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Reading Guide Response 1

For my first reading guide response I chose to read *Eating Your Friends Is the Hardest: The Survivors of the F-227*. This article showed how in extreme circumstances social norms can change and new ones can form. Acts that were normally considered taboo quickly changed to become acceptable. So, the point of the article is to illustrate that social norms can and will change as time goes on and as circumstances change.

I think it is made clear in the article that the social norms changed. There wasn’t an experiment per se, but the plane crash and following behaviors could kind of be seen as an experiment. It was more observational than experimental; however, you can still see the results of how the survivors’ social norms changed. It is normally considered taboo to consume human flesh. When the circumstances became more extreme it became acceptable for the survivors to consume the flesh of the ones who didn’t make it in order to regain strength and survive.

The findings were somewhat obvious to me. In extreme situations social norms quickly change. Most sociological experiments are repeated or added to, but this one can’t necessarily be repeated. One of the things talked about in the article was how the symbolism behind human flesh changed. This relates to one of the major paradigms of sociology, symbolic interactionism. We normally treat the deceases very carefully as to not damage or harm the deceased. Once the circumstances became drastic, the survivors still treated the deceased with as much respect as they could.

When I saw that this was one of the articles that we had to read, I was very intrigued. The concept was very fascinating to me, and one that I wanted to learn more about. In extreme circumstances it is logical for people to do what they have to do in order to survive, even if it is unspeakable. In this case, the survivors had to resort to cannibalism. The survivors did so with respect and even made rules to govern themselves. I think the rules were very important, as they helped to create a sort of decency in their actions. The survivors did what they had to, and nothing more.

After reading the article and writing the majority of this response I have several questions. For example, what would have happened if the plane crash was in the tropics instead on the mountains? The survivors likely would not have resorted to cannibalism, but would they still have found ways to respect and try to preserve the dead? Perhaps the would have chosen to bury their friends and family. Another question is would they have created a different set of rules and assign different jobs? These people survived in the mountains for months, perhaps if a plane crashed in the tropics they too could survive by assigning jobs and creating rules. There are so many different ways this crash could have gone; it’s crazy to think about what one change could result in.