Unraveling the AIDS Quilt: A Study in Oppression
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The AIDS Quilt

An estimated 40,000 Americans contract HIV every year, half of them under the age of 25 (Centers for Disease Control, 2001). "The Quilt... a memorial, a tool for education and a work of art, the Quilt is a unique creation, an uncommon and uplifting response to the tragic loss of human life (The Names Project Foundation, 2011)." This study is grounded in frameworks of multicultural feminism, critical theory, and cognitive dissonance theory, all of which are used to reveal influences of activism and influence inherent with the artifact.

Method

Data was collected via a face-to-face semi-structured interviewing technique and thematic analysis was used to identify aspects of recurrent themes, repeated phrases, and forceful/meaningful references throughout participant responses (Berg, 2004; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Keyton, 2006; Strauss, 1987).

Feminist and Theoretical Frameworks

Multicultural Feminism: "A synergy of gender class creates an environment of domination or subordination (Lorber, 2005)."

Critical Theory: A school of thought that stresses the examination and critique of society and culture, drawing from knowledge across the social sciences and humanities

Cognitive Dissonance Theory: "States that if a person holds two cognitions that are inconsistent with one another, he will experience the pressure of an aversive motivational state called cognitive dissonance, a pressure which he will seek to remove, among other ways, by altering one of the two dissonant cognitions (Bem, 1967)."

Results

The findings of this analysis are presented via a creative scholarly works project culmination of a short documentary introducing the AIDS quilt and highlighting brief personal narratives and interview testimonials from a variety of University, local, and state resources (e.g., AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin; UWEC Women’s and LGBT Resource Center; UWEC Student Health).

Conclusions

Based on this analysis, recommendations are offered regarding strategies for generating more inclusive and safe communicative environments surrounding personal, physical, and sexual health and safety conversations and choices.

- Even if you have no risk factors for HIV infection, you may still want to get tested to ease your own mind. This also encourages everyone to be more responsible about HIV transmission.
- Immune system monitoring and early treatment can greatly improve your long term health.
- Knowing you are positive may help you change behaviors that would put yourself and others at risk.
- You will know whether or not you can infect others.
- Women and their partners considering pregnancy can take advantage of treatments that potentially prevent transmission of HIV to the baby.
- If you test negative, you may feel less anxious after testing.

References


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