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SOC-210-OALD1

Final Project



Homelessness has stood out to me in this course because I often see homelessness firsthand in my community. In downtown Asheville and around the rest of the city, I see people asking for money or food. When my family occasionally offers food, it always feels good to see how grateful they are. Homelessness has also stood out to me because of the new perspectives that it has shown me. I have learned that different governments and local laws can have a big effect on the state somebody is living in. This is a new perspective that I found very interesting, as I previously thought that it is always the individual who is responsible for their situation. I have learned that the community surrounding the homeless person is a big component of how privileged the individual is.

How Sociology Changed My Perspective

A research method from this module that surprised and interested me was the ethnography research method. Ethnography is, “the immersion of the researcher in the natural setting of an entire social community to observe and experience their everyday life and culture” (OpenStax, 2023, 2.2). This interested me because I think it is a very valuable research method to involve yourself in the environment you are studying, instead of just looking at it from an outsider perspective. It made me see the world differently because it made me realize that I have used ethnography without realizing it. Anytime I go on vacation and experience the culture and talk to the people there I am involving myself in their day to day life and in a way subconsciously researching them.

A moment I noticed myself thinking like a sociologist was during the D2 unpacking gender roles assignment. I saw myself looking deeper into the details of stereotypes in everyday objects. I thought about how brands work to target specific groups based on what the world has assumed about them. I specifically noticed the silhouettes of people on the protein powder packaging I was looking at, and saw the slim athletic figure that the social world has impressed on women, and the big muscular stereotype expected in men. I was thinking like a sociologist when I noticed how the social world has determined how genders should present themselves.

Understanding these sociological perspectives and after completing assignments D4 Social Institutions, Socialization, and Your self Concept, I have noticed that my family has had a huge impact on me as I've grown up. “Mothers and fathers, siblings and grandparents, plus members of an extended family, all teach a child what he or she needs to know” (OpenStax, 2023, 5.3). Realizing how much my family has impacted who I am has helped me understand myself and why I am the way I am. So much of who I am was defined at an early age. The things that I was taught were almost entirely by my close family for the first years of my life. I notice how different families have different expectations, norms, and beliefs, and I think that if I was raised by a different family, I might have different beliefs and morals too.



Personal Troubles vs. Public Issues

Sociological Imagination is connecting personal issues to broader public issues. For homelessness using a sociological imagination can help people understand that the homeless population isn't completely to blame for their condition. When so many people in the US struggle with the same personal issue, it shows that there is probably systemic inequality or that housing costs are too high for everyone.



Inequality, Conformity, Social Movements

I learned about the different stages of a movement in D7. The institutionalization stage is when the organization is established and taken seriously. For example, in D7 I determined that the Reproductive Rights Movement was in the Institutionalization stage because in the “1990’s the morning after pill was approved”.

The Homelessness Movement is in the Institutionalization stage currently because it is widespread and recognized by the public. This movement is established and understood by government. Federal and state government are aware of the homelessness issue, and have the goal of reducing the number of homeless people.



Growth Reflection

After creating an infographic on the reproductive rights movement, I realized that social change can happen when there are many people behind the cause. In the reproductive rights movement, there was little progress or action during the preliminary stage. Once other people got behind the movement though, there were new advancements in reproductive rights for women in the coalescence stage. The coalescence stage is when, “people join together and organize in order to publicize the issue and raise awareness” (OpenStax section 21.2). For the reproductive rights movement this stage resulted in legalized abortion protected by the fourteenth amendment.

What surprised me about the reproductive rights movement was that instead of a decline stage, the movement picked back up. This usually doesn't happen because movements get what they want, and then the group calms down and disperses. In the case of abortion, the movement had to continue working for rights after *Roe v. Wade* was overturned. The right to abortion had been a fifty year old right protected by the Constitution, so when it was overturned, the reproductive rights movement had a second wind. *Roe v. Wade* being overturned surprised me, and also the unique stages that the movement has been through surprised me.



Homelessness as a Status

Homelessness is a status, economically and socially. It is obviously an economic status, because people who aren't well off and have little money are left living on the streets instead of being able to afford a home like everybody else. There are a limited number of houses, so the low status people get left without somewhere of their own to stay. Homelessness is also a social status. People view homeless people as less than them, or even as dangerous. Whether this is true or not, it is a broad generalization that leaves homeless people in a lower status in the common people's eyes.



Role Strain, Role Conflict, Role Performance

The textbook describes role strain as, when “too much is required of a single role” (OpenStax 4.3). The example of a parent is used. A parent has lots of duties that all need to happen at once. This can lead to strain and stress.

Role Conflict is slightly different. Role Conflict is not when there are too many things on an individual’s plate, but when the responsibilities of those roles interfere with each other. The textbook defines it as, “when one or more roles are contradictory” (OpenStax 4.3). A parent who has to give their kid’ dinner, and who also has a project due that night for work, might be experiencing role conflict. The two roles have to compete for the attention of the parent, because the two roles dont overlap.

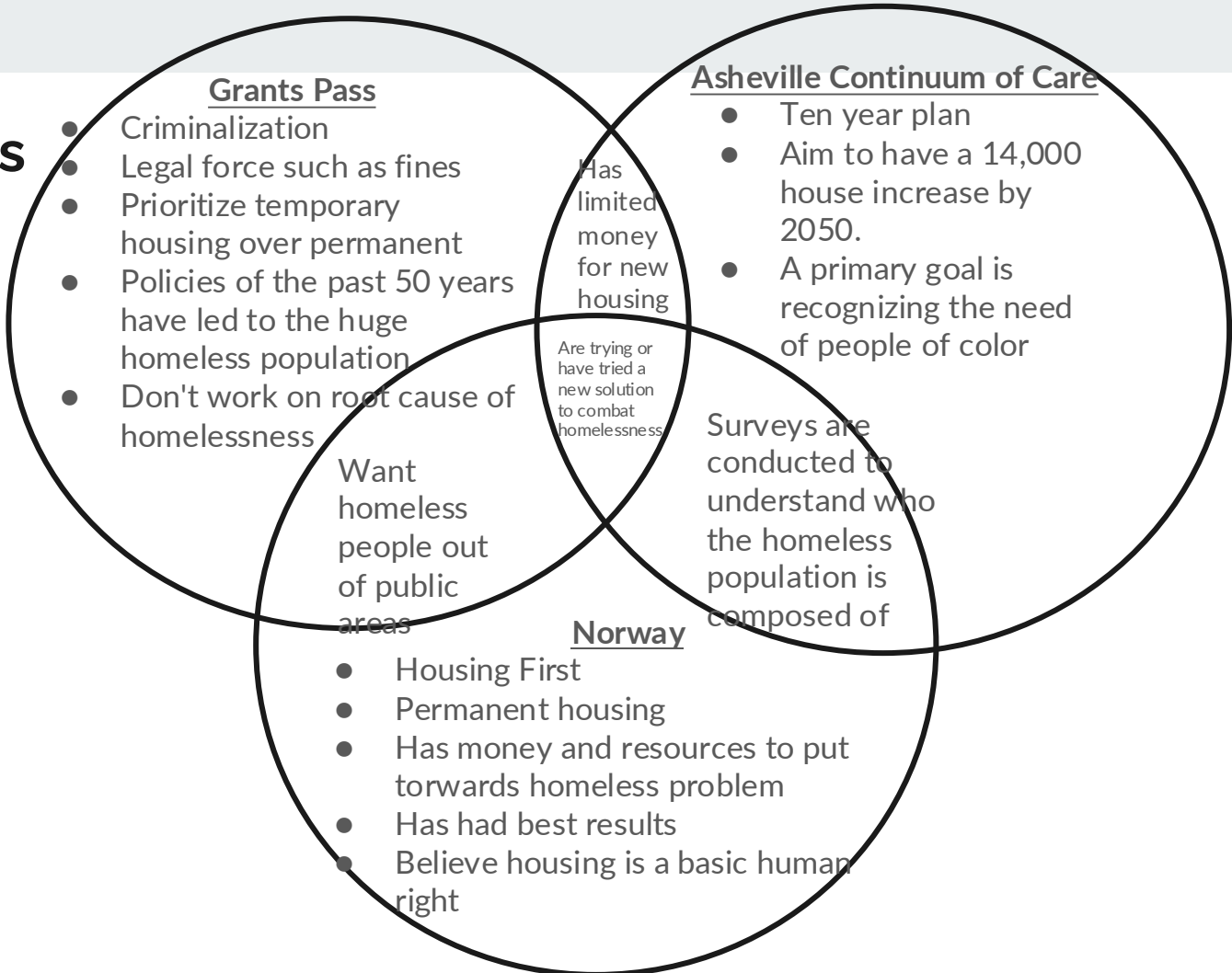
Role performance is how someone performs their roles. It is defined in the textbook as “how a person expresses his or her role” (OpenStax). How you act towards different people varies. A parent, for example, might talk softly and simply to their kids, but professional and strict at work.



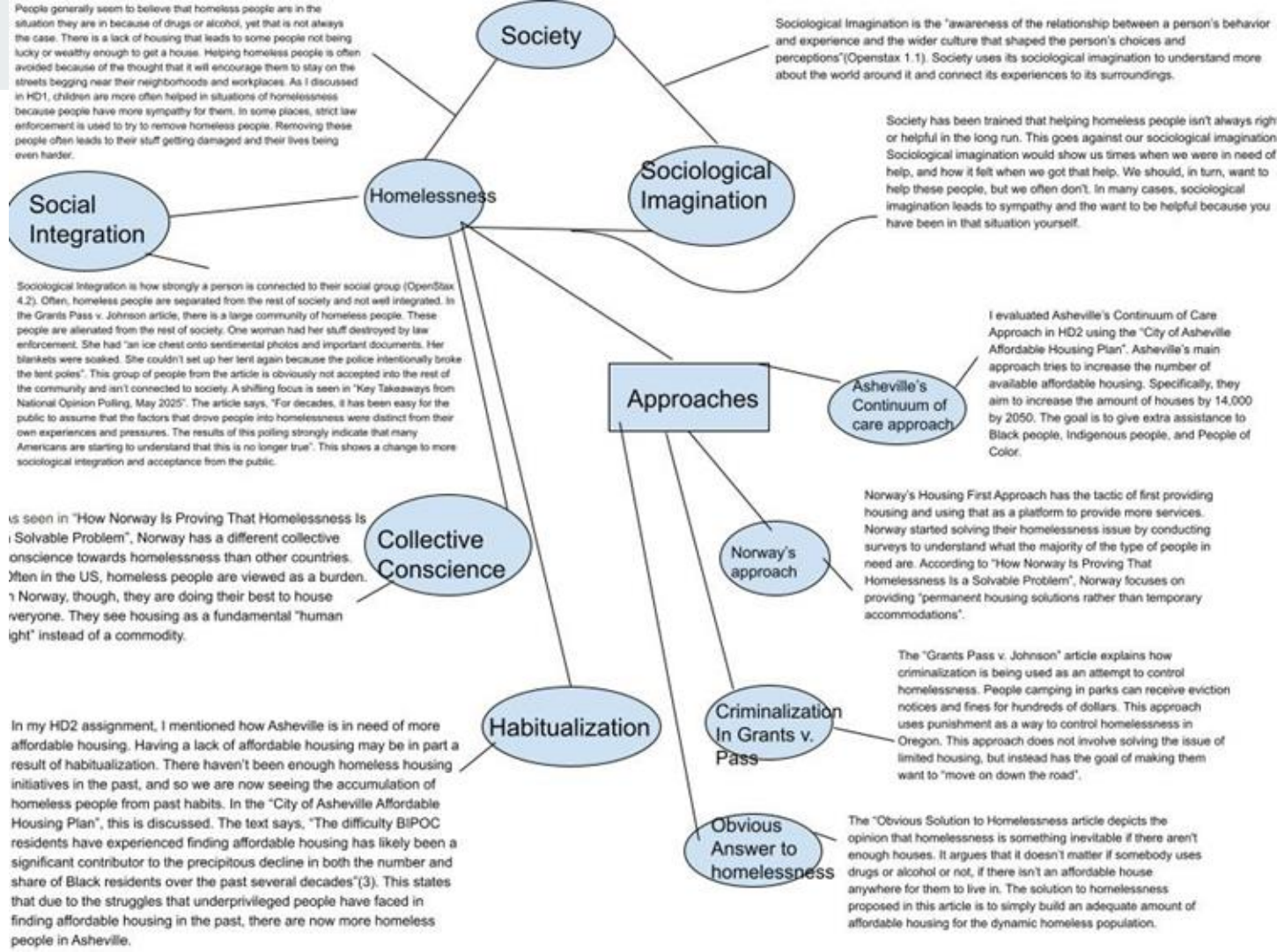
Looking-Glass Self

Public reactions shape identity because of people's awareness of how others perceive them. A negative public reaction to a community will leave that community feeling less valuable. A negative reaction to homeless people that I mentioned in HD1 is that people were against affordable housing being built near their neighborhoods, in fear that the homeless being there would reduce the worth of their homes. Homeless people knowing that they weren't wanted and wouldn't be accepted as normal, even with a house, probably affects how they see themselves. Feeling like they are not welcomed into society, and are somehow separate, probably shapes their identity.

Three Approaches



Concept Map





Structural Causes and Solutions

The most effective approach to addressing the root cause of homelessness is Norway's approach. Norway prioritizes stable housing over anything. They believe that in order to help these people become independent, they need a permanent living situation first. This allows the homeless people to have shelter before the less urgent needs are met. "The Obvious Solution to Homelessness" Article has the opinion that "it's all but guaranteed that a certain number of people will become homeless". Norway acknowledged that there simply weren't enough houses to ensure everyone was off the streets. They built many more houses to combat the homelessness issue in Norway. Norway's approach is so effective because they get to the root of the problem through surveys.



Local Evidence

After Hurricane Helene many people were left without basic necessities like water and electricity. The government wasn't able to immediately provide the relief that was needed. Before resources started coming in, people had to rely on each other for support. One group that stepped up was BeLoved Asheville. The goal was to collect donations so they could be provided to people most affected by the hurricane. Mutual aid allowed many people to get access to electricity, food, toilet flushing water, and more.



Sociological Analysis

During Hurricane Helene many people with similar **collective consciences** came together because of the belief that it was right to help others in need. Local organizations such as BeLoved Asheville, are composed of people with similar morals who aided in delivering supplies.

Mutual Aid organizations are **secondary groups**. They encompass many different people who wouldn't usually come in contact, yet they are all in the same situation of being in need of help. A trait of secondary groups that very much applies to mutual aid groups is being task oriented. Working together to achieve a common goal of helping people was at the heart of the mutual aid groups during Helene.



Personal Growth

I believe that over this semester of learning I have become more open minded. Sociology has taught me that there are more parts to the story than what is immediately told. In the case of homelessness, at the beginning of the semester I had assumptions about all homeless people. I thought that they must have done something wrong with drugs or alcohol to lead them to be in this situation. Now I see that ending homelessness isn't even an option with the lack of housing. When there is a lack of housing there will always be people who dont have a house. I have also learned from Norway's approach that there are accomplishable solutions to these worldwide issues.



Why This Matters

Understanding homelessness sociologically beyond this class is important because the shift in my thinking for homelessness can apply to other real world situations. I will now hopefully be able to see that not all issues are entirely the underprivileged individual's fault. There are issues in the governmental systems that greatly affect the condition of our country. I hope to be able to identify systematic errors in the future and understand that policies, accessibility, and many other factors can affect somebody's living condition.