

Question 1: In about 5-6 sentences define what a social problem is from a sociological perspective (with a sociological imagination) rather than simply from an individualist (or blame the victim view) point of view.

A social problem refers to a social condition that not only offers a threat to people's quality of lives but also to their most cherished values. An issue that can be characterized as a social problem existence should be one that affects the whole society. While there may be disagreement on the approach to remedy the problems presented by the social problem, it is important that some degree of consensus to remedy the situation exist for an issue to be identified as a social problem. The economy, unemployment and healthcare rank among some of the most common social problems.

Question 2: Compare and contrast the views of the conflict, functionalist, and symbolic Interactionist perspectives on social problems. What do each of these say about the cause/s of social problems and how they could be solved? [Sentence limit: 7-8 sentences]

The functionalist view on social problem describes the origin of social problem as a failure meeting social expectations through impersonal functioning of institutions. In order to rectify social problem from this perspective, several actions that include research and active intervention as well as organizational restructuring are recommended. Conflict perspective on the other hand recognizes the existence of conflicts in the society due to racial, class and gender inequalities among others. These usually contribute to inequalities in distribution of power and resources leading to emergence of social problems. Steps to remedy the social problem from this perspective include incorporating divergent views in existing laws or changing the laws to reflect divergent views. The symbolic Interactionist theory looks at how subjectivity on deviance contributes to the existence of social problems. The theory suggests that social problems exist due to influence from social environment as well as people of power creating conditions and labeling them as social problems. The symbolic interaction theory proposes methods such as re-socialization and empowering the less powerful in asserting their place in the society as some of the methods of addressing social problems.

Question 3: From the lecture discuss what you understand about the concept of sustainability, and then explain what you see is the connection between solving social problems and building sustainable communities/society. [Sentence limit: 5-6]

The concept of sustainability refers to efforts targeted toward improving the quality of life of all people but this effort should involve all sectors and institutions of the society. Sustainability therefore looks into achieving balance between environmental health, economic prosperity, and social equity. Since sustainability is concerned with addressing issues related to social equity, it is one of the ways through which social problems can be addressed. Sustainability attempts to creating stable communities through eradication of injustices and structural inequalities such as poverty, hunger, unemployment which themselves are social problems. Sustainability therefore is an important concept that attempts to address all the potential causes of social problems within the society.

Question 4a: Why is health care in America a social problem?

Despite the improvement of healthcare delivery systems in the United States, healthcare remains a major social problem based on a number of factors. Unequal access to high quality healthcare remains a major problem since majority of the population lack access to healthcare insurance. Secondly, social inequalities regarding race and ethnicity discriminate against the minor ethnic communities from accessing appropriate healthcare. The social class structure is also an important factor as far as discriminatory healthcare provision is concerned with members of lower social class ranking subjected to high rates of illnesses. Certain illnesses especially mental illnesses contribute a higher percentage to the social impact of deinstitutionalization as these patients fail to integrate well in the community. Mental illnesses also provide challenges related to ineffective administration of healthcare based on existence of certain social factors. Another important factor to consider is the high cost of healthcare that is often associated with increased use of medical technology among other factors such as insurance policies. Other important factors to consider in terms of contributing to social problem in healthcare include treatment of physical illnesses as well as caring for victims of gun violence.

Question 4b: How can we make health care in America more sustainable?

Sustainability concept looks into achieving balance between environmental health, economic prosperity, and social equity in order to improve living conditions of individuals. In order to achieve a sustainable society, it is important to argue that these goals often play an important role in addressing existing social problems. Some of the methods that could be used to solve social problems in the America healthcare system basing on the conflict, functionalist, and symbolic Interactionist perspectives include law reforms targeted at incorporating divergent social views into the healthcare system. Secondly, there is need for actions such as re-socialization to be instituted if the problem of de institutionalization occurs for instance in the case of mental illnesses rehabilitation. Also of importance is the need to restructure healthcare benefits such as insurance policies in order to benefit majority of the society members. Problems related to inequality for instance could be addressed through enacting powerful social movements to agitate for the rights of the socially oppressed. This could be coupled by creation of new organizations in order to eliminate the existing social institutions hence the social problems that are in existence. Another important aspect that could be considered is carrying out research activities on social problems and how best to address them. This research could contribute a great deal in improving social institutions. Furthermore, it could play an important role in establishing active intervention strategies targeting the challenges posed by social problems in the healthcare system.