

TOPIC: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON HEALTH & MEDICINE

Functionalist Perspective on Health & Medicine

◆ *Recall:* Functionalist perspective focuses on how different structures allow society to function.

- ▶ Illness is considered _____ → prevents people from fulfilling their roles.

Sick Role

◆ **Talcott Parsons** (1902 - 1979): Society allows people who are ill to adopt a *sick role*.

- ▶ **Sick Role:** _____ role assumed during acute illness with unique rights & responsibility.

Rights

- ▶ _____ from normal social roles (ex: school or work).

Responsibilities

- ▶ _____ to get better.
- ▶ _____ medical help.



Legitimized through interactions with a physician.

- ▶ Doesn't address _____ conditions or inequality.

EXAMPLE

Determine if the statements below are true or false according to Parsons' explanation of the sick role.

1	If a person is in the sick role, they are excused from their typical role in society.	
2	Illness is considered a functional part of a society.	
3	When someone assumes a sick role, there is an expectation that they are trying to get better.	

PRACTICE

Tatianna comes down with mono during her first year of college. Which of the following is *not* part of the expectations for the sick role?

- Tatianna can email her professor with a doctor's note and ask for an extension on her paper.
- Tatianna's friends bring her soup.
- Tatianna is allowed to miss club meetings to rest.
- Tatianna is given extra responsibilities as treasurer of the running club.

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Conflict Perspective on Health & Medicine

- ◆ *Recall:* Conflict perspectives look at how social structures create and perpetuate inequality.

Economic & Class Disparities

- ◆ Focus on how problems with healthcare system are linked to capitalism.
 - ▶ **Commodification:** Viewing healthcare as a _____ rather than a public good or human right.
 - ▶ _____ to care depends on wealth/ power:
 - ↑ SES = ___ quality care.
 - ↓ SES = ___ quality care.
 - ▶ **Profit Motive:** Doctors are _____ to prescribe more/ perform more procedures.
 - ▶ Tendency to treat *individuals* rather than target _____ determinants of health (ex: poverty).



Racial & Gender Disparities

- ◆ Historically, medicine played a role in _____ inequality.
 - ▶ Ex: Diagnosing women with “hysteria” (“hyster” is from the Greek for uterus).
 - ▶ Ex: Lack of training to detect skin conditions in POC.

EXAMPLE

GLP-1 inhibitors are a class of weight-loss drug that promise great results for individuals looking to lose weight.

Using the ideas discussed in the lesson, what are two issues a conflict theorist may have with this?

1. _____

2. _____

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PRACTICE

Which of the following statements is most in line with conflict theory?

- a) In capitalist systems, all people have equal access to quality care.
- b) Individuals with fewer resources have access to the best quality care due to social welfare programs.
- c) Social welfare programs around healthcare are unimportant because business owners will provide for their workers.
- d) In capitalist systems, access to care is dependent on socioeconomic status.

PRACTICE

Imagine you are a social conflict theorist. Which of the following would you be **most likely** to investigate as a cause of poor health?

- a) How air quality in a poor neighborhood is related to asthma morbidity.
- b) How a patient's feelings about their illness influence their outcomes.
- c) How an individual's economic productivity changes after a diagnosis.
- d) How a patient's comfort level with a doctor influences their outcome.

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Symbolic Interactionist Perspective on Health & Medicine

- ◆ *Recall:* Symbolic interactionists look at how interactions shape and create reality.

Social Construction of Reality

- ◆ **Social Construction of Illness:** _____ people attach to health & illness.

- Health is influenced by our _____ experience.

How do I feel about it?

- Mindset.
- _____ experiences.
- Beliefs.
- Temperament.

How do others feel about it?

- _____
- Biases.

- ◆ **Social Construction of Treatment:** _____ is defined by social meanings and interactions.

- Erving Goffman's dramaturgical approach.

- Doctor: Knowledgeable.
- Patient: Cooperative.

- Clean room w/ tools.
- Diplomas.

- Technical terminology.
- Formal language.



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EXAMPLE

According to symbolic interactionists, which of the following could influence how a person experiences illness?

- I. Stigma against certain conditions.
- II. A person's temperament.
- III. Belief that a medical intervention won't work.

- a) I & II.
- b) I & III.
- c) II & III.
- d) I, II, & III.

PRACTICE

During a sensitive medical procedure, a doctor uses technical language, avoids eye contact, and maintains a brisk, professional manner. A symbolic interactionist would interpret this as:

- a) Poor medical ethics.
- b) An attempt to give the patient anonymity.
- c) An attempt to manage social expectations and keep the interaction professional.
- d) Evidence of how doctors operate under a profit motive.