ANOMIE OF THE STATE:

SOCIETAL RESPONSE OF KEEPING HOMELESSNESS HIDDEN THROUGH
URBAN POLICIES AND SHELTER SETTINGS

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by
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ABSTRACT

Homelessness has been a widely debated topic that has had multiple approaches to addressing the issue but many of these measures either contradict one another or do more harm than good. Anomie of the State, drawing from Durkheim’s concept of solidarity, refers to the societal disconnect between politicians, law enforcement, and the public that has led to an inability to come to a consensus on how to approach the homelessness issue, causing a lack of solidarity in the community and alienation of people deemed secondary citizens. The urban policies designed to prevent crime and promote gentrification derive from stereotypical representations and force the homeless into hiding or push them into overcrowded shelters. Qualitative research conducted at one men’s and one women’s homeless shelter in Harrisburg on the perspectives associated with the labeling of homelessness, perceptions of shelters, and the community response to the social problem are examined and comparisons are made between the two shelters through observations and semi-formal interviews of residents and staff. The concept of total institutions is applied to the organizational structure of homeless shelters and their impact on institutionalization. The labels that society has grown accustomed to concerning the myths and realities of homelessness have infiltrated the walls of homeless shelters, where residents set themselves apart by superiority over each other, suggesting that in any society, people are destined to fall into a hierarchical class structure.
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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

The urban landscape provides opportunities for businesses to flourish and culture to be expressed but with that luxury high class citizens indulge in, an accompanying message is that people who do not fit into society’s standards are not welcome. Among the unwelcomed are homeless persons. There are approximately 636,000 people that are homeless in the United States each year (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2012). Pennsylvania has an estimated 15,086 homeless persons compared to neighboring states such as New York where there are 77,430 and New Jersey which has approximately 12,000 homeless individuals (United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2013). In Harrisburg alone, there are an estimated 300 individuals living on the streets, and that number fluctuates daily (Burger, 2010). Points in time estimates have the number between 650 and 800, but it is difficult to have an actual number due to varying ambiguous definitions of what constitutes homelessness (WGAL News, 2012). The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development defines a homeless person as an individual or family who lacks a regular and adequate nighttime residence and uses publicly or privately operated supervised shelters or other places that are not designed for regular sleeping accommodations (United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2009).

The issue of homelessness has caused contrasting opinions and policies that have been controversial. For example, the city of Philadelphia imposed a ban on feeding the homeless on the streets which outraged religious and charity groups (Scullion, 2012). The policy has been criticized as being unconstitutional and immoral as it criminalizes altruistic efforts to help needy and vulnerable persons. Moreover, the policy deepens the rift between the different social classes
as homeless persons are pushed out of tourist and other “civilized” areas. Another instance where homeless persons were displaced was in Columbia, South Carolina where they were forced to leave the downtown business district and relocate to homeless shelters across town or go to jail (Keyes, 2013). Besides hiding the homeless, incarcerating them for drug abuse or violating urban policies are common practices. Urban policies, including prohibiting sleeping or begging, and urinating in public are enforced without providing adequate alternatives such as providing areas for homeless persons to safely rest without being disturbed and public restrooms.

Homeless who have arrest records are more likely to have multiple bouts of homelessness or remain chronically homeless than those who do not (McQuistion, Gorroochum, Hsu, & Caton, 2014). Being incarcerated can cause one to lose their property and, if they were involved in a felony, public housing can be difficult to obtain, further crippling efforts to get off the streets (McQuistion et al., 2014). Not only are the people living on the streets labeled as secondary citizens, but they can also carry the stigma of being an ex-convict even in their own social circles. Popular stereotypes have led the public to believe that homeless persons are inhumane loners that are incapable of making logical decisions.

Anomie, a concept developed by Emile Durkheim, is tied to the absence of collective solidarity and the breeding of social inequality among diverse individuals due to the consequences of social changes such as industrialization (Willis, 1982). In Durkheim’s mind, the division of labor was crucial in the formation of solidarity and that if there was an imbalance in the importance of roles, alienation and class conflict can be the end result (Willis, 1982). Durkheim believed that anomie was due to the social disconnect involved with the pursuit of individual ambitions that disregarded other’s needs. Durkheim believed that anomie, or confusion during rapid social change in society, is experienced in an individual context, but his
theory could be applied to organizations and among classes within society as well. Rapid social change has shifted from industrial movements to urban renewal and gentrification processes spurred on by state and local governments, where organizations are uncertain of a unified response to address homelessness, causing alienation within the societal foundation. Merton (1938) advanced Durkheim’s theory through his Strain Theory which consisted of adaptations to strain where people who exhibit differing behaviors are grouped as conformists, innovators, ritualists, retreatists, or rebels based on their reactions to societal constraints as a result of suffering the effects of anomie (Murphy & Robinson, 2008). Merton’s theory suggests that there is a disjunction between the cultural goals and the institutional means of accomplishing those goals. This disjunction can cause adaptations that characterize their actions and separate the individuals or groups from the rest of society as a whole. Homeless persons have exhibited characteristics of retreatism because of their status and also innovation, in order to survive the street lifestyle.

**Anomie of the State**

Herein I use the term *Anomie of the State* in referring to the social disconnect among and within social classes, along with the policies that have been the driving force for promoting stereotypical assumptions about certain populations that sabotage efforts of progressive reform. The state, in effect, manufactures anomie in attempting to manage and responsibilize its most troubled citizens, and its efforts are inconsistent. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has instructed that, in order to receive funding for homeless services, communities must develop a Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness effort which entails localized
solutions to homelessness with minimal governmental involvement (Dooling, 2009). The federal government has been decreasing the funding for public housing for low income and social assistance programs so as not to interfere with private real estate interests. Since 1983, only 256,000 public housing units have been constructed, whereas between 1976 and 1982, there were more than 755,000 units built (Mandell, 2007). Society has had mixed responses to dealing with homelessness due to the origin of homelessness being distorted. There is the philanthropic side, where organizations such as non-profit agencies and charities collect donations of money, food, clothing, and household items for those in need. There is also the political side, where legislation is enacted to protect businesses and citizens from homeless persons. In cities like New York, homelessness has been viewed as an epidemic and the public has demanded action to control and remove the homeless from the streets in the wake of isolated events such as homeless persons allegedly committing crimes. In response to the public outcry for controlling the homeless population, politicians have enacted policies that have led to criminalization of homeless individuals and people trying to help them such as dismantling homeless camps, feeding bans, anti begging laws, and other quality of life ordinances (Fang, 2009). The reasoning behind these policies stems from Wilson and Kelling’s (1982) Broken Windows Theory that order maintenance policing and enforcement of urban policies to rid the streets of urban disorder will prevent minor offenses from leading into major crimes, though its effectiveness has been disputed (Herbert, 2001). These urban policies essentially target the status of homelessness by equating it with social disorder, which translates to crime; even though homeless persons are more likely to be victimized than commit crime (Miller & Hess, 2002). The tug of war between the politicians backed by the public and social service agencies causes a rift in the social structure where homeless persons are dehumanized and treated either as criminals or as the
image of social disorder. There has not been a unified approach to handling homelessness where the needs of those experiencing homelessness are met. The concern for public safety and how to effectively maintain order has caused the debate to continue.

Homeless persons have been stereotyped as retreatists who basically give up on the goals and reject the means of obtaining prosperity and success (Rosenthal, 2000; Schweiker, 1968), but this declaration is debatable and supposes that homeless persons actively choose to retreat from conventional society. With approximately 70% of Americans living from paycheck to paycheck, according to the American Payroll Association, and with mounting debt, disruptions in one’s health or employment status can easily change one’s status and put them at risk of being homeless (Forsyth, 2012). Still, it is difficult for well-resourced classes of citizens to envision that they could fall victim to the misfortune of homelessness as the stereotypical representations dominate and the deserving and undeserving paradigm can cloud their judgment depending on their attitude toward homelessness as a personal or structural issue (Rosenthal, 2000). Besides retreatism, homeless persons also employ other adaptations to strain. Homeless guests of shelters must conform to staff expectations or they will be kicked out. Innovation is used to acquire money, drugs, and other items through panhandling, stealing, and dealing, which is largely dependent upon the street culture (Marr, DeVerteuil, & Snow, 2009). Ritualism occurs through acquiring low wage work that barely affords the basic necessities and not attempting to attain any more. Rebellion is apparent in their contempt for “the system” and developing an alternative social order.

It is unclear whether homeless shelters positively impact homeless persons. For instance, while homeless shelters provide hospitality services such as food and lodging, it is uncertain if they are safer and if inhabitants are less likely to be victimized or commit a crime. Homeless
residents have been victims of theft and assault while in the care of homeless shelters, as well as the stringent protocol that dictates the expectations of the residents (Mandell, 1997). The shelters use rules and regulations to control the environment which can cause loss of dignity and empowerment where traditional family roles, such as that of mother, are usurped by resident adherence to the shelter staff (Stark, 1994). On the street, homeless persons maintain a sense of autonomy by distancing themselves from more “dependent” peers, pejoratively termed “shelter dwellers,” creating a status gap (Hill, 1991). Snow and Anderson (1987) found the street homeless likened shelter inhabitants to welfare recipients, in that they keep taking but never give back. This suggests a strong dependence on shelter resources that street dwellers refuse, to retain their autonomy and dignity.

Another issue pertains to the similarities between shelter and prison life, where shelter inhabitants become complacent or accept the status quo and find no need to change their living situation, similar to how inmates can become enmeshed in the prison culture (Stark, 1994). Moreover, Not In My Backyard (NIMBY) sentiments put social pressure on shelters to serve a warehousing function, keeping homeless detached and isolated. Policies such as prohibiting loitering, criminalizing panhandling, or placing spike strips on buildings to prevent homeless persons from sitting or squatting are designed to prompt homeless persons living on the street to be in perpetual motion, or forced into isolated areas. The areas of an urban city have been separated into prime, transitional, and marginal space that are often used in the survival of homeless persons and outline the distinct differences of urban space (Snow & Mulcahy, 2001). Prime space refers to the commercial districts where businesses and markets thrive, transitional space is where there is a concentration of low income residents and is the site of most urban
renewal projects, and marginal space or abandoned space is where many street homeless reside in such as abandoned buildings and under bridges (Dooling, 2009).

To date, little research on homeless populations has explored, in-depth, the effects of stereotypes, and how marginalization can play a role in the institutional setting. In addition, there are also limited studies that focus on the effectiveness of homeless shelters and how their design can facilitate adaptations detrimental to the homeless persons they aim to assist. Drawing from 30 interviews with homeless persons and shelter workers, and 30 direct observations of homeless resident and shelter worker interactions from two different shelters in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, I examine how the shelter and the street play key roles in helping or hindering homeless persons reintegration into conventional society. In the following sections, I trace the historic roots of homelessness and the shift in the social perspective that is increasingly intolerant. Contemporary policies and views in the city of Harrisburg will be discussed with emphasis on environmental factors that affect the homeless persons’ adaptations to strain, and how shelters function as total institutions. Finally, I discuss my findings on the relations, perceptions, and experiences among homeless residents and shelter staff.
CHAPTER 2 – OVERVIEW

History of Homelessness

The present day homeless person differs in important ways from the vagrant of the past. In his classic ethnography *The Hobo*, Anderson (1923), portrayed hobos as not being stationary and would travel by railroad across the country in search of new work, closely resembling migrant laborers. Most jobs involved manual labor and ranged from farming to handy-man duties, and did not require education. Thus, hobos were able to adapt to different cities and acquire new skills in part as a result of their transient lifestyles. Labeled as the transient poor, migrant workers were perceived as deviant individuals and ostracized by society while other marginalized populations that were poor, such as the handicapped and the mentally ill, were supported simply because of the fact that they owned property (Abelson, 1999). Industrialization and the development of urban areas during the late 1800s caused society’s perception of the homeless to change drastically. Homelessness became synonymous with social disorder and the demand for reliable and skilled stationary factory workers caused the migrant workers, who lacked established housing, to be unemployed and stigmatized as tramps and bums (Abelson, 1999). The public voice had decided that going against conventional norms was a threat to the social structure and would need to be addressed. As technological advancements superseded the primitive work ethics of man, the idea of the working, traveling hobo became obsolete. Since they lacked education and a stable environment, hobos became trapped in the cities and fought over the limited amount of jobs available. The influx of hobos in cities across the nation was viewed as creating disorder. Begging for food, money, and employment drew attention to the hobos from policymakers and law enforcement, in which a strict policy of repression was
enacted to protect the community. Soup kitchens and shelters were created to help get vagrants off the streets and ensure that they were fed and had a place to sleep that did not interfere with pedestrian traffic and market activity in city downtowns. Society viewed the association between the homeless and urban disorder as symbiotic and affirmed the belief that homelessness needed to be contained by either locking them up or “hiding” them.

**Shelters on the Rise**

Shelters became prevalent during the 1970s as a result of high unemployment, limited affordable housing, and the closing of many mental institutions. As a result, the number of homeless continued to climb in the 1980s (DeWard & Moe, 2010). Other factors that could have contributed to the homelessness population are gentrification, substance abuse, the baby boom, and the release of prison inmates (Abelson, 1999). Gentrification is an urban renewal process that can cause low income residents to be displaced through eminent domain, in favor of reinvigorating the appeal of the area for middle class citizens. Shelters are normally located within areas that have not yet undergone the gentrification process, so that is where the displaced houseless individuals tend to end up. The 1980s recession caused unemployment and a deficiency in affordability of goods and services on solely a minimum wage making it exceedingly difficult to make ends meet (Abelson, 1999). Drug addicts, mental patients, victims of gentrification, and ex-convicts had filled the streets and, as a result, benches were removed and public bathrooms were being locked to control the surge of new homeless to the scene (Abelson, 1999). These measures took away the means for the homeless to sleep on the street, clean themselves, and have a makeshift refuge, causing many to resort to staying in one of the
increasing number of shelters. The number of homeless persons that rely on homeless shelters is about 65% of the total homeless population and the remaining 35% endure the street life in abandoned buildings or under bridges (Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2013). From 2007 to 2013, there has been a large decline in the homeless population overall from about 671,888 to 610,042, in addition to the unsheltered population dropping (Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2013). While these numbers are declining, the number of sheltered homeless has remained relatively consistent, 391,401 to 394,698, which reveals how much shelters have become increasingly utilized (Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2013).

**Institutionalization**

In these shelters, where people from many different backgrounds, life circumstances, and with diverse personalities come together, a means of order and control was established to prevent issues from arising and to ensure fair treatment and safety for all. Homeless shelters have been categorized by studies as being reflective of total institutions where institutionalization and bureaucracy are apparent (Stark, 1994; DeWard & Moe, 2010). Goffman (1961) defined a total institution as a place where a group of individuals with similar situations have a regulated, all-encompassing way of living that is separate from mainstream society and the roles that the institutionalized individuals assume, inhibit the ability to act freely. Although correctional institutions and psychiatric facilities are generally the case examples of total institutions, homeless shelters exhibit similar characteristics. For example, shelters have a set of rules that all guests must follow or face repercussions, and there is a hierarchy that exists where an imbalance
of power between the staff and residents is noticeable. There is an absence of privacy and respect where the residents are often treated like children, and forced to obey shelter staff without question (Stark, 1994). Conformity is required in total institutions and as such, autonomy is not encouraged as it may undermine social order. Though shelters exhibit some characteristics of total institutions, one significant distinction between the shelters and total institutions such as prisons for example is that, in prisons, persons may be physically incapacitated if disruptive, and are unable to leave by their own volition. Homeless persons, by contrast, are “guests” of shelters, and are thus able to leave at will. Although by doing so, they would lose the readily accessible basic comforts, such as food and sleeping arrangements, which were provided. Thus, leaving voluntarily may become a difficult proposition when the reliance has become engrained and they are habituated to shelter life or have been shelterized. Shelterization is the effect of institutionalization in a homeless shelter context in which residents become accustomed to the routines of the institutional environment, isolate themselves from the public, and abandon their aspirations for the future (Desjarlais, 1997). Shelters, under the direction of caring staff, can be safe, hygienic, and provide food for its residents but there can be a level of apprehension where the shelter expects high standards of success. The interactions of residents and staff can be inconsistent or forced among staff trying to lighten the mood that is cast over the shelter.

**Contemporary Views and Policies**

More recently there have been a number of grassroots efforts and policies across the country with the intentions of helping the homeless population. For example, one program called Katie’s Krops, started by a young teenager, has young persons all over America partaking in
planting gardens in which the crops are then sent off to local homeless shelters (Katie’s Krops, 2012). The organization has gained widespread popularity, not only for its nutritional value, but for its benefit to feeding the homeless and getting youth involved. In Central Pennsylvania, there are numerous events and drives that collect money and food for the various homeless shelters and soup kitchens in the area (Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, 2014). In the wake of sharp budget cuts to social welfare programs in the U.S., it is increasingly community-based efforts that keep a majority of homeless services afloat (Hunger Homeless, 2014).

While such endeavors are useful in meeting basic needs, it also suggests that the nature of homeless services in most jurisdictions are not well-funded, and lacking more comprehensive protocols such as help with mental health, employment seeking, and education. With the luxuries of food and shelter provided, it is possible that homeless persons become complacent and do not have the incentives or structure to become self-reliant. As such, a view that has been advanced is that homeless shelters and soup kitchens serve merely as band aids and thus obscure larger social problems that cause homelessness in the first place (Bock, 1993). Warehousing the homeless in shelters may be interpreted as a means of keeping them out of sight and out of mind; similar to more recent policies criminalizing autonomous homeless persons who choose to live on the street. While there are shelters that offer drug treatment and religious services, many shelters lack the resources to help get the homeless back on their feet such as job training and helping to find suitable long-term housing. By not equipping shelters with resources for more staffing and comprehensive programming, many of those homeless persons who desire to leave the streets may not have the means to do so.
Harrisburg’s Homeless

The economic state of Harrisburg over the last couple decades has been unstable due to a massive debt that has accrued from exorbitant spending and following the Great Recession in 2007, causing the city to file for bankruptcy in 2011 (Beckett-Camarata & Grizzle, 2014). From 1950 to 2011, the population in Harrisburg has rapidly declined from 90,000 to 49,673, 1/3 of which, live below the poverty level (Beckett-Camarata & Grizzle, 2014). A rapid movement to bring revenue to the city has caused areas such as downtown to become more and more gentrified as businesses and restaurants move in to attract consumers. Urban policies have assisted in this process with the support of law enforcement. Over the last decade there was a coalition of churches within the Harrisburg area that had made it a mission to serve food to the homeless in a court house parking lot every weekend. Recently, this operation was shut down due to complaints that the homeless were harassing local patrons and urinating in public (Frantz, 2013). As a result, the homeless went back into the confines of the shelters and soup kitchens or fended for themselves on the streets. No loitering signs were also erected to send a message that the police would get involved if necessary. Policies within the city are in place to deter the homeless from mingling with the “citizens” of Harrisburg such as prohibiting panhandling and squatting. Since no loitering signs have not always been effective, some buildings within the city have spike strips to prevent people from sitting or lying down on ledges. This approach is similar to the barbs put on rooftops to prevent birds from perching, sending a message that homeless persons have been reduced to pests in society. An encampment of homeless persons on the outskirts of the city was raided by police and dismantled. This caused the homeless individuals to be displaced to other areas of the city or into overcrowded shelters that have been viewed as dangerous to some homeless individuals, despite the reforms that have improved security. Other
homeless individuals prefer to embrace their independence and engage in drugs and alcohol, which is not permitted in shelters. Survival on the streets sometimes leads to breaking the law, such as trespassing or breaking and entering in order to find shelter from the elements. Such happenings further underscore the role shelters continue to play in homeless persons’ lives. Politicians often use enforcement of urban policies and shelters as a public relations ploy to show that the homelessness issue is being resolved, when in reality the social problem is merely hidden from mainstream society.

Figure 1. Spike strip on building ledge in Downtown Harrisburg.

Photo taken by Kevin Funkhauser

**Calls for Change**

Homelessness has been primarily a macro concern and policies have been a reflection of that mindset. In addition to the street culture that exists, both the influences and the perceptions of the individuals who are part of that environment need to be taken into account when contemplating policy intervention options (Christian, 2003). Debates on the issues with homelessness have been primarily rooted in government policy and have not given much attention to the behaviors and relationships, both culturally and socially, that exist within the
urban landscape (Christian, 2003). A collective compilation of all preceding individual and structural factors would be beneficial in determining reasons why homelessness exists and how to approach the dilemma.

Adaptations to Shelter Life

In homeless shelters, the environment can elicit behaviors that are reflective of the attitudes of its residents and staff. In one study, the residents were divided into groups. The submissive was characterized as embracing the expectations of the shelter in order to remain a guest and was not one to challenge authority by any means (DeWard & Moe, 2010). As with the conformist, total institutions often prefer submissive personalities because they are easier to control. The other type, the adapter, was split into two sub-categories, one of which addressed utilizing religion as a coping mechanism where spiritual enlightenment was the motivating factor in changing their present status. Spiritual adapters accepted responsibility for their circumstances based on the choices they made and believed they were being justly punished. The other adaptation was concocting an imaginary hierarchy that homeless shelter residents used. In an effort to separate themselves from other homeless residents, there was a level of discrimination where some residents would make the distinction of being either homeless or houseless. In their view, the label of “homeless” meant they were at the shelter due to circumstances of their own making such as a drug problem or mental illness. Conversely, “houseless” residents perceived their situation as temporary, due to reasons beyond their control, such as becoming unemployed or marital issues. Houseless residents did not identify themselves as equals to the homeless so they could preserve a sense of dignity and advocate for more useful resources with the mindset
that they could escape the clutches of the shelter. Resisters made it a point to note that shelters operate as total institutions and to hold the staff accountable. They would voice their opinions about the discretionary power that the staff wields to the administration and other residents. Some residents would receive disproportionate punishments for violation of rules and some staff would show favoritism toward certain residents. Their capacity to resist was limited, however, as they were subject to expulsion from the shelter for disruptive behavior. While this study revealed adaptations of shelters residents manifest in large part as a result of their environment, perceptions of shelter staff were not addressed. Accounting for the view of staff has the potential to provide a counterbalance that privileges the views of homeless persons, and thus provide additional nuance in understanding how dynamic interactions, not just attitudes, shape the experience of homelessness in complex ways that vary substantially between homeless persons, and across organizations. Another study consisted of establishing a homeless shelter on a college campus and having volunteers from the community help out and document their thoughts and experiences. Some of the individuals expressed self realization that homelessness can affect anyone and others recognized that they were grateful to not be in such a dismal situation (Stolley, Hotaling, & Kiser, 2008). A study is needed that integrates the perspectives of both homeless residents and staff within the institutional setting to explain the complexity of their interactions and how the shelter environment impacts their behaviors.
CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

The sites of analysis were the Metro Sanctuary, a men’s homeless shelter and Haven Lodge, a women and children’s homeless shelter in the city of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The design of the study is qualitative in nature and required social interaction and observations that were analyzed in order to explore how homeless persons assign meaning to their experiences and their perceptions of themselves, other homeless persons, and shelter staff. While there is evidence of quantitative studies pertaining to homeless populations, a majority of studies involving homeless perceptions have been qualitative in their design. Qualitative research has been criticized as being bias, difficult to reproduce results, and not generalizable (Mays & Pope, 1995). How to dispel any ridiculing is to have a solid research design that thoroughly outlines the steps of the data collection and analysis so that other research studies can be replicated with similar outcomes and conclusions.

Researching social phenomena is selective and subjective in the sense that the absolute truth cannot be revealed, and the results depend on the researcher’s methodological approach. In the case of surveys, it poses a great challenge to incorporate language that is understandable and interpreted similarly by all participants of varying educational backgrounds, mental capacities, and social statuses without clarification (Mays & Pope, 1995). Semi-formal, face to face interviews facilitate the process of tailoring the questions being asked to fit the needs of both the interviewer and the interviewee.

The study used a multi-method ethnographic approach at two different locations, Metro Sanctuary and Haven Lodge, which encompassed interviews and direct observations. 10 Residents and 6 Staff at Metro Sanctuary and 6 Residents and 8 Staff were interviewed from
Haven Lodge for a total of 30 participants. The interviews explored the lifestyle and perceptions of homeless persons that are regular guests of shelters. Viewpoints of the staff at the shelters were also taken into account. All interviews were conducted in the shelters in private rooms away from the general shelter population. All participants were age 18 or over and represented both genders. The racial breakdown was 6 Black and 10 White residents and staff at Metro Sanctuary and 8 Black and 6 White residents and staff at Haven Lodge. Ages were approximately 20 to 65, with most of the participants being between 20’s and 50’s. 30 interviews were conducted over the span of one month. Approximately 15 direct observations at varying times during the week, each totaling an average of 4 to 6 hours at each shelter took place. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes to 90 minutes. Observations concentrated on shelter protocol, attitudes, behaviors, and interactions among residents, guests, and staff. This study was approved by the Penn State University’s Institutional Review Board from 2014 to 2015.

Triangulation ensures that the criteria for validity and reliability are met through the use of multiple sources of data collection such as interviews, observations, and archival records (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenzo, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). The three sources of data collection were observations at both shelters and semi-formal interviews of the residents, as well as the staff. Conducting interviews with both the residents and the staff separately, allowed for comparisons between group perspectives and for validation from each group. An ethnographic study was conducted where the researcher acted as an observer in the homeless shelters and reported in detailed field notes about the interactions between staff and homeless guests, in addition to the events that took place within the shelter. At Metro Sanctuary, the men’s shelter, the researcher initially began the study as a direct observer to establish a foundation for the regular interactions in the shelter without the researcher’s presence tainting the results. The
shelter was made aware that a study was taking place, but not all the residents and staff knew who the researcher was and in fact mistook the researcher as an overnight guest or new resident some of the time, in which the researcher would then identify himself and his purpose. The researcher’s mistaken identity was due to the facility housing a large number of different people from one day to the next. After the direct observation period, the researcher became more of a participant observer where he engaged in conversations at meal times, served food, helped staff with the mobile mission, assisted with packaging canned goods, attended meetings, and stayed overnight. In Haven Lodge, the women’s shelter, the researcher’s presence was instantly noticed, being a male outsider, so the researcher was only able to do participant observations where he attended life skills meetings, engaged in conversations at meal times, and helped out staff. By not identifying as a staff member or a resident, the researcher was able to collect data that was unbiased and not affected by both shelters’ organizational and social circles. The benefit of using an ethnographic method is that it allows for informal observation of behaviors, relations, and attitudes that exist among homeless populations and shelter staff. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were used to understand how the homeless respond to their environment and their thoughts on urban policies and shelter structure. The participants were given an implied consent packet which they reviewed and responded via audio recording. Then the investigator proceeded with tape recorded personal interviews with shelter residents and staff about their perceptions. The investigator verified the accuracy of the analysis through member checks to ensure that the perspectives were represented accurately. The benefits of using face to face, in-depth interviews rather than a survey instrument are that personal details can be revealed that ordinarily would not be known, and also give the interviewer indications of someone’s impressions and biases about a certain topic (Opdenakker, 2006). There is no absolute sample size for a qualitative study but,
instead, the sampling is complete when saturation has been reached. Saturation occurs when the data has revealed all the patterns that have emerged from the study and no new perspectives can be obtained (O’ Reilly & Parker, 2012). Saturation was reached with 30 participants due to similar themes arising.

The study used a qualitative approach as opposed to a quantitative method of sampling, data collection, and analysis because the purpose was to identify the wide variety of perceptions and experiences rather than only looking at amount or quantity. After the data was collected, an analysis was performed where the observations and interview transcripts were analyzed. The analysis method involves open coding and dividing the data into categories that are relevant to the main research question. Using Glaser & Strauss’ (1967) grounded theory approach, the investigator separated interview transcripts into units to identify and organize themes that emerged. After the interview transcripts were coded with pseudonyms, the format that was used was to isolate statements given by the residents and staff that had to do with certain topics such as perceptions of homelessness and shelters, relations with others, and opinions on policies. From those statements, themes were established that corresponded with the concept of Anomie of the State.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations must always be a priority with any research study pertaining to social science. It is essential that the integrity of the research is upheld, the participants are not compromised, and the results are genuine (Dupont, 2008). Permission was obtained from the homeless and shelter staff through implied consent and identities were kept intact.
Confidentiality is of the utmost importance when conducting research and to prevent exposure or alienation of the participants, the investigator safeguarded the sensitive information. The data, once it was collected, was immediately encrypted and was only accessed when it was needed. The identifiers that were used were age range, race, gender, and shelter affiliation. As with any study, there are always limitations that must be addressed for improvement in current and future research. The homeless and staff in the study could be untruthful or exaggerate statements during the interviews as well as act differently when being observed than they normally would.

Words of Caution

Research involving marginalized populations such as the homeless should have an objective lens where judgment is not cast and observations are not manipulated. Sociologist Loïc Wacquant (2002) analyzed research studies involving marginalized populations and articulated principles that should inform ethnographic studies. Accounting for the conditions and environment that surrounds the group will provide a more solid and well-rounded foundation from which inquisitive research derives. When portraying a marginalized population, telling their story in its entirety without censorship or exaggeration is ideal. The investigator acknowledged and took into account his initial biases and they did not influence the following analysis nor were the interpretations censored to show an unrealistic portrayal of the men and women in the shelters that participated in the study.
**Shelters of Study**

**Metro Sanctuary**

Metro Sanctuary is a men’s homeless shelter in Harrisburg that is not referred to as a shelter, but as a mission. The mission is part of a multifaceted faith based nonprofit organization that deals with homelessness, hunger, and addiction issues. There are approximately 75 residents at Metro Sanctuary. Residents who are in the addiction program are able to stay at the facility between four months to one year while they attend classes geared towards assisting in the recovery process and helping them turn their lives around. After the residents complete the program, which is modeled after the twelve steps of recovery, they are able to move into a more independent living situation. During the winter months, homeless individuals that are living on the street are given the opportunity to escape the hazardous elements and sleep on the chapel floor. Metro Sanctuary also provides a soup line and a mobile mission for the community.

**Haven Lodge**

Haven Lodge is an emergency shelter where approximately 20 women and children experiencing homelessness can seek refuge from the streets. The set up is different from the Metro Sanctuary in that it operates essentially as a house. The residents rotate through a checklist of chores to keep the place clean. The residents are required to attend daily Life Skills courses that range from financial responsibility to self empowerment. Haven Lodge provides numerous resources for housing and employment but it is ultimately the resident’s responsibility to achieve goals that are set from the day they arrive. The residents typically have four to six weeks to accomplish the tasks of securing housing and a job.
Chapter 4 - Metro Sanctuary

*Shelter Structure*

The Metro Sanctuary is a men’s homeless shelter that is part of the homeless outreach program in the city of Harrisburg. Metro Sanctuary provides refuge for men experiencing homelessness and men with substance abuse problems. There are a variety of social services that the shelter offers, separate from fulfilling the basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing. The services include assistance for guests with mental health issues, veterans, and the elderly in obtaining housing. Recently released convicts are also assisted in gaining employment. A legal clinic is held once a month for residents and guests that are seeking advice in civil matters. The recovery ministry program specializes in overcoming addiction and life controlling issues. During the winter months, between December and March, the shelter is open to overnight guests to shield them from the elements. Metro Sanctuary also has a mobile mission, which goes out and ministers to those living on the street that won’t come inside of the mission, as well as the low income families within the city. The mobile mission provides snacks, clothes, and blankets to those in need. The shelter also hosts a community evening meal at dinnertime for the people on the street and for the marginally poor in the area.

*Black Out*

Metro Sanctuary has a policy in place that is referred to as Black Out. Black Out is considered the initial evaluation period for residents that are new to the program. Residents are required, for a minimum of 30 days, to have limited contact with the outside world. The residents
are instructed to not leave the property and are unable to make or receive phone calls. The only exceptions are for medical or legal issues, which in one resident’s case, he was permitted to meet with his Parole Officer outside of the county. During the Black Out period, use of the shelter’s gym is also forbidden as it serves as another distraction. The reason the shelter implements this policy is to allow the program participant to become focused on the mindset of recovery without having distractions or pressures from family or friends. Black Out period also serves as a means of getting the resident accustomed to the schedule and policies, as well as the other residents and staff, that he frequently comes into contact with on a daily basis. The transition process causes the new resident to become acclimated to the institutional aspects of the shelter. In addition to the resident becoming focused and assuming his role in the program during the month long period, his safety and wellbeing are also accounted for, since he is not out in the neighborhood. This is especially important if he is a local of Harrisburg.

**Brian (Metro Sanctuary Staff)** – There was a time when a gun was drawn on the sidewalk outside pointed at the shelter. Someone was trying to send a message to someone inside. The Black Out keeps them safe from the dangers of the street with drugs and alcohol and outside relationships.

The 30 day Black Out period and other parameters are at the discretion of the counselors of the program. Paul was put on Black Out for an extended time based on his situation and condition.

**Paul (Metro Sanctuary Resident)** - I was on black out for 60 days, normally it’s 30 to 45 days, My counselor said that since you came in at that time of the month, we’re gonna push it… I needed to stay here, get grounded, and it worked.
Gerald, a staff member who had previously completed the program, recalls his experience and the self discipline that he had by staying within the confines of the shelter.

**Gerald (Metro Sanctuary Staff)** - I put myself on restriction when I was here for two years. I didn’t go nowhere. I stayed for two years on the porch. Cuz I wanted to get myself ready for this recovery and knowing God, things I had to learn.

Black Out is a test to see whether or not the resident is serious about changing his life. If he is unable to successfully complete the evaluation period, by violating one of the stipulations, he risks being discharged from the program.

**Discipline**

In any institution, it is fundamental to have a system in place to deal with violations of policies or other infractions to maintain order and civility. These consequences can range from minor adjustments to more serious ramifications depending on the severity of the violation. The expectation of the shelter is for all program residents to be drug and alcohol free. In fact, when they are first admitted into the shelter program, they must be given a urine test and a breathalyzer to determine whether they have addictive substances in their system. If their test results are positive, they must be retested in three days, in which case, if the results remain positive, then the resident will be asked to leave. Upon arriving at the shelter and proceeding through intake procedures, the residents are informed that they will be subjected to random drug testing while staying at the shelter to ensure that they are maintaining their sobriety. Besides drug use, other conduct that the shelter has zero tolerance for and is grounds for expulsion from the shelter are threatening, fighting, and sexual activity, as well as smoking in the building. Another cause for
being removed from the shelter program is called a therapeutic discharge where a resident is reluctant to change their behavior or attitude after constant staff intervention and is subsequently released. Other less extreme circumstances, such as disrespect and cursing, do not warrant a ticket out the door and are dealt with by public apology. Being late for class could result in extra chores or a writing assignment. There is a graduated system of punishment that exercises tolerance to a point, but when the safety of the residents and staff or the integrity of the program is compromised, measures must be taken to restore order.

While the policies that are in place are designed to be consistently applied to the shelter residents to set an example, there are exceptions that are made, showing that in Metro Sanctuary, compassion and understanding can trump the authoritative stance that most other institutions practice.

Ethan, who is part of a pilot cohort program that the shelter recently initiated, violated the drug policy and his fellow residents were given a voice in determining his fate.

**Ethan (Metro Sanctuary Resident)** - I used when I was in here and I could have very well been thrown out of the program. But I received some grace from my classmates and my teachers. Not everybody agreed with it so they took some crap, I took some crap. But it worked out…Where if I was in another class, I would have been out on my ear. I would have been in another program …or the street.

Ethan’s experience highlights that his classmates were able to influence the decision making process and go against the norm that the other classes have consistently followed. The shelter gave him a pardon in exchange for a lesser punishment.
Shelter Schedule

A resident that is part of the program is expected to adhere to the schedule that is in place at the shelter. This includes attending meals, classes, and medication times when instructed. This schedule rarely deviates throughout the week, with the exception of the weekends when it is less structured. During the week, there are classes in the morning and afternoon followed by either bible study or Alcoholics Anonymous meetings in the evenings. Despite all the structure in place, residents are given ample free time in between meals, classes, and work detail. The responsibility is on them whether they use their time constructively.

Luke shares his perspective of the schedule and the level of constraint over the residents.

Luke (Metro Sanctuary Resident) - You could be here for months and just go to three or four classes a day, not really get anything out of it, or you can actually take the time that they give you in here, to look over your past and just really look at yourself. I’ve been to other programs before, and in the other programs, there’s a very strict schedule… Here, you have a couple classes, and then it’s your free time… When I first got here, I spent most of my free time just goofing around. But now, I’ve started to do more things on my own without being told.

Luke initially did not fully embrace the program and did not use his free time wisely but after being in the shelter for a couple weeks, his attitude changed and he began to buy into the loosely based agenda and have personal accountability.

Ethan, who has a military background, was also taken aback by the minimal obligations compared to other programs.
Ethan (Metro Sanctuary Resident) - I was at other Christian programs also that were very military. You went to school for half the day and worked the second half… Set routines from the time you get up to the time you go to bed. This has a lot more leeway. Even with a most structured day. There’s still a lot of free time, you get in what you need to get in.

When the program residents are not attending classes and are afforded free time, the men keep themselves occupied through various activities such as card games, ping pong, reading, and watching television. Occasionally, the staff arrange for the men to go play flag football or basketball at the local youth center where they will sometimes challenge the Transition House members. Since Metro Sanctuary is a large facility that accommodates over 75 people at one time, the program residents are assigned daily tasks to make sure the institution can function and their living space is clean and tidy. The residents are divided into teams of seven or eight people in which each team performs a specific duty which is either cleaning an area of the house, such as the lobby or living quarters, or the daunting task of working in the kitchen. In the kitchen, a great deal of responsibility rests on the team’s shoulders, requiring the team members to devote eight hours a day to running the kitchen. They have the task of getting up in the early hours of the morning to prepare and serve breakfast and clean up the kitchen and dining area, as well as repeat the same process for lunch and dinner. Metro Sanctuary also provides a dinner soup line for low income citizens of Harrisburg which can serve up to 60 or more people. Staff that has supervised the kitchen has deemed the task as an opportunity for intense fellowship and a real test of fortitude. Each team is depended upon to complete their work detail adequately and then they rotate weekly. The work detail teaches basic housekeeping and working cooperatively as a team.
Shelter Policies

Metro Sanctuary does not operate in the same manner as the stereotypical homeless shelter. The recovery program within the shelter has several components to it that keep those involved on the straight and narrow to recuperation. When the program participants first arrive they must furnish identification and undergo an intake procedure where the staff will ask them an assortment of questions such as where they slept the night before and inquiries of mental health subject matter. The staff also checks to see if the individual is a registered sex offender under Megan’s Law, which is a necessary precaution since there is a school within the proximity. After the drug and alcohol testing, the individual is photographed and then assigned a bunk in either the transitional sleeping area or in the program sleeping area if there is space available. The transitional arrangement allows the individual to stay at the shelter for 10 days and then he is not allowed to return for four months. The transition choice gives the opportunity for the person to consider joining the recovery program or simply provides a temporary living situation for people just passing through. Involvement in the recovery program consists of a minimum of four months and can last up to two years. Once a program resident settles into their respective bunk, they are given a locker for all their earthly belongings because, for most of the residents that stay at the shelter, all their possessions are with them and must fit inside the storage locker. At the shelter, there is a curfew in place that requires that all residents must be inside by 9:00PM. Failure to return for the evening leads to the high probability that their bunk is given away and their program membership revoked, which means they have to wait for four months to be considered for a spot in the program again. While part of the program, participants are forbidden from working a steady job with the exception of a brief time period while waiting for the next phase of the program. By not having the ability to work, most participants have to solely rely on
the shelter for basic needs such as food and clothing since they have no income consistently coming in.

**Shelter Location**

Metro Sanctuary was originally used as housing for the rail yard workers. The shelter is conveniently located on the outskirts of the city near the railroad tracks in which hoboes would be most likely to pass through by train, and so the rail house was converted into a men’s shelter. A group of clergymen who wanted to get the drunkards off the streets came up with the idea of establishing the shelter, which was how society had originally decided to solve the homelessness disorder. The location of Metro Sanctuary is useful because it sits on the bus route, is close to jobs, medical assistance, the welfare office, and other services that someone experiencing homelessness would need. The shelter is in an area where it is surrounded by mostly abandoned houses and buildings where drug activity is known to occur. Having a homeless shelter so close to a rough neighborhood makes the allure of the street life tempting for residents to relapse, or in some cases, revert back to their criminal ways.

**Joe (Metro Sanctuary Resident)** - I got a relative he wants to come here, he’s in prison. I told him no, this ain’t for him, because he’s from Harrisburg and he was here for the 10 day thing. And he ended up not coming in and got put out. So he likes to get high, and him being right here and going right up the street to go uptown is not a good thing for him. I think he needs to go out of town.
While Joe believes that a person who is from the area should leave the city to overcome their addictions and homelessness, Sam’s thought is that the person should remain in the area to face the challenge head on.

**Sam (Metro Sanctuary Staff)** - Honestly for people who are going through recovery, would it be nicer to be up in the mountains somewhere where you’re secluded from a lot of the temptation, yeah maybe. But here, you’re either gonna fight the temptation as it faces you or you’re gonna give in, you’re gonna cave.

By having the shelter in a crime prone area, the residents’ integrity is tested and some are not able to resist temptation, but having them in an isolated area outside the city would prevent them from facing their major issue head on.

**Gentrified vs. Non-Gentrified**

Since Metro Sanctuary is located on the boundary line between gentrified and non-gentrified areas, there have been unsuccessful attempts by the state to seize the property. Still, the shelter has been able to hold them off due to the donations received from the community. Metro Sanctuary has had to take matters into its own hands to make their area safer by buying the property around them where questionable activities were taking place.

**Gerald (Metro Sanctuary Staff)** - The state tried to get it, this whole place is covered by donations, everything in here. Our salaries, no government money. Nothing. That’s one of the reasons the government can’t get this place. They tried, but they can’t get this
property. Used to be a motel next door. And the mission bought it cuz there was a lot of stuff going on over there that wasn’t right.

Since the State Capital is just blocks away, the downtown area is branching out with a courthouse and businesses set to be constructed close to the shelter, which puts pressure on the shelter to move. Metro Sanctuary has participated in its own gentrification process by purchasing the area around it that has been deemed to be unsafe and in need of an upgrade, which sets up a competition for urban space between the State, Harrisburg, and non-profit social service agencies not supported by government funding. Metro Sanctuary has developed a positive reputation and its location is prominently situated where it is hard not to notice the three story building.

**Brian (Metro Sanctuary Staff)** - If a guy is coming from out of town, quite often it’s by bus or train. And I’ve had some people say I didn’t know where I was going, I got off the bus, I needed a place to stay and people told me to come here. It’s easy to find.

The uptown area of Harrisburg, which is where the shelter is located, has become increasingly upscale with businesses, townhouses, and markets moving in on one end, where on the other, low income housing thrives. Low-income housing stock is shrinking, however, as there has been a trend of buying cheap housing and restoring them and then turning around and selling the houses to people of higher income.

**Brian (Metro Sanctuary Staff)** - I think because of the stereotype of what a shelter is, I’m talking about neighbors’ impressions, the potential drawing to that location of undesirables…a worry about property values and getting them out of the neighborhood. Right across from here is where the courthouse is scheduled to be built, and one of the reasons it was almost rejected is because we’re here. Because on this corner, is the kind
of property that they want the courthouse to be surrounded by and that’s understandable.

Now fortunately, even with the city planners and some of the state people that are local residents, they know the reputation that we have.

The shelter has become vulnerable to the gentrification happening in the surrounding area, but due to its positive reputation in the community the building has been left untouched for the time being.

**Perception of Shelters**

The perception of what a shelter looks like and its purpose has traditionally been a place to warehouse people who chose to not get jobs and were considered freeloaders by people unaware of what actually goes on inside. In the Metro Sanctuary, the residents and staff had similar views and were greatly surprised that there was more to it than that.

**Paul (Metro Sanctuary Resident)** - I had no idea that people could stay here for a length of time and proceed through levels of study to find out who they are, who God is, how to work through situations where you do have authoritative figures that you answer to… I thought that this was the only place for homeless to get a hot meal. Occasionally I would stop off here after an AA Meeting and dropped off food stuff and that was my contact. I never inquired, nor did I ever think I’d be here, but God gave me that path.

Paul saw the shelter as nothing more than a place for homeless persons to get a meal, but through his experience he understood that a shelter could provide much more with the support of the
local community. Shelters are often viewed as isolated asylums with no connection to the outside world but some shelters, like Metro Sanctuary, are not run like prisons.

Luke (Metro Sanctuary Resident) - Other shelters just take you as a number. Haven’t gotten the love and support that I’ve gotten here. The people here come together, we all do chores, we all clean this house every day. The news is being spread about how hopeful and how much help they do offer than other shelters, because the other shelters don’t really help out the community as much as they do here. And if I’m not helping out the community but I want the community to help me, it’s just not going to work for long, cuz it’s like a relationship, it’s both ways.

Luke brings up the point that communities are more accepting of organizations and businesses when they become actively involved in the city’s affairs and give back instead of just asking for assistance. Shelters, in many cities, are strictly places that provide beds and food, whereas Metro Sanctuary consists of social services and counseling programs which counters against the common perception of warehousing shelters.

Ethan recalls a shelter that he was at where it was basically a form of servitude.

Ethan (Metro Sanctuary Resident) - Well I think this is probably the best I’ve ever been in. The other shelter I went to was basically a work shelter. You just work for your bed and your meal. Very little counseling and spiritual guidance where this is completely opposite.

The Metro Sanctuary was not always a shelter with a plan and has, in the past couple decades, revamped its warehousing model to a more comprehensive program that is geared towards shaping and disciplining the inhabitants.
Ken (Metro Sanctuary Staff) - I will say in its early days, I wasn’t impressed with the homeless shelter. …It was like a flop house and the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again expecting a different result. I noticed some changes over the years where they began to focus on developing programs to end the cycle. That’s the issue because, you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day, but if you teach him to fish, you feed him for life. Where if you can get him to understand certain things, he may not go back. And we have had a lot of success here with getting people off drugs and getting their lives back in order.

In Harrisburg, there are no warehousing shelters because they have been proven to be dangerous at times since the inhabitants were not working towards progress and were stuck in the same ways that caused their homelessness in the first place.

Shelter Mentality - Business is Business

While shelters are mostly run by non-profit organizations in the city of Harrisburg, they still must operate in a design that is similar to a large scale corporation. Shelters are in the business of helping people, but they also have to ensure that their business stays afloat.

Will (Metro Sanctuary Resident) - I would have been left, the picture is about me. They don’t care if I leave out of here man… so what, fill that bed with John Smith, he’s coming next. If you don’t want it, somebody else will. They have to fill the bed. It’s a business. It says mission but it’s a business, keep it real.
Will’s perception is that the shelters have revolving doors in which somebody else could easily take his place if he was not serious about his recovery and walked out. This also indicates a distancing between the residents and the staff that can occur with a business model.

The Metro Sanctuary recovery program is set up as an abstinence only design that is based on a twelve step program similar to AA (Alcoholics Anonymous). While there can be a high success rate based on past results, there can also be difficulties with having only a single means of recovery.

Jake (Metro Sanctuary Resident) - They kinda have this one solution fits all… There are programs out there that are not twelve step …So you have 80 people here, so they’re trying to fit the solution to everybody as a cookie cutter like this is the one solution. But there are different solutions for different people. But that’s just how it’s run here.

Another possibility of kicking a drug or alcohol habit is to slowly wean oneself off of the addictive substance and supply clean needles so that they are free from the risk of contamination as they do so. Providing a safer alternative, such as methadone, is also an option. In either case, these alternatives are not acceptable in the Metro Sanctuary due to the institution being faith based.

Another issue arises when a program does not account for all of the individuals’ needs, some can become discouraged and not want to participate because their needs are not being addressed.

Ian (Metro Sanctuary Resident) - I’m conflicted. Part of me wants to complete the program. Another part of me wants to go for certain reasons… And felt like if maybe if they would give a little consideration to getting to know me and who I am and realize that
I’m not a drug addict. It would probably encourage me to want to stay… I kinda feel like just wanting to leave and start over somewhere else, but my options are really limited so it’s hard for me to just get up and leave.

Ian, who is considered to be chronically homeless, does not do drugs but is in a recovery program directed towards people who have had a history of addiction. He has the desire to leave, but having no other alternative available to him, he is stuck. This can engender, among residents, thoughts of being trapped or isolated by the shelter whose ultimate goal is to help them.

**Shelter Resident Interactions**

**Camaraderie And Brotherhood**

A group of men who eat, sleep, and work together on a daily basis are bound to form a bond. The program residents refer to themselves as brothers and they look out for each other to make sure that nobody falters. Contrary to the belief that shelters are only places for lazy people, there are a variety of hardworking men from many backgrounds who ended up in Harrisburg by some twist of fate, and have come together to make amends with their troubled pasts.

**Will (Metro Sanctuary Resident) -** I’ve met some dentists, doctors, I’ve met lawyers, alcoholics, drug addicts, homosexuals, comedians. That melting pot gives me more definition to who I am, gives me more perspective on what this thing of recovery is about… Giving each other support, you hear some horrific tender understanding, directional real stories. You can’t make this shit up, you got some guys that try to… Cuz we know, we’re dope fiends, we’re alcoholics, con artists, thieves. … You can’t bullshit
no one. That’s off the table, you come to the table naked. And you do that in a context where those at the table have gone through the same trial as you. Just as exposed.

A common misconception of homelessness is that usually it is blue collar workers that find themselves homeless. This is due to factories closing down, the workers losing their jobs, and not being able to get a job doing anything else with the limited skills they have that are now obsolete. But in the Metro Sanctuary, there are men from respectable positions that have been affected by past relationships, addictions, and their personal choices that have left them homeless. When first arriving at the shelter, all the program residents are viewed as equals because they may have come from different social classes, but they all share the same hardship. The residents have multiple labels according to society whether they are businessmen, criminals, or drug addicts, but inside the shelter, that judgment is not shared among those in the recovery program. The shelter environment strips them of the labels they have been given and allows them to have a fresh start. There is skepticism when people try to fabricate stories about themselves, because the other residents do not take kindly to being lied to, seeing as how they actually went through similar experiences. There is camaraderie among the program residents because they are all working towards the same goals which are addiction recovery, gaining employment and housing, and maintaining their devotion to God. When one of their own is tempted to jeopardize their progress, the group will intervene and reel the resident back in with moral support.

Paul (Metro Sanctuary Resident) - I had a person that I actually recognized when I came in here. We would exchange thoughts. Three people that I respected and talk to a lot in here, couldn’t wait for me to come back from being out, cuz they were waiting to see what kind of trouble I may have gotten into. I said everything is good, not that I didn’t feel the pull to go ahead and hang out.
Some of the older residents take it upon themselves to provide guidance to the younger men by sharing their wisdom and experiences, in hopes of keeping them from going down the same path.

**Joe (Metro Sanctuary Resident)** - I had a couple issues with a couple guys, like a miscommunication or something, but we worked it out. I like put it on my heart, go back to em and apologize, explain to em like how when I was their age I acted just like them... I’ve been in and out of jail. And I’m trying to stop them from going that path... And I feel I can maybe help you, lead you in a better direction and then you’re gone. Learn from my mistakes and don’t keep repeating the ones I made.

The realization of the older residents that their behaviors and choices held them back from reaching their full potential was discovered as they aged and matured but the younger generations are not always receptive to the fatherly advice. There are instances where being cooped up in the same place with the same people for so long can start to wear on a person and he will sometimes take it out on his fellow residents. But that ends as quickly as it begins and there are usually no grudges held since the recovery program emphasizes forgiveness of self and others.

Andrew describes the type of relationship that the Metro Sanctuary residents have with each other.

**Andrew (Metro Sanctuary Resident)** - Like a family, that’s the type of energy we have around here. We just try to lift each other up. I mean every once in awhile, just like a family, there’s times where we get into squabbles and arguments and don’t like each other. But we get over it. And we start to build each other up. And most of the people here they notice their mistakes. I was just going through something rough myself and I
know that I shouldn’t have taken it out on you. From then on, the awkward atmosphere is just cleared. …You don’t really see that in the outside world, but here it just happens.

Metro Sanctuary has an imaginary bubble around it where the people inside mostly get along with one another. The atmosphere can become disheartening at times and while in the real world, you can avoid coming into contact with someone you do not particularly care for, in a shelter it is guaranteed that you will either sit near them at meal times or sleep in a bunk nearby so it is best to bury the hatchet or risk being kicked out if the issue escalates. Camaraderie can be witnessed in the dedication of keeping Metro Sanctuary a presentable place to live.

Sam remembers a time when the whole shelter banded together to fix an issue that required a lot of manpower.

**Sam (Metro Sanctuary Staff)** - Last winter, our pipes froze and broke. The guys who were living here at the time just all pulled in to get the thing to stop leaking, to get the water cleaned up as best we could. Cuz it happened on third shift when we only have one staff person. Just a lot of memories like that.

A lot of the men at the shelter view it as their home, albeit, temporary for most, they still treat the facility as they would their home, which brings them closer together.

**Sam (Metro Sanctuary Staff)** - the overnight guys don’t shower very often, cuz there’s not availability for them to shower. But our residents actually pleaded to us for them to get showers and that they would oversee that process, and so that’s been happening…they’re actually just serving and helping out somebody that’s less fortunate than they are.
The residents will show acts of kindness toward the overnight guests such as getting them to clean themselves up in an effort to get rid of the image and scent of their time spent on the street. The residents start to mirror the staff in some ways by organizing tasks and helping those who are less privileged.

Staff Interaction

The Metro Sanctuary staff has a difficult position in the shelter because, while they may have feelings of compassion toward the residents and guests, it is essential that they enforce the policies to maintain order with such a large, diverse group. With any job or profession, it is important that the employee does not have thoughts of disconnection from what they are doing and how it is affecting others because a distancing can occur where it can be all about the money or other selfish reasons. The Metro Sanctuary Staff, some who have had experience with homelessness and addiction, are aware that they are making a difference in the lives of the men at the shelter and the residents are able to notice the staff’s dedication.

Ian (Metro Sanctuary Resident) - They’ve got a lot of care and concern for everyone’s well-being …And I think the one way I really know that is when there are graduation ceremonies you can tell when one of the counselors or staff share something about a resident. Sometimes it seems like one of their own kids. Going through life. Just being proud of what they have been able to accomplish.

The graduation ceremonies that happen for the programs mark a change from when the residents first walked in off the street to the next step which is to begin the next phase or get out on their own. The staff witnesses the image and attitude adjustments of the residents over the course of
their time at the shelter in the program, and forms a mentoring bond where some of the staff will keep in contact with former residents long after they have departed. This reveals a sense of pride in their work where they are not just going through the motions and residents are not just numbers.

**Gerald (Metro Sanctuary Staff)** - I have a good rapport with all these guys, cuz I’ve been there where they’ve been at. I’ve slept on floors, slept in hallways, been in jail, slept on the streets. Going into stores stealing stuff. Getting caught, everything. While I was homeless. Several of the staff have experienced homelessness and have been on the wrong side of the law, therefore they treat the residents with respect and they show that the job is not just a job where they rule with an iron fist, but they still have to maintain order and decorum.

**Paul (Metro Sanctuary Resident)** - If they were here for a paycheck, they’re not getting it. They’re here to give back. They get tweaked a little bit by some of the people that don’t show respect. In there for role call or reading the word. People start chirping and making noise, it gets them. It doesn’t take long to find out that they knew how to take care of themselves or they wouldn’t be alive today.

For some residents, the initial contact with staff can give them a perception that a staff member does not reflect genuine interest and care in people’s lives. After all, Metro Sanctuary has almost a hundred homeless persons and people overcoming addiction coming in and out of the shelter.

**Luke (Metro Sanctuary Resident)** - When I wasn’t in the program and I would just come here for the 10 days. I thought the staff and the people here were a bunch of fakes. But when I got into the program and I saw them, not just a couple hours out of the day,
but saw them on a regular basis, they really have good intentions. They’ve walked in the shoes. Having burnt all the bridges, no monies, no food, they’ve been through that dark place and they’ve been out of it.

The staff can sometimes be unpopular due to their enforcing role but they must be consistent in applying the rules to maintain order and not single any group out. There are times when the residents believe that certain groups should be held accountable for their behaviors as opposed to the shelter as a whole having to suffer.

**Jake (Metro Sanctuary Resident)** - there’s a rule that you can’t sleep or lay down on the chapel chairs, and we were watching a movie, and he paused it, I’ll turn the movie off if I have to and there won’t be no movie for anybody. But he didn’t really look to see the fact that the people that were lying down were not in the program, they were people for hazardous weather… So you’re gonna punish us, and take away privileges from us for violations of people that are not in the program... it’s the people that are given a privilege or a favor in some sense to be here.

Staff will give the program residents the responsibility of making sure that nobody is sleeping or lying down on the chairs in the chapel since it is a sign of disrespect. Most of the instances occur with the hazardous weather overnight guests who are falling asleep or resting on account of them not getting adequate sleep from either sleeping out on the street or on a mat on the floor of the chapel. It can get frustrating for the residents who follow the policies but also have to make sure that everybody, even those not in the program, is kept in line. The program residents can occasionally overlook the fact that they are given the privilege to stay at the shelter and could be kicked out if the situation warranted such a severe measure.
If You Can Reach One, Then You’ve Done Your Job

Metro Sanctuary staff have said that they are not in this field to change everybody because some people cannot be changed. Some of the staff have gone through the program and want to have the same positive impact on current program residents if they are willing.

Gerald (Metro Sanctuary Staff) - Some of them want to change and some of them don’t… Cuz you can’t reach everybody. If you can reach one, then you’ve done your job. And that’s the way I think about it, they’ve reached me, if I can reach one, I can help somebody else.

While the staff are compassionate about helping others, they do not bend over backwards to the point where the stress of the job leads to burnout because they can only do so much. A mutual respect is shared between the residents and staff, and even when some guests may not be acting appropriately, a calm and collected response prevails.

Gerald (Metro Sanctuary Staff) - I’ve had a couple of them cuss me out and stuff and I just ask them nicely and plainly to leave, that’s all. If you don’t wanna leave, I’ll call the police for ya …A guy called me a lot of names last night when I was there. Look, all I asked you to do is take your hat off please. F this and F that, I said all you gotta do is leave man if you gonna be disrespecting me like that… I understand what you’re going through man. You don’t know what I’m going through, you ain’t never been like this.

The residents can sometimes perceive the staff as not being empathetic because of the staff’s position of power. Initially, it is difficult for some of the residents and guests to understand that a lot of the staff has gone through what they are currently experiencing. Gerald was indeed homeless during parts of his life and had battled addiction just like the guest that cursed him out.
The guest only saw him as an authority figure and thus incapable of relating. The guest could not comprehend that the staff member had been in his situation but was able to overcome it and become productive. A feat that may seem too great for some to achieve, but the staff are living proof.

**Division Among Homeless**

Among the residents and guests at the Metro Sanctuary, there exists a separation according to program affiliation or image. Residents adapt a superiority complex where they set themselves apart from the rest of the shelter in an effort to preserve their identity or to exercise a sense of control over others since they may seem powerless in their situation.

**Program vs. Program**

There are graduated levels of the recovery program at Metro Sanctuary. New Beginnings is the initial stage and then, after the four month period, they graduate from that program and move up to the Helmsmen Program. There are only twelve spots available in the Helmsmen Program and residents must wait for a spot to open up before they can join the Helmsmen Program, which can take up to a year. The Helmsmen Program is more specialized and in-depth than the New Beginnings phase, and the residents are given apartment style rooms upstairs where they only have to share with one other roommate, as opposed to being in the large dormitories with several people on bunk beds within their proximity. While the amount of luxury
awarded to the elite group of Helmsmen is to serve as motivation for the rest of the program residents, it does cause a clear distinction of separation.

**Joe (Metro Sanctuary Resident)** - I think I’ll create a better bond when we’re upstairs, when I’m separated from the dude that’s not in the program and just with guys that are more serious about getting what they need out of it… I don’t know how long they gonna be around. I don’t want them calling me to get me to do something I don’t have no business doing.

Joe is awaiting his opportunity to become part of the Helmsmen and recognizes that the members in that program are more devoted to their recovery and form stronger connections that could last after leaving the shelter. He is hesitant about trusting the New Beginners, the ten day stay residents, and the hazardous weather overnight guests because they have not proved that they are dedicated to bettering themselves and are in it for the long run so they could easily disrupt his advancement. When the New Beginners become Helmsmen, a change is noticed in how they conduct themselves, where they have to lead discussions for the rest of the program, set the examples, and adhere to the policies more closely but, by doing so, that can sometimes have a negative effect on the other residents.

**Will (Metro Sanctuary Resident)**- The Helmsmen, the ones where I am going. The thing is what I have seen is when they accumulate themselves to another level of the program, it’s like they morph into something else. Like they think they are better than. Now these are guys who I met prior to them going upstairs we got along fine… They would set me up. Put money in my bag, go tell the director, I’m charging for haircuts and I didn’t charge them anything. Threw me under the bus...each one a helmsman. Couple of them,
when I first stepped foot on this soil…If you need anything, you need help… But then you turn around and do that to me. I’m done.

Will believed he was betrayed by the guys who were now Helmsmen that he had been close with when they were in the New Beginnings phase. When someone is witnessing a questionable act occurring, there is the expectation that it is reported or else they are held just as responsible for knowing and withholding that information. In Will’s case, he perceived the Helmsmen used their status to assert power because of their established credibility and they used that advantage to put a stop to something they did not think was acceptable or the staff would not approve of.

**Residents vs. Hazardous Weather Overnight Guests**

The hazardous weather overnight guests are not at the Metro Sanctuary year round like most of the program residents. In fact, some of the hazardous weather guests only stay one or two nights which can make the dynamic of the shelter constantly change. Because there is no cut off time, unlike other places, for when the shelter closes its doors during the wintertime, the overnight guests can come into the shelter at any time of the night even though they may not be drug and alcohol free. Normally, the guests are told to leave in the morning before the residents wake up, but on colder days, Metro Sanctuary does allow them to stay inside the shelter. Their presence can cause tension among the residents and staff. There is an obvious separation between the residents and the hazardous weather guests based on their appearance, actions, and state of mind.

**Jake (Metro Sanctuary Resident)** - The hazardous, I don’t really compare myself to them …they don’t want to be here. They’re not here to get themselves better, they’re here
because it’s a warm place to be, they get food…They may start the program and go for a month or two, but once it starts getting warm out, they’ll find someplace else.

Jake does not see himself as similar to the overnight guests because he has the desire to be at the shelter, whereas the overnight guests are forced to be there because of the elements and that they will just move on to another shelter or another city. Other residents have similar thoughts that the overnight guests are not seeking help and are only concerned with getting high or drunk.

**Dan (Metro Sanctuary Resident)** - I hear people from outside, Aw no man, I can’t deal with this. You don’t want to change your life. You just want to come over here, sleep one night and just go out there again. You want to get locked up, just go out there…Homeless for me is an addiction.

Dan does not understand why the overnight guests continue to go through the same routine with no hope of change and that homelessness itself is an addiction where the overnight guests become comfortable with the accommodations because they are still free to go out and do what they want, while still having a warm place to sleep at night during the harsh winter. It is because he and the other residents are in recovery and are actually putting in the effort that is necessary to change their lives, that they hold themselves to a higher standard than the overnight guests.

**Joe (Metro Sanctuary Resident)** - I was serving snacks in line and I smelled the liquor and alcohol on them. Made me realize that could easily be me. The ones in hazardous weather I think they should be trying to do a little more, cuz to me it’s like they’re giving up. Me personally, instead of sleeping in the street, I would go back to jail… I would start going out there doing what I do until I get caught. I might as well be in jail. I’m in a jail in my own mind being out on the streets.
Joe identifies that he could have been in the hazardous weather guests’ situation if he did not seek help from shelter services and believes the hazardous weather guests are giving up and have no intention or desire to change. He says he would go back to jail if he was living on the streets because of his past history, giving a clear impression that the streets are as bad, if not a worse environment, than jail and that the Metro Sanctuary is not just a building, it’s his salvation. Luke views the overnight guests as a reminder of where he came from and how their presence serves as motivation to keep working towards a better future so as not to end up at rock bottom.

**Luke (Metro Sanctuary Resident)** - During the winter times like this, there are the overnight people … I’d rather be friends with them than the people that I see every day because they inspire me more due to the fact that I have the opportunity to change my life, but not only that, they’re coming in here and they’re just doing the same routine over and over again. I remember that I was just like that. I had to sleep on the streets. It gives me a flashback to the past sometimes and right now I have to deal with my past in order to go on to my future.

There is a perception of overnight guests that is determined by their scent and unkempt appearance and sometimes that perception can mean to residents that the guests are in need of being taken care of. There are residents who do not see a major difference between themselves and the overnight guests or do not allow themselves to pass judgment on the appearance or the behavior of the overnight guests.

**Will (Metro Sanctuary Resident)** - Everybody’s the same. But you got some guys, think that hazardous weather guys, man you were the same way when you came in… So they stink, so they smell like pee. But listen man, I didn’t go to those extremes in my
addiction, but I was filthy… So I understand, I’m humbled by it. But to have people think that they are better than them is sad man. Absolutely can’t judge a book by its cover. So a lot of them do, I see it from both sides, from behind the desk to the residents, I see it, it ain’t right, but ya know what do you do.

The shelter’s policies can also play a role in the separation of the residents from the overnight guests as well.

**Gerald (Metro Sanctuary Staff)** - They come in… they be drinking and stuff. They’re mixing with the guys that are trying to stay clean. That’s why we gotta separate them, put them in the library. Then we bring all the guys from the library into the chapel, get their mats…And lay down and go to sleep. Not like it used to be, see before, when I first came here, you had to be humble and stay in the chapel for ten days before you got a bed downstairs. Now when you come, you get a bed as soon as you come in.

The intention is to limit the amount of interaction between the guests and the residents so that the temptation of relapsing is not so readily apparent. The hazardous weather guests will also eat at different times, in addition to sleeping in separate areas. The residents used to have to sleep in the same room as the overnight guests as a test when they first arrived, to see if they were serious about their recovery, but now they are automatically given a bed, further giving the program residents a sense of entitlement, and not having to share a space with the likes of the overnight guests. The staff also notes that the hazardous weather guests will not hang around the shelter in the summertime because they have other places they go to such as a homeless camp or living on the street.
Chapter 5 Haven Lodge

Shelter Structure

Haven Lodge is an emergency shelter for twenty one women and children for an allotted time of twenty eight days, though exceptions are made for women who are diligently working on the goals that were established on day one of entering the shelter. Haven Lodge, like other women’s shelters, is part of a voucher system where the individual needs to check every day to see if there is space available to obtain a voucher. Once a resident has received a voucher, she must continue to stop by the office weekly to obtain a voucher in order to stay at the shelter. After she has used up four weeks of vouchers, it is up to the shelter’s discretion whether she is allowed to stay any longer. When the shelter is full, the staff refers the individual to other shelters in the county or tells them they need to go to another county. The shelter provides a safe environment, food, clothing, and the resources to obtain housing, employment, daycare, and anything else that is necessary for them to move forward. Upon entering the shelter, the women go through an extensive intake process where they are drug tested and become familiar with the expectations and policies of Haven Lodge. Within the first week, the residents make a life map where they outline their past history, identify the characteristics and accomplishments that define them, and their goals for the future. This serves as a building block for the residents to visualize where their life choices have taken them and where they see themselves after leaving the shelter. The residents meet with a caseworker on staff to provide updates on the progress toward the goals that were agreed upon and what steps need to be taken by the next meeting. Over the course of the week, there are different life skills meetings that address social, family, financial, spiritual, physical, and mental aspects of transformation to move continually in a positive
direction. The shelter advocates for self sufficiency rather than dependency and the life skills meetings cover topics such as budgeting, relationships, and spiritual guidance. Haven Lodge also has the women complete daily chores such as cooking and cleaning the house. Some residents may not be used to having responsibilities of running a household and may choose to leave due to their inability to accept and carry out the expectations.

**Rita (Haven Lodge Staff)** – Some people just leave on the fact that they don’t like structure here. And our lodge is structured like any normal home and some ladies don’t feel the need to have that kind of structure because maybe they never had it or never grew up with it, so they don’t accept it and they’ll leave on that note.

The policies can be challenging for a woman with children because she is expected to follow the protocol of the shelter which can have an effect on the mother and child relationship.

**Jasmine (Haven Lodge Resident)** - Don’t put everything on the parents. I shouldn’t have to do everything for my kid. Cuz then kids think my mom do everything. Then you gotta break them of that. I think kids should have chores. They thought I was supposed to clean up their mess, they got used to being here. You can’t discipline. I have a problem with that.

Most residents do not think that the shelter is overly strict and would prefer it to some other shelters. Tracy stayed at a program where she was treated almost like a prisoner.

**Tracy (Haven Lodge Resident)** – I was in a women’s program and they locked up your phone for six months. For the first thirty days, you had to go out with a mentor. Here you have leeway to be free, though with chores, when you got your own place, you want to go to sleep. We don’t have that choice here.
Haven Lodge does not have as many restraints on freedom as other programs, but there is the expectation that chores are completed daily, even if some residents may not think that it is necessary. The non-profit shelter survives on donations and grants and with limited space, they can only do so much. The shelter has one case manager for all the residents and it can be strenuous for one person. The staff stresses the importance of being upfront and honest when the residents first come in because, if they have criminal backgrounds, they can be referred to services that will help them find employment, but keeping the truth hidden will stall the process.

**Discipline**

Maintaining order is essential when a large number of people live under one roof. This is especially true for Haven Lodge where space is limited and there are children involved. The staff must enforce policies but have a certain level of discretion. Since the shelter is drug and alcohol free, violations such as having or doing addictive substances will result in the staff referring the resident to drug and alcohol services and performing random drug tests during the duration of their stay. The residents are also expected to abide by the curfew where they need to be inside the shelter by 9:00PM. If they do not return for the night, the residents risk being removed from the shelter. Fighting will cause the staff to call the police, resulting in dismissal from the shelter if the situation is serious enough. The residents are also not allowed to have visitors due to the confidential nature of the shelter’s location and the residents themselves, who may have been victims of domestic violence scenarios.
**Shelter Location**

The picture of a shelter is often one where the building is located in the inner city in an area that has not undergone the gentrification process. Some shelters have been successful in moving out of these areas, whereas others are stuck for a number of reasons, such as lack of funding and not having a suitable location where people at the shelters have access to the resources they need for housing, employment, and public assistance. Another reason, which has always caused controversy with the placement of other social institutions, is the “not in my backyard” argument, where citizens are not so willing to allow a shelter in their neighborhood even though they support its purpose.

**Diane (Haven Lodge Staff)** - The spread between the have and have nots is growing.

Gotta have a shelter where the homeless are.

Diane expresses that the gap between the classes is widening and that shelters should be where the homeless congregate, which is most likely in the inner city areas.

Alex also sees that people would have issues with having a shelter set up anywhere but in urban areas.

**Alex (Haven Lodge Staff)** - There’s a stigma, if you were to open it in another area it would be looked at with disgusting eyes.

It all comes down to location, and where the shelter is established can affect the operations, mindset, and outcomes of all those involved in the shelter. Haven Lodge is in a non-gentrified district and the decision to move out if given the opportunity remains up in the air. Since the shelter resembles a house, it blends into the surrounding neighborhood and does not have the
stigma attached to it as with other shelters. Haven Lodge was originally part of a peaceful neighborhood but, over time, the surrounding environment changed for the worst.

**Monica (Haven Lodge Staff)** – Years ago, this street was not too bad. Back then, you couldn’t come in anybody’s neighborhood and cause chaos, cuz the older people weren’t tolerating it because they lived there all their life. They protected their area. But now people just don’t care, mind their business, as long as it ain’t happening to me. With all the renting around, people are in and out of here.

Not having firm roots in a community, such as a person who is renting an apartment, can lead to distrust and alienation, which has led to the downfall of the community surrounding the Haven Lodge shelter.

**Sarah (Haven Lodge Staff)** – We should move the shelter out of the area. When you live in a better area, you have some sense of pride about yourself. A lot of our residents look for something in this area because it’s close to where they are… For some it’s all they know.

Image and surroundings can play a major role in confidence level for someone who is in a shelter. By living in the slums and seeking out shelter in the slums, it is difficult for a person experiencing homelessness to envision a better quality of life because they have grown accustomed to that environment. Sarah continues to explain how challenging it can be to move the shelter out of the slums into a more affluent community.

**Sarah (Haven Lodge Staff)** – It’s often hard to move into a neighborhood of any other type because of the lack of understanding of homelessness. And the people develop phobias, well I don’t want those people in my neighborhood.
Here again, the misguided conclusions that are drawn about homelessness and about shelters hinders a clear understanding and the walls of judgment go up due to an ongoing fear of “those” people. Besides the shelter being in an area that looks rundown, there is also the concern for crime that makes the residents and staff at Haven Lodge vulnerable. Moving the shelter due to safety reasons is a common position among the residents and staff. There have been numerous shootings and fights right outside.

**Rita (Haven Lodge Staff)** – The environment that we’re in, it’s not helping the residents, because we’re trying to make life easier and better for them, but as soon as you walk out the door, it’s like they’re right back where they started. So it’s a little hard having some of the residents that are from this area and are still in the area.

The shelter is in the middle of an area that is notorious for crime and it is not farfetched for the residents or staff to become caught up in it. How close the violence in the neighborhood has hit to home is shown by the bullet holes outside of the shelter’s door that have become permanent reminders of the grim reality that awaits outside of Haven Lodge.

**Monica (Haven Lodge Staff)** – We want to move, but where? Cuz if you move way out, how are they gonna get to where they have to go, to the resources. All the resources are in this area…So if they move, how they gonna get back here into the city… When people donate, they’re trying to help the inner part of the city or the low income.

Unfortunately it is not so easy to just pack up and move to a new location because the services the people living at a shelter need should be within walking distance or transportation should be provided. A shelter receives sympathy from donors because it is located in a downtrodden area where economic turmoil is prevalent. If a shelter moves to a more refined area, people may not
be so forthcoming with contributions since there is no visible image of need or adversity to warrant charity. There are plans for a shelter that is in a different location that is much larger and more accommodating than the current floor plan. Having a new building can be instrumental in dispelling the negative stereotype of shelters.

**Annette (Haven Lodge Staff)** – Starting out, when shelters were first put into place, it was a mindset like, throw away people, so what difference does it make what the building looks like… The shelter doesn’t have to move out of the area… We’ve moved from the fact that it’s hush hush. You end up stifling the growth and the women can develop trust issues.

The distorted way of thinking involving the labeling of homeless persons as throw away people rationalizes not only their treatment, but also what conditions they should accept and not be particularly picky about. Annette also comments on the notion that, traditionally, shelters that housed women and children were to remain secretive to keep uninvited guests such as abusers and other perpetrators from discovering the residents’ whereabouts, but that concept can actually do more harm than good. The reason for that is because that person may develop a sense of paranoia always looking over their shoulder, which can potentially sabotage any future relationships.

**Perception of Shelters**

When people picture a shelter, images of large dirty, drafty warehouse buildings with rows of cots may come to mind due to the belief that all shelters really do look like that. This image has manifested itself as a result of media representations and outdated folklore. When the
residents and staff shared their perceptions of shelters, they almost all agreed that their initial thinking was vastly different from what they know now after having experienced being on the inside of a shelter firsthand.

**Wanda (Haven Lodge Resident)** – The one large room with everybody in it. Standing outside in line hoping to get in and having that cycle every day. TV never shows a good perception of it, it’s like always bad. That was my fear especially coming with my kid. That was my family’s biggest fear cuz they’re just like, are you in a room, what’s it like? It wasn’t a good perception. My family is more devastated than I am that I ended up in a shelter.

Wanda’s fear of coming to a shelter was based on the assumption that all shelters look alike and are run the same way. However, she became comfortable with the fact that she was in a shelter after realizing it was not like the shelters portrayed on television. Her family continued to have those thoughts of anxiety because they had not witnessed what Haven Lodge really looked like. Often the perception of shelters is that they are just places to eat and sleep and nothing else. While some shelters are run that way, Haven Lodge offers more than just the basic needs. Haven Lodge, which was started by social justice advocates with the intent of providing shelter to battered women and children, began as an overnight shelter just like any other typical homeless shelter. Haven Lodge has since adopted more of a goal oriented structure that has set it apart from the warehousing type of shelter that has received a poor reputation.

**Annette (Haven Lodge Staff)** – It had been a culture of we just get women and children off the streets, and while that’s still an admirable thing to do, what are we doing once that happens… The mission is about transforming lives and what we were seeing was too
many people coming back through the system, and clearly that’s a problem, that’s a brokenness in the system itself if that continues to happen. So we definitely went from that place of just seeing people coming through and using that as the only metric to now looking at how many people actually coming back that their lives are changed and be empowered.

Haven Lodge recognized that more needed to be done besides just providing food, shelter, and clothing. The staff was originally doing the cooking and cleaning, but then the responsibility was put on the residents with the reasoning that staying at the shelter is not supposed to be a vacation. There needed to be a more in-depth look at the root cause of why the person became homeless and to give her tools and knowledge so that she would not end up homeless again.

**Shelter Mentality – Business Of Helping People That Want To Be Helped**

Shelters have evolved from their roots as non-profit charity organizations to assuming more of a business oriented role, in order to keep pace with the growing demands for shelter services. Non-profit shelters are no longer accepting their disadvantaged status where, due to limited resources and dependence on community contributions, they have only been able to move homeless residents up levels of poverty, but instead, are investing in the long term. Shelters have expanded their purpose to measuring efficiency of addressing the needs of people experiencing homelessness and are evaluating the preferred outcomes of transforming lives.

Some residents do not use their time wisely and do not work towards completing their goals, in which they can be kicked out to make room for someone else who needs a place to stay. A resident cannot get too comfortable at a shelter where there is a limit to how long they can
stay. The time constraint keeps them motivated to do whatever is necessary to become independent and self sufficient. When their time runs out and they are no longer given extensions, they have no choice but to leave and they cannot return, so they either stay with family or friends or live on the streets.

**Jasmine (Haven Lodge Resident)** – Now this is a 28 day shelter, when you leave here and you don’t get a place…it’s like a revolving door, if you don’t get a place, you’re homeless so that means you’re part of the homeless statistic. So then another person comes and takes your place, but then if they don’t get a place, then they’re back in the statistic. And you can’t come back to the shelter for a whole year. And what I also think is sad, how people do, next year the same person coming back. Me? Won’t be me.

There is a cycle where homeless residents who do not acquire the necessities, such as employment and housing in a short amount of time, are rotated out of the shelters to make room for new residents, in which if the new residents fail to make progress, they join their predecessors. There is a backlog for people waiting to be eligible to get shelter access. This can lead to a ripple effect occurring in neighboring counties because the residents will travel to other counties in an effort to find a shelter with space, contributing to the displacement of homeless persons.
Shelter Interactions

Family – It Takes A Village To Raise A Child

Haven Lodge has a number of different women and children that come in and out of the shelter, but during their stay the residents form a bond over their situations and start resembling a family. Not only do they cook and clean with each other to keep the house running smoothly, they also encourage one another and take care of the children like a family.

Wanda and Louise grew up in communities where everyone would look out for one another and Haven Lodge reflects that small town way of life.

Wanda (Haven Lodge Resident) – It takes a village to raise a child, in small communities, everybody knows everybody… You always get this bad perception that too many women in the same place, you’re gonna have all cat fights cuz they’re not gonna get along… You learn that a house full of women can live together and it can be rather nice. I’m raising my child and might not have known something and you’ve experienced it and can offer advice and vice versa.

Not only does a women’s shelter have a stigma because of being a shelter, but also the idea that a bunch of women cannot live under one roof immediately comes to mind. Once again, the myth is not always the absolute truth and it is possible for women to live in harmony. That does not mean that they always get along, especially in such close quarters, but they learn to tolerate one another. Most of the women are supportive of residents who have found jobs or housing and are probably going to leave the shelter not long after, but some will not share in the celebration of the progress of one of their own because they are secretly envious of her success. The women
rely on each other for advice and helping with taking care of the children who could be as young as an infant or as old as seventeen. Different perspectives and experiences make for a well-rounded household that can benefit the children in the long run.

**Monica (Haven Lodge Staff)** – Everybody starts to depend on each other. Not everybody gets along, but they become as a family… the single women, if they have children or plan on having children, they can get a feel of someone else with a family. Cuz a lot of the single women help the families, we say you’re not allowed to babysit, they do not, but they interact when they prepare meals, watch TV, and do activities with the kids.

The young residents of Haven Lodge without kids are able to see what it is like being a parent and other mothers can observe different parenting styles. The shelter is designed like a family environment where the women take care of the children and fulfill their domestic roles while also balancing the search for employment and housing.

**Staff Interactions**

The relationship between staff and residents can be very complicated because, on one hand, the staff wants to be able to develop a rapport with the residents, to help them transform their lives but on the other hand, there are policies that need to be enforced and boundaries to be aware of when interacting with the residents. Some of the staff have had experience with homelessness and have even stayed at the Haven Lodge, so residents are able to view the staff’s ability to rise above, as motivation to turn their own lives around.
**Wanda (Haven Lodge Resident)** – A lot of the staff have traveled this road, so that in itself is inspiration because it’s not just somebody who has a degree sitting behind a desk. It’s somebody that’s actually been there. If they can do it, I can make it too. As long as I keep fighting, they’ll keep helping.

The reason some shelter staff members decided to work at a shelter was because of having stayed in a shelter themselves and wanting to share their experiences and the guidance that they received when they were in the same or similar circumstances.

**Monica (Haven Lodge Staff)** – I once was homeless and I know how it is to be homeless cuz I used to live here, I used the tools to get to where I am today. So I basically wanted to pay forward because I wanted to help someone else that was homeless.

Having gone through the experience, some staff members are able to relate to the residents more so than those who have not been homeless. The staff can sometimes appear to get along with some residents better than others, and this can be perceived as favoritism. In most institutions, the staff has to equally enforce the policies that have been established and special treatment is not given. What can happen is that the policies that are put in place to promote uniformity can undermine the central goal, which is to be understanding and supportive of individual needs. While being sympathetic, staff must also be cognizant of the fact that they need to maintain a boundary between the staff and resident relationship.

**Sarah (Haven Lodge Staff)** – There is a line between staff and residents. And while you’re not better than, neither are you less than. You still are esteemed because of your position. So you can’t come from your position to join into a conversation where there’s a
lot of gossiping. Your job should not be to blend into that, it should be to try to defuse that.

The staff has to assert their neutral status and the power they have over the residents to sustain the organizational structure of the shelter and so that there are no secret alliances formed. It is the staff’s purpose to be judgment-free and to not stoop to the level of trash talking and rumor spreading that can occur among the residents.

**Monica (Haven Lodge Staff)** – When you first come in, you don’t want to be in a shelter and you have trust issues because you don’t know anybody. So it’s our job to interact and get to know the clients and what they need to develop that trust…No talking down, we’re all the same, at the end of the day, we’re all struggling just as much as you are. We’re just trying to give you the tools to get you somewhere to live. We’re no better than them.

By referring to the residents as clients, there is a professional relationship that is discernible and, while there is that degree of separation, the staff is adamant about the fact that they are dealing with people that are no different than them. The only difference is that they have the skills and knowledge to aid in improving the residents’ current situations.

**Sarah (Haven Lodge Staff)** – Through life skills, they are often reminded, this is not where you’re living the rest of your life. It’s wise to make the best of it. To overlook one of those fallacies which we all have. Areas that we need to change, areas that won’t change, and look at what’s good.

Words of encouragement by the staff help the residents get into the frame of mind that the shelter life is only temporary and to not get too comfortable. The endorsement of life skills assists in
relaying the message that what is learned can be applied in the future, even if it may not seem like it is relevant at the time.

**Division Among Homeless**

The existence of subgroups within Haven Lodge and in the homeless community is apparent. These groups are formed based on gender, age, and supposed status among the rest of the household.

**Men vs. Women**

There are indications that men and women experience homelessness differently, which can lead to one group claiming more or less hardship over the other. In this case, the women attract more sympathy than the men, especially if there are children involved.

**Rita (Haven Lodge Staff)** - I feel for the women and children, not saying that men shouldn’t be homeless, but a child always needs stability in their lives.

Raising a child can be difficult, especially if the child is on the streets or in a shelter.

**Louise (Haven Lodge Resident)** – I think the women and children need more attention than they are giving the men. That should be top priority first. Cuz she has a whole package and herself. He’s just up there by himself. He can listen to them or he don’t have to listen to them. She has a load, she’s carrying a burden. And us women in here, they do good.
Women appear to be less likely to cause trouble at a shelter than men because they may have children with them and they do not want to risk getting kicked out. The men have more independence and the choice to be at a shelter or on the street is not as difficult as a person who is homeless with children.

**Residents vs. Residents**

Haven Lodge houses a group of women from all different backgrounds and with varied reasons for coming to the shelter. Some are escaping a domestic violence situation. Others were recently released from prison and some were evicted from their apartments. Having dissimilar personalities, ages, and diverse races can lead to clashing among the residents.

**Rita (Haven Lodge Staff)** – They usually clique up with each other. Then you have the bullies of the house that try to run it. And they start judging each other. Too much gossiping. You’re not better than each other cuz if you were, then you wouldn’t be here.

The staff reveals the relationships among residents can be rocky and that some of the women can appear bossy or spread rumors to establish status in the shelter. Others try to avoid the drama that can ensue and try to keep to themselves, but in a shelter, it can be difficult to have privacy.

**Jasmine (Haven Lodge Resident)** – I’m not about the cliques. It’s like, If I don’t like you, I’m gonna get everybody in the house not to like you. I didn’t come here to make friends. I came here for my kids. If it was just me, I don’t think I would be here. Don’t want to be here. I never felt comfortable here, it’s just different personalities, residents, it’s just always something. I’m used to being by myself.
It is undeniable that in any social setting, there is bound to be a clique of some sort that puts those not inside the circle at a lower standard than everybody else. There’s a gang-like mentality that can occur when entering a new environment and survival is based on who you associate with. In Haven Lodge, this interaction can be witnessed in order to salvage a sense of pride and superiority despite the actuality of their state of affairs. Jasmine also comments that she probably would not have come to a shelter if it were not for her kids but she had to endure the difficulties that arise from living with multiple women for the sake of not being out on the street. Since there are residents of all ages, tension can mount between the younger and older residents.

**Carla (Haven Lodge Resident)** – Give more freedom to older and mature people, people with history are more likely to break the rules. They have to have structure cuz if you don’t, things will get out of hand, chaos. It’s just been hard adjusting to being told what to do.

There are some that do not totally come to grips with the fact that they are in a homeless shelter and it can be difficult for them to adjust. When you observe someone else’s life and their relationships and compare it to your own, a feeling of gratefulness can make you have a newfound appreciation for all that you have been blessed with. A person can become critical of other people’s differences as well, such as the way they communicate with and treat their children.

**Wanda (Haven Lodge Resident)**– Being in the shelter has made me appreciate our relationship even more, because when I look at the relationships of other parents and their children here at the shelter. I realize how great our relationship really is. I even have people comment on the relationship that I have with my kids.
Wanda witnesses how other families interact within the shelter and confirms her belief that her way of raising children is more than sufficient. She realizes that other families may not be as close as she is with her children and she sets herself apart from them. Single women and women with children all under the same roof can be trying at times but they make it work with the space they are given. While some residents believe that women and mothers with children can live together, some residents believe that there should be separation between the two groups within the shelter.

**Shelter Jumpers**

Most residents that come to a shelter have the intention of doing what they need to do to get back on their feet which includes finding a job, housing, and mending relationships. There are some however, that do not work towards achieving their goals and are content with using the shelter’s hospitality until they are no longer able because they have exceeded the time frame allowed and then they move on to another shelter in another county and follow the same routine. These people are referred to as shelter jumpers by the staff and residents. Harrisburg women’s shelters are part of a system that follows a voucher process where residents are given a maximum of six vouchers and after that they are either told to leave, if the shelter needs to accommodate somebody else who needs the space, or they are given an extension. Shelter jumpers often exhaust the basic resources from a shelter and do not work on their goals. Once they are told to leave or leave voluntarily, the women are not able to reside at another shelter in the county for one year because all of the shelters communicate. The agencies in Harrisburg are connected and report to each other the reasons why the resident left the previous shelter. Shelter jumpers will
move from county to county, where they have a clean slate, because the counties are not interconnected, until they are able to come back to Harrisburg in one year and start the process all over again.

**Wanda (Haven Lodge Resident)** – I’ve met people here, that hop from shelter to shelter and have no desire to do better.

Shelter jumpers are viewed as people who are wasting time and resources and do not have genuine aspirations to improve their state of homelessness. There was one woman, who had been at the shelter previously, came back exactly a year later but did not stay at the shelter long because she had trouble getting along with the staff and the residents and she walked out. There was another woman who was not serious about working on her goals. She slept most of the day, and exceeded her voucher time. As she was leaving, she expressed wanting to move to another county, which would infer that her plan was to hop to another shelter outside of the county.

Haven Lodge residents and staff share the belief that shelter jumpers are freeloaders who make no attempt at bettering their life. The perception of the existence of shelter jumpers is in line with the stereotype of the traditional homeless person that all they do is take up space and have no real value. The residents set themselves apart from the shelter jumpers because they do not want to be associated with that negative label. Here again, we see a distinction between the residents who put themselves in higher esteem than the shelter jumpers because even though both groups are experiencing homelessness, what sets them apart is the residents actually being proactive about doing whatever it takes to improve their circumstances and wanting to change their lives.
**Shelter vs. Street**

Someone accepting the fact that they are homeless or are experiencing homelessness can be difficult and sometimes that status can be replaced with a title that is seen as less damaging to one’s self image.

**Jasmine (Haven Lodge Resident)** – Shelters. I think it should be called a temporary place of living. A homeless person is a person that doesn’t have a roof over their head. That means they’re outside in the street. A temporary situation does not make you homeless, it makes you not have your own home. There’s a difference. To call the people that walk into this shelter as homeless is wrong and degrading to me.

Jasmine prefers her situation to be more of a temporary state and sets herself apart from the street homeless. Even though the definition of homelessness includes living at a shelter, she denies that she is homeless and renames the shelter as a temporary place of living to convey a less disconcerting interpretation of homeless and shelter that has dominated society’s way of thinking.
CHAPTER 6 - CONCLUSION

As with any research, there are limitations to take into account with this study. The study took place over a month long span, so it was not possible to follow up with those residents who participated to see how they progressed through the shelter program. The study also did not include children as participants, which is a direction to consider in the future since there are a significant number of children who experience homelessness. A limitation that brings up questions is that there was more participation among the men and they were more forthcoming than were the women. The reason for this could be that the researcher was a white male, so there could have been a degree of discomfort in divulging information with the women who may have had sensitive histories pertaining to their past that they did not wish to share. If a female were to have interviewed the women, there may have been more participation and the interviews may have had more depth. Research studies have shown that the researcher’s demographics can affect the quality and quantity of the data when investigating a phenomenon experienced by the opposite gender or a different race. The men seemed to be empowered and open about sharing their past history as if the interview session was an opportunity to vent or absolve themselves of wrongdoing, whereas the women were more reserved and preferred not to disclose their histories. Another possibility for the men being more forthcoming than the women could have to do with the structure of the shelter. Since Metro Sanctuary is more structured, the male residents were more verbal about suggestions and complaints about the shelter than were the women at Haven Lodge who were given more flexibility within the shelter and thus less inclined to protest. The size of the shelters could impact the amount of participants as well, since the men’s shelter housed more residents than the women’s shelter. The findings from this research study can be applied in various ways to better understand the services provided to persons experiencing
homelessness including reforms in urban policies and decriminalization of acts associated with homelessness. In major cities such as New York and Chicago, the average amount spent on jailing is $87 a day for each person compared to $28 for sheltering, in which there is a potential for cost savings that would also put less of a burden on the criminal justice system (National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, 2011). Designing and funding shelters with treatment programs and social services would help with ending the cycle of homelessness.

In both Metro Sanctuary and Haven Lodge, there was a separation among the shelter residents that was consistent with the study by DeWard & Moe (2010) where the residents viewed themselves as superior. Metro Sanctuary and Haven Lodge residents are similar to the shelter residents in DeWard & Moe (2010) where they created distinctions by identifying themselves as houseless instead of homeless and their situation was out of their control, in spite of their choice to be at the shelter. This can be seen as a means of coping with their experience and maintaining their dignity and identity. The interpretation of the definition of Goffman’s (1961) concept of total institution can be witnessed in the Metro Sanctuary men’s shelter more so than in the women’s shelter due to the structure and expectations of conforming to the shelter’s policies. The shelter interactions were not staged between the residents and staff and there was a genuine concern for helping. Contrary to Stark (1994), the residents were not treated like children, though in the women’s shelter, the mother’s roles were sometimes restricted by the shelter’s procedures. This reveals that shelters from different locations which cater to one gender over another, do not all operate in the same fashion. Some shelters embrace every aspect of the total institution, whereas others do not. Institutionalization usually occurs at a facility where everything is routine and isolated, but with Metro Sanctuary and Haven Lodge, this is not
apparent due to the expectation that the residents are required to work toward goals or will be kicked out of the shelter.

Shelters, depending on the style by which they operate, can be useful in getting people back on their feet. The shelter not only provides a roof over someone’s head, it can also provide valuable resources that living on the streets cannot, such as an address. This is very important for finding jobs because employers are not always so keen on hiring someone saying they are homeless, which can project a stereotype of undependability. Shelters have become more than just warehouses to get people off the streets. Treatment programs and social services have modified the function of shelters and their popularity for social change is growing. The people who have not witnessed what the new and improved shelters are all about are skeptical that life change can really happen and that the existence of shelters can have an impact on crime prevention.

Ken (Metro Sanctuary Staff) - Most people don’t realize what we do here. They think it’s three hots and a cot. The judges for the federal court house came here and visited, when they realized what we did, they were no longer opposed to moving across the street from us because every night this community knows that there are 75 guys in here at 9:30 that are not on the streets, not running the streets, and they’re drug free. That makes your community safer.

While the traditional purpose of shelters, to get people off the streets is still a goal, the scope has expanded to where the shelters are providing steps to aid those who are experiencing homelessness instead of enabling them. The function of shelters is more than just providing a bed and food. It can act as a safe house from the dangers of the street.
**Rita (Haven Lodge Staff)** – If it weren’t for shelters, people would be on the streets with their kids and it’s a good place to come if you don’t have anywhere to stay… it’s like a normal home but it’s just temporary here knowing that your future is going to be better once you leave here.

The idea that the shelter is a temporary situation, as opposed to a place to flop, is a reminder that if the residents do not do what they need to, they could end up on the streets. Most of the residents did not consider living on the street before coming to the shelter. After spending an extended amount of time at the shelter and attending life skills classes the program residents develop a changed mindset about their life, what homelessness is about, and how the Metro Sanctuary and Haven Lodge have actually helped them.

**Louise (Haven Lodge Resident)** - They rose above it just like I’m supposed to do, rise above that. It’s just a moment, it’s just an experiment. Part of life. And just keep yourself focused on moving ahead. Like my church says, moving forward.

Louise and many of the residents at Haven Lodge have adopted new perspectives in their short stays at the shelter that gave them a more positive outlook on life. The tools and life skills that they learned will serve to empower them to move on from their past.

Luke, like many of the residents at Metro Sanctuary, found a new appreciation for what they lost and how to regain their identity and self worth. They became more aware that they could overcome their circumstances through faith and with the help of the shelter program.

**Luke (Metro Sanctuary Resident)** - When I was homeless and how I got to be homeless, it made me more motivated than if I were to actually have everything. It’s when things are taken away from you that you have a greater power and energy to want
to, not only get those things back, but do something better and do something greater than that.

The residents are often reminded that the bed, food, and clothing provided to them come with a cost, which is to learn how to become a better person to themselves and to the people they have affected. If the residents are not dedicated to changing their lives, the shelter can and will find other applicants who are of the mindset to succeed with self-improvement.

Andrew (Metro Sanctuary Resident) - The staff remind you that you have to work on yourself in order to stay here. If you don’t work on yourself, then it’s pretty obvious what’s gonna happen, you’re out on the streets again. Cuz you don’t want to do anything better for yourself and they notice that. And you have to go.

When involved in the shelter program, the residents can become so involved in the daily routine that, not only do they not have time to engage in unlawful activities, they become partly institutionalized, but not to the extent of becoming solely dependent on the shelter. A lot of residents saw going to a shelter as a last resort and were willing to do whatever was necessary to bounce back. Though the residents at both shelters became accustomed to the routines and isolate themselves from the public, albeit temporarily, most residents had not abandoned their aspirations for the future so they were not fully shelterized. According to the staff, change is not always easy and some people fear or refuse to change and that decision can make it exceedingly difficult to get through to those types of people. The right mindset is important on the road to recovery and overcoming homelessness. Those who do not buy into the shelter program and do not utilize the resources provided will have a difficult time and most likely will be unsuccessful in transforming their lives.
Through the results of this study, an interesting dynamic was discovered between the structures of men’s homeless shelters and women’s homeless shelters. The homeless shelters, which are run by private organizations, are entrenched in gender stereotypes. The men’s shelter, Metro Sanctuary is designed to emulate a boot camp like atmosphere where the men are responsibilized and prepared for becoming the principal providers reentering the workforce. The residents are part of a total institution environment where they adhere to a regimented schedule, their performance is evaluated, and they are conditioned to follow protocol. The women’s shelter, Haven Lodge, is structured more so as a household where the residents live communally in a warm, inviting atmosphere. Unlike the Metro Sanctuary’s strict organizational structure, the residents at Haven Lodge are given more freedom to take charge of their own recovery and progress. This suggests that women in shelters are more trusting and do not need a heavy structure to keep them on track of their goals, whereas men need to be held more accountable. The pathways to homelessness for both genders are traditionally different. Men are more likely to have had a drug history or a criminal record, whereas the women have either been evicted or experienced domestic violence and needed a place to escape. Shelters have to serve different functions as a result, either by training the residents to be job oriented for the men or aiding in the healing process for the women. It is apparent that gender stereotypes are at play in the organization of homeless shelters. The women at Haven Lodge learn through life skills and interactions with other residents to be supportive and to assume the maternal role of taking care of the children and participating in the domestication of cleaning and cooking in a household, whereas the men at Metro Sanctuary maintain a large facility in a militaristic fashion. The takeaway is that the type of program for homelessness depends on the gender of the person. Not only is there a disagreement about what causes homelessness, but there are also multiple
approaches to address the social problem and the level of service could be based on gender, addiction, or a multitude of other factors that formulate stereotypes. The main priority for many of the Metro Sanctuary residents was to find jobs and become productive members of society as if it was a badge of honor that they had lost, proved their worth, and affirmed their masculinity. Most of them did not have children or their children were all grown up, so their desires were directed at providing for themselves, whereas the women at Haven Lodge were more concerned with providing for their children and their families. This could be because most of the men had lost close ties with their families and the women were still involved in their family’s lives in most cases.

Anomie of the State is reflected in the policies that are inspired by public demand. These urban policies limit the ability for homeless persons to adapt and survive on the streets. The regulations also act as a mechanism to control where the homeless population resides and the shelters that are supposed to house them, leading to an easier transition for gentrification processes to occur. Homeless persons are forced to either hide within the urban landscape by dodging all the urban policies or be hidden in homeless shelters where the structure resembles a total institution. The stereotypes of homelessness, such as laziness and the assumption that all homeless persons are disorderly criminals, have sustained in the public’s mind the traditional belief that shelters are merely warehouses for derelicts. The identity of homelessness is dependent upon social norms and behaviors attributed to homelessness that would be acceptable behind closed doors are viewed as forms of deviancy by society (Parsell, 2011). While the perceptions of shelters have been evolving where programs are available to assist with homelessness and addiction, for the people who have not witnessed firsthand what goes on in a shelter, they are still wary of having a shelter in their backyard. This distancing forces the shelter
to have to remain in non gentrified areas where the resources that are needed are close by, but also where criminal activity goes on. Since the general public usually stays away from crime prone areas, they do not have regular contact with people experiencing homelessness, contributing to the unawareness of homelessness. People have the impression that they are impervious to being homeless, but just because they are not addicted to drugs or alcohol, does not mean they could not experience homelessness as a result of a loss of job, eviction, or abuse. One can rely on their family and friends for support, but that can have an expiration date and then there are only two options, the shelter or the street.

Judging a person by their cover is a common practice in any society that allows cliques and gaps of marginalization within a population leading to a lack of solidarity. Durkheim’s idea of anomie shows that people that do not see themselves as equal to everyone else, will cause the individuals who do not fit the society’s standards to become alienated or ostracized. Anomie has occurred not with just the public but also with the state. The concept of Anomie of the State is not a logical fallacy that has no merit because events have transpired all across the country that show there is not a consensus on how to appropriately address the homelessness issue. Fear is a powerful tool that can be used to gain the support of the public for policies, all in the name of public safety. Businesses are given the liberty to protect their property by posting no loitering signs or, in some cases, spike strips which have become prevalent in large metropolitan cities. This has an impact on the homeless street population by reducing panhandling and limiting areas to rest which are essential for survival on the streets. In Harrisburg, politicians and law enforcement have approached the issues of homelessness by criminalizing or displacing individuals. Politicians and law enforcement with good intentions can sometimes fail to see the butterfly effect where the urban policies and enforcement of those policies can put a large
amount of dependence on non-profit agencies and shelters which are overcrowded and underfunded. In Harrisburg, a person will not go hungry because there are numerous soup kitchens, including the Metro Sanctuary, that provide meals with no questions asked, but they can only provide so much and mostly depend on donations from the community.

The stereotypes that have driven the impressions and policies have carried over into the shelters themselves by evidence of the perceptions given by staff and residents at both Metro Sanctuary and Haven Lodge. The residents will judge each other and, with the assistance of the structure and regulations, some individuals start to assume roles where they deem themselves more superior. The belief that shelters will inevitably cause the residents to become institutionalized and thus not want to leave was not a concern in the Metro Sanctuary or the Haven Lodge among the residents because they were given goals to complete and a set amount of time to do it before they would end up out on the streets. Most of the residents had a desire to leave their respective shelters and not ever come back. They also had the goal of giving back to the community in a productive manner such as helping troubled youth, starting businesses, or continuing their education. These ambitions were not evident among the hazardous weather overnight guests at the Metro Sanctuary during the winter months, or the Shelter Jumpers at Haven Lodge suggesting that these individuals had become shelterized.

Attitudes towards homelessness reflect that it is a social problem that can be solved by enacting policies to keep the homeless on the run or having them go to shelters because if you cannot see them, there is no indication that there is an issue needing to be solved. The idea of ending homelessness is noble, but it is an uphill battle and it may seem to be very improbable, since there are so many factors at play that contribute to homelessness, whether it is addiction, the economy, lack of education, mental health, family relations, or prison history. The state’s
involvement in addressing homelessness is limited due to the disagreement on what causes homelessness and how the social problem can be effectively handled. The local, state, and federal governments are concerned about getting individuals who are homeless into shelters or back into the workforce with little regard to resolving the underlying issue of what caused their homelessness in the first place. Homeless shelters and other non-profit agencies have to fill in that gap but are underfunded or have to rely on community donations. Urban renewal, in many cities like Harrisburg, has been utilized to clean up the streets, in favor of a crime free setting. While gentrification has rekindled businesses and attracted tourists, the approach has caused property values to go up and limit the availability of low income housing. As a result, people are displaced, and, compounded with other symptoms that can lead to homelessness, could eventually end up on the streets or in a homeless shelter. The community is vital in remembering that the homeless are people too and that has started to take shape in some cities such as Harrisburg.

Annette (Haven Lodge Staff) – The community helps through their belief. Images of homelessness have been shifted to images of hopefulness. Consistency is key, and that's where the whole community is now coming together. We recognize that we have operated in an asylum fashion and there’s a weaning process to move away from that.

An image of hopefulness can replace the stigma surrounding homelessness and with a collaborative effort, the community can become integrated and the societal response to homelessness can be unified for the betterment of all the citizens regardless of background or social class.
**Brian (Metro Sanctuary Staff)** - For a small city the size of Harrisburg, that can be an overwhelming thing to have homeless flock here, it’s like a Mecca or a destination point. Jesus said the poor you will always have with you. I guess it’s a reflection of the relative nature of wealth and poverty.

Homelessness has been around for centuries and society has had numerous reactions and responses that have included criminalizing, displacing, and warehousing but the stance is beginning to shift in a direction of reforming shelters to provide resources and support for homeless individuals. Communities continue to change through gentrification and urban policies, but it is essential that homelessness is not hidden because it does not discriminate and could very well show up at your doorstep.
Appendix

Appendix A

Homeless Shelter Resident Interview Questions

1. What program are you a part of? What do you think of it so far?

2. What hobbies/interests do you like to do?

3. What do you think of Harrisburg? Why did you settle here?

4. How has the city changed since you’ve been here?

5. How was it growing up?

6. How much school have you had?

7. Do you consider yourself homeless?

8. How do you compare yourself to the other residents and overnight guests?

9. What job did you have before you became homeless?

10. How long have you been homeless? How long have you been at the shelter?

11. How many times have you been homeless?

12. How did you become homeless and decide to come to the shelter?

13. How do you feel about your situation?

14. What problems or challenges have you faced being homeless?

15. Have you used drugs or alcohol? How has the rehabilitation process been helpful?
16. What have you learned from being homeless?

17. Do you have any spouses/children? How is your relationship with them?

18. What does your family and friends think about your situation and how have they tried to help?

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**Shelter Questions**

19. Have you been to more than one shelter or soup kitchen?

20. What was your perception of shelters before you came here?

21. Have the homeless shelters been helpful to you? Why or why not?

22. What part does religion and faith play at the shelter?

23. Can you recall any memorable events that have happened at the shelter?

24. How have you and the other residents/guests interacted with each other in the shelter? Issues?

25. How do you feel about the shelter staff?

26. How has the staff interacted with you and the other residents/guests in the homeless in the shelter? Issues?

27. Have you felt unsafe at the shelter?

28. Do the residents have the ability to have input or say in how the shelter is run?

29. How do you feel about the shelter program and how the shelter is run?

30. Are there any policies that you disagree with?

31. How could the shelter better help you?

32. If there was something you could change about the shelter, what would it be?
33. What have you learned from being at the shelter?

34. Do you plan on staying in contact with any of your fellow past or current residents or staff?

35. Would you recommend the shelter to a friend or relative?

End of Shelter Questions

36. What has been your experience with the community?

37. Have you been in trouble since being homeless?

38. How have the police treated you? How does that make you feel?

39. Have you ever lived on the streets?
   a. What have you done to survive on the streets?
   b. Have you ever begged or panhandled before?
   c. What kinds of people do you look for to give money when begging?
   d. What time of day gives you the best results?
   e. What location works best?
   f. What is the typical amount given or asked for?
   g. How often do you ask for money?
   h. How successful is begging or panhandling?
   i. Is the use of a sign or a verbal request more effective?
   j. What do you do with the money that people give you?
k. What kinds of things do you look for when dumpster diving or gathering

l. What valuable resources/things do you look for to sell or trade?

m. What have you used for a shelter?

n. Have you lived in a homeless camp before?

o. Which do you prefer, shelter or street?

40. Have you been on welfare or used food stamps?

41. Are you a veteran?

42. What is your daily routine?

43. What areas of the city do you spend the most time and avoid? Why?

44. What do you value and miss most since being homeless?

45. Do you feel like you control your life or something else controls it?

46. What is your definition of success?

47. What are your views or opinions toward the homeless?

48. Why do you think the shelter was established where it is in Harrisburg?

49. Do you think the location should be moved? To Where?

50. What are your thoughts about how the public views shelters and the homeless?

51. What are your thoughts about how politicians and the police view shelters and the homeless?

52. How do you feel about the following policies?
1. Anti-loitering laws, spike strips on buildings, public feeding ban, outlawing homeless camps

53. What advice would you give people to avoid being homeless?

54. Do you feel that anyone that is homeless should go to a shelter?

55. Is there a difference between a homeless person begging for money on the street and organizations asking for donations?

56. Do you think homelessness in Harrisburg is a serious issue, if so, what contributes to it and how can it be handled?

57. What are your plans for the future?
Appendix B

Shelter Staff Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your job title and what the position does

2. How long have you been working at this shelter?

3. Why do you work at a shelter?

4. Do you have other jobs besides working at the shelter?

5. What was your perception of the homeless and of shelters before you started working at the shelter?

6. What image or images come to mind when describing a homeless person?

7. Do you think people can get out of being homeless without using shelter services?

8. Why do you think people become homeless?

9. Have you had any experience with being homeless?

10. If you were homeless, what would you do?

11. How does the shelter help the homeless? What kinds of services does the shelter offer?

12. What part does religion play at the shelter?

13. Can you recall any memorable events that have happened at the shelter?

14. How many people get back on their feet after leaving the shelter?

15. How many people come back to the shelter?

16. What message does the shelter try to send?

17. How have the homeless interacted with each other in the shelter?
18. How has the staff interacted with the homeless in the shelter?

19. Have you ever felt unsafe in the shelter?

20. Are there any residents that you have trouble with?

21. Describe your ideal resident

22. Have you had issues with other staff members?

23. How difficult is it to separate yourself from the job?

24. Have you known any of the residents prior to them coming to the shelter?

25. Do you stay in contact with any past residents?

26. Do the residents have the ability to have input or say in how the shelter is run?

27. Have you seen an increase or decrease in homeless residents at the shelter since you started working at the shelter?

28. Why do you think the shelter was established where it is in Harrisburg?

29. Do you think the location should be moved? To Where?

30. Should the shelter be visible to the public or blend in?

31. What is your definition of success regarding working with the homeless?

32. Taking into account burnout rate for social service positions, do you plan to continue working at the shelter long term?

33. What are your thoughts about how the public views shelters and the homeless?

34. Why do you think more people do not volunteer to help out or donate?
35. What are your thoughts about how politicians and the police view shelters and the homeless?

36. How do you feel about the following policies?

   Anti-loitering laws, spike strips on buildings, public feeding ban, outlawing homeless camps

37. Is there a difference between a homeless person begging for money on the street and organizations asking for donations?

38. Do you think homelessness in Harrisburg is a serious issue, if so, what contributes to it?

39. If you could change something about the shelter, what would it be?

40. How do you think the homeless issue can be resolved?
References


