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SOC 305

Essay Question #1 Test #1

Studying Human Misery and Suffering

The meaning of suffering is a hard word to define as it can be subjective depending on whom you ask. For instance, giving a person one meal a day when they are used to three or four meals can lead to starvation which is seen as a form of suffering. Yet you give that same meal to a child in a third-world country who hasn’t eaten a substantial meal in days and it is seen as a gift, a positive blessing. The infliction of pain usually isn’t seen as suffering unless it’s a considerableamount and has drastically changed others lives. If you are in a car accident and obtain a few scratches and bruises then that really doesn’t fall under the category of suffering. If you are in an accident and rendered paralyzed having to require constant attention and needs which you or your loved ones cannot support, that can be seen as suffering.

The sociological theorists have their thoughts and beliefs about society and how society views suffering. Durkheim believed that suffering in society was caused by people not following the ‘norms’ of their society and falling out of place. Whether this be due to the individual or the society not clearly forming rules on how one is expected to act which lead to deviant behavior. Marx believed that man relied too much on the institute of religion and thought that man needed to divulge his illusionary happiness for a more tangible kind.

Studying human misery, while at times may be uncomfortable, I believe to be important. I believe all people need to study human suffering not just in order to gain more insight, but to ground them more and give them a sense of perspective. Studying human suffering can truly humble a person. Not only that, but it can also motivate an individual to take interest in the field and make them want to help. Having a career in the care field might be something an individual may consider after having learned more about human suffering.

If you go into volunteer work without much knowledge of human suffering, your volunteer work may be jaded. I believe that having a better understanding of human suffering will help to make my volunteer experiences more meaningful, since I know what I’m working towards helping. It is a cultural standard to try and avoid the topic of suffering. However I believe that when we can start to discuss is more freely, it will be an easier subject to openly discuss. I am looking forward to my volunteer work and hope I will be able to, no matter how small, make a difference.