

HOMELESSNESS THROUGH THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

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Homelessness stood out to me as its such a widely known problem and we see it everyday but we never know what is truly happening to fix homelessness. That is why it stood out to me, I was finally knowing what is happening to trying to fix homelessness.

<https://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/local/2024/10/11/helene-hit-ashevelles-homeless-hard-how-can-the-community-recover/75583995007/?gnt-cfr=1&gca-cat=p&gca-uir=true&gca-epi=z118403e008000v118403d--93--b--93--&gca-ft=215&gca-ds=sophi>

Josh Bell/Asheville Citizen Times



[A group of volunteers who delivered water bottles during the hurricane helene relief.](https://www.belovedasheville.com/our-work/street-pantries/)
<https://www.belovedasheville.com/our-work/street-pantries/>

MODULE 1

How Sociology Changed My Perspective

One theory that changed the way I saw the world was Max Weber's theory of rationalization. I would go on to say in my module 1 reflection "society would split due to someone's merit-based success". Along with that the eBook on chapter 4.2 said "A rational society is one built around logic and efficiency rather than morality or tradition." This all supports what Max Weber's theory of rationalization is along with how it expanded my own knowledge. My own experience of rationalization would be, getting ready to apply to colleges. Most things in college are based on your grades or merit. This includes whether you get in to a college and or how many scholarships you might receive. This is an example of a Rationalization of society; Which would help me get a better understanding of myself in this merit based society. Along with understanding that it is ok to get a bad grade and how to improve other parts of my merit. As I said in my module 1 reflection "



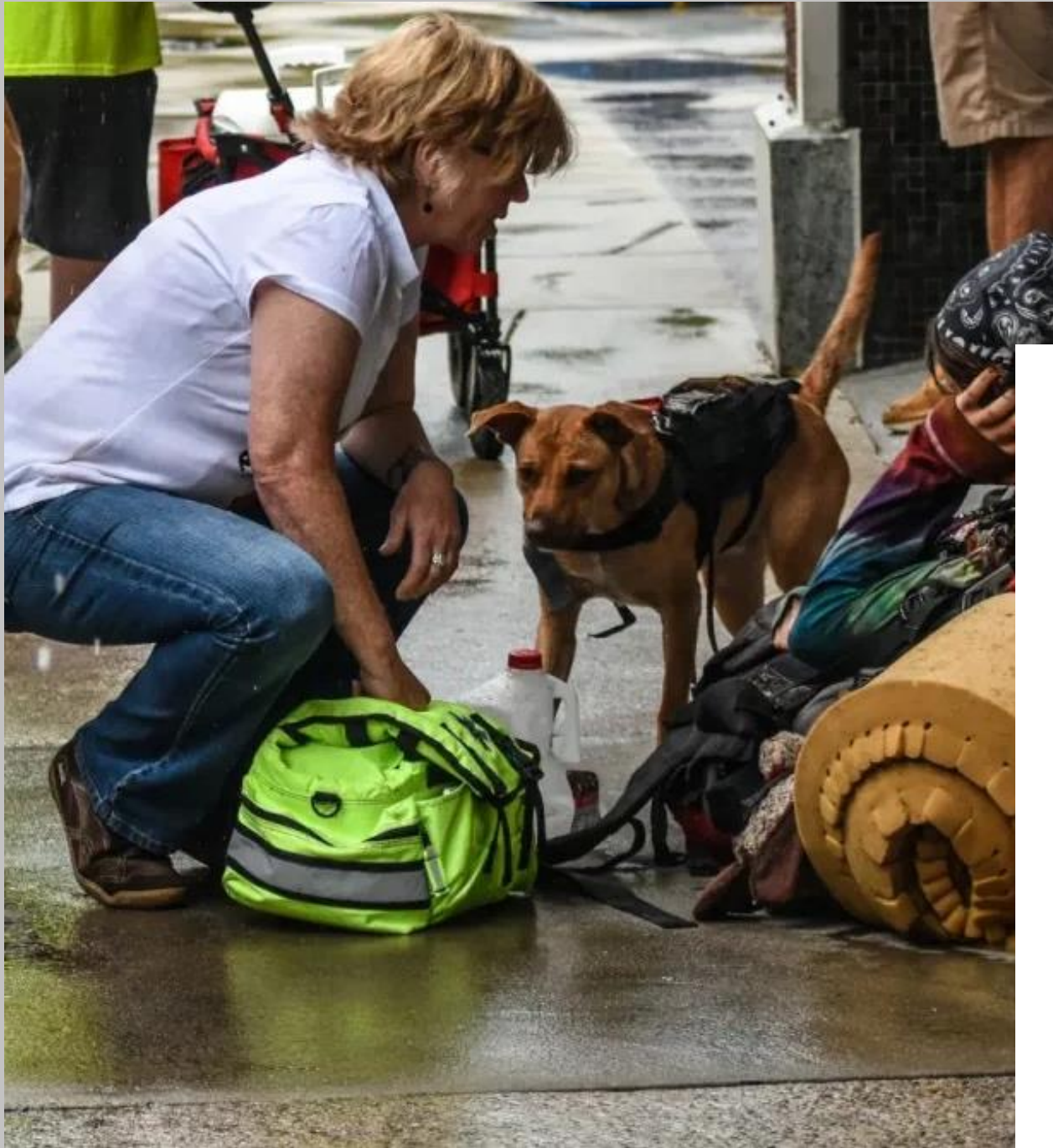
PERSONAL TROUBLES VS. PUBLIC ISSUES

Homelessness tend to look like a personal problem to most people and to an extent it is. For example, if someone suffered from job loss or substance abuse that is the individuals choice and or failure. Through a main cause of homelessness is the lack of affordable housing which makes it an public issue. This is were we see a sociological imagination shift from a personal to a public issue. For example, one person not being able to afford rent is a private problem but rising housing prices is a public problem. Figuring out if homelessness is a public or private problem could help us reduce and overall get rid of homelessness.

[A row of affordable housing that theBeloved community built for the homeless.](https://www.belovedasheville.com/our-work/street-pantries/)

<https://www.belovedasheville.com/our-work/street-pantries/>

INEQUALITY, CONFORMITY, OR SOCIAL MOVEMENTS



[This is a off duty nurse trying to give aid to a homeless individual.](https://www.belovedasheville.com/our-work/street-pantries/)

<https://www.belovedasheville.com/our-work/street-pantries/>

A module 2 concept that I will be applying to homelessness is Social Stratification. Social stratification is based on someone's wealth, power, and status. This connects to homelessness as people who are on the lower end of the social hierarchy are more likely to become homeless. Along with that people on the lower end also have a limited access to education. In D6, when we had to do the SPENT challenge; We saw how it is to be that person on the lower end of the social hierarchy. The risks that came with it and for many other who played the Spent scenario did end up with no money, showing how easy one mistake can cause someone to be homeless. Unfortunately this society is based on a heirarchy sytem and social stratification.



GROWTH REFLECTION

During my module 2 reflection, I talked a lot about seeing through life as someone who is homeless along with the struggles and choices that are challenging. Which the homeless have to face everyday. I still agree with everything I said in my reflection but I've gained more knowledge, through this class since then. Not only can I see the struggles that they have in front of them but also the struggles others put on them. For example, if someone homeless is trying to get a job and they don't get it because of them being homeless we are just adding to their struggle instead of helping them. Along with struggles I was also able to learn about amazing ways governments and volunteers are trying to help the homeless, get back on their feet.

[A street pantry set up by the Beloved Asheville.
https://www.belovedasheville.com/our-
work/street-pantries/](https://www.belovedasheville.com/our-work/street-pantries/)



HOMELESS AS A STATUS

Homeless is primarily a status placed on someone who doesn't have a home and tends to live out of their car or on the streets. When this status is placed on someone it makes it harder for them to move through their life. For example, it's harder to get a job because of transportation or not being able to get a shower causing them to be dirty. Along with making their life harder it also makes them rethink their whole life and their personal values.

A moment during Kids Day, Where kids get to experience that they never got the chance too

<https://www.belovedasheville.com/our-work/street-pantries/>



ROLE STRAIN, ROLE CONFLICT, ROLE PERFORMANCE

Role conflict can be seen through homelessness as someone who has two different roles like an employee and a mother. This can cause her to choose between keeping her job or trying to provide a shelter and food for her child, also known as role conflict. The role of being a mother can also cause a strain as she is expecting to provide a shelter and food but her being homeless its hard she her to meet that expectation as she has limited money and cant afford an home. Through shes homeless she can still try and get her child to school on time and find an shelter. This can be seen as role performance as she is trying to carry out her role to the best of her ability.

Beloved giving out free bikes for kids who couldn't afford them

<https://www.belovedasheville.com/our-work/street-pantries/>

LOOKING-GLASS SELF

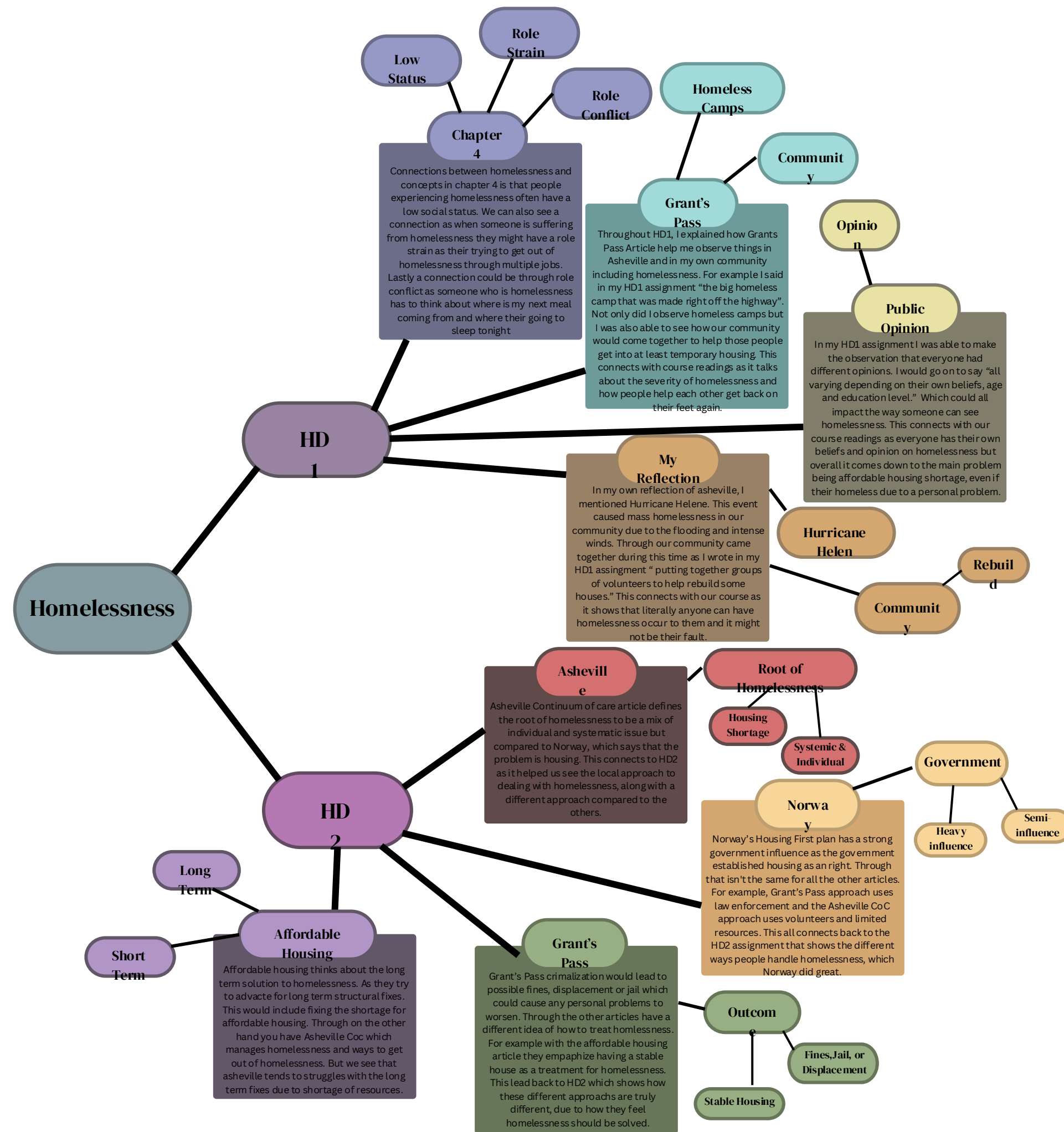
Public reaction can impact how they might see themselves. This occurs as the concept of looking glass is when you imagine how other see you, you imagine their judgement, and you develop feeling about yourself based on that. This is very likely to happen when we look at someone who is homeless. Society has the tendency to treat someone who is homeless as someone who is invisible or undeserving. If someone who is homeless and get ignored it can start this process. This can make lots of homeless individuals to have a bad feeling about themselves which can lead to mental health issue. Through if someone homeless is treated with respect they might apperience themselves more .

THREE APPROACHES

In my HD2 post, we are able to see how homelessness is more of a systemic problem more than a personal failure. As I look back on what I said about Asheville I mentioned us not having enough materials to prove what Norway does to help get rid of homelessness. Through Im also able to see the success of Norway through me saying "Norway has 123,000 people living in the streets and 2,472,000 people in housing". (HD2)

THREE APPROACHES

Approach	What They Do	Main Point	Result
Asheville	Provides shelters, job, and healthcare to support homelessness	Focuses on helping people get out of homelessness until stable again	1,300 new affordable housing, and adding policies to remove homelessness in public
Norway	Gives people stability and housing quickly through government aid	Reduce the homeless rate significantly	Reduced child homelessness from 679(2012) -> 142(2020), along with the homeless population by half
Grant Pass	Uses law and enforcement to regulate homeless in public spaces	Focuses on the visibility of homeless	Doesn't reduce homelessness but enforcing it. Less visible homelessness in public





STRUCTURAL CAUSES & SOLUTIONS

Norway's approach to homelessness addresses the root of homelessness. In "The Obvious answer to homelessness" article argues that homelessness isn't just an individual problem. One of the main causes discussed in the article was the lack of affordable housing. This was due to the scarce and expensive housing market. This makes it harder to maintain a home leading to homelessness. In Norway, they build affordable housing in their "Housing First" approach.

Beloved's food truck handing out food to those in need
<https://www.belovedasheville.com/our-work/street-pantries/>

LOCAL EVIDENCE

Beloved Asheville is a non-profit based in Asheville that works towards supporting the homeless and other people in poverty or a crisis. We can see this through the images provided on their site that shows volunteers building affordable housing, supplying families with food and other supplies, and also creating meaningful relationships with individuals within this non-profit. The reason non-profits like Beloved Asheville are important is because it's not a charity but a community-building. Beloved also tries to provide families and individuals with a long term solution so they don't have to go back out on the streets again. Throughout my slides you are able to see some of the incredible work this non-profit has done for our community.



Food being distributed to people in poverty.

<https://www.belovedasheville.com/our-work/street-pantries/>

SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

One sociological concept that follows along with the BeLoved Asheville is the term structural inequality. Structural inequality refers to how social systems create unequal opportunities. BeLoved saw this and recognized a way to fix it as they help build housing that is affordable and help get jobs to those in need. Another sociological concept is symbolic interactionism, as it means how people create meaning through life and how labels shape their identities. BeLoved challenges this through as they build relationships through outreach, treating people with respect and create communities of unhoused individuals where they can find their voice.

PERSONAL GROWTH

My thinking has changed so much during this course. I came into this course knowing little to nothing about Sociology. This course has helped me shift the way I think. At first thinking and learning about the world made me feel overwhelmed and a little scared. As I was so used to being sheltered from that side of the world and only knowing about my little bubble. Over time, I learned about homelessness and different sociological aspects, I became more open to it and ready to learn more. I started to understand these different experiences and found ways to help other and improve their life even if it was only a little bit. My thinking has changed from being a someone scared to learn about the world to someone who is excited to learn more and want to help those in need.



WHY IT MATTERS?

Understanding homelessness sociologically matters as it opens your eyes to the real causes. We're able to see the reality to the housing cost and policies that can impact homelessness. This makes it easier to find a solution to homelessness in your area. Along with that because I know what structural inequality is, am able to see that in Asheville. As we don't have to same resources Norway does when it comes to helping the homeless. We tend to relay on non-profits and volunteer to try and reduce the rate of homeless individuals.