

# Final project

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# Slide 1

Homelessness stood out to me because at first I believed that Homelessness was just a personnel issue and personnel failure/laziness. However throughout the course I realized how these peoples struggles are connected to larger social systems, it challenges the idea that homelessness is just an individual choice. I discovered how factors like costs of living, mental health, government policies and in general societal treatment and views play a role in homelessness. This course has also dramatically changed how I view homeless individuals and allowed me to connect sociological views and concepts to everyday life.



I took these pictures myself.



• A reason why I chose these two images is because  
• this is the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. Many  
• lost their houses and gained food insecurity. These  
• two images show the fragility of a “comfortable” life  
• and represent what many people lost and could  
• have caused them to become homeless. . . . .

## Slide 2

**‘the looking-glass self,’ Cooley argued that we ‘see’ ourselves by the reactions of others with whom we interact. -(Cooley 1.2)**

In my Module 1 reflection I realized how my confidence was often shaped by other peoples opinions, not just my own beliefs. What I thought was often my true self is actually influenced by social facts. This connects to symbolic interactionism because meaning and identity are created through interactions. Tjis also connects to my Concept Map because if I am easily influenced by others than how much more are these poor people affected by every mean glare an gaze. If society treats individuals like they are outcasts of society and “Failures” then these homeless people will start to believe it and their hope and drive will be crushed. Previously I also used to see these people as lazy and drug addicts, but soon saw that homelessness can devastate society that has jobs and money in an instant. Sympathy for these people is essential and putting yourself in their shoes opens up new possibilities.

# Slide 3

**Sociological imagination: the ability to understand how your own past relates to that of other people, as well as to history in general and societal structures in particular - Openstax**

Homelessness might seem like a personal problem for example, someone losing a job, struggling with mental health, or making financial mistakes. Personally my dad has a job and so does my mom and they work super hard, but because of financial struggles recently my dad has to file for bankruptcy even though they are hard working individuals. This is what a sociologist calls a personal trouble. But when we use the sociological imagination, we can step back and see the bigger picture. Homelessness becomes a public issue because it is influenced by larger factors like high housing costs, low wages, lack of affordable healthcare/benefits and limited access to support systems. This also relates to my Structural VS Individual causes bubble on my concept map and to the Public Opinion article where I mentioned that America is finally starting to realize that thousands of people experience homelessness and succumb to depression or other influences that harm them further.

## Slide 4

Homelessness is often a direct result of inequality. Limited access to resources like education, affordable housing and healthcare traps individuals and families in cycles of poverty. Much like the limited paths described in my reflection on immigrants and the “SPENT” game where even something as education is not a recourse that is allowed for everyone.. “ **...class, people from the lower economic class have less formal education and earn smaller incomes. They work jobs that require less training or experience than middle-class occupations and often do routine tasks under close supervision...(section 9.2)**” The desire for conformity and belonging as seen in my sneaking out and analysis of the “Peoples temple” in D5 can play a role in affecting people's decisions in accepting others who are in difficult circumstances or even affect the people who are in the situation from seeking out help outside their social group. Social Movements inspired by powerful storytelling and collective action, echoing the insights I gather from FIRM, offering a crucial counterpoint and demonstrating resilience and the drive for change by humanizing peoples unfortunate situations and advocating for policy shifts.

## Slide 5

Before immersing myself into sociology, I knew inequality existed, but I didn't really apply it to what it looked like for basic people or how much of a privilege it is to just have a choice and the basic necessities we have always had as children, but as I learned more, especially through thinking about what immigrants experience and playing the "SPENT" game, I started to see how the system stacks the odds against people, limiting their options so severely that they are often left with no choice at all, but survival itself. It made me so much more appreciative of everything I have and made me realize that homelessness can be caused by such a variety of things like not getting proper education from a young age which causes not being able to have a high paying job and not being able to afford housing. Instead of calling people "freeloaders" we need to realize that these people have to often times choose survival over getting themselves back up on their feet. One little mishap can cause someone to spiral out of control and end up homeless.

# Slide 6

**Status: the responsibilities and benefits that a person experiences according to his or her rank and role in society-(OpenStax chapter 4)**

IN considering homelessness as a social status, its crucial to distinguish between ascribed status and achieved status. An ascribed status is like being born into poverty or its the status outside of an individual's control. This type of discrimination can unfortunately lead a person to homelessness and set a challenge from the beginning and they cant control it. Achieved status is a status that a person chooses. This status ism often times what society thinks homeless individuals choose, that they choose to be homeless and unhappy. This stigma is oftenly a misconception that allows society to blame people rather than address the societal failures that contribute to homelessness. Homelessness is more than just a status where you dont have a physical house its a sustained social condition. The label “homeless” can become a core part of how a person is viewed by others and carrying harmful stigma. This stigma also creates barriers towards opportunity and continues cycles of disadvantage. I also mentioned how status affects an individuals view and opportunities in my concept map.

# Slide 7

Role performance is how a person expresses his or her role. Role strain is where you have tension with one role and role conflict is where you have many roles conflicting and are trying to live up to society's expectations.

For example for someone experiencing homelessness lets say their role includes being a student. A homeless student might still try to attend school, complete assignments and try to feed themselves, this is their role performance. However role strain happens when they have an something that collides with their one role, being a student, for example a job. Role conflict happens when many roles clash together like the homeless student is expected to get good grades do homework while working, trying to feed themselves and stay alive. They may need to work longer hours to cover school, but what about food ? If a student work more than 12 hours their grade drops, but they need that money. The expectations of being a students and worker interfere directly with each other. This creates this loop that makes role performance much harder because role strain and role conflict both increase.

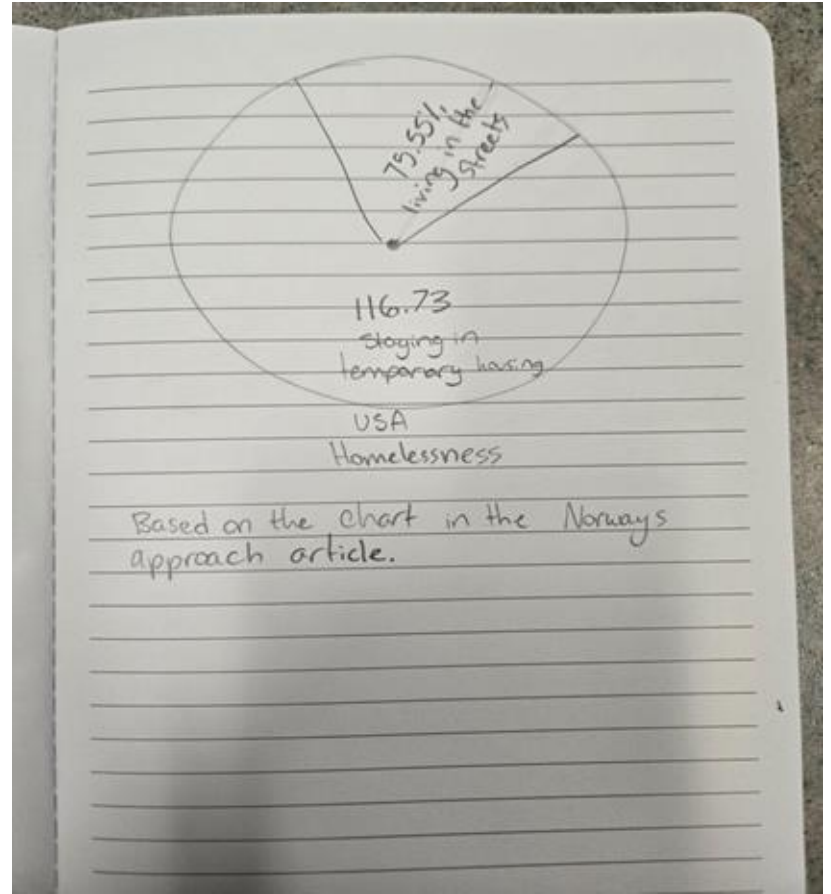
# Slide 8

According to the Looking Glass Self theory people form their identities through what society deems acceptable and how they react to these decisions. When someone is homeless they are often exposed to repeated rejection like people avoiding eye contact, making assumptions or treating them as invisible/ignoring them. All of these tiny messages still send messages of negativity. Over time these reactions can affect how a person see themselves or they can evel internalize these labels and feel shameful even though it's not true. One of the most negative societal reactions to homelessness are the The criminalization strategies described in the Grants Pass article. People are punished for doing the only thing they can when no other solution is made. According to the **Grant pass article,"... criminal enforcement of anti-camping regulations violates the U.S constitution when people have no other places to go."** Society is already treating homeless individuals as criminals for nothing instead of addressing the root cause. If homeless individuals see this type of feedback then they will start to embody this type of label.

## Slide 9

This graph is based from the graph in Norway's approach.

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# Slide 10

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JyXyOfrrKysUbzxD8O1Jv705gPA0fIJ/view?usp=sharing>

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# Slide 11

Some of the root issues is the lack of housing, low wages and unstable jobs and limited access to mental health care and addiction treatment. These are not just individual failures, but they are system level problems. According to the “The Obvious Answer to Homelessness” article, providing free housing to homeless or struggling individuals is the solution to homelessness. This article also shows that providing basic needs to people leads to a better outcome. Personally I think housing and the lack of care for people is all very intertwined because some people just can't afford to live in today's society and that maybe is caused by a lack of education. Some people need help with their mental health and addiction treatment. Others need help with finding a job in today's job market. The system needs to have organizations that are specific for each person or can work with these people based on their needs and some people honestly don't want help because they nothing else, those people need to be transported to a safe environment where they can choose to help themselves or not.

## Slide 12

Some local organizations that I have worked with and will work with includes the food pantry out in Black Mountain and Habitat for Humanity. The food pantry is the Appalachian Community Relief. They formed after Hurricane Helene hit and are a safe space where anyone can have access to clothes, fresh food and safe hygiene products. I volunteered there with a couple of my friends and hope to return soon. Their goal is so important and we honestly need more people like them with the price rise of groceries and housing. This organization helps feed families and keep them from becoming homeless. The second volunteer opportunity I will experience will be this Wednesday the 29th of April. Me and a couple of my classmates will be going to help build houses for communities and familys. Both of these organizations can help prevent someone from becoming homeless or helping people focus on other things they need and lightening the load .

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## Slide 13

One sociological concept that connects to my examples of volunteering in organizations to help the needy and homeless is Social Institutions. Social Institutions are structures in society that meet social needs. The food pantry addresses hunger and poverty and the Habitat for humanity addresses housing inequality and homelessness. Both of these social institutions show how society can respond to growing needs. My second concept that I could connect to the volunteering opportunities is Symbolic Interactionism. When I go out to help people in these volunteering events I need to focus my interactions with these people who seek help. Instead of treating them with this stigma of failure I can treat them with respect and let them feel like normal people no matter what they are going through. How volunteers interact with recipients is very important.

## Slide 14

Over this course I think the greatest thing I have learned is how fragile life is and that even though many of us claim to be independent we never really are since everything we are and do is shaped by society. We are shaped by economy, housing systems and the public. I realized how unfair some things were and that many people suffer in the world just because of an imbalance in education, jobs, health care and many other benefits. I've become more aware of how societies stereotypes and stigmas affect how people view themselves and what a powerful force society actually is. As a whole it shapes people and how they act. Instead of blaming individuals for their problems I recognized how bigger systems are at play and instead of pointing fingers and trying to solve their peoples problems I need to start with myself and see how I can fix my conduct and behavior so it affects others in a positive way.

## Slide 15

Understanding homelessness sociologically matters because this perspective affects who we vote for and how, what policies we support and how we treat others in a community. Its essential to see what others are going through and actually understand that homelessness can creep up on anyone, anyone can succumb to homelessness. Sociology is also important to reduce stereotype that only hurt people further. This judgemental gaze blinds individuals that can help the needy and only creates this “class” barrier. If enough of us realize how homelessness becomes something shaped by housing markets, wages and healthcare access then we can start to advocate for those who cant, depend policy shifts and force the larger systems to be more equal and accessible to everyone.