

# Less of a Home

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Homelessness has always been apart of my life. Not only as someone who lives in an area where its common, but also because It was apart of my home. I myself wasn't homeless, but after my mom and dad divorced, my dad had no where to live with no money. He'd jump around his friends house, letting us come visit from time to time, but there was a period of time where he lived on the streets. So now, when I see or consider a homeless person, it hits me on a deeper level. This is why studying the concept of homelessness is very important to me.





# -How Sociology Changed my POV-

In Module 1 of SOC-210, the idea that stood out to me the most was the sociological imagination. The textbook explains it as seeing how “personal troubles are connected to larger social structures” (Chapter 1, p. 15). Before this class, I mostly thought people’s problems were just based on their own choices. Now I realize that things like social class, gender, and culture play a big role in shaping our lives.

One time I noticed myself thinking “like a sociologist” was during our discussion about advertisements. I started paying attention to how body wash commercials use different colors and words for men and women. The book says culture is made up of “symbols, values, and norms that guide behavior” (Chapter 3, p. 62). That made me see how ads reinforce gender roles on purpose because it helps companies sell more products.

I also thought about this during our VSCO trend discussion. It showed me how strong social norms are and how people follow trends to fit in. Overall, this module helped me see that society shapes the way we think, and act more than we realize.



# -Personal Troubles VS. Public Issues-

The concept of sociological imagination, introduced by C. Wright Mills, is how “personal troubles are connected to larger social structures” (Chapter 1, p. 15). It helps you see that what feels like an individual problem, is often shaped by broader structures like the economy, policy, and culture.

At a personal level, someone experiencing homelessness might be described as having made poor financial decisions, struggling with addiction, or facing mental health challenges.

If you look at it this way, it seems like an individual failure. However, the sociological imagination pushes you to zoom out, and take

Using homelessness Ex:

**Without sociological imagination:** “This person failed”

**With sociological imagination:** “What social forces made this outcome more likely?”



# -Inequality, Conformity, or Social Movements-

The concept of **Social Stratification** from Chapter 9, defined as a “socioeconomic system that divides societies members into categories ranking from high to low, based on things like wealth, power, and prestige,”(Section 9.3) is related to homelessness through the status that homeless people are held at.

Related to social stratification, **Class Traits** can be connected to the concept. Class Traits are “the typical behaviors, customs, and norms that define each class.” (Section 9.10) For example, someone who appears to have a certain economic status may be challenged upon entry to an expensive restaurant or store. Having the label of homeless, being seen as run down and worthless, may not allow that person into the restaurant. Our appearances are almost always key to where we go/how we get treated. Being homeless and not having access to cleanly facilities can set the person up as a stereotype, not letting them get a job.





# -Growth Reflection-

Learning about inequality hit a little harder than I expected. It made me realize that a lot of people are dealing with situations that aren't fair at all, and they still have to make tough decisions every day. I used to think people always had more control over their lives, but now I see how much society and circumstances can limit choices. When the book mentioned that social structures shape what options people even have (Section 2.5), it made me think differently about judging others. Like, you really don't know what someone is dealing with behind the scenes. I learned that change doesn't just happen randomly, it takes time, effort, and people who are willing to keep pushing even when nothing seems to be happening. What surprised me the most is how small actions can grow into something way bigger when enough people care. It also made me realize that people working together can be way more powerful than I thought. This whole module kind of made me more aware of my own actions and how I respond to people around me. I feel like I think a little more before just going along with things now, and I try to understand situations instead of just reacting to them.

# -Status-

“Sociologists use the term status to describe the responsibilities and benefits that a person experiences according to their rank and role in society”(Chapter 4.3). The concept of status is seen everywhere in society. It often defines your standing in your community. When you think of homelessness, you may think dirty, undeserving respect, lack of knowledge, unsuccessful, etc. However, that mindset could be blamed from learning status interpretation. Homelessness is seen as the lowest possible economic status.

Being the lowest considered status, I can only imagine how hard it is to lift yourself from it. Low status pushes people to not hire someone, let them in places, or believe they are only there to do bad things. To rise up from homelessness and make a home for yourself is an experience I'd never want to experience, It pushes me to continue my studies and work hard so I'm able to be comfortable.



# -Role Strain, Role Conflict, & Role Performance-

According to Chapter 4.3, "Roles are patterns of behavior that we recognize in each other that are representative of a person's social status." (Chapter 4.3). Just like how you play a role in a musical or play, you take on your role in situations in life.

## **Role-Strain**

(Too much on your shoulders)

As someone who works hard for everything I earn, I experience role-strain quite often. I would go as far as to say everyone does at some point.

Committing yourself to a role can be very rewarding, but also very draining. It's important to keep a reminder of why you hold that role.

## **Role-Conflict**

(Contradictory roles)

I've role conflict in myself. As someone who loves both her friends and partner, I take pride in making sure each side of the coin is shown that love. However, my anniversary and my friend's birthday line up on the same day. This situation has had me at a role-conflict, deciding which I'd take more to heart.

## **Role-Performance**

(How you express your role)

To perform your role is what makes it a role, just like on stage in a movie set. I've seen many musicals where the actors put everything they've had into their character/role. But I also see it everywhere off stage. Being a young adult, where everyone's trying to grapple at who they are, roles are everywhere. We tend to form a role around different people, and bend ourselves into different "vibes".

# -Looking-Glass Self-

I've always heard that first impressions are everything. When thinking of "Looking-glass self", I turn to the idea of seeing how to act based on other people's reactions toward me. Public reactions play a powerful role in identity because people often come to understand themselves through the way others perceive and respond to them (Like looking in a mirror). According to chapter 4.3, "We imagine how we must appear to others, then react to this speculation." (Chapter 4.3). For example, people dress up nicely when expected to be around a lot of people trying to illuminate ourselves in the best light.

This dynamic is especially visible in how society responds to vulnerable groups, such as people experiencing homelessness. Public perceptions of homelessness often rely on stereotypes: lazy, dangerous, or responsible for their own circumstance. These reactions shape how the homeless see themselves. Constant exposure to this kind of treatment heavily reduces their identity to a single label: "homeless"

# -Three Approaches-



## Asheville

(Continuum of Core)

Focuses on giving people services like shelters, job help, and support programs. Asheville think of homelessness needs a mix of solutions, not just a place to stay.

## Norway


(Housing First)

Putting housing first, Norway focuses on getting people places to live before anything else, which shows they see housing as something everyone should have.

## Criminalization

(Grants Pass)

The customs of the GRant Pass is almost opposite because it uses laws and punishment. This means it makes homelessness look more like something to control, rather than fix.

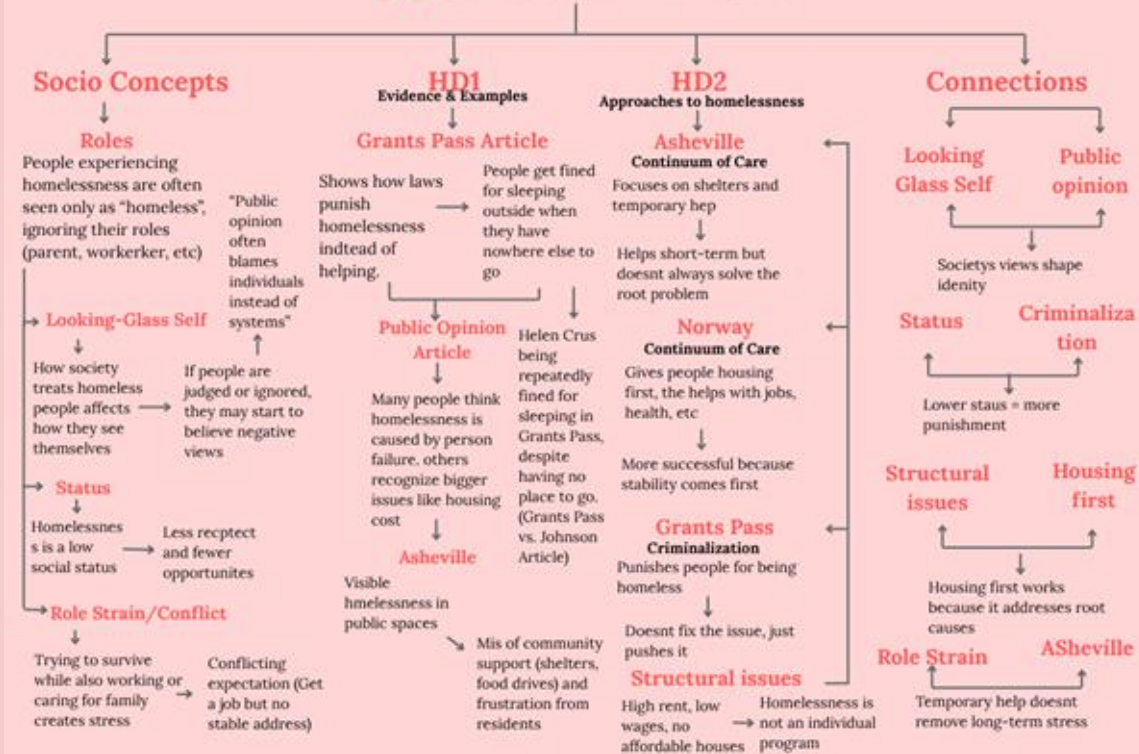


All three approaches are shaped by bigger things like housing prices, job availability, religious beliefs, etc. In my opinion, I heavily agree with ASheville's approach because I believe there is so much variety in stories of people who are called "homeless". Not only do they not have a place to call home, but may also be struggling mentally.



# -Concept Map-

## Homelessness



# -Structural Causes & Solutions-

The best approach to homelessness in terms of housing, employment, healthcare, and policy is Asheville, North Carolina. As someone who lives in Asheville, I see efforts to combine local nonprofits, shelters, and some housing-first initiatives with employment programs and healthcare outreach. There's often an emphasis on coordination, connecting people to job training, mental health services, and transitional housing. This makes the community feel effective because services are visible and integrated, and people may move through programs relatively quick.



# -Local Evidence-

**In Western North Carolina, mutual aid plays a lead role in community needs.**

After Hurricane Helene, Roblin Longinotti lost her home. According to the article, “The loss didn't stop the retiree from carrying cardboard boxes filled with household supplies inside the Hot Springs elementary school gym everyday since the storm.” (Gerald Albert III) Robin took the initiative to supply resources for people who had lost their homes to the hurricane. Her selflessness caused a uprising of volunteers, and a union in community.



# -Sociologist Analysis-

## 2 Sociological Concepts tied to my Local Evidence

1. **Social Capital:** One key concept is social capital, which refers to the networks, relationships, and trust that allow people to work together effectively. In Western NC, Longinotti highlights how neighbors, local organizations, and volunteers mobilized quickly to provide food, shelter, and support. This kind of response shows how strong bonding social capitals (tight-knit communities) and bridging social capital (connection across different groups)
2. **Structural inequality:** Another concept is structural inequality, which looks at how social systems create unequal access to resources and opportunities. Longinotti's account of aid efforts reveals that not everyone was affected or helped. Rural areas, low-income residents, and those without stable housing often face greater challenges in receiving aid. Even though community members stepped up, systemic issues influenced who could recover quickly and who could not.

# -Personal Growth-

At the beginning of this sociology course I mostly saw the world through an individual lens. I would tend to explain people's situations as a result of personal choices or efforts. Over time, though, my thinking shifted as I started to understand how much larger social forces shape people's lives. Learning about concept like the sociological imagination help me connect personal experiences to broader patterns like economic inequality, public policy, and access to resources.



One of the biggest changes in my thinking is how I now interpret public directions and labels. I did not realize before how strongly societies perceptions can shape someone's identity. For example, now discussing homelessness, I began to see how stigma and stereotypes don't just reflect opinions, but mold how someone views themselves. This allowed me to become more aware of how language, media representation, and everyday interactions can either reinforce or challenge inequality.

# -Why This Matters-

Understanding homelessness goes beyond academics because it shapes how we see and respond to real people in our communities. It challenges stereotypes and helps us recognize that homelessness is not just an individual issue, but the results of larger social factors economically. This awareness makes us more informed citizens who can think critically about solutions rather than relying on assumptions.

It also matters because our attitudes influence real life outcomes. How society react affects opportunities across the board for people without homes. By understand homelessness, we are more likely to approach this issue with empathy and advocate for responses that address root causes instead of symptoms.

Beyond the classroom, this knowledge will help me engage more responsibly in conversations, voting decision, and community involvement. It encourages me to see people experiencing homelessness as individuals with complex stores rather than labels.