms of social interaction in order to explain society as a whole". Schaefer 441) The HIV/AIDS epidemic on a micro level was predicted that the outbreak " would lead to a more conservative sexual climate among both homosexuals and heterosexuals, in which people would be much more cautious about becoming involved with new partners. " (Schaefer 395) However, statistics have shown quite the opposite. " People in the United States have not heeded precautions about " safe sex. " Data from studies conducted in the early 1990s indicated a growing complacency about AIDS, even among those who were most vulnerable. " (Schaefer 395)

To conclude, no sociological perspective or approach is the precise method of viewing society as a whole. It is best to take a little bit of each perspective. Although, each perspective is different, they all depict that HIV/AIDS is a huge concern for society. If we do not continue to make progress and become lax in spreading the education on HIV/AIDS, history will have a way of repeating itself. Reference Schaefer, Richard T.. Sociology: A Brief Introduction, 9th Edition. McGraw-Hill Learning Solutions, 2011. .