

Social Indicators Research Series 67

Ronald E. Anderson *Editor*

Alleviating World Suffering

The Challenge of Negative Quality of
Life

 Springer

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Volume 67

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Ronald E. Anderson
Editor

Alleviating World Suffering

The Challenge of Negative Quality of Life

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Preface

This book project serves as a companion volume to *World Suffering and Quality of Life* (<http://www.springer.com/us/book/9789401796699>), which I edited and Springer published in early 2015. That volume introduced an agenda for studying global quality of life, including both negative and positive aspects of daily life. Since then the concepts of negative quality of life and ill-being have gained greater attention among researchers.

In this new book, my vision, and that of the other authors, has been to understand and heal the roots of suffering, in other words, to more effectively alleviate suffering. Our chapters could reinvigorate policies related to global well-being by providing new approaches and more thorough evaluation of these approaches. We hope that a side effect of this project will be to add sufficient clarity to public understanding, such that both humanitarian institutions and individuals take additional steps to relieve more suffering.

This follow-up volume of 27 chapters written by experts around the world is clearly distinguished from the first volume by concentrating upon the *alleviation* of world suffering rather than world suffering itself. We also take on the challenge of integrating suffering and its relief into the research on negative quality of life. Importantly, alleviation will be defined to include prevention of suffering as well as relief actions and institutions. Most chapters evaluate aspects of the ways that relief, development, health, and other social programs ultimately attempt to reduce suffering. The scope of these chapters encompasses analyses of social policies and programs on relief work, economic development, environmental policies, human rights promotion, caregiving, and compassion. The resulting book serves as an example of quality work that addresses such major sources of suffering as violence, inequity, cruelty, poverty, and climate change, focusing on how these conditions can be more effectively contained.

Removing or reducing extreme suffering symbolizes kindness, compassion, humanitarianism, empathy, and, most importantly, altruism. Some would even say it springs from the better angels of our nature. Yet some moral traditions punish specific types of alleviation, for example, taking illegal drugs for severe pain, aborting a deformed fetus, or performing mercy suicides. These controversial topics are

not discussed in this book, with the exception of abortion, which is discussed in two chapters as a topic related to global health.

In a society where self-interest is valued more highly than solidarity, giving alms or providing welfare for the poor could become taboo and even declared immoral by some. Such cultural ambivalence about suffering may explain why the alleviation of suffering often goes unrewarded, even though it has been offered empathetically, sincerely, and generously.

Alleviation of large, complex sources of suffering such as poverty or discrimination poses another problem: that the path to alleviation has not been mapped. This problem can be addressed by researching the roots of social suffering and studying forms of intervention intended to relieve suffering.

It is apparent that the alleviation of suffering is not always perceived as a uniformly desirable trait or social activity. However, for the most part, it remains a humane, caring action that can provide scaffolding for solidarity, trust, and mutual caring. Therefore, it appears to be a solid place to start in the mobilization of civil society and programs to improve mutuality and, ultimately, human betterment.

Audience

This work primarily targets researchers, academics, and students in the social sciences, international studies, psychology, health sciences, and health professions. It is also aimed at nonacademic readers with a personal interest in the relief of suffering, whether intellectual, policy oriented, or practical. As I assembled the chapters, I divided them in many different ways, including by study methods used and key themes. From this process, the principal audience communities became more apparent. Anticipated audiences include:

- Those supporting or participating in humanitarian activities, including human rights and development
- Those trying to understand suffering and how to ameliorate its effects
- Researchers wanting to assess the quality of life of different groups
- Those studying communities, including online community, and the impact social suffering has on these
- Health-care providers and informal caregivers, especially those who struggle with someone's suffering

Project Development

Over the past two years, in preparation for writing this book, I digested hundreds of articles and books about suffering and its alleviation. I found the diversity of approaches and opinions startling. Such divergence made the mission for this book even more compelling.

To develop the chapters for this volume, I emailed invitations to about 100 authors of academic books or articles related to suffering and its relief. Each was charged with writing something important pertaining to the *alleviation of world suffering* in 5000 to 9000 words. I received about 50 good abstracts and asked for the authors to write chapter drafts.

Over a 9-month period, I worked with these authors and obtained reviews in order to create high-quality, in-depth but succinct reports for this volume. Together, the 27 chapters assembled here represent the best of contemporary thought and cutting-edge research on world suffering and its alleviation. The authors live in many different countries and represent each major continent except Antarctica. The authors don't necessarily agree on precisely how to define suffering, but their work contributes to a cumulative body of knowledge about suffering that ultimately will be enormous. By bringing a more precise and complete vocabulary of suffering into every day and humanitarian discourse, we have the basic tools to collaborate to alleviate suffering and reduce its future occurrences.

Challenges

In today's world, it is nearly impossible to escape images showing violence, famine, disease, and other calamities. As noted in Chap. 3, media scholars tend to agree that social media and other new technologies, combined with narcissist marketing of humanitarian aid, produce half-hearted concern for global suffering. Thus, the public sees secondhand a barrage of disasters, epidemics, wars, and terrorism. Existing institutions such as human rights organizations and humanitarian relief agencies rally support for relief from these calamities. But often their appeals fall flat because the giving public has not been socialized in the humane values that demand social responsibility for all tragically suffering human beings. Working against full support for alleviation of suffering is public indifference from growing weary of so many appeals for help.

Avoiding preventable suffering is an ultimate human concern. This means that human beings must come to terms with it and understand it as a central social responsibility in exchange for being human. Research on suffering will help us identify and evaluate how best to act responsibly.

In contrast, unpreventable suffering, such as natural death, can be a tragedy that we learn to approach with serenity and accept as part of life. Toward that end, some of the chapters here offer enlightenment on how suffering can become a source of greater meaning and an aid to making peace in a cruel world.

Acknowledgments

A book this size—with 34 authors and 27 chapters—requires an extended “family” to conceive, produce, and deliver a new, literary life. The book's production had its moments of excitement and suspense as well as hard, tedious—but challenging—work. The book project began in Buenos Aires at an ISQOLS (International Society for Quality of Life Studies) conference in July 2012, when I met Esther Otten, editor of health, well-being, and sociology publications at Springer Science + Business Media (commonly known as Springer) in Dordrecht, the Netherlands. She expressed interest in my work on the topic of suffering, and by the end of the year, I had presented two successful book proposals to Springer. After finishing the first book in June 2013, I immediately started an edited book, *World Suffering and the Quality of Life*, which was completed a year later. After the book's publication, it became clear that many people were buying or reading it, so I proposed another volume, this time emphasizing alleviation, not just suffering.

During the writing and preparation of this book, I sent dozens of email requests for help to the Springer staff, namely, Esther Otten, editor; Tuerlings Hendrikje and Miranda Dijkman, both editorial assistants; and Joseph Daniel, project coordinator, all at Springer in Dordrecht, the Netherlands. I am very grateful for their support throughout.

Here in Minnesota, I began the project doing everything myself, but as the draft chapters started arriving, I hired Sherri Hildebrandt to help with the copy editing of the documents. Kathryn Albrecht served as the project's expert on citations and references, as well as working with statistics and making charts. Some authors helped by reviewing papers and finding additional prospective authors. This writing project benefited greatly from a small grant to me from the University of Minnesota Office of the Vice President for Research and the University of Minnesota Retirees Association (UMRA).

Finally, the contribution of my wife, Nancy Kehmeier, was the most important of all. Not once did she claim to suffer from social rejection due to my preoccupation every day, from sunup to sundown, with this intense and time-consuming project.

Minneapolis, MN, USA

Ronald E. Anderson

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About the Editor

Ronald (Ron) E. Anderson is Professor Emeritus at the University of Minnesota. He received his PhD in sociology from Stanford University in 1970. From 1968 until retiring in 2005, he served on the faculty of sociology at the University of Minnesota. From 1990 to 2005, he coordinated several international studies of the social and learning effects of information technology within primary and secondary education in 20 or more countries in each study. From that and earlier work, he wrote or edited seven books and over 100 articles. Since retirement, his research interests have shifted to suffering and caring. In 2014, Springer published his book *Human Suffering and Quality of Life: Conceptualizing Stories and Statistics*, as a 105-page Springer Brief. In 2015, Springer published a contributed book of 32 chapters and 46 authors, entitled *World Suffering and Quality of Life*. This 439-page book, which was edited by Anderson, is a “companion book” to this one. Both that book and this one are part of the Social Indicators Research Series of Springer’s Science+Business Media Publishing Company.

Abbreviations

AIDS	acquired immune deficiency syndrome
CRC	colorectal cancer
DfID	Department for International Development (Britain)
DHS	Demographic and Health Surveys
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
FGC	female genital cutting
FOA	UN Food and Agriculture Organization
FP	family planning
GDP	gross domestic product
GHG	greenhouse gas
GPI	genuine progress indicator
HDI	human development index
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
ICTR	International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia
INGO	international nongovernmental organization
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPPF	International Planned Parenthood Federation
IPV	intimate partner violence
IRS	Indian residential school
ISQOLS	International Society for Quality of Life Studies
IUD	intrauterine device
LGBTQ	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning
LMIC	low- and middle-income countries
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MMR	maternal mortality rate

MSF	Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders)
NCANDS	National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System
NCVC	National Center for Victims of Crime
NGO	nongovernmental organization
ODA	official development assistance
PAC	postabortion care
PAFP	postabortion family planning
PP	positive psychology
ppm	parts per million
PPP	purchasing power parity
QOL	quality of life
SDG	Sustainability Development Goals
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SSA	sub-Saharan Africa
STI	sexually transmitted infections
TAN	transnational advocacy network
TFR	total fertility rate
TRC	truth and reconciliation commission
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
USAID	US Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

Part I
Humanitarian and Social Perspectives on
Suffering Alleviation

Chapter 1

A Worldview of the Alleviation of Suffering

Ronald E. Anderson

Introduction

Alleviation of suffering lies at the core of caring for others, humanitarian relief, civil society, social solidarity, and social welfare policy. For many people and some societies, it is the essence of human purpose, and for some it is the source of greatest meaning in their lives. And yet this is the first book to have addressed this topic from the perspective of not only individuals but societies and global society in particular.

Strangely, the one book that has a title anything like *Alleviation of World Suffering* is the name of a report from a U.S. Congressional hearing in 1921, almost 100 years ago (U.S. Congress 1921). Named as the hearing on “Relief of Suffering Populations of the World,” the event passed a resolution to endorse a private philanthropic organization’s contribution to provide relief for the “deplorable conditions that exist in Central and Eastern Europe.” Not only did the initiative avoid spending any government money, but the target of concern covered only a tiny portion of the world.

Perhaps the neglect of suffering-alleviation in the published literature can be traced back to cultural aversions to negative words and events (Baumeister et al. 2011). A variety of studies of words have found that negative words have much greater staying power than positive words. And a number of studies have found that negative events have more influence than positive events in predicting future success in whatever task individuals or groups are working (Tugend 2012). This probably explains the aversion within academic disciplines to deal with the negative rather than the positive. In particular, studies on human progress use terms like well-being and quality of life, but “ill-being” and “negative quality of life” have been almost totally neglected. Furthermore, it is not just the words that have been

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ignored, but researchers have ignored the possibilities to be gained by doing research on negative aspects of these dimensions of human experience.

As the absolute number of persons forced into extreme suffering continues to rise by the millions, if not billions, the need to study and help these persons is becoming much more compelling and urgent. Joseph Sirgy's chapter in this volume proposes that the word "ill-being" not only be widely used in conversations and theories of wellbeing, but that ill-being actually be measured in studies of wellbeing, both locally and globally. I propose that researchers invest in measuring negative quality of life as well as positive quality of life. Measuring negative quality of life must necessarily include suffering, which adds complexity to the research, but the results would be much more comprehensive and true to the actual experiences of all individuals from the top to the bottom of social hierarchies.

Better measurement of suffering will boost research on the alleviation of suffering. Now, we often do not have any idea whether suffering relief efforts actually reduce suffering. While this obviously applies to quantitative measurement, it also applies to qualitative research where the main tools are interviews and social observations. Knowing whether alleviation of suffering is occurring necessarily depends on valid qualitative judgments about peoples' responses to the world around them.

This volume has such a variety of topics and chapters that it necessarily will add to our understanding of both suffering and its alleviation or reduction. After an overview of the concepts of suffering and social suffering, I describe six useful frames for thinking about and conceptualizing suffering-alleviation. These frames include suffering-alleviation as moral and social responsibility; as undesirable or even harmful; as a central human purpose; as civil society; as quality of life; and as the future. Following this are characterizations of four different sectors of society that reveal how cultures are structured to accommodate different approaches to relieving suffering. Additional topics include (1) philosophical approaches for thinking about how to set practice priorities for the work of suffering-alleviation, (2) suggestions for how to alleviate extreme suffering, (3) data on global trends in suffering, and (4) a final section overviewing each chapter.

The Definition and Concept of Suffering

In the companion book, *World Suffering and the Quality of Life*, as editor I spent considerable time defining suffering (Anderson 2015: 3–12). The essence of the definition is severe distress that damages one's body, mind or interpersonal relationships and also damages one's self-identify. Thus, it encompasses not only physical hurt but mental and emotional trauma and destruction of the dignity of individuals, social groups, and even entire societies. The latter divisiveness occurs when the cruelty of one group of people humiliates or bullies another group as in racism, sexism, or even entrapment in poverty. As noted in the companion book (Anderson 2015: 5–6), this type of collective suffering is called *social suffering*. A common, recent form of social suffering has been neglect of and aggression toward refugees.

This rejection has had not only physical manifestations such as blocked border closings, but social stigmas that humiliate refugees, which without intervention can end in violent conflict.

The World Health Organization (WHO 1995) has asserted that poverty is the world's greatest killer. And Farmer (1996) built upon that assumption in describing social suffering by pointing to the intimate relationship between social suffering and structural violence. The essential notion of structural violence is that not only does deep poverty increase one's chances of dying of illnesses and injuries but it creates susceptibility to "hunger, torture, and rape" (Farmer 1996; p. 262). Farmer said that "the poor are not only more likely to suffer but they also are more likely to have their suffering silenced."

"Structural violence" also is a social arrangement (social structure) of conditions that unfairly disadvantage a category of people and puts them at risk. Social suffering and structural violence go hand in hand in that they co-occur and mutually reinforce each other. "In the most recent, comprehensive treatise on social suffering, Wilkinson and Kleinman (2016) capture in words the catastrophic burden of those trapped by the human plight of tormenting trauma. They also argue that "implicitly if not explicitly, social suffering has come to represent a call to moral responsibility and humanitarian care."

Wilkinson and Kleinman (2016) conclude that most "terrible and disabling events of suffering tend to involve us in the experience of losing our roles and identities as husbands, wives, children, friends, and citizens; and thus we are made lost to ourselves." Viewed from the perspective of civil society, social suffering rips apart the social fabric of one's world, leaving it potentially beyond repair.

Basic Principles of Alleviating Suffering

Almost all books and articles on the topic of suffering focus on suffering itself, whereas in this volume we emphasize alleviating it, which includes ameliorating, relieving, reducing, easing, erasing or preventing suffering. Those who seek to provide relief for suffering in the world usually adopt one of two general approaches. One is to offer and provide care for close others feeling trapped by suffering. The other approach is to become an advocate or activist for organizations and/or institutional change to bring suffering relief to large communities of people, sometimes even around the world. Of course, one can attempt to do both, but unless explicit priorities are set and followed, those distant from us physically or socially tend to be neglected.

The decision to reduce suffering, whether at the individual, community, or global levels, arises from a variety of sources such as a sense of social or moral responsibility. Charitable behavior does not necessarily take suffering into account. In fact, a large share of charity does not appear to be guided by suffering. Instead, it seems to be driven by the desire to improve general well-being or even by the desire to get

something in return, such as recognition, payment, power, or prestige. Such types of charitable giving should be labeled as self-centered rather than other-centered.

Actions to alleviate suffering may also simultaneously reduce poverty, hunger, homelessness, illness, chemical dependence and so on. Such contributions to welfare or well-being generally benefit the giver as well as the recipient. The degree of observable suffering can serve as a guide to social priorities. A suffering-based policy decision process necessarily takes into account factors such as the severity or degree of hurt and whether or not the hurt has become chronic, that is, lasting 6 months or more. For social suffering, a suffering-based policy decision process would take into account other considerations such as justice and human rights.

Because suffering has many underlying roots, actions to alleviate severe suffering almost certainly need to include the alleviation of basic structural problems of society in order to keep the suffering from re-occurring. Here is a list of goals (which could also be called sub-goals) intended to eliminate the structural problems underlying suffering. Primarily they are goals required for the alleviation of widespread, severe suffering.

Ending violent conflict
Ending ongoing hunger
Ending persistent poverty
Providing disaster relief
Providing refugee relief
Eco-system preservation
Caring for the traumatized
Increasing equality
Raising human dignity

These considerations are not equally important in relieving all types of suffering. The complexities of social life and eco-systems need to be taken into account in alleviation strategies for any large-scale suffering. Furthermore, taking action to reduce suffering may yield additional social benefits.

Useful Frames for Thinking About Suffering-Alleviation

To better understand the role of suffering-alleviation across time, it is helpful to identify and trace some major frames (or points of view) that people use to organize their thoughts. Frames are complex perspectives that structure thought and build a rationale for a particular rhetoric, ideology, ethical principle, or social movement. Frame analysis explores how the frame links to social categories and its role in social change.

In the subsections that follow, I identify six frames with the first three frames focusing upon personal points of view and the last three on societal perspectives. The definition of each frame is not fixed or absolute but heuristic (illustrative of the

implications of the frames), and the implications of each frame may change over time. Unless otherwise designated, the frames refer to contemporary culture.

Suffering-Alleviation as Moral and Social Responsibility

Some are driven primarily by a feeling of moral responsibility for others' wellbeing (Kleinman and van der Geest 2009; Mayerfeld 2005; Tronto 1993; Williams 2008). The most common literary metaphor of such commitment to others is the parable of the Good Samaritan as told by Jesus Christ. Now people with humanitarian commitments to helping others, no matter their race or stature, are sometimes called good Samaritans. A similar sentiment motivated hundreds of thousands of people (regardless of faith) to commit themselves to following the principles of the Charter for Compassion (Armstrong 2011). One of the charges of the Charter is "to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures" and another is "to cultivate an informed empathy with the suffering of all human beings."

A long tradition of research on bystander intervention points to the many ways that people who encounter others in extreme suffering need assistance with delivering relief of suffering. When people are exposed to either a contrived or real situation of severe suffering such as sexual violence or domestic violence, the research question is "Under what conditions does a bystander offer assistance?" The implicit assumption underlying this social situation is that the well-being of such victims of violence depends upon whether or not an observer (bystander) engages in any attempts to relieve the victim's suffering. Darley and Latane (1970) found what has come to be known as the "bystander effect:" that the more people who concurrently observe the suffering, the less likely any one person will attempt to relieve it, presumably because responsibility for helping has been defused across all bystanders.

The large body of research on this situation reveals that accepting moral responsibility typically cannot be reduced to a simple choice of right and wrong (Darley and Latane 1970). Instead, responsible choices inevitably must take into account the array of considerations embedded in the decision situation itself as well as the cultural understanding of how to treat different types of strangers. Because of this complexity, the person who seeks to act with compassion and alleviate the suffering at hand should reflect on whether or not the reasons for not helping a stranger are valid or convenient excuses. In summary, this frame for suffering-alleviation is an important one, in part because moral responsibility is often forgotten.

Suffering-Alleviation as Unnecessary If Not Harmful

Literature of many genres claim that suffering builds character. Larson (2012) embellishes this notion with the additional claim that suffering makes great artists, religious leaders, and social reformers, and she wrote that: "The problem is not

suffering per se, but rather our identification with our own ego: our divided, dualistic, cramped view of things.”

Psychologist McGonigal (2015) brought together a host of academic research studies that provide evidence that stress and suffering do not necessarily have a negative effect on one’s life. She concludes that it is possible to learn to act with resilience to stress and suffering and thus benefit from the experience of suffering. She argues that learning to respond resiliently to stress and certain types of suffering is essential to maintaining personal and social well-being.

Extreme suffering, on the other hand, often cannot be resolved by an individual’s training or will power alone. Extreme sufferers often require support and assistance from others in the face of major injury, persecution, torture and equivalent sources of extreme suffering.

The question of this frame’s usefulness probably is best answered in terms consistent with some spiritual approaches. Specifically, upon taking a personal path to greater resilience to suffering, there will be a reduced need to rely upon suffering-alleviation. But this does not give one an excuse to withhold suffering-alleviation from others who suffer. These “others” in your life may not have the personal tools yet to learn the resilience necessary to make them immune to events that trigger suffering. Developing this immunity or resilience poses a challenge to everyone because a clear dividing line does not exist between mild and extreme suffering. Thus resilience typically involves a long process of learning the tools to transform painful hardships into strengths of character.

Suffering-Alleviation as Human Purpose and Meaning

The principle purpose of many humans is self-promotion, hoping to obtain (or maintain) comfort, power, popularity, and wealth. At the opposite extreme are those with a purpose to love, care for, or help others. Suffering provides a basis by which to prioritize limited time and attention in doing things for others (Johnson and Schollar-Jaquish 2007). Helping those who truly suffer severely is generally viewed as more fulfilling. Since the traditional definition of compassion is a desire to relieve another’s suffering, the work of suffering-alleviation becomes the yardstick by which to measure an authentic life. Contributing to humanity in this sense could mean helping a few close friends or all 7 billion people alive today.

The mission to relieve suffering does not require one-to-one contact. It can be accomplished by providing time and resources to global relief organizations. By giving to varied causes or helping a variety of different types of people in need, you increase the likelihood that your pro-social actions will truly have benefited one or more people. While positive feedback is not mandatory for gaining purpose and satisfaction from compassionate actions, it does help prop up and support the energy put into reducing the suffering of others.

Research on the role of media communications in the humanitarian sector reveals that marketing strategies such as celebrity contacts or rock concerts to raise money

for major disasters have undercut the desire to contribute to human well-being and the alleviation of suffering (Chouliaraki 2013). Giving money to disaster relief has become a matter of entertainment and celebrity watching rather than taking steps to aid another human being in dire straits. On the surface the mix of entertainment and humanitarianism seems like a happy marriage but in fact the transition to trivialized benevolence almost totally undermines the meaning of donation as suffering-alleviation and replaces it with the meaning of donation as fun and privilege.

Suffering-Alleviation as Key to Community and Civil Society

The phrase *Civil Society*, while a very important concept, creates confusion and misunderstanding. Across hundreds of definitions, the essential meaning of the phrase is that of a public space between the state and the market (government and business) where people and their representative organizations can debate and tackle action. Therefore, actions and organizations of civil society will be voluntary and intended to advance society and its core values. In addition, the concept looks very much like community and the promotion of community, which is known as communitarianism (Etzioni 2009).

The latter notion of civil society is consistent with the shared ideal of alleviating the suffering of others. Human interdependency combined with concern for others justifies ameliorating the suffering of others whenever possible and appropriate.

Korten (2016) defined “global civil society” as “rejoicing in love of all beings,” and actions that are rooted in “a sense of who we are, who we want to be, and how we relate to each other and the living body of Earth.” Korten’s notion of civil society tends to be future oriented and optimistic about peoples’ ability to avoid self-destruction.

Suffering-Alleviation as Improving Quality of Life

The process of meaningful relief of others’ suffering, as discussed in the preceding frames, applies to this frame as well. When you are relieving another’s suffering, you are also improving their quality of life. This frame is uniquely justified by its emphasis on quality of life as a human need and its emphasis on *social* suffering as a qualitatively different type of suffering.

As a common phrase, “quality of life” (QOL) goes back only a few decades (Mukherjee 1989). However, in the twenty-first century, the concept has become well known, especially within research on health and economics (Land et al. 2012). There is even a professional group called the International Society for Quality of Life Studies, and it publishes several academic journals with “quality of life” in their titles. Many national and international policy reports also use the phrase, sometimes equating it with general well-being and/or happiness (Jordan 2012). The

governments of several nations are now using the concept in attempting to construct new measures of national and human progress.

The second wave of Positive Psychology (sometimes called PP 2.0) reflects an attempt to engage in suffering-alleviation and improve quality of life (Ivtzan et al. 2015). Traditional positive psychology (Seligman 2011) presumed that the negatives would disappear if one focused on the positives of life. The second wave of positive psychology emerged to address the limitations of this approach. Ivtzan et al. (2015) assume that it is necessary to engage with the “dark side,” recognizing suffering of all kinds. “Engage” means to experience and develop the skills to address suffering such that positive growth becomes the outcome. The weakness of this approach is that positive outcomes may not always be possible.

Present-day approaches to suffering-alleviation framed as improvements in the quality of life can occur in many arenas including public health, human rights projects, humanitarian disaster relief, social services, security, safety precautions, and environmental preservation.

Suffering-Prevention as a Perspective on the Future

Many natural systems, biological and otherwise, depend upon balancing mechanisms for survival. Human societies depend upon these and other social systems to function over time. Suffering is an outward manifestation of threats to individual and social functioning. In addition, suffering serves as a warning sign for persons and civil society to engage in actions that help avoid chaos or social collapse. Actions taken to protect future conditions and future generations should be called “suffering prevention.”

Some suffering-producing calamities perpetuate suffering long after it begins. In such circumstances it is more a matter for the future rather than the present. Climate change and global warming are cases in point. Under the assumption that greenhouse gases will continue to be emitted at high rates, suffering-prevention cannot be taken lightly. Strategies primarily for future survival include ecosystem health maintenance, sustainable development reforms, global security systems, and structural economic reforms. Just as we owe distant strangers relief from disasters, we owe our future generations more suffering-prevention activities in the present day. This theme of the future continues in the last chapter (Chap. 27).

Global Social Sectors of Suffering-Alleviation

English-speaking Western nations have evolved such that most suffering-alleviation that transpires collectively occurs within one of these four social sectors: the humanitarian sector, the social policy sector, the caregiving sector, and the spiritual sector.

This pattern arises from the social institutions that have been constructed within these sectors to facilitate coordinated and individual behavior to reduce suffering.

Each of the four sectors generates a unique frame with which to view the world, so this section in part continues the list of six frames in the previous section. But as you will see, these sectors each play such a special role in the practice of suffering-alleviation that they deserve special consideration. The four sectors overlap because all share a common goal to improve human wellbeing. And many projects have components within each of the four sectors. For example, a civil society program to increase racial and ethnic inclusion almost certainly will be consistent with humanitarian goals, support key social policies, create caregiving organizations and generate ethical projects that promote racial inclusion.

Each of these four sectors has sparked its own discussions and literature related to the mission of the sector. In fact, I identified these sectors by conducting a variety of literature and book searches using the keywords “alleviating suffering” and “relief of suffering.” The labels for these four sectors emerged from content analyzing the literature related to suffering and its alleviation.

The caregiving and spiritual sectors have by far the largest representation among books and articles. However, the other two sectors (the humanitarian and the social policy sectors) each were represented by over 10% of the published writing. In the discussions below, each sector will be briefly described because not only do they each reflect a body of literature and live website discussions, but they each reveal very different approaches to suffering-alleviation.

The Humanitarian Sector

This sector usually equates with humanitarianism because it champions charitable causes such as disaster relief, socio-economic development and meeting unmet needs such as food, water, and healthcare. Often this sector appeals to its constituents solely on the basis of moral integrity or the ethics of humanitarian responsibility. The International Red Cross website states its mission is to “prevent and alleviate human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors.” Often fund-raising solicitations by humanitarian organizations refer to suffering and their activities to reduce it.

These humanitarian organizations often are called non-governmental organizations (NGOs, or INGOs, if the NGO is truly international in scope). During the twentieth century, the number of NGOs evolved from a few hundred social action agencies to an estimated 10 million organizations with 1.5 billion donors worldwide (OnGood 2016). This sector of global society has become so large and dominant that some equate NGOs with civil society (World Bank 2016).

In addition to NGOs and INGOs, a major share of the humanitarian sector is the United Nations, which is an inter-governments agency that works closely with many private NGOs. The United Nations filled a vacuum for global government at a time when inter-nation cooperation emerged as a critical need. The UN now employs

more than 50,000 people and takes a major, if not a primary, lead in such areas as health, labor, and development.

Given that the UN plays such a critical leadership role in the global sphere, it is most significant that the World Humanitarian Summit on May 24, 2016, declared one of its primary goals was the minimization of suffering around the world (UN 2016a). In addition, on September 22, 2016, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon declared the alleviation of suffering as a goal toward which all UN staff worked every day (UN 2016b). The UN routinely calls for alleviation of suffering on special events and days such as International Migrants Day.

In this volume, a number of chapters explore elements of the humanitarian sector and how it has changed over time. (Longer summaries are given of each chapter in the last section of this first chapter.) In separate chapters by Lilie Chouliaraki and Iain Wilkinson, these well-known scholars of social suffering trace how the humanitarian sector has evolved rapidly over the past few decades due to the communications and the technology sectors.

Several chapters in this volume discuss genocide, which perhaps poses the greatest challenge to humanitarianism. Joachim Savelsberg takes the case of Darfur to examine the interrelationship between the media and International Criminal Law. Samuel Oliner focuses upon the holocaust while Ellen Kennedy uses five different genocides to summarize the state of knowledge about sexual violence against women. And Adam Muller and his associates describe their project to educate the public about North American cultural genocide against their indigenous people.

The Social Policy Sector

This sector consists of government agencies and nonprofit organizations relevant to social policy, including social welfare, crime, and justice work; safety and security; education, labor, pensions, and child benefits. Also, included within social policy are social issues that do not fit into these broad policy areas. These social issues include animal treatment, legalizing drugs such as medical cannabis for suffering reduction, allowing for assisted suicide in conditions of extreme suffering, abortion, domestic violence, criminal sentencing policies, and actions to minimize discrimination on the basis of race, gender and other inappropriate bases (Jimenez et al. 2014).

The breadth of the social policy sector depends largely on the local standards for defining what can be included within social policy and implemented by local governance institutions. For example, if laws regarding unlimited consumption of natural resources do not exist or are not enforced, then natural disasters will likely follow at considerable social and economic cost.

New social policy may become necessary under conditions of extreme inequality if it leads to crippling poverty and new costs from high crime and incarceration rates. Poverty, crime and debilitating illnesses together create intractable social suffering, which may threaten the actual survival of a community or society.

Issues such as legalizing medical cannabis and doctor-assisted suicide remain controversial because, while they may dramatically reduce suffering, they conflict with core values of specific social groups within many societies.

It should be obvious by now that the humanitarian and the social policy sectors often overlap. While disasters and economic development tend to be subsumed under the humanitarian sector, social development tends to be seen as part of social policy. If a community issue deals with social inclusion, social isolation, or civil society, chances are that it is seen as a matter of social policy. The World Bank has been primarily concerned with economics and economic support for development around the world. However, a few years ago it established a Social Development division that concentrates upon social issues such as social exclusion, reducing violence, building cohesive and resilient societies, and making institutions accessible and accountable to citizens (World Bank 2005).

Several chapters in this book address social policy by dissecting major human problems. One is Elise Féron, who describes recovery programs for male survivors of sexual violence in armed conflict situations. Examining female rather than male victimization, Elizabeth Heger Boyle and Joseph Svec summarize research on the slow progress being made around the world in reducing the cultural practice of female genital cutting. They focus upon how practice often overwhelms policy, and how social change often requires education in the negative health consequences of following existing social practice.

Several additional chapters primarily pertain to social policy, but they have important implications for humanitarianism as well. One is Richard Estes' report describing research on sexual exploitation of children in North America. He reviews the impact of various social policy legislation intended to curtail child sexual exploitation including child trafficking across borders.

Another chapter reports on a survey of Bangladesh villagers by Faress Bhuiyan. He found naturally occurring alleviation of mental suffering to be highest among those married, those with the best access to health services, and those with relatively little disparity in income with their neighbors.

Thirdly, Cawo Abdi describes her field work findings in South Africa. She concludes that even though Somali refugees to South Africa suffered greatly from refugee camps and lack of resources, the South African indigenous people living in urban shanty towns (also called squatter camps) suffered even more from the lack of resources that left them without adequate housing, sanitation, healthcare, and steady employment.

The Caregiving Sector

As defined in this volume, the caregiving sector encompasses both institutionalized healthcare practice (Farmer et al. 2013) and informal caregiving, which consists of both situations of care and caring (Glenn 2010). The healthcare community, which includes professional groups and organizations such as hospitals, lacks a single