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The volume *A Socio-Criminological Analysis of the HIV Epidemic* (Vernon Press, 2020) by Bruno Meini, an Italian sociologist, consists of a slender book summarising concepts, analyses, and suggestions for patterns of thought and action in 100 pages. Accompanied by 50 pages of bibliographical reference sources (careful with both original and more current documentation), it was written with the tangible intention of speaking to both an expert reader and a non-expert but curious person who wants to know more.

The different socio-criminological aspects of the HIV epidemic are thoroughly examined in this book, which also makes a valuable contribution to the current sociological discussion on infectious diseases. In order to explain how gender influences and defines the path and experience of the epidemic, the author aims to develop an independent and unique epistemology of HIV. He also aims to redefine the public discourse on HIV to reflect sociological conceptualisations. This process identifies gender relations as a useful tool for emphasising the complex social nature of the virus (Orza *et al.* 2021).

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The book is divided into six chapters. The first offers a thorough source of information that is simple to obtain and lists all the key factors influencing the HIV epidemic. The focus of the second chapter is a sociological investigation of HIV, and Parsons' concept of the "sick role" is also extensively covered. The third chapter examines the effects of HIV stigma and prejudice on vulnerable children and children who become orphaned due to AIDS, as well as how to promote a strategy that includes these young people in social protection plans and initiatives. The fourth discusses the connections between violence against women and children and the risk of contracting HIV by using South Africa as an instructive example. Gender-based violence persists in South Africa and many Sub-Saharan African countries today, where it is a serious social, cultural, and health concern. The fifth illustrates the potential connections between female genital mutilation, virginity testing, widow inheritance, and HIV transmission among adolescent and adult females. This chapter adds significantly to the vast and multifaceted field of victimology of human rights. The sixth analyses the connections between HIV, security, legitimacy, and governance. Given the threat that disease poses to stability and the state's ability to maintain both internal and external security, it is acknowledged that disease is an essential part of a country's security.

The clean writing for a topic that is not simple demonstrates a commendable respect for the reader, as does the historical summary of the birth of the HIV/AIDS phenomenon, intended to provide the basic elements to better understand the arguments and reasons for the book. HIV has been and continues to be an important social issue at the attention of biological, immunological, and medical research, which has been careful to identify functional cures (a type of drug or a mix of drugs) and a vaccine with decidedly important insights, leading today to a dignified life expectancy for infected persons, but little has been done in the field of social research.

Meini, already the author of prestigious publications consistent with these themes, shows that he belongs to the still too small group of social scientists who have well absorbed the more contemporary instances of the intersectionality theory of health determinants applied to models of practice (Holman *et al.* 2021). This is evidence of the cultural background that the author has accrued with an important curriculum that has allowed him to compare very different ways of approaching public health problems and to apply a sort of international benchmark, synthesised in a vision of global health that links the scientific approach to the advocacy of human rights, as relevant as ever. The book represents a challenge for policymakers, current and future scientists, gender experts and activists, and health professionals trained in monolithic perspectives of analysis who will have to be willing to experience cultural 'inner fractures', (as Festinger suggested), which are indispensable in order to perceive and understand the complexity of an interdisciplinary and multidimensional 'mosaic' configuration of the HIV-AIDS phenomenon (Festinger 1957).

The original chapter 5 on harmful traditional practices, which are signs of gender-based discrimination caused by deeply ingrained unequal power relations between men and women and dangerously violate the rights of girls and women to health and safety, deserves special attention. These ritual practices all have a connection to female sexuality and are frequently encouraged as a strategy to perpetuate male superiority, despite being as varied as the communities in which they take place. Although regulations are important, they are not enough to stop these acts or improve women's rights. The use of the law should be one component of a multidisciplinary strategy to protect women and girls from harmful traditional practices and reduce their vulnerability to HIV infection. It is obvious that girls need more power, particularly through education, as they will be the future mothers and women (Meini and Tognetti Bordogna 2019).

The primary conclusion to be drawn from this book is the identification of the concept of social interaction as a sociological interpretive lens of the epidemiological context (Helleringer and Kohler 2005), such as the relationships between perpetrators and victims in a setting of forceful and/or sexually abusive relationships and HIV-related infection risks. This indicates that the gender system is specifically relevant to the interaction process. For instance, women are more likely to experience intimate partner violence and contract HIV in societies where women are legally and structurally subordinated to men (Stockman *et al.* 2013).

The topicality of Meini's work will not escape one's notice, both in relation to what has already happened and to the 'hidden present' as far as HIV/AIDS is concerned (it is disconcerting to learn that, according to 2019 data, 6,000 girls are infected annually in the world). It can easily be translated into a useful analysis and intervention model for understanding the most recent Sars-Covid-19 pandemic and its effects (Dawa and Narain 2021). Men are more likely than women to die with COVID-19 infection, despite the fact that the two groups represent an equal portion of persons affected. This might be due to the biological fact that women often have more robust immune systems. Other variables, such as gender variations in behaviours that impact health, like smoking, might also be in play (European Institute for Gender Equality 2024).

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