

Sociology Reflection Final Project

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Homeless really stood out to me in this Sociology course because it made me look at it from a different perspective. There's a bunch of different concepts and ways that explain homelessness to me and made me understand it more than just saying "it's their own fault".

<https://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/local/2021/04/10/boyle-column-homeless-mecca-not-image-asheville-wants/7148687002/>



How sociology changed my perspective

One of the things we did this semester that changed how I see the world, is when we did our assignment on “Trends”. This unit really made me think about a certain trend that I did and how it changed me and forced me to be who I am today. Without that unit I don't think I would've made that connection to the trends I used to follow and who it made me into today. In section (1.1) it says, that “a key component of the sociological perspective is the idea that the individual and society are inseparable.” I believe that all things that happen to us, happen for a reason, and it is our job to judge if it's good or bad and to make changes.

Personal Troubles vs Public Issues

The sociological imagination explains how personal problems are connected to larger social issues. With homelessness, a personal trouble might be one person losing their job or facing challenges that lead to losing their house. But when many people experience homelessness, it becomes a public issue caused by bigger factors like high housing costs, low wages, and limited support systems. This shows that homelessness isn't just about individual choices, it's also shaped by how society is structured.

Inequality, Conformity, or Social Movements

One thing I connected to homelessness during Module 2 was our assignment “D6” on inequality when we played that simulation game. I learned in this unit that there’s a bunch of decisions you have to make in your life that can alter your living status, income, and how you spend your money. During the game I realized that people in real life have to make important decisions that come at bad times and are sometimes unfair and out of your control. For example, in my post I decided to sign my child up for the gifted program because I hoped it could give him better opportunities in the future. I also gave him money for small things like ice cream or field trips because even though I was struggling financially, I didn’t want my child to miss out on normal experiences. These choices relate to ideas discussed in section 10.2 of Introduction to Sociology 3e, which explains that “people’s decisions are often influenced by social expectations and the pressure to follow certain roles in society. “

Growth Reflection

Thinking about the kinds of decisions people have to make because of inequality was honestly kind of eye opening. It made me realize that a lot of people don't really have the same choices I do. For example, things like going to school, getting healthcare, or even having enough food aren't guaranteed for everyone, and that can force people to make really hard decisions that most of us don't think about, like putting your kids needs before your own. This module definitely made me appreciate my own life more, because I have access to opportunities that others might not, it also made me feel more understanding toward other people's situations. Instead of just assuming someone made a bad choice, I can see how their circumstances might have limited their options. Overall, it changed how I think about fairness and made me realize how important it is to be aware of inequality and its impact on people's lives.

Status

Homelessness is a social status that affects how people are viewed and treated. It is often stigmatized, which means people make negative assumptions about those who are homeless. Even though it is usually caused by larger social factors, this label can make it harder for individuals to find jobs, housing, and support.

Role strain, conflict, and Performance

In Asheville specifically, role concepts show up in homelessness situations. Role strain could be when a shelter worker can't meet everyone's needs due to limited resources. "If too much is required of a single role". Role conflict could happen when a police officer must enforce laws but also wants to help people. "a person can experience role conflict when one or more roles are contradictory" Role performance could be how well a social worker supports unhoused individuals. "is how a person expresses his or her role."

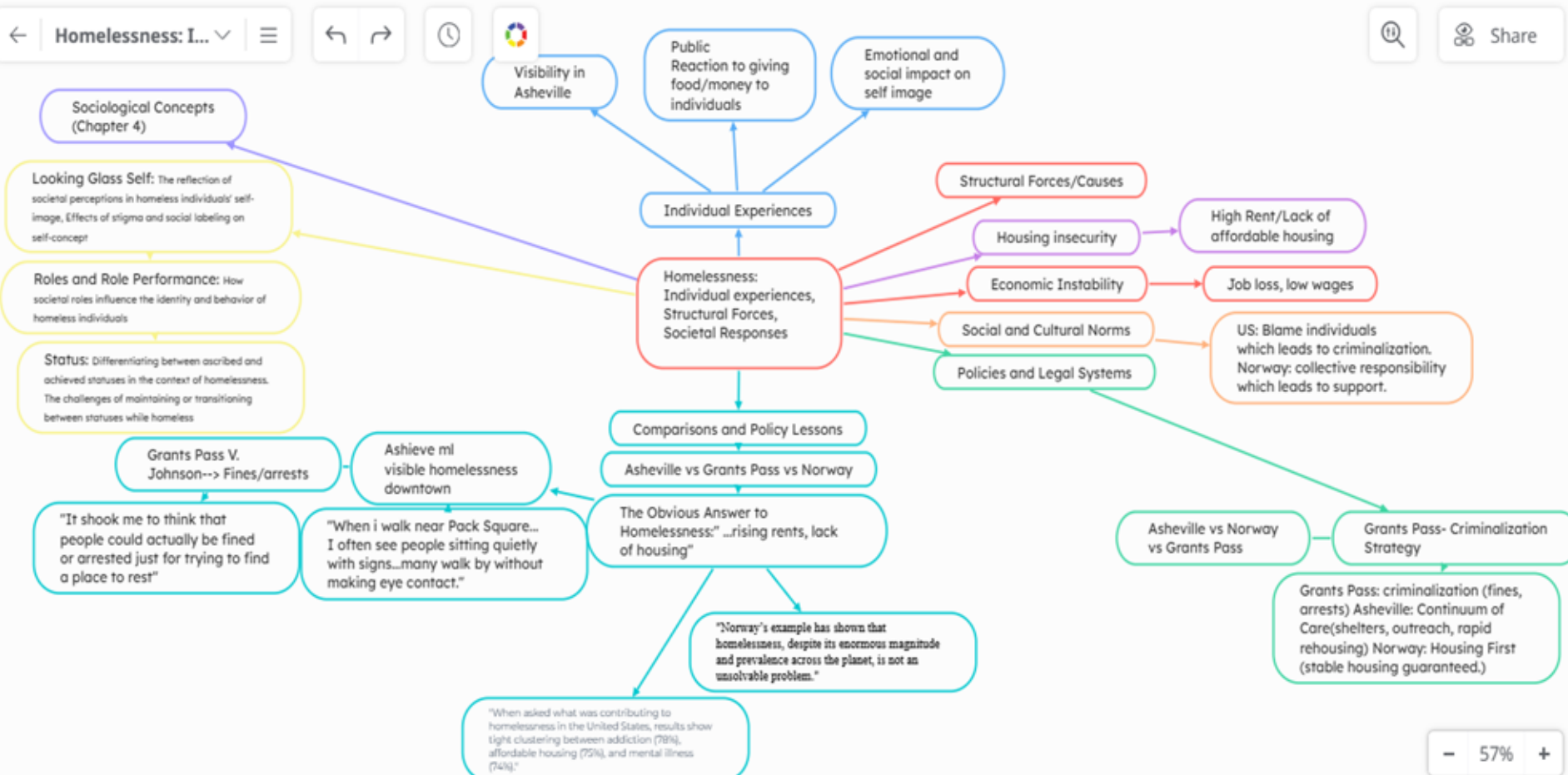
Looking glass self

The looking-glass self explains that people shape their identity based on how they believe others see and react to them. Individuals imagine others' opinions, interpret those reactions, and then use them to build their self-image. Positive reactions can lead to confidence and self-worth, while negative judgments can cause someone to develop a more negative view of themselves. In my HD1 forum I said “ in a place like Asheville. One thing I've noticed is how people react to homeless people in public. A lot of people either ignore them or seem uncomfortable, and a lot of people even judge them without knowing their situation.” This could affect how people see themselves and hurt them.

Approaches chart

Approach	Location / Example	Main Idea	Strengths	Weaknesses
Continuum of Care	Asheville	Provides a range of services (shelters, job help, healthcare) to support people at different stages	Helps with multiple needs at once; flexible system	Can be slow; people may not get stable housing right away
Housing First	Norway	Gives people permanent housing first, then offers support services	Proven to reduce homelessness; stability makes it easier to improve life	Expensive upfront; requires strong government support
Criminalization	Grants Pass	Uses laws to limit sleeping in public or camping	Keeps public spaces "orderly"	Doesn't solve root causes; can make homelessness worse by adding fines or legal trouble

Concept map



Structural causes and solutions

Homelessness is mostly caused by bigger problems in society, like not having enough affordable housing, low-paying jobs, expensive healthcare, and not enough government support. These issues make it hard for people to stay financially stable. The “Housing First” approach, in Norway, works best because it focuses on the main problem by giving people housing first and then helping them with other needs. This connects to “The Obvious Answer to Homelessness”, which explains that providing housing is the most effective solution. Housing First is better because it gives people stability and a safe place to live, making it easier to find jobs, improve their health, and access support. It also reduces reliance on shelters and emergency services. Overall, Housing First is better because it solves the root problem instead of just dealing with the effects.

Local Evidence

In Asheville, organizations like Homeward Bound of WNC and ABCCM work to support people experiencing homelessness. Homeward Bound focuses on the Housing First model by helping people move directly into permanent housing and then providing support services. ABCCM uses a Continuum of Care approach by offering shelters, meals, job programs, and other resources. Together, these organizations show how local efforts combine immediate help with long-term solutions to reduce homelessness.

Sociological Analysis

Sociologists would use the sociological imagination to show that homelessness in Asheville is caused by larger social factors like housing costs and jobs, not just individual choices. For example, Homeward Bound of Wnc uses the “Housing First” model to address these structural issues. Another concept is the social institutions, shown by ABCCM, which provides shelters, food, and job support. This shows how organizations help shape peoples opportunities and reduce homelessness.

Personal Growth

At the start of the semester, I mostly saw issues from an individual perspective. As I learned more about sociology, especially the sociological imagination, my thinking shifted to understanding how social structures and institutions shape people's lives. I now see how factors like class, culture, and systems influence behavior and opportunities. Overall, sociology taught me to look beyond individuals and understand the bigger picture of how society works.

Why This Matters

Understanding homelessness sociologically matters because it shows that it's shaped by larger social factors like housing costs, wages, and access to resources, not just individual choices. This perspective helps people support better policies, create more effective solutions, and respond with more awareness and empathy. It also applies to other social issues like poverty, education inequality, healthcare access, and unemployment, and helps us better understand how society influences people's lives beyond this class.