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INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

HOMELESSNESS STOOD OUT TO ME AS IT IS SOMETHING THAT IS SEEN IN MOST COMMUNITIES IN THE U.S. IT IS SOMETHING THAT NEEDS MORE RECOGNITION AND AWARENESS, AND THROUGH THIS COURSE I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GET THAT



HOW DID THIS COURSE CHANGE MY PERSPECTIVE?

This sociology course changed my perspective of American as it truly demonstrated to me the amount of judgement people get for just owning something. In Chapter 3, Page 5, the term Material Culture is defined as “the objects or belongings of a group of people”. The small things that people own can define them as a person in this culture. If someone is wearing a old pair of shoes people might think that that person is dirt or poor. If someone shows up to a meeting with a Louis Vuitton bag, you automatically consider them as rich. Just learning about this alone demonstrated to me how things as small as possessions give in to a stereotype you make of someone in your head. This course has reminded me that it is not items who make up a human being, but the person themselves.

PERSONAL TROUBLES VS. PUBLIC ISSUES

As I recounted in my Module 2 Reflection, one of my closest friends' is not able to afford much. She does not have power, barely has food, and what she does have in her home, she pays for all by herself. Using sociological imagination, a concept were connect personal issues and public issues, I can conclude that my friends' experiences is a prime example of how easy it is for someone in America to fall to homelessness. Many people struggle with finance in America, later resulting in homelessness. The people living on the streets tend to get a negative opinion, when many people who you wouldn't even expect are on the brink of homelessness. I think that examples like this are prime reason why we as people should not judge those who are living without a home, as trying to maintain that is no small feat.

INEQUALITY, CONFORMITY, OR SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Whether it be something as broad as middle class, lower class, and upper class, or something as niche as people who like burgers rather than hot dogs, in every society there are cliques. The same thing happens with people who are homeless versus people who are housed. This factor causes a divide. As said in Section 6.2: conformity is the extent to which an individual complies with group or societal norms". When people are in a conforming group, it is easy to look down at others. As I explain in D5, there is an in-group (people in the group) and an out-group (people not in the group). People in the ingroup may view those out of the group as less than they are. A prime example of this was seen in D7, when researching the LGBTQIA+ movement. People who were in the movement believed they were correct and helpful, while those who weren't were judging those in the movement. Another example of this is when people who are granted with luxury in life look down on the homeless: they feel like they are better than the homeless. The groups made up in society create barriers between us.

GROWTH AND REFLECTION

After reading Chapters 6,9,10,11, and 12, I have truly been able to grasp the concept of how easy something is when it is done in groups, whether it be something negative or positive. My reflection from module 2 really highlighted how humans tend to group together when they are of similar thinking or for a similar cause. This reflecting has made me notice these patterns in life. Many academically motivated people hang-out solely with academically motivated people, while athletes tend to hang out with athletes. I believe the recognition of this basic fact has allowed me to step outside of the usual people I surround myself with people who I used to consider would push me in a similar direction as them. Not only this, I have also noticed how easy it is to pick on a group that is different from me and how to shut this pattern down. If these behaviors are not recognized, inequality will easily slide through, unrecognized.

STATUS

Homelessness is viewed as a status. There is a major stereotype in America of how those who are unhoused are lazy, dirty, and failures at life. These are all things that play into the status of a homeless person. A status is what defined someone's position or rank in something. The status of a homeless person leads those who are not homeless to believe they are better than them because of a ranking/status that they have been perceived as. Adding on top of this, coming out of being homeless is set up by the Government of the United States to be very challenging, further deepening the false perception of how all homeless people are lazy. The status granted to those who are not homeless lead them to believe the mean terms they call homeless are permitted, as those saying the mean words believe they are superior.

ROLE STRAIN, ROLE CONFLICT, AND ROLE PERFORMANCE

When I was younger, I had my aunt and grandma come into town. We were walking in downtown Asheville when we walked upon homeless people minding their business. My aunt walked faster away from the man and grew uncomfortable by this due to role performance. She believed that she was better than the homeless man and wanted to be perceived as above that (4.3). My grandma, who was not uncomfortable, began to converse and even sing with the homeless man. My Aunt was facing role strain as well as role conflict as this action made “too much [was] required of [her] role” (4.3). She was now conflicted with running away from the man and staying to be a good daughter to my grandma by singing alongside her. This class has made me rethink if little moments like these.

LOOKING GLASS SELF

As I previously talked about in the prior slide and in HD1, my aunt has rude opinions towards homeless people, while my grandma views them as normal people. My aunt wanted to be perceived as better than the homeless man performing, so she walked away fast from him, in doing this action, she was making herself believe she was in fact better than that man on the street. This mirrors the concept of Looking Glass self, which is an idea that we develop our self image of how we think other people see us. I continue to talk in HD1 about how my grandma stayed and admired the homeless man singing, which allowed her to believe she was a kind person. My aunt believed that we saw her as someone who was better than those who are unhoused, leading her to think that too. In reality, we viewed her as judgmental, something she was unaware of, while on the other hand, we saw my grandma as a kind, giving person.

ASHEVILLE V. NORWAY V. CRIMILIZATION

Norway

- Permanent housing as a first action
- Look for employment routes
- More successful

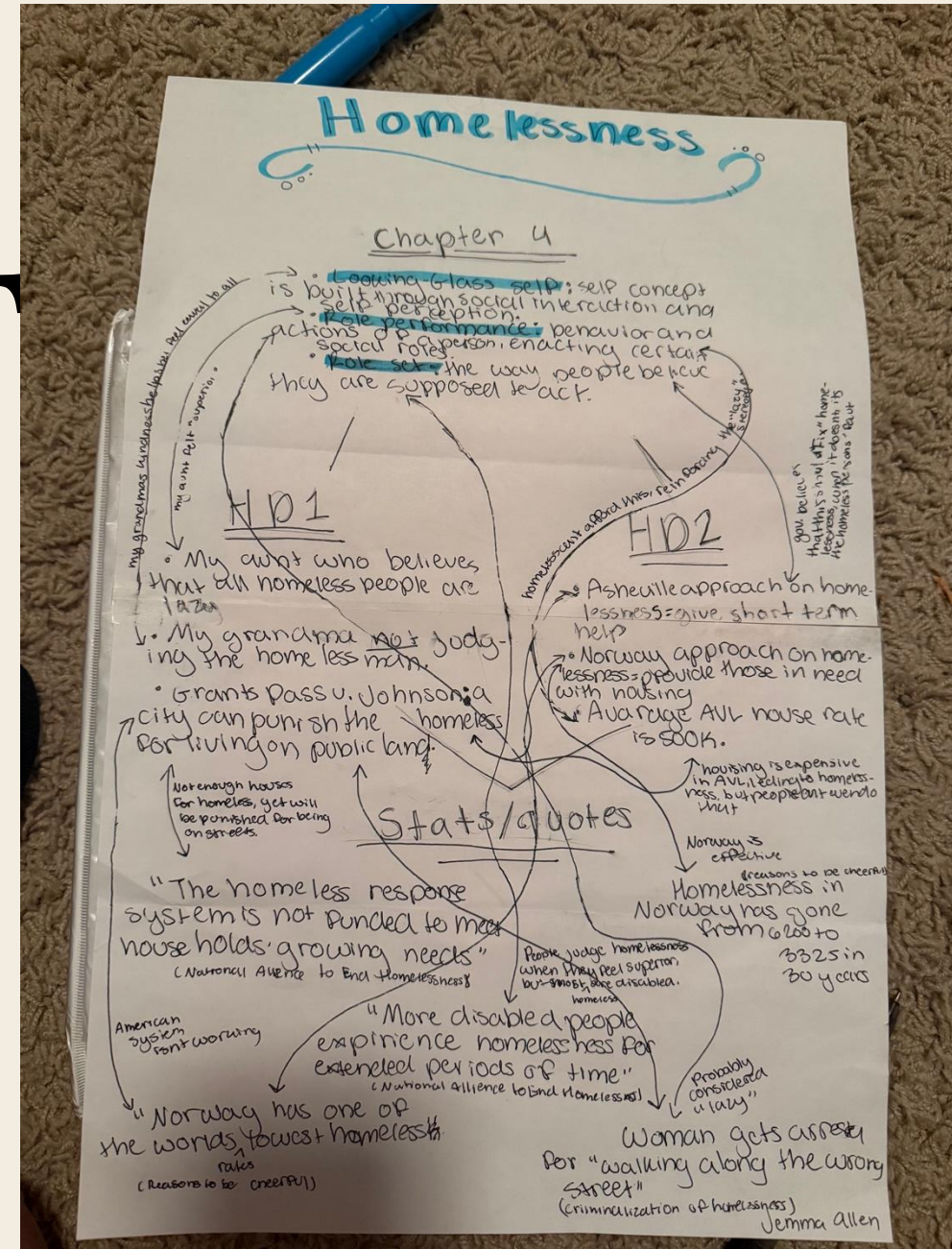
Asheville:

- Transitional housing
- Support programs
- Financial assistance on housing
- Developers must sell cheap housing
- Temporary solution to a permanent problem

Grants Pass v. Johnson

- Punishment for a homeless person residing on public land
- Fined
- Left with no place to live
- Not given a permanent solution

CONCEPT MAP



STRUCTURAL CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS

I believe the best way to combat homelessness is by creating a lower housing market. In the article "The Obvious Answer to Homelessness", the metaphor of musical chairs and there not being enough chairs for everyone represents the cause of homelessness. The market for affordable housing is so small, that when all of those cheap houses are bought up, what remains is people who are homeless. Those people get referred to as lazy, even though they had been working for a house that didn't exist. If there were more affordable houses, that would give more people an opportunity to get off the road and live a more luxurious life. The lack of housing is affecting the homeless rate, and there needs to be an immediate fix.

LOCAL EVIDENCE

While the lack of affordable housing is a major problem all over the United States, there are local, Western North Carolinian organizations trying to help. One example of this is the Asheville Area Habitat for Humanity. The Habitat for Humanity focuses on creating affordable ownership for over 2,100 people. Not only do they provide housing. Habitat for Humanity also has been actively working on housing recoveries for people and families who had been hit hard by Helene and needed help with recovery. The goal of Asheville Area Habitat for Humanity is to provide many more people with housing, rather than those people be on the street. In a time like this, these organizations have a huge impact on those who are in need, and there need to be more organizations.

SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

The Homeless Crisis is in need of a lot of support. Not only does it need the homeless, but it needs everyday people and even government support. This refers to Structural Functionalism (Chapter 1), the idea that the way each part of society works contributes how it functions together. If one person can step up, then eventually, all of the American Society may fall into place in support of this. Another thing that would support the homelessness cause is abandoning conformity. Conformity is when people align to group standard for acceptance (Chapter 6). Conformity is blocking people from stepping up to join a unpopular cause. People fear judgement from others to the point where it is punishing those who need support the most. We as citizens must come together as one to support the cause of Homelessness.

PERSONAL GROWTH

As per any class, you always leave with a bit of information that you may or may not remember later, but this class is different. Through this class, I have been able to open my eyes and understand why people act the way they do. Before taking this class, I would live my day-to-day life, not noticing anything. But now, I notice patterns: I notice why people conform, I can see more clearly on how homelessness is not only at fault of the one experiencing it, I have learned about movements that bring people to where they are today, and I am able to fully understand why not only other people perceive themselves how they do, but why I perceive myself as I am. This class has shown me that there is a reason behind every ones thought process, even if I don't agree with it. This class has left me with a desire to learn more.

WHY DOES UNDERSTANDING HOMELESSNESS MATTER?

Homelessness is a topic that is normalized in American culture. Whatever city you may find yourself in, you will also see a homeless person. Prior to this class, I used to just see homeless people and think to myself "Awe, I am sad for them", but now, I see them and think of how unfair that their life has been set up for them. This class has shown me that homeless people are not only people without homes, but people who have fallen victim to a poor system that has been set up for them. Learning about homelessness gives me a new understanding of how much support these people need. I have since been motivated to volunteer, donate money, and raise awareness to other people. Learning about homelessness in depth give you a real taste of what their realities may be like, rather than the stereotypes that the homeless are just lazy.

CITATION

Giavedoni, Sarah. "18 Life-Saving Housing Support Nonprofits across WNC." *Howard Hanna Allen Tate Blog*, 20 Feb. 2025, blog.allentate.com/housing-nonprofits/.