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# Homelessness: The Problem With No Solution

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# How Sociology Changed My Perspective: Conflict Theory

What is Conflict Theory: How it changed my perspective:

- Conflict theory originated from Karl Marx who saw “society as being made up of individuals in different social classes who must compete for social, material, and political resources.” (1.3, Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology).
- Conflict theory showed me that there is always a motive behind an action. In one of the discussions we mentioned how Conflict Theory affects ads for women and men, and it highlighted how powerful people can be with the right resources and how manipulated people are, whether it is their actions or thinking it all comes from something before it. I went through life thinking all of my actions were my original ideas but I now see that it branches out from multiple factors, it made me judge everything anyone does.

How it affects homelessness:

- It highlights one of the reasons behind homelessness, greed. Our system values money over people which leads to housing being a luxury rather than a human need. With this idea those who need help are pushed out of view, leading to homelessness.

# Personal Troubles vs. Public Issues

## The Personal Trouble:

- Meaning: What happens to someone directly.
- Example: Someone loses their job and can't pay their bills, because of this they become homeless. Society looks at them and say they are homeless because they are lazy or addicted to drugs.

## The Public Issue:

- Meaning: A problem that affects a large group and comes from social shifts.
- Example: A city with a low vacancy rate, high rent, and no mental health help. With more homeless than housed the problem is from the lack of resources rather than the people.

## The Sociological Imagination: One Homeless Person's Experience is Linked to Public Issues

- Economic: Less jobs and a raising cost of living means people are close to being homeless.
- Housing Market: Lack of affordable housing and real estate investing make housing a commodity rather than a need.
- Healthcare: lack of accessible mental health services people who are unable to cope have a hard time maintaining employment.

# Inequality, Conformity, and Social Movements

## Dependency Theory:

- What is it: The reason for global inequality is “core nations exploiting semi-peripheral and peripheral nations which creates a cycle of dependence...they will never achieve stable and consistent economic growth” (10.3, Theoretical Perspectives on Global Stratification). We played a simulator based on the real world, and this topic showed up often which was a real struggle, highlighting what many groups go through.
- How it relates to homeless: Nations and people are connected in the sense that they both fall into the cycle of never ending debt and dependency. People depend on how much jobs pay and how high rent is to survive in the world. If someone changes their rent, even illegally, they usually go along with it to keep a roof over their heads. People depend on those around them to keep prices consistent or equal with what they get paid, if it changes it could start their cycle of debt and homelessness. It is one of the main reason for homelessness in the United States.

# Growth Reflection

## What was Said:

- Conformity can be from pressure, annoyance, or personal interest and mainly comes from a “follow the leader” dynamic.
- Inequality is a big hardship in America and causes a lot of families to be in a ‘hole’. It’s mainly in job opportunities for minorities and women.
- Groups can create change both good and bad with just the power of people, a good example is the Women's Rights movement.

## How did my thinking evolve:

- Inequality: It is in a lot more than what I thought. When I thought of inequality I thought it was just in jobs, pay, and stereotypical things. I now see that it can be in everything even subconsciously like handing the worst object to someone who is different.
- Social Change: Change is everywhere and many of the battles have been going on for a long time. I thought they usually fought for a few years then got what they fought for but even the most basic rights like women's reproductive rights has its back and fourths and will probably be fought for a long time.

# Homelessness & Social Interaction: Status

How homelessness is a status game: The difference between ascribed and achieved status is important, they are defined as “ascribed-those you do not select....achieved statuses are obtained by choice” (4.3 Social Constructions of Reality). The problem is that many people assume homelessness is a Achieved Status, but it is often forced on people due to social failures like the lack of affordable housing. This status carries a heavy stigma which changes how people interact with them. People tend to ignore them because they don't see them as who they are they see them through the eyes of the stigma, which is usually a person 'who did it to themselves through their bad actions'. This ascribed status makes it hard to gain achieved statuses, because the stigma of being homeless creates barriers towards stability such as employment. This highlights what is so difficult about battling homelessness.

# Homelessness & Social Interaction: Role Strain, Conflict, and Role Performance

## Role Strain:

- When a role requires too much work, usually resulting in burnout. “Consider the duties of a parent: cooking, cleaning, driving...the list goes on” (4.3, Social Constructions of Reality).

## Example of Role Strain:

- My aunt up had a kid young who passed away. This and working, taking care of herself and her family she got burnout and turned to addiction, she ruined her life. She had a hard time coming out of homelessness. She was one of the lucky people to pull herself out of the hole due to the resources around her.

## Example of Role Conflict:

- “When one or more roles are contradictory...who comes first?” (4.3 Social Constructions of Reality). When my aunt was recovering she had to give up being a parent, even though she was “better” because she knew that she couldn’t take care of her kid while also getting her life back, so she made the choice to give her kid to her sister.

## Role Performance:

- Role performance is defined as “how a person expresses his or her role” (4.3). This feeds into the stereotype of homelessness. When people become homeless they think since they are homeless they should fall into the habits everyone assumes. This deepens the hole they are in.

# Homelessness & Social Interactions: Looking-Glass Self

## Looking-Glass Self:

- A reflection of how we think we appear to others. We base our image based on what we think other people will see.

## How reactions shape identity:

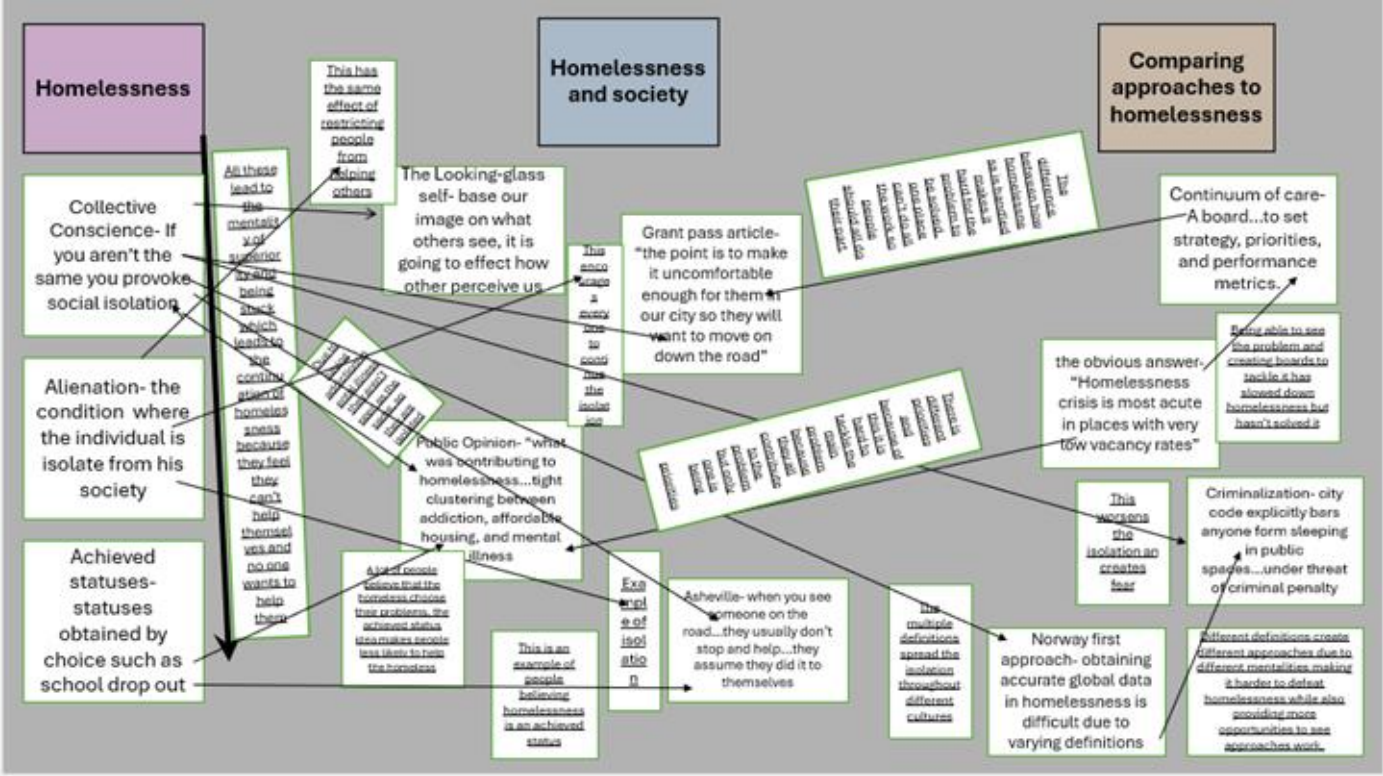
- This is a big reason why people look down on homeless people. Due to the visions we have of ourselves we react negatively when we see the situation of some. When society reacts in a judgemental way, homeless people could internalize the negative label of 'dirty' or 'helpless' as apart of their identity. The Looking-Glass Self explains this idea, we often act based on what look we want others to see. People avoid helping the homeless because they are scared of being judged for interacting with someone who has a negative stigma, so they choose to play it safe by looking away.

Example: When the homeless man in Candler with his cat became popular people wanted to help him because people adored him. When he was looking better people saw that it was okay to help him and that they wouldn't be judged for helping someone with a negative stigma. But prior to that no one wanted to help because he was considered dirty with a potentially dangerous cat and no one wanted that look associated with themselves.

# Social Responses: Three Approaches

Category	Norway (Housing First)	Asheville (Continuum of Care)	Grants Pass (Criminalization)
Primary Goal	Eliminate homelessness by determining housing a human right.	Protect current residents from becoming homeless specifically those with low incomes.	Prioritize public order through enforcement against anti-camping laws.
Main Method	They provide permanent housing and followed it with support services like mental health counseling.	A 10 year plan with different strategies that reduce barriers and create affordable properties.	Punish public sleeping with fines and jail time to discourage homeless occupancy.
Impact	Reduced the rate of homelessness from 1.5 per 1,000 (1996) to 0.62 per 1,000 (2020).	Provided many strategies to build thousand of units for those under 60% AMI	Developed a cycle of fines for homeless people, leaving them in debt and forced homeless out of public parks

# Social Responses: Concept Map



# Social Responses: Structural Causes & Solutions

What is the best approach: Norway is the best approach, they have a plan and a goal and by providing policies and taking data they understand the causes of homelessness and tackle the most common one while still working on the others. They provide a positive approach which encourages people to reach out and get the help they need rather than moving to the next city. In “The Obvious Answer to Homelessness” they mention that the main problem is the scarcity of housing, but what they don’t mention is why. People can’t afford housing because of the job market and because of this people tend to rent apartments which is why they build more and set them at a higher price which then increases homelessness.

# Local Application: Local Evidence

BeLoved: a local organization in Asheville that helps our community with homelessness especially after Helene. While they focus on many things their main ideas are home, health, equality, and opportunity, with a primary focus on the housing crisis. They connect people with resources and help by providing the resources others can't provide like prevention efforts which keep people in homes so they don't have to worry about other experiences.



<https://www.belovedasheville.com/fo-cus-area/equity/>

# Sociological Analysis:

- **Conflict theory:** They help with equity, helping everyone and anyone. They said a big problem is the racial minorities are disproportionately represented in unhoused population. A likely cause of this is systemic discrimination in housing, because of the amount of people looking for jobs and conflict theory proving the lean towards those who are well kept and predominantly white, people tend to hire them rather than others, which deepens homelessness for colored people.
- **Social stratification:** These two ideas connect and both play a big role in the issue. Because society ranks homeless people in the bottom of the chain people are less likely to provide houses or jobs. When you have a job interview they ask for an address and reliable transportation, because of the lack of it, usually they won't get hired which they attempt to help with by providing resources to prevent homelessness and by providing spaces to show off talent and work without judgement or discrimination.

# Reflection & Meaning: Personal Growth

My thinking has greatly evolved over the semester, and not just for homelessness. Due to this class I understand how people function and why. As a kid I wondered why people didn't think like me or why they acted in ways I judged as problematic. I now understand that those behaviors were rooted in socialization. Everything begins in childhood, where you grow up, how your parents act, and the friends you have all make you who you are, even subconsciously. This class taught me to view others in a sociological way rather than a personal way. I saw some people in a negative way but never really understood why or never talked about it but I now understand it's because of the societal structures I am surrounded by. Since this class I have over thought every action and thought I've had and put it in perspective of the real world rather than my mind. I have developed a more empathetic perspective and no longer rely on my own assumptions. I now evaluate actions with a sociological perspective so I can understand actions within the context.

# Why This Matters:

Understanding homelessness sociological matters beyond this class because it affects the world, both present and future. Because I understand the factors that play into homelessness I can help more, and be willing to help without the embarrassment that I thought would come with it because no one else was doing it. I also can teach others the difference and help terminate the stereotype surrounding around homeless people. With this knowledge I won't be able to change the world in a few days, but over time with more people learning homelessness can start to decrease due to the stereotype being gone and more resources being provided.