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SERVING THE POOR:

A case study of how Sharing and Caring Hands impacts the lives of the urban poor

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

By

DEAN R. HILDEBRANDT

IN PARTIAL FULLFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

August, 2011

UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

We certify that we have read this dissertation and approved it as adequate in scope and quality. We have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects, and that any and all revisions required by the final examining committee have been made.

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Acknowledgments

Thank you:

LeAnn – for teaching me beauty.

Zach – for teaching me courage.

Andrew – for teaching me grace and forgiveness.

John – for teaching me more than I knew existed. My ontological and epistemological perspectives have expanded because of your influence.

Alla – for teaching me your contagious and energetic quest for knowledge.

Mary Jo and Dick Copeland – your selfless love and caring heal people. You are an inspiration.

Abstract

Serving The Poor:

A case study of how Sharing and Caring Hands impacts the lives of the urban poor

Homelessness is a serious national issue. It carries a significant cost to our society in terms of both current financial expenditure, and perhaps a much greater cost, the loss of human potential. Related research has provided many quality indications on how to assist this population, but little interpretive work has been conducted to truly understand the experience of serving and supporting the homeless in a manner which helps them achieve housing and life stability.

This case study seeks to understand how one particular non-profit organization in Minneapolis, Sharing and Caring Hands, seeks to serve and heal this disenfranchised population. This case study included thirty-eight in-depth, as well as significant record reviews and time spent observing the operations at Sharing and Caring Hands.

This case study includes a number of unique findings. The interpretive nature of the study allowed for the findings to present themselves over an eighteen month period. Paramount among the findings is that Environment is a critical factor in creating a healing experience, self-determination and self-efficacy are critical to a person's ability to improve their station in life. The most important finding was that the presence of unconditional love is also a significant ingredient to the growth and development of this disenfranchised population.

The implications for this study on future research are numerous. The study would prompt a natural longitudinal study to further examine the longevity of the healing nature

of the experience at Sharing and Caring Hands. A positive study at Sharing and Caring Hands would also be valuable in that it would enable a review of a more expansive group of individuals. Finally, study is warranted to further examine how the financing mechanism involved in supporting a non-profit also impacts the service paradigm and service offering.

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Chapter One

Introduction

In his audio-book *A People's History of the United States*, Howard Zinn (2003) recalled an anonymous quote, "The cries of the poor are not always just, but unless we hear the cries we will never find justice" (Introduction). Sharing and Caring Hands has been hearing the cries and serving the poor for more than 25 years. What can be learned from an organization that has simply and effectively served the poor for this extensive length of time? That is what I was seeking to find.

Homelessness and social marginalization are a major national social concern. Government spending has increased to support this population over the past 10 years. In 2000 the National Alliance to End Homelessness initiated a plan to end homelessness by 2010. In 2005, the 109th Congress of the United States of America put forth the House Resolution 1471/S.709, the Services for Ending Long-Term Homelessness Act (McCarty, 2005). According to the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (2008), as of 2008, there were 73 Federal programs that may deliver assistance to the homeless or may combat homelessness. The programs are not necessarily solely focused on homelessness, but may include services which serve this population. The programs are all connected with one of three aspects of homelessness: understanding homelessness (inclusive of keeping demographic records), mitigating the prevalence of homelessness, or service and support of the homeless. Of the 73 programs, fifteen were specifically targeted to support the homeless. The 73 programs had total federal funding of nearly \$410 billion for fiscal year 2006. The fifteen targeted programs received Federal funding of nearly \$22 billion (USICH, 2008).

In addition to the substantial federal funding, 53 states and territories have “created intergovernmental partnerships to end homelessness” (USICH,2008). As of 2008, over 300 Mayors and County Executives have “committed to a 10-Year Plan” to end homelessness (USICH, 2008). There may indeed be more people working in federal programs, and initiatives aimed at “solving” homelessness, than there are homeless.

Yet, the impact of these programs, and the related spending, is debatable. A 1996 study by The National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty estimated that there were 760,000 homeless at any one given night and between 1.2 million and 2 million people who experience homelessness in a given year. A 2005 study by the National Alliance to End Homelessness found that approximately 750,000 people were homeless in January 2005. This substantial population would indicate that existing efforts and methods of solving the issue of homelessness have not yet been fully effective. It strikes me that there is not a lack of desire or effort to end homelessness, but the desired results have certainly not yet been achieved.

Homelessness and poverty are clearly a significant national issue that has not yet been effectively resolved. Perhaps even more significant than the financial impact of governmental funding and political involvement, though, is the marginalization of the homeless and the uncounted poor. The lost opportunity of the people has a real financial cost, and is certainly a moral disgrace, for our nation.

A great deal of research has been conducted regarding the homeless and urban poor (Toro, 2007). Existing research frequently points toward homelessness either as a logical outcome of insufficient service distribution for at risk populations or as a socio-economic issue. Manifestations of the former thought process include that the homeless

are alcoholics, drug abusers, or mentally ill (Knecht & Martinez, 2009). These beliefs do not necessarily match with reality however (Link *et al.*, 1995).

Another theoretical basis for homelessness is that it is simply a socio-economic issue. Causes consistent with this theory include insufficient affordable housing and scarce jobs with income sufficient to support housing. Again, these theories fall short from explaining the totality of the issue when measured against real results that I discovered through this research (Burt, 1993).

Perhaps a more ambiguous theory on the primary cause of homelessness is the “single calamity hypothesis” (Craighead, 2004). This hypothesis states that homelessness grows out of a singular event or issue which, when combined with other factors, leads to homelessness. This theory is not as simple or neat as others, and includes the added concern that it could happen to any of us. The theory may, however, be a more accurate description of how homelessness occurs in many instances, and it was certainly more consistent with many of the experiences of the people whom I interviewed.

It may be helpful to think of causes of homelessness in the following framework:

Individual Issues	Example: Acute illness	Example: Untreated Drug Abuse, Untreated Extended illness
Structural Issues	Example: Severe weather issue - hurricane	Example: Lack of affordable housing
	Single Calamity	System Theory

Figure 1. Homelessness framework of causation

In short, there is a great deal of research, and many theories, on what causes homelessness. The reality is that each of these theories has merit and is a likely causal impact in some cases. Yet, we still struggle with clear identification of how to best help this population. We also spend significant money and energy treating various symptoms. Little research has been conducted, however, to discover how to effectively serve the aggregate needs of this population, either before someone becomes homeless or after. Said another way, many studies have addressed individual aspects of homelessness and social marginalization, but additional research is needed regarding programs that effectively work at helping this population (Toro, 2007). The purpose of this study is to identify what works at one specific, non-governmental, social service agency. One organization that has served this population for the past 25 plus years is Sharing and Caring Hands.

Background Information

Sharing and Caring Hands, a Minneapolis-based, non-profit organization, serves the homeless and urban poor in rare fashion. Sharing and Caring Hands was founded by Mary Jo Copeland in 1984 as a soup kitchen serving a noon meal to about 35 homeless people on the streets of Minneapolis, Minnesota. In 1985 Mary Jo personally signed a three-year lease for a storefront location in downtown Minneapolis and placed a sign in the window saying “Sharing and Caring Hands.” Her goal for her relationship with the poor was to “love unconditionally” (M. J. Copeland, personal communication, 2008). In 1998 Sharing and Caring Hands was forced to move due to zoning changes. The organization moved multiple times. The current 5.3 acre parcel of land was purchased in 1992 for \$1,050,000. The original building was built at that time at a cost of \$6,500,000. In 2000 Mary’s Place was expanded at a cost of \$6,000,000. The original lease, signed with a personal guarantee, and all subsequent work has been conducted solely through private donations.

This organization is rare for many reasons. First, this non-profit entity is completely privately funded. It does not accept funding from the Federal or State government, nor does it accept funding from general philanthropic organizations such as the United Way. Per Copeland, these entities require extensive documentation and “paperwork dehumanizes the poor” (M. J. Copeland, personal communication, 2009). Sharing and Caring Hands is funded solely through the donations of individual contributors.

Another aspect of Sharing and Caring Hands that adds to its rare existence is that there is a significant level of collocation of services. Many shelters combine a few services, such as temporary shelter and a soup kitchen. Sharing and Caring Hands provides a vast array of services however. It provides a food shelf, over 1000 hot meals per day, private shower facilities for 35 showers per day, 92 fully furnished apartments for temporary housing, a youth center for young adults, dental services, vision services, tutoring services, legal aid, and transportation assistance. This array of services is truly unique in the social service arena.

An additional element which adds to the rarity is the sense of service to the poor that exists at Sharing and Caring Hands. Each day Mary Jo Copeland washes the feet of poor who are in need of new footwear. This simple, symbolic gesture of servanthood is a daily reminder to all of the purpose for which Sharing and Caring Hands exists – to serve the poor. This is an element that frequently does not exist in the bureaucracy of many other social service organizations. Mary Jo Copeland believes that she is helping to “heal broken people” (M. J. Copeland, personal communication, 2009).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to gain a greater understanding of how one particular not-for-profit entity, Sharing and Caring Hands, has served the homeless and urban poor so effectively for over 25 years. During this time various governmental entities spent countless dollars and human resources searching to find an appropriate solution to these issues, yet Sharing and Caring hands experienced remarkable success on a relatively minuscule budget. I wanted to understand what they do to be so effective and how they do it.

Research Question

The central research question for this qualitative case study was “How does Sharing and Caring Hands serve the homeless and socially marginalized?” More specifically, “What does Sharing and Caring Hands do to “heal broken people”? The “how” of this research question runs much deeper than a recitation of the services provided however. With this research study, I was seeking to elicit the deeply rooted “how” – “how” this organization ‘heals broken people’. Additional research questions are “What is the impact of the work of Sharing and Caring Hands?” and “What does Sharing and Caring Hands do to achieve this impact?”

As a corollary to this question, I intended to examine why this particular organization works, to the extent that it does, and what can be learned from the entity in hopes that it may be replicated to serve others more effectively.

Importance of Study

This research is particularly relevant because there is a growing body of knowledge suggesting that providing co-located services to support this at risk population shows promise in mitigating both the financial and social cost of homelessness (Blue-Howells, McGuire, & Nakashima, 2008). The goal of this study is to research one particular organization (case study) solely dedicated to serving the needs of the poor. This research should augment current knowledge to help us better understand programs and practices that serve this community and act as a launching point for life improvement for the clientele.

This research may also be significant in growing the understanding of the role of Organization Development in the social justice of homelessness. Critical Theory has

been utilized to examine social justice since the Frankfurt School in the late 1920's. Per Horkheimer, Adorno, and Noerr (1947), the objective of the Frankfurt School was "to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them" (p. 70). Certainly the work that is being conducted at Sharing and Caring Hands is an effort to liberate those being served from the shackles of homelessness and urban poverty. Understanding the work of Sharing and Caring Hands may build a greater understanding of the current context of Horkheimer's liberation.

This topic is of particular importance to me because there is great cost involved with homelessness and urban poor. The financial cost, as has been documented, is significant in terms of a portion of government spending. Unfortunately though, the cost in terms of human impact is worse. The National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty (2009) documented that children are fifty percent more likely to die in their first year of life if they are born into unstable housing. The National Coalition for the Homeless, in a study conducted from 2000 through 2007, documented that on average one homeless person died per day in Los Angeles County, with death occurring on average thirty-six percent earlier than an average life expectancy. People literally die in our streets. I simply believe we can do better as a society.

This research is of particular importance to me because I innately see a population that has significant value and potential that is being unrealized. I believe that there are opportunities to help this population and I want to know how we can perform better, on a larger scale. This subject causes a visceral reaction to me.

Researcher Bias

The bias that I brought to this research resides on several levels. First, as a frequent volunteer at several social service organizations in the Minneapolis area, I interact frequently with those who are socially marginalized in some manner. Second, Mary Jo Copeland has been an inspirational person to me for many years. Her selfless dedication to serving others is a higher level of being to which I aspire.

On a completely different level, my research is biased by the fact that I am part of the social mainstream, with a loving family and a solid career in the business world. Much of the experience of the people being served by Sharing and Caring Hands is well outside of my direct experience.

My research was also biased by the fact that I spoke with only English speaking people. There are a number of other languages spoken by people visiting Sharing and Caring Hands, but I did not speak with any of them. It is certainly possible that people speaking other languages would have different experiences both as a homeless person or as a person seeking service at Sharing and Caring Hands.

Another area of researcher bias that existed in this research is that I believe there is good happening at Sharing and Caring Hands. I have known of the organization for many years and occasionally volunteered there. My previous experiences have left me with a very strong belief that Sharing and Caring Hands helps people – purely and simply. This preexisting paradigm is the primary driver to explore the research question “what do they do to heal broken people?” What do they do to help?

In short, my bias is that I am very close to some aspects of this research, and well removed from other aspects. This perspective prompts me to be quite interested and

curious about the unique nature of Sharing and Caring Hands and how it serves this population.

Definitions

Throughout this text I will use terms that are somewhat subjective in nature. Therefore, I offer the following definitions as I have perceived them through the research process.

- Homeless – When I use the term homeless, I am referring to the people that visit both the day center, as well as the residents of the temporary housing at Sharing and Caring Hands. While the people that visit the day center may actually not be living without shelter, they are certainly experiencing life at the edge of significant housing instability.
- Help – The term help, for the purposes of this research, is defined as providing a service to a person or people at Sharing and Caring Hands.
- Heal – The term heal, for the purposes of this research, is defined as assisting a person at Sharing and Caring Hands achieve a more positive life outcome and achieve housing stability.
- Success - The term success, for the purposes of this research, is defined as achieving an outcome with a homeless person that is either helping or healing, as defined above.

These terms will be used considerably throughout this case study. The definitions are consistent with how these terms are described by the stakeholders of Sharing and Caring Hands.

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

Current research in the area of serving the homeless and socially marginalized is primarily focused on a few key elements: counting the homeless, causes of homelessness, documenting efforts to combat homelessness, and preventing homelessness (Sommer, 2001). Precious little qualitative research has been conducted however to actually understand what works from the perspective of helping the homeless and urban poor (Toro, 2007).

This first major area of research relative to the homeless and urban poor is counting this population. Measuring the degree of homelessness has been viewed as an “essential business practice” (Cowan, 2008) by the Bush administration homelessness czar, Philip Magano, who also frequently referred to homeless people as “consumers.” Unfortunately, these categorizations and euphemisms only serve to further distract the general public and our political leaders from the reality and pain that exists for the homeless and urban poor.

There are several prominent difficulties associated with counting the homeless. Perhaps the most destructive issue regarding counts is the definition used for ‘homeless’. In reality, as Shinn and Gillespie (1994) pointed out, chronic housing instability is the overriding issue at hand. Further, the only real benefit from an effective count of the homeless would be to drive additional resources to the problem. As previously documented herein, however, there are extensive resources available. The salient issue at hand is how to better utilize available resources to effectively serve this hurting population.

A second major area of study regarding homelessness is documenting the causes of homelessness. Metraux and Culhane (1999) pointed out that these arguments generally fall in to one of two categories: “individual” or “structural.” Structural causes are issues such as insufficient supply of low cost housing or insufficient employment opportunity. Individual causes are issues such as alcoholism or mental illness. The broad categorization, or more specific causal identification, may be helpful on an aggregate social level. It does not, however, move us closer to understanding of how to best serve the needs of the homeless and urban poor, regardless of the causative issue, which is the focal point of this research.

Craighead and Nemeroff (2004) added to the framework of documenting causes for homelessness. Their work classifies homelessness as being caused by either a “Single Calamity” or a “System Theory.” A Single Calamity is defined as “single crisis” (p.437). The System Theory deals with “interconnected parts or units, the implications of one having implications on the actions of another” (p. 305). This framework helped construct a framework to think about how people had gotten to Sharing and Caring Hands. It also helped frame how Mary Jo Copeland views service to the homeless, as each person interviewed through fieldwork was dealing with multiple issues – i.e., more of a System Theory approach than a Single Calamity approach to service.

A third major area of study is the documentation of the governmental efforts to serve and support the homeless population. Much of this work is done by the vast supply of governmental bodies and appointees involved which focus significant time and energy on measuring the effectiveness of the \$22.5 billion presently spent directly on homelessness (Lindbloom, 1991). Indeed, there are routine efforts to place the blame of

this issue with each past administration. As of 2005, there were more than 60 Federal Government backed programs to mitigate homelessness, and serve and support those that are homeless (McCarty, 2005). Again, perhaps there is real value in documenting governmental efforts to combat homelessness, but the documentation does not directly help solve the issue. My research, though, is designed to document results – the results of one social service entity to serve a hurting population.

The final major area of study is ending homelessness. This aspect of research is most closely aligned with the prominent question in this research. Much of the research is conducted on the broad basis of understanding how to serve this overall population. Martha Burt is frequently cited by the National Alliance to End Homelessness and others as having done extensive research in this manner. Her research has exposed findings which will no doubt be of value in this research project, either as a source of context, corroboration, or tool for adding insight. Most significantly, Burt and Hall (2008) have studied and offered change initiatives to Homeless Assistance in the District of Columbia.

Additional research which provided a framework for this case study includes Slesnick, Dashora, Letcher, Erdem, and Serovich (2009), who presented an effective method of building greater understanding of effective interventions may be through the use of Action Research (Argyris, 1994). The use of Action Research includes the participants in the research to help build the knowledge and understanding of the issue. This research technique was reviewed, but was not utilized in fieldwork designed to develop a greater understanding the efficacy of the work at Sharing and Caring Hands.

Extensive additional literature review was conducted to provide context and further understanding of the themes discovered through this case study. The additional literature review will be presented along with findings in Chapter 4.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

The purpose of this research was to study how Sharing and Caring Hands provides healing in the lives of the homeless and urban poor. This study was conducted as an interpretive case study because the goal was to study this single social service agency. Further, an interpretive case study was used because a theory of what was being done to facilitate healing was not being presented. Instead, the findings emerged through the course of the inductive research. The specific methods utilized to conduct this research primarily were observation and in-depth interviews with the key stakeholders of Sharing and Caring Hands. The majority of the data was collected from the poor being served at Sharing and Caring Hands. Interviews were also conducted however, with volunteers, the nuns that serve, and Mary Jo Copeland, the founder of Sharing and Caring Hands. Interviews were also conducted with various local government officials, as the public in general is also a key stakeholder for this organization. I also reviewed the current and historical literature created by Sharing and Caring Hands. In addition, my personal experience as a volunteer and visitor to Sharing and Caring Hands has added context.

Qualification of Approach

Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995) present support for the use of qualitative case study as a valid research methodology. Per Erickson, as cited by Stake, “the primary characteristic of qualitative research is the centrality of interpretation” (p. 42). The primary purpose of this research is the interpretation of the activity at Sharing and Caring Hands.

Yin (2009) stated that case study research has become a common research method in several specific areas of research, inclusive of both social work and sociology. He further stated that the more one's research requires in-depth description of a social phenomena, the more applicable case study research will be. In his framework for choosing a research method, Yin presented case study as an appropriate method when the form of the research question is "how" or "why", there are no controls over behavioral events, and the focus of the research is on contemporary events. All of these criteria fit nicely with this particular case study.

Research Design

The primary methods of data collection for this study were interview and observation. Interviews were conducted with staff, clients, and volunteers. The interviews began as semi-structured with specific issue oriented questions directing the conversation toward specific areas of inquiry. There were then detailed, lengthy conversations with a great deal of room to explore salient issues as they were discovered. The loose structure allowed me to facilitate gathering thematic information, and also to elicit the "unique experiences, special stories to tell" (Stake, p.65) of the interviewee. Interviewees were selected via volunteer sign-up sheets in both the day center and the residence. Interviewees were plentiful, as many people sought me out to visit during each day of field research. Interviews with clients and staff took place in the quieter and more private areas of the dining room for day visitors, and in public meeting rooms for the residence clients.

Interview Structure

Because this case study relied heavily on interviews for data gathering, several protocols for triangulation were used to ensure themes were interpreted accurately. Interviews were conducted in both individual and group settings. Transcriptions of interviews were “member checked” whenever possible and group interviews were pursued further for member corroboration of specific events and stories. Group interviews occurred when multiple people approached me at one time, in a group, and offered to visit with me in that context.

The interviews took place at various locations within the buildings of Sharing and Caring Hands. The interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed for further analysis. Follow up interviews were conducted to clarify any ambiguity from initial interviews.

Fieldwork Frequency

In specific, I visited Sharing and Caring Hands on thirty-eight separate occasions over an eighteen month period through fieldwork, in addition to my visits prior to formal fieldwork. I conducted semi-structured interviews using an interview guide (Appendix A) with twenty-four homeless people, nine staff members, eight volunteers, and three members of the community at large. I then transcribed the interviews and then reviewed the transcripts thoroughly for recurring themes. Once themes were interpreted, I reviewed my understanding of the themes with the interviewees to ensure that I heard and understood correctly. My shortest interview lasted only about five minutes, and my longest interview lasted nearly twenty-five minutes.

To augment the interviews, I reviewed current and historical documents pertaining to Sharing and Caring Hands. This review included books, newspaper articles, government documents, internal documents, and promotional information. The documents “serve as substitutes for records of activity that the researcher could not observe directly” (Stake, p. 68). These documents were reviewed in their native context to help understand the growth and development of the organization, as well as the current position. Data for this study were collected and analyzed until “resources have been exhausted” (Merriam, 1998, p. 165); “categories have been saturated” (Merriam, 1998, p. 165); and / or there was an “emergence of regularities” (Lincoln & Gobi as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 164) – meaning common themes had emerged and outlying responses had been accounted for.

Observation Structure

Observation was also a significant method of data collection. McMillan (2004) describes observation as “comprehensive in that it is continuous and total” (p. 262). The researcher must spend significant time in the field in an effort to develop a deep understanding of the context (Merriam, 1998) and meaning of the phenomena being observed. This research involved several months of consistent fieldwork, much of the early portions being observational in nature. From the more observational involvement, I began visiting with people informally. After about a month of observation and wide-ranging visiting, I began formal interviews. My visits were generally twice per week – one weekend day, and one weekday. This allowed me to observe and interview a strong cross section of the people being served by Sharing and Caring Hands, as well as those providing the service. In total, I visited Sharing and Caring Hands thirty eight times, and

spent just under two hundred hours in formal field work activities. Additional field work research was conducted in interviews with other organizations, including other social service organizations.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed through both “direct interpretation of the individual instance and through aggregation of instances” (Stake, 1995, p.74) until consistent themes emerged. Direct interpretation occurred through the development of understanding of individual instances and events. The understanding developed as I added context to individual instances through repetition of interaction with the clients, volunteers, and staff of Sharing and Caring Hands.

The repetition of interaction with clients of Sharing and Caring Hands also provided opportunity to aggregate multiple individual instances and responses to observed themes. These themes were further investigated through follow up questions, and confirmation of observation with the staff and volunteers of Sharing and Caring Hands. The data generated from individual instance observation and theme generation was rigorously pursued in an effort to develop the true understanding of the “how” Sharing and Caring Hands heals broken lives.

Confidentiality

To mitigate any risk of general participant identification, pseudonyms have been used for all interviewees with the exception of Dick Copeland and Mary Jo Copeland, and Chris Moore, the Director of Mary’s Place, the transitional residence. Input from the Copelands and Moore have been attributed to them, as this is critical to the contextual content of the input. Individual participants were de-identified by assigning a random

number to each participant and then using that number as the sole identifier from that point forward. The roster of participant and assigned number has been kept in my locked safe, where it will remain until the time of data destruction. Further, the pronouns “she” and “he” have been used for all client and staff interviews. Also, direct quotations have been edited to ensure that any potential identification of the person making the quote is avoided.

Validity and Generalizability

“The real business of case study is particularization, not generalization” (Stake, 1995, p. 8). The goal of this research is to tell the story about how one organization is serving this at risk population. Lessons learned from this research should augment the current body of knowledge, however, to help us better understand how to effectively serve the homeless and mitigate homelessness in our society.

Findings from this research have been validated through extensive member checks. Checks on findings from observation and research were conducted with staff and individuals interviewed. Validity for this research has been checked via comparison to other research, quantitative and qualitative, related to this subject matter. There are many studies corollary to this study. The validity of this study has been thoroughly analyzed relative to the currently existing work.

Limitations

This case study was bounded by the specific organization being studied, Sharing and Caring Hands. This case was chosen due to the unique nature of the organization. Sharing and Caring Hands is unique because it is a large non-profit, social service entity which serves over twenty thousand people per month. According to an internal brochure

created in 2006, Sharing and Caring Hands also has an annual budget exceeding five million dollars, yet it does this work without government support or support from general philanthropic entities such as the United Way. Sharing and Caring Hands is unique, and the study was limited to this organization.

Further, this study is limited by the timeframe of field work and the “volunteer” nature of participants. I interviewed only people that volunteered to visit with me, and I did not follow up with any of the interviewees after the fieldwork was complete.

Chapter Four

Research Findings

On my first day of field research at Sharing and Caring Hands, I simply observed. It was a Sunday and I walked around the facility, portfolio in hand, taking notes about what I was seeing and hearing. I also took several pictures. After the noon meal had been served and most of the cleanup done for the day, Kevin, a volunteer who coordinates the weekend activity, stopped me and asked if I wanted to talk a bit. I did.

The conversation opened with me stating that the level of giving of the volunteers that day amazed me. The volunteers were engaged, happy to be there, and really focused on serving the people. Kevin stated that if I hung around long enough, I would understand that the volunteers serving the meal at Sharing and Caring Hands were receiving a far greater gift than any of the people they were serving that day. This was the first time at Sharing and Caring Hands that I was both logically confused, and emotionally skeptical. As I would come to learn, I was wrong, and that error of understanding what I was seeing was an occurrence that would repeat itself many times.

Kevin also mentioned that I should “lose the notebook and stop taking pictures.” He told me that it made people nervous about me. My demeanor was creating an image of authority. It should have occurred to me that not all people coming to a homeless shelter are anxious to interact with people that appear as an authority figure. Again I was humbled by how little I understood of this world.

So started my first day of fieldwork, a journey that would be life changing for me, and hopefully informative for the field of Organization Development.

Physical Environment

The physical organization that is Sharing and Caring Hands is comprised of a campus of three buildings located on the northwest edge of downtown Minneapolis. The three buildings have three separate and distinct purposes. The first building is the main building for Sharing and Caring Hands. It provides day services and meals to the homeless and urban poor. The second building, Mary's Place, provides temporary transitional housing and other services for the homeless, which are designed to enable and facilitate the transition to stable housing. The third building, the Youth Center, provides daycare for young children and a teen center for the families living in Mary's Place and other urban poor seeking assistance from Sharing and Caring Hands.

The main building for Sharing and Caring Hands is designed as a day center to serve homeless and urban poor. The building is a two story building, built in the early 1990's. The top level of the building is largely a cafeteria for the hundreds of people that come by everyday for a warm meal. Nearly one thousand meals are served each day (Tour information sheet, 2010). The cafeteria is a warm, light blue color. The area is incredibly clean and well kept. The area is mopped after every meal, and the tables and chairs are also washed down after each meal. The area is cleaner than any other public cafeteria that I have ever witnessed, inclusive of hospitals and other governmental buildings.



Figure 2 . Sharing and Caring Hands as seen from North Seventh Street, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

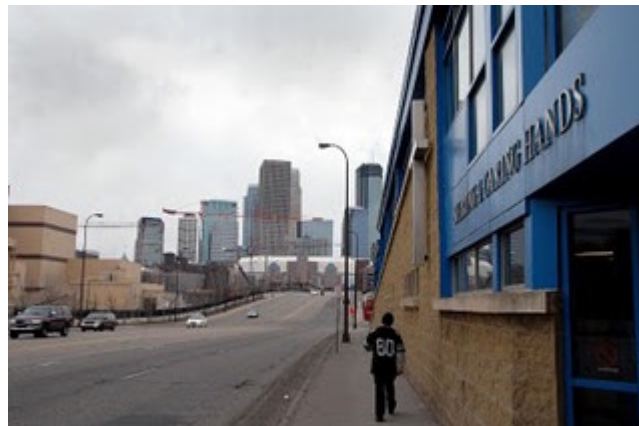


Figure 3. Sharing and Caring Hands as seen from North Seventh Street, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The cafeteria is adorned with artifacts consistent with the Catholic faith. There are pictures of the Mother Mary, Jesus Christ, and related symbols. The Christian symbols

are omnipresent, but not overpowering. Other artwork in the cafeteria includes Native American art and a calendar of upcoming events.



Figure 4. Lunch line at Sharing and Caring Hands



Figure 5. Cafeteria at Sharing and Caring Hands



Figure 6. Cafeteria at Sharing and Caring Hands

There is a general uplifting feeling in the cafeteria at Sharing and Caring Hands. 1950's pop music plays on the sound system. The music seems to always be lively and upbeat. As I found out later, Mary Jo chooses the music station, along with most other details concerning the operation of the organization she founded. The staff working in the cafeteria includes the security staff, which is large, strong, and serious; the volunteers, who always seem to be smiling and happy; and Mary Jo, who appears to be buzzing around constantly addressing several issues at the same time while making everyone feel

welcome and important all at the same time. The support staff also works just to the side of the cafeteria. These folks are continually serving the poor, at Mary Jo's direction, by providing vouchers for various county services, bus tokens, rent deposit assistance, and an endless array of other methods of assistance. Collocation of services takes on new meaning at Sharing and Caring Hands. The services provided are determined by the needs of the homeless, rather than an environment in which a pre-structured basket of goods and services is presented and delivered to assist the person in need to the extent possible.

The cafeteria is also very orderly and calm. Drugs and alcohol are strictly forbidden from all Sharing and Caring Hands facilities, and I saw no evidence of either in my entire fieldwork experience. Fighting is also strictly forbidden. The security team, along with the general clean, calm atmosphere, seems to further encourage the orderliness. I did not see anyone step out of turn in a line or have any level of disagreement in my entire fieldwork experience.

While I did not see any existence of illegal activity in my fieldwork experience, that observation does not mean that the activity did not exist. In 2006 Minneapolis Police made 17 arrests in and around Sharing and Caring Hands property for drug offenses (Brandt, 2008). This would indicate that there is a level of criminal activity at, or around, Sharing and Caring Hands. Crime also exists throughout Minneapolis and other urban areas, however. I believe that the criminal activity would exist regardless of the presence of Sharing and Caring Hands. It likely occurs there because it is a group gathering location. By 2008 the City of Minneapolis had documented, in a private Memorandum of Understanding with Sharing and Caring Hands regarding future licensing of its meal

service, that much of the criminal activity had been eradicated through increased security presence and security cameras. Given the population that congregates at Sharing and Caring Hands, a base level of criminal activity is not surprising. Drug abuse is frequently cited as a Single Calamity cause of homelessness (Craighead, 2004).

One of the other services provided on the main level at Sharing and Caring Hands is foot care. On a daily basis Mary Jo Copeland washes the feet of the homeless people in need of care. She then provides new shoes and socks, which provide a significant comfort to a person in serious need. Seeing Mary Jo wash a homeless person's feet, and care for them, is incredibly moving. In interviews with both homeless and volunteers, several people commented specifically about the experience of witnessing Mary Jo wash feet and how meaningful it was for them. She is caring and loving with a person who is sorely lacking both. She gently washes the feet in a tub of soapy water while the individual relaxes in a comfortable chair.

During my interviews in the cafeteria, several people commented about the ability to simply sit in a safe and comfortable environment. It was significant for them. One person interviewed commented that "it is hard to be scared all the time. The street can be a tough place." Another interviewee at the shelter commented that "it has been a long time since I was warm."

Mary Jo caring for people in the manner she does is an act of unconditional love that is quite foreign to this population. Mary Jo says "I am sharing Jesus' love" (M. J. Copeland, personal communication, 2009). Her symbolic gesture of washing the feet of the homeless teaches all involved on a daily basis the need for grace and love as a basic

human need. I witnessed Mary Jo washing feet many times during my time at Sharing and Caring Hands. It remained as moving the last time I witnessed it as the first.



Figure 7. Mary Jo Copeland washing feet

The business offices of Sharing and Caring Hands also exist on the main level of this building. These offices house the business operations of the organization and hold the inventory of goods that need to be available on a daily basis – items such as shoes, socks, baby clothing, etc. The business office also keeps very detailed information regarding the service delivered to each individual served. While the services are free and the staff works to accommodate every request, detailed records are also kept of each service provided via an internal database designed to track services provided from the source of the service through to the consumer of the service. Mary Jo appears to drive a very benevolent organization, but not an ignorant one. She believes in helping people improve their lives, but she does not believe in enabling bad habits. One staff member interviewed commented on a man that was requesting bus fare to another city for the third time in the

span of two months. The staff member stated that “Mary Jo told him no. He needed to get his life right first.”

The lower level of the main building is used for distribution of food and clothing which has been donated to Sharing and Caring Hands. Every day there are truckloads of food and clothing that come in on the docks. And every day this same food and clothing is distributed out to people in need. The clothing that comes in during the morning is spread out on large tables. After the lunch is served upstairs, the lower level is opened for people to come down and help themselves to donated food and clothing. There is no monitoring of the inflow or outflow of goods. What comes in, goes right back out. It just goes to different people. Again, the traffic is orderly and calm for the most part. At the first sign of disorderly behavior, one of the very large security guards yells something to the effect of “calm down or we will need to close for the day,” which instantly calms the situation.



Figure 8. Clothing distribution area – Sharing and Caring Hand



Figure 9. Food shelf distribution – Sharing and Caring Hands

One of the great mysteries to me during my time at Sharing and Caring Hands was where the food and clothing comes from. I asked staff, many volunteers, and even Mary Jo. All had some version of the same response – “It comes from people that want to help.” When pressed as to how much food comes from whom and how they make sure they have enough of each kind, the responses continued on the same theme – “It just shows up” was a common response. Never did I talk with anyone that had any sort of “logistics” role. The entire organization operates on a paradigm of ‘God will provide through people, and we will serve the people’. They just believe it will happen, and it does.

While the fact that the food shelves remain well stocked may seem miraculous, the reality is less so. The source of food is actually less about happenstance and more about execution. Mary Jo has cultivated powerful relationships with many donors over the past twenty-five years. She has developed relationships with many grocers, food wholesalers, and restaurants. Many provide both financial and ‘in-kind’ support. In

essence, much of the food provided is donated by donors who own the food in the course of their business and donate it because it was not used in their business. This food is also augmented by goods that are purchased. Food is purchased to ensure that meals are well rounded from a nutrition perspective. This does not diminish the belief structure regarding food stores – it simply points again to the reality of that which seems to be miraculous is actually very consistent hard work and a continued focus on doing what is necessary to deliver for the homeless being served.

Also located on the lower level of the Sharing and Caring Hands building are private showers, bathrooms, an ophthalmology facility, and a dental facility. The private showers and bathrooms help people living on the street achieve some level of privacy and dignity by cleaning themselves when they have the opportunity. The ophthalmology and dental facilities are operated on a consistent, structured basis. Appointments are based on a first come, first served basis. There is no charge for the services provided. The volunteers working in the professional services offices provide a much needed health care service to people who would simply go without absent this service provider.



Figure 10. Private shower areas in lower level of Sharing and Caring Hands



Figure 11. Dental services at Sharing and Caring Hands

The second building on the Sharing and Caring Hands campus houses a child care center, and a youth center. The upper level of this building consists of a child care center, which is free to the residents of Mary's Place. The child care center is similar to any day care center. There are separate areas for various age groups and each area is filled to the brim with age appropriate toys and activities. Again, the immediately striking aspect of the environment is the cleanliness of the facility. Everything is kept orderly and washed down on a daily basis. The interior of the facility appears as though it could be a child care center that exists in any suburban neighborhood.



Figure 12. Outside of Teen Center at Sharing and Caring Hands



Figure 13. Daycare Center at Sharing and Caring Hands

The lower level of the second building is a youth center. This center has pool tables, an electronic gaming area, and a workout area complete with weight lifting equipment. This area, similar to the child care center above, is kept clean and orderly. There is a feel of structured enjoyment in these areas. The activities available are similar to any other youth center. The rarity is that this facility is available with no governmental support, and the structure provides for a safe, low stress environment for teens that have a significant need of this type of environment.



Figure 14. Weightlifting area in Teen Center



Figure 15. Mural on wall as you walk in to the teen center

The third building on the Sharing and Caring Hands campus is the transitional residence, Mary's Place. The residence contains 92 apartment style living facilities of various sizes. The apartments are one, two, and three bedroom units that are fully furnished and ready for occupancy. The rooms are ready for someone to move in with simply the clothes on their back – and that is exactly what happens on a frequent basis. The facility houses approximately three hundred and seventy-five people on most nights. The residents generally stay in this facility for a few months – some as few as two months, others as many as eighteen months.



Figure 16. Mary's Place transitional residence

Mary's Place also contains a laundry facility, computers available for the residents, and a prayer chapel. There are also counseling rooms and education rooms located within Mary's Place. Many residents use the computers for updating resumes and conducting job and apartment searches. Residents are expected to be continually working to improve their current station in life.

Mary's Place also has both indoor and outdoor play areas for children. The play areas are structured to provide a safe, secure area for children that frequently do not have access to such a facility. These areas also experience a high level of security.



Figure 17. Laundry facility at Mary's Place

The residence is always fully occupied and there is a continual waiting list for people in need. The application process is a simple one – an individual makes a request to Mary Jo, and she either grants or denies that request. The feel is that Mary Jo would choose to help all people and grant anyone a room, but she accepts only people who she believes show a significant need and are ready to help themselves progress toward independent living. Mary Jo alone makes the decision as to who receives an apartment. She frequently consults with other staff members, especially Chris Moore, the residence Director, but she always makes the final decision.

Similar to all other areas within the Sharing and Caring campus, Mary's Place is clean and orderly almost beyond comprehension. There seems to be a constant effort to wipe down or sweep up any type of debris. The residents clearly take pride in their environment and want to help make sure it stays nice, clean, and pleasant. There is a constant rotation of volunteer and resident janitorial staff who make painstaking efforts to ensure a pleasant atmosphere.



Figure 18. Children's play area outside of Mary's Place

The security system and presence at Mary's Place is substantial. The entrance is controlled via one locked door that a security person must engage to allow the door to open. All other windows and doors are closed to entrance. Further, there are security cameras in nearly all common areas which are monitored constantly by the security staff. Access to the facility is very secure during all hours of the day and night.

The security system at Mary's Place is also significant from the perspective that it impacts the ability for the organization to carry out its' mission. Several interviewees commented on the ability to feel 'safe' because of the controlled access and strong security presence. This allows residents to focus on developmental issues such as employment searches or apartment searches, rather than primal safety, which had been the primary concern for many residents prior to staying at Mary's Place.

The entire Sharing and Caring Hands campus is located just one block west of the Minnesota Twins baseball stadium, Target Field. Mary Jo has faced political pressure

many times to have her facility moved away from popular public areas. The facility has been moved multiple times, but has been at its current location since 1992. She still faces this continual pressure, yet stays focused on the work to serve her constituency, the poor. When she built the current site, this area was quite undesirable. Now that the land is highly desirable, Mary Jo will again face pressure to move. She knows that the pressure is inevitable, but feels that dealing with the pressure is simply a part of her work. She states that “most people would prefer to not know that this problem exists, but we need to care for them” (M. J. Copeland, personal communication, February, 2010).

The Poor being Served

The consumers of services at Sharing and Caring Hands and Mary’s Place have an incredibly wide array of backgrounds and catalysts that led them to this place in their lives. Some were born poor and simply remain poor, going from one service organization to another looking for a better life. Others were successful and had a positive life, but events worked against them and they are now homeless. Many times, as Mary Jo stated, the residents “are not homeless; they are loveless” (M. J. Copeland, personal communication, December 2009). They simply do not have a social network of loving, caring family and friends to help them through tough times.

Many of the patrons with whom I spoke were from other parts of the country originally. Some were even originally from other countries. Various events had brought them to Minnesota. In all cases, however, the residents viewed Minnesota as their permanent home and viewed the state as a great place to live. They were surprisingly upbeat about their prospects of improving their station in life, and were committed to working to achieve that outcome.

Volunteers

The volunteers at Sharing and Caring Hands have as varied of backgrounds as the poor that are being served. Many of the volunteers come from church groups. Others, however, are connected by innumerable events, issues, and circumstances. The one commonality of the long-term volunteers is that they did not originally start out to serve as a long-term volunteer. They simply started volunteering, felt a calling to the organization, and never stopped coming. One volunteer that echoed a very common sentiment commented that “once I started coming, I was hooked. How could I stop coming?”

The volunteer experience is powerful. Volunteers generally work only one or two days per month, with the schedule being set months in advance. One volunteer commented that he had not missed one of his work days at Sharing and Caring Hands in over ten years. He serves Sunday breakfast twice a month and said that to him it is the singular most important thing that he does. It is more important to him than even his own family events. Several other volunteers had very similar responses when asked of the importance of this particular volunteer activity in their life.

Volunteers are generally charged with working in the day center, not the residence, or the youth center. Hence, the experience is predominantly serving meals to the urban poor and homeless. This effort includes preparing the meal, serving the meal, and cleaning up both the kitchen and eating area after everyone has left. For most volunteers, this is their only connection to people in this economic stratum. The experience with this group, as well as the sight of Mary Jo washing feet after the meal becomes quite powerful for the volunteers. Volunteers are frequently moved to tears

either in the prayer prior to opening the front doors for the homeless to come in and eat, or at the sight of Mary Jo washing feet. One volunteer commented that she had seen Mary Jo wash feet “hundreds of times”, and yet still feels that “this is the closest thing we do to being the people God wants us to be.”

The volunteers often come from church groups connected on a long term basis to Sharing and Caring Hands. The group members may change, but the groups as a unit stay connected for many years. Some volunteers also just show up as individuals wanting to help, and then become a part of one of the long term groups. Either way, the volunteers generally gain a level of consistency in service that leads them to Sharing and Caring Hands on a frequent, structured basis. While the availability of food and clothing resources seems to happen in a relatively unstructured manner, the delivery of those resources to the poor is very structured. Indeed, the work schedule for volunteer groups is carried in to the future with no end date set. This schedule is perpetual and detailed to the point of knowing the service dates for each group and lead person within each of those groups.

Employees

The employees at Sharing and Caring Hands also come from many different walks of life. Most work at the center as a calling, as well as a job. They feel this is an opportunity to provide assistance in the lives of some people that are less fortunate. Each employee interviewed was individually asked if they viewed their work at Sharing and Caring Hands as a job or a calling. All of the employees interviewed commented that they viewed their position as much more of a calling to help people than a job. Even the security officers, who have a very practical role, view their efforts as primarily caring for

people. This frame of thought is consistent throughout the employee ranks, from the security staff, to the administrative staff, to Dick and Mary Jo Copeland.

The security staff generally has a bit of a rougher background than other employees. Several have experienced homelessness themselves. All view their work at Sharing and Caring Hands as both a job and an opportunity to help others. They are by definition accustomed to, and experienced with, confrontation. They perform their work, however, just like all others connected to Sharing and Caring Hands – with compassion and kindness. The infrequent times when they are called to a confrontational action, prompts a response that is powerful and authoritative, yet benevolent. Again, many of the security guards have also experienced homelessness, and they understand the pain involved. The guards create a safe, secure atmosphere, but do so with compassion.

One security guard told me of his experience with homelessness when I asked him about how he viewed his role at Sharing and Caring Hands. He told me that he became homeless after being discharged from the Marines in the mid 1990's. He said he experienced being beaten and "having the boots put to me." He knows the difficult life that the homeless lead from first-hand experience, and is intent on "helping other people, just like Mary Jo helped me."

During my observational time at Sharing and Caring Hands, it was quite common to see one of the security guards helping people around the building, or carrying a plate of food for someone. At one point, a security guard was even holding a child on his lap, helping the child eat while the single mother helped her other child eat. Scenes like this were not uncommon and are exemplary of the family feel of the organizations efforts on a daily basis.

The office and administrative staff have experience in office settings with other organizations, and have chosen to change positions and work with Sharing and Caring Hands. The staff generally moved from for-profit enterprises toward Sharing and Caring Hands to fulfill the mission of the organization and feel a part of an organization in which they believe. They are high energy, qualified people with a great heart for serving people. They are faced on a daily basis with myriad of odd issues and needs, and they simply work tirelessly to serve the people in need. These folks also coordinate all of the collocated services and volunteer schedules for both Sharing and Caring Hands, and Mary's Place.

The leadership of Sharing and Caring Hands is primarily vested with Dick and Mary Jo Copeland. Dick jokingly called the organization a "monument to wives who will not listen to their husbands." (Dick Copeland, April 6, 2009) He told me that he has many times told Mary Jo "we need to stop. We cannot afford this." (Copeland, 2009) Yet the organization continues to serve a growing need and population. Dick leads a majority of the business side of Sharing and Caring Hands.

Mary Jo is a smallish woman in seemingly perpetual motion. She is less than five feet tall and slightly built. Her demeanor is very quiet and conservative. She has a quick smile and is constantly interacting with people. She is so active that Sharing and Caring Hands has placed a treadmill in the Board Room so that Mary Jo can walk while in meetings.

Mary Jo leads the service side of Sharing and Caring Hands. She is responsible for leading the mission of the organization. She is consistently and continually focused on delivering service and love to the hurting people that show up each day. She keeps the

energy and emotion high on what seems like a perpetual basis. I saw her on many different days during my field work, but never saw her down or quiet. She was always upbeat and encouraging others.

While Dick Copeland likes to present himself as a secondary figure in the organization, he is anything but secondary. He leads the business of Sharing and Caring Hands. He has decades of quality business experience, and brings a wealth of competencies to the organization. He also has a strong heart for service and is an absolute rock in terms of serving as a foundational cornerstone for Sharing and Caring Hands. He is front and center on all key issues, and continually takes on the details of running a business so that Mary Jo can simply serve the poor.

Chris Moore is the full-time Director of Mary's Place, the temporary residence. This position is also a key leadership position in the overall Sharing and Caring Hands organization. Chris works very closely with Dick and Mary Jo. Chris is a talented, intelligent college graduate who could easily be climbing the corporate ladder in nearly any for-profit institution. He portrays the same warmth and caring nature as Mary Jo. He is articulate, genuine, and energetic. Chris exudes service. He effectively directs a service organization, and connects with the residents in a manner that fosters an environment of caring and love. Chris presents an honesty and warm nature that is inspiring. Chris truly has the skill set to be an operational leader and advocate in any significant customer service organization.

The teen center manager is Rob Wills. Rob is paraplegic and competed in the Paralympics in Barcelona in 1992 and Atlanta in 1996. His motto is "Failure is not an option" and he lives this motto daily. Rob is a central presence for the kids in the teen

center and coordinates everything from youth groups to pizza parties. He speaks very openly about faith and belief and how those things will lead a person through difficult times. Rob has managed the teen center since 1998.

A day in the life of Mary Jo

Mary Jo Copeland is the heart and sole of Sharing and Caring Hands. She may not be a Saint, but that is not necessarily how many who know her view it. She is up every morning well before daylight to spend hours in prayer to prepare her for her day of service. She then focuses a vast majority of her day on serving the needs of the homeless and poor all day, every working day. She stands in the front of the day center meeting one on one with the poor that need help. She hones in on the real needs of the individuals quickly and efficiently, all the while showing compassion and love for the person that she may interact with for only a few minutes. The line to see her at times extends for fifty people or more, yet she takes time to serve and care for each individual.

On many occasions I stood in the business office of Sharing and Caring Hands watching and listening as Mary Jo met with the individuals in line. Many times the requests that people make of Mary Jo are relatively simple. The requests are for bus fare, rent assistance, information on how to obtain a state identification card, or some similar issue. Mary Jo listens patiently to the request and turns to the staff to instruct them as to how she would like to respond to the request. Frequently she simply asks the staff to check the Sharing and Caring Hands database to make sure the person is not abusing the services, and then she serves the request. Other times, the request may be for something quite difficult such as temporary housing. Mary Jo talks with the person making the

request a bit longer about these sorts of requests. Ultimately, she decides the outcome and instructs her staff as to how the person will be served.

The database that Sharing and Caring Hands uses is extensive. The organization tracks each service that is provided with significant detail. People that come in for a warm meal or to visit the food-shelf or clothing center do not need to present a state identification card. For all other services, however, the person must present an identification card so that the service distribution can be tracked.

Questions that came to mind frequently was, “how does Mary Jo know what to do with each person?”; “what if she is wrong?” I do not know how to answer these questions. It certainly appeared as though Mary Jo consistently worked with the people to determine their needs and help them. If she either failed to serve someone, or served them ineffectively, I did not see it.

After Mary Jo has completed meeting with each and every individual who wants to visit with her, she leads the entire group in a pre-meal prayer. At this point, she commands the room like a corporate kingpin and extols the group to understand that “we are all broken people” and “we are all in need of God’s love” (M. J. Copeland, personal communication, 2009). She quickly and effectively takes a room that is loud and appears in complete chaos to a point of quiet calm. She then takes it to a point where everyone appears ready to join in a group hug. The occupants of the room then go about having a good home-cooked meal, with the setting resembling more a church social than a homeless shelter. There is a general mingling of people from many different races, cultures, and age groups. All seem to be helpful to one another and generally patient and kind. There is love in the room.

When the meal has been served, Mary Jo announces that she will be washing feet for anyone in need. She then goes to an area adjacent to the cafeteria. Next, she kneels to her hands and knees, and literally washes the feet of the homeless. This simple act of humble service prompts a deflation of any pride and puffery that may exist among volunteers or other workers. In an instant all connected to the organization – be it employee, volunteer, or the poor being served – know exactly what the organization is founded to accomplish, and there is a renewed drive to serve. One of the office employees that has worked at Sharing and Caring Hands for over eight years commented that this is her “daily reminder of what we are here to do.” The downstairs area is also opened up at this time, so that the people can go there and acquire food and clothing. They can also take showers and receive dental and eye care during this time.

After the meals have been served, the people have worked their way through the food and clothing available, and the professional services have been dispensed, the cleaning begins. Essentially all areas of the building are completely washed down each day. The kitchen is thoroughly cleaned, all tables and chairs are washed down, and the floors are scrubbed with a power-scrubber. The entire building is cleaned and looking fresh by mid- to late-afternoon, and everything is ready for the next volunteer crew to come in the next day and start the process again.

Mary Jo starts her day by attending a prayer service at 4:00 AM. After prayer she begins working in the administrative offices by 7:30. She goes to Mary’s place to visit with residents there from around 9:00 until around 10:30. She then goes back to Sharing and Caring Hands to begin the lunch routine. She generally leaves Sharing and Caring Hands around 3:00 in the afternoon. Because she begins her day with prayer at about 4:00

AM, this is already a long day. Somehow she also fits fundraising and public relations in to her day as well. This is her routine five or six days per week, depending on fundraising and business commitments.

While our conventional perspective of work and time may lead one to view Mary Jo's day as a shorter 7:30 to 3:00 day, her day should be seen from a different perspective. Her time from 4:00 to 7:00 in prayer and meditation is critical to her role at Sharing and Caring Hands. Just as a busy executive must take time to re-energize, Mary Jo systematically structures time on a daily basis to ensure that she is prepared for her position. Just as an athlete must prepare the body, Mary Jo views this as a time when she "must prepare my heart and mind" (M. J. Copeland, personal communication, 2009). This daily ritual is critically important, especially when viewed in the context that Mary Jo does not take normal vacation. Her only travels away in the past 25 years have been trips to carry forward the mission and work of Sharing and Caring Hands.

A great example of the mysterious efficacy and drive of Mary Jo Copeland, and how the organization works, comes from one of my early days of visiting for fieldwork. I met Mary Jo at about 8:30 AM on a Tuesday morning in the offices next to the main cafeteria of Sharing and Caring Hands. About twenty minutes in to our meeting, someone came into the office with a gift for Mary Jo. It was a beautiful, large metal crucifix. Mary Jo took it, thanked the person, and a few minutes later handed it to another staff member with barely a word. We later went over to visit Mary's Place. At about 10:00 AM, we were walking down a hall and I saw the same crucifix hanging on a wall as though it were made for that exact spot. When I asked Mary Jo how that happened so quickly and perfectly, she simply stated that "It is so beautiful; we need to have it available for people

to enjoy” (M. J. Copeland, personal communication, 2009). The fact that, with seemingly almost no direction, a wonderful outcome occurred as though it were pre-ordained did not even seem to register with her. She was focused on interacting with me, and those around her. In her mind, the crucifix was just something that was supposed to happen.

Government as Stakeholder

Sharing and Caring Hands has an interesting relationship with the various governmental entities. At times Sharing and Caring Hands is lauded for its wonderful contribution to society. A beautiful example of this scenario is when then Governor George Bush, during his nominee acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention in 2000, commented on Sharing and Caring Hands saying “Government cannot do this work. It can feed the body, but it cannot feed the soul.” This sentiment has been expressed on a recurring basis by state and local government officials as well.

Conversely, there is a consistent pressure to control the potential that Sharing and Caring Hands becomes a negative congregation place for people who are not generally part of main stream society. This sentiment can be best exemplified by a statement made by Ricardo Cervantes, the Deputy Director for Licenses and Consumer Services, in a comment he made regarding Sharing and Caring Hands. When asked about the security risk of having Sharing and Caring Hands at its current location near downtown, he stated that “that place has been on my radar since I walked in the door” (Brandt, 2008). While the governmental entities are pleased that the people are being served, there is a frequent sense that they would much rather control the service, or better yet, have the problem simply go away.

The Copeland's' perspective on the governmental entities also has a strange dichotomy. They acknowledge the recognition from politicians for the wonderful work that they have done, but they also express concern that those same politicians bring pressure upon Sharing and Caring Hands due to redevelopment plans on a relatively frequent basis (D. Copeland, personal communication, 2009). The staff at Sharing and Caring Hands spoke highly of the police officers that patrol the areas near the campus. The staff frequently cited a positive relationship with local field authorities. The overall relationship is positive and pragmatic – both sides value the other, but also understand that they are at times on different sides of a tough issue.

Shelter Comparison

While the vast majority of my fieldwork experience was spent at Sharing and Caring Hands, inclusive of Mary's Place, I did also visit five other homeless shelters, most in the Minneapolis area. The experience of visiting these shelters helped crystallize the themes that had emerged during my time at Sharing and Caring Hands. Each of the other shelters was effectively serving its mission. If the shelter's purpose was to provide a warm meal at noon, it was doing so. If the mission was to provide a safe residence for someone for a limited period of time, it was doing so. I did not visit any establishment that was wholly missing the mark of its intended purpose.

Primarily, though, the other shelters could be characterized by what they were not. In each case the shelter was not a place of love and compassion. They were serving their constituency per their mission, and were doing a wonderful job, but they were stopping where their mission stopped. Conversely, Sharing and Caring Hands has a broad mission of “compassionate response to the needs of the poor” (Mission Statement, 2009).

This expansive mission presents an organization focused not on serving a meal or providing a bed, but on serving the needs of the poor – serving people. This subtle, but significant, difference became very clear as the themes from fieldwork emerged.

The organization that appeared the most similar to Sharing and Caring Hands was People Serving People, a Minneapolis non-profit founded in 1982 to serve the homeless. Similar to Sharing and Caring Hands, People Serving People also has extensive co-location of services, and takes an approach driven to serving the many different needs of the homeless. A common sentiment about how many of the organizational leaders that I interviewed perceived their goals was expressed by Steven Cramer, Executive Director of Project for Pride in Living, when he stated that there are four pillars that must be addressed to help the homeless find stability: “Health, Housing, Education, and Employment” (S. Cramer, Personal Communication, 2010). The reality is though, that other organizations focus much more on the pragmatic delivery of service (a meal or a bed), while Sharing and Caring Hands focuses on serving and caring for the person.

There are two major differences between People Serving People and Sharing and Caring Hands. One primary difference is that People Serving People does not have nearly the same presence of love as Sharing and Caring Hands. This difference is evident both in the artifacts that adorn the walls of the two organizations, as well as how the staff interacts with the residents. The artifacts that adorn the walls at Sharing and Caring Hands are primarily religious in nature. The religious frame is the organizational foundation and the artifacts are a symbol of the manifestation of the love. The artifacts at People Serving People are primarily much more sectarian. Further, the relationships developed at People Serving People, while very positive, are very pragmatic and focused

on serving multiple specifics need rather than serving the person. There are certainly quality, holistic, relationships that develop at People Serving People, and other service providers, but the relationship always starts with a service provided. At Sharing and Caring Hands, the relationships always start with a warm welcome, a prayer, and, frequently, a visit with Mary Jo.

Another major difference between the organizations is that the funding for People Serving People is primarily government. In 2009, 72% of the total funding for People Serving People was generated from government contracts (2009 annual report). Conversely, in 2009, 0% of the total funding for Sharing and Caring Hands was generated from government contracts (Financial Report). This difference in funding mechanisms certainly impacts the organizational structure of the organizations and also creates additional significant stakeholders for the People Serving People entity to accommodate. Sharing and Caring Hands is able to focus, without constraint, on serving the poor. People Serving People must focus on the poor, but additionally it must develop, and live within the structure of, the various funding sources.

Theme Development

Themes from fieldwork were developed through the observation and interview process. Each interview was transcribed and thoroughly reviewed and coded. The primary themes were then developed through this deep review of the interview transcripts and observation notes. Through this review, certain topics and terminology resurfaced multiple times. The commonality of interview participant's responses to questions and general talk tracks were identified. These topics were then studied for thematic consistency and importance. Once the themes were identified and vetted, they were

reviewed with the interview participants for clarity and completeness by meeting with the participants either individually or in groups and talking about my interpretation of their responses and key themes. Once the participants and I were comfortable with the themes that had been developed, I conducted additional literature review to understand the contextual nature of my findings.

Themes are presented in order from those most generalizable and consistent with existing research, to those that are least documented in existing research. This manner was chosen because it is how the interpretive process worked. The themes that I developed and researched initially were quite common. As I mined the data further, more complex themes developed which were less well documented in existing research and less common in other homeless shelters.

Theme One – Thankfulness

Many themes emerged during the process of studying Sharing and Caring Hands. Thankfulness for the services being provided was one theme commonly cited by residents when asked to describe their feeling of this homeless shelter. This theme was exhibited in both the day center and Mary's Place. Although the services provided at the two facilities are very different, consumers of services at both Mary's Place and Sharing and Caring Hands repeatedly expressed thankfulness. At no time did I hear any mention of wanting more – the people were only thankful for what was being provided.

Comments from people at the day center that supported this theme included statements such as “I am just glad to have a home cooked meal” or “these clothes will be so much warmer.” People at Mary's Place made comments such as “just having my own

place is so nice” and “this is the first time I have been able to sleep in the same bed for a long time.”

The theme of thankfulness of homeless people for the services that they receive has also been cited by many other studies. Hays (2006) found that residents in a shelter in Minneapolis were “thankful they had a place to live” (p. 2). Further, Adkins (2010) found similar sentiment in a Dallas faith-based homeless shelter, the Stewpot. The thankfulness of the shelter residents spans geographic boundaries and residence structure. Even in shelters with significant rule structure and limited resource availability, residents remained thankful for a warm meal and a warm bed (Nuncz and Fox, 1999).

In terms of discovering why and how Sharing and Caring Hands is successful, this particular theme did not differentiate Sharing and Caring Hands from other shelters or service organizations for the poor. Adkins (2010) and Wolfe, Toro, McCaskill (1999) have documented the feeling of thankfulness felt by the people being served. So, while this theme is interesting, it was not evidentiary of the answer to my original questions of “how” and “why” Sharing and Caring Hands enjoys the level of success that it has attained.

Theme Two – Desire to “Give Back”

A corollary to the thankfulness theme was that many of the recipients of help have a strong desire to get their lives straightened out and then come back to help others at Sharing and Caring Hands. As Benzies, Rutherford, Walsh, Nelson, and Rook (2008) document, this theme has also been cited in many other studies. Several people whom I interviewed expressed serving others as a primary driver and motivator for them to get their own life right. Two interviewees in specific commented on their desire to “volunteer

for Mary Jo.” One person, who had experienced serious health issues, discussed her desire to spend “the rest of my life just helping people, like Mary Jo does.” In reality, few actually do come back to Sharing and Caring Hands to help, and the staff prefers that the people stay focused on improving their own lives. Caring for others though, seems to be a strong driver for people in the process of finding their path to a successful life. It was a definite driver for the security guard referenced earlier.

The desire for previously homeless individuals to “give back” has been managed very effectively in some scenarios. A study by Connor, Ling, Tuttle, and Brown-Tezera (1999) documented the benefits of individuals previously homeless in assisting in the health education for current homeless individuals. While others have experienced success with this type of assistance, the staff at Sharing and Caring Hands downplays this aspect of emotion from the people in the shelter. Chris, the Director of Mary’s Place, states that they “want people to stay focused on getting their lives back on track” (C. Moore, personal communication, 2009). He stated that if “someone comes back at a future time it is great, but the best thing they can do is get their own life right” (C. Moore, personal communication, 2009).

One example of a resident at Sharing and Caring Hands that had a desire to give back was a former resident name Jeff. Jeff had graduated from a Minnesota high school in the late eighties. After high-school he went into the Marines, and later served in armed battle in Iraq. After serving several additional years in the Marines, Jeff left the service and found several odd jobs in southern California. Eventually he found himself without money, any quality relationships, or housing. Jeff spent several months living in the streets. He came back to Minnesota with a girl he had met. That relationship later ended

and he again found himself homeless. Again he spent several months living in the streets. He spoke very movingly about the constant fear of living in the streets, even for a very large man trained to defend himself. He also spoke of the pain of living without housing or money.

Jeff eventually came to Sharing and Caring Hands. He at first visited only the day center for a meal and some warm clothes. Jeff later moved into the residence. Once there, he spent time developing skills that would later help him gain employment as a security guard. Jeff found permanent housing and worked elsewhere as a security guard for three years, and then came back to Sharing and Caring Hands as a significant member of the security staff. Jeff felt called to come back to Sharing and Caring Hands. He stated that “it is my purpose to come here every day and help the people, just like other people helped me.” Jeff is bright, articulate, presents himself very well. He was also homeless for nearly one year.

Again, while this theme was significant and remarkable in terms of understanding the population being served, it did not differentiate Sharing and Caring Hands from many other service providers. There are certainly nuances as to how other service providers interpret and accept help from those that they have previously served, but this particular theme has been replicated many times across many different service providers. Therefore, this theme did not yet provide a definitive “why” or “how” in my quest. It was an elementary clue, but not definitive.

Theme Three – Quality Environment

Another consistent theme in the interviews was that the environment at Sharing and Caring Hands is conducive to better lives. Environment has been frequently cited as a

key factor in creating a healing atmosphere for shelter residents (Ovrebo, 1994). Residents and day guests frequently commented on everything from the soothing music, to the clean hallways, to the friendly volunteers. The overall effect of these details, though, cannot be overstated. The environment provides a clean, soothing, safe place, free of violence and fear. For many of the people receiving services, this type of environment is a true gift. If they have been living on the street, and many of them have, simply achieving these base human needs becomes incredibly comforting. Many are coming to Sharing and Caring Hands from environments in which even physical safety is not a given.

Conversely, environments that are less supportive have also been documented for the difficulty they create. Hausman and Hammer (1993) effectively document the “chaos” of many shelter environments and how it can “erode the mother’s confidence, relationship with her children, and position as ‘head of house’” (p. 361). While other shelters that I visited seemed silent on the issue of environment, the staff at Sharing and Caring Hands, and Mary’s Place, was acutely aware of the repercussions of the environment they were creating. Indeed Mary Jo and Chris both spoke of how important it is to maintain the clean, safe environment. Finlayson, Baker, Rodman, and Herzberg (2002) also documented the lack of personal control felt by many residents and the negative impact that this environmental variable has on personal growth.

This aspect of the importance of environment has been well established in work by Kelling and Wilson (1982). His research documented the importance of the visual environment and how minor degradations build quickly. Sharing and Caring Hands understands the need to keep things neat and orderly. As Chris Moore states, “we control

what we can because there is a lot that we cannot control” (C. Moore, personal communication, 2009).

Turkheimer (2009) conducted extensive work on the relationship between environment and IQ. He found, in part, that the environment is not a critical factor for IQ, with the exception of the lower socioeconomic stratum. In that lower socioeconomic stratum, environment and the many variables that make up that environment, indeed have a significantly negative impact on IQ. His work goes on to present, however, that there is no one specific factor about environment that can be identified to have the specifically negative impact on IQ for this population. It is the whole of the environment that has a negative effect on the individual. Mary Jo and the staff at Sharing and Caring Hands seem to understand this phenomenon at a very fundamental level. They seek to serve the total person and change the environment of the homeless and urban poor. Regardless of what has brought the person to Sharing and Caring Hands, the goal once they are there is to serve the whole person. Turkheimer’s work would indicate that perhaps that is the only effective methodology for effectively impacting this population. The whole nature of change at Sharing and Caring Hands was most effectively described when I asked one resident of Mary’s Place about what was different in his life since gaining residency there. His response was “Everything.”

This theme begins to present a few key elements as to both how Sharing and Caring Hands is different than many other shelters, and as to what is occurring that so positively impacts the people being served. The environment at many shelters I visited felt somewhat down and sad. In some cases the buildings were in a bit of disrepair. As stated, Sharing and Caring Hands is bright, positive, and downright cheery. There is a

definite feeling of positive energy. This physical environment is a starting point for building people up.

This theme is one manifestation of what Sharing and Caring does so effectively. Essentially they view all of the seemingly minor details as important aspects of their relationship with the poor, and they then seek to create an environment and relationships which facilitate growth and development. The theme of overall environment began to build a framework of how Sharing and Caring Hands interacts with the poor, and why it works. The future themes would be much stronger manifestations of this basic, but critical, paradigm.

Theme Four – Rules are Beneficial

Another consistent theme from interviews was that the rules put in place at both Mary's Place and Sharing and Caring Hands are helpful. The rules are essentially designed to keep the environment consistent and conducive to growth. Some of the basic rules include:

- Weapons of any kind are not permitted on the property.
- Any sort of violence is strictly forbidden.
- Drugs and alcohol are not permitted on the property.
- People are expected to be honest about their identity and the services they seek.
- People are expected to respect the personal space and privacy of others.
- The residence has a 9:00 PM curfew. All residents must be inside the building each night by 9:00 PM unless they have a work permit.

- All residents that are employed must put half of their take home income in to a savings account. They then receive this money back when they move out of the residence.
- Residents must keep their apartment in a clean and orderly fashion. Weekly room checks ensure strict compliance with this rule.
- All residents are required to be either working at a job, or working to get a job.

The general atmosphere of the staff and volunteers at Sharing and Caring Hands is one of expecting the best of people. There is a feeling from both staff and residents that these rules, and others, will be followed, and that the people are truly working to improve their lives. This is evidenced in several comments from staff and residents. One nun commented that “these are God’s children and they have faced challenges, but they are now finding their way.” A resident commented that “we all want the same thing – a good life and nice place to live.”

This atmosphere is strengthened greatly by Mary Jo’s seemingly innate ability to see through anyone trying to game the system or take a shortcut. She quickly sees those intentions, and can single handedly shut off service to any individual. Several staff members made comments such as “I don’t know how she does it – she just knows.”

There are certainly times when a person was not identified accurately at the start and was able to take advantage of the generosity at Sharing and Caring Hands. Those instances were dealt with quickly once they are identified, however. This dichotomy of positions – a strong belief in the good of people, and the ability to deal swiftly with the exceptions – creates an environment where people are very open, honest, and driven to improve their

lives. There is really little to be gained by any level of deceit because the end result would be exclusion from an organization that most have experienced as very benevolent and constructive.

The rules that provide the structure for Sharing and Caring Hands and Mary's Place are generally perceived in a very positive manner. That positive perception is not consistent across all other shelters, however. One Mary's Place resident spoke very poignantly about the rules associated with another shelter that she had experienced. She discussed in detail the manner in which the rules indeed provided structure, but also made it impossible for her to gain employment and begin creating a new life for herself. In another shelter, she had been required to spend much of her day in working within the shelter, which made it impossible to work toward external gainful employment. The regressive nature of some rule systems is well documented in related studies by Louisa Stark (1994) and Broadhead-Fearn (2006). The regressive result of the scenario that this resident described was that it made her less employable and created less housing stability than when she had entered the shelter. That experience ultimately led her to Mary's Place, where she was hoping to "get a job and get my own place again."

A significant aspect of how the rules are created and enforced is that Mary Jo has unilateral decision making ability. She has the ability to serve those that she deems worthy, remove those she deems problematic. She also creates the rules and standards that she deems advisable. There is no sense whatsoever that she uses this power in any negative manner, however. In fact, just the opposite – she has built her organization on an ability to wield this power in an incredibly positive, benevolent manner. Having this unilateral ability is significantly different than most organizations of this type though and

allows the organization to react to needs and issues efficiently. There was no other shelter that I visited that had an organizational structure similar to this.

Croutou and Hicks (2003) examined various organizational structures present within homeless shelters and ultimately advocates for a coalition of service providers. Her research indicates that to provide the most efficient service delivery model, there should be a consensus of the various service providers. While this structure is critically important for inter-organization efforts, the intra-organization work at Sharing and Caring Hands appears to occur with great efficacy due to the streamlined decision making of its organizational structure.

Srinivasan and Davis (1991) effectively documented the benefits associated with an organizational structure focused on the empowerment of the shelter residents. Sharing and Caring Hands include shelter residents in the rule making systems for Mary's Place in a substantial manner. While Mary Jo ultimately has final authority for the organization, residents are very active in helping design programs which will assist in the transition from homelessness to a stable housing environment.

The theme regarding rules and structure presented an additional element of difference for Sharing and Caring Hands. The rules present at many shelters appear to constituents, and to me, to be more arbitrary and less focused on growth. Indeed some rules at other shelters are somewhat regressive. One example of a rule that had a very regressive impact was a shelter that focused a great deal on religious teaching. A resident of Mary's Place that had also stayed at that shelter commented that "we spent most of our time in Bible study. I could not get a job or look for an apartment." Rules such as this

extend the dependence on the shelter and create an end goal of housing the homeless, rather than helping the homeless achieve a better station in life.

A frequent comment from the residents at Sharing and Caring Hands was that at other shelters, if they had a job, they would need to pay out a significant portion of their income to the shelter for rent. Each person that made this comment also commented on the demotivating force that this rule presented. Conversely, the rules at Sharing and Caring Hands are all designed to help the person either build positive habits while at Sharing and Caring Hands, or provide safety during their stay. There were no comments regarding arbitrary or capricious rules at Sharing and Caring Hands. Indeed the rules at Sharing and Caring Hands are designed to act as a motivator for positive behavior and positive outcomes, and the rules are perceived as such.

Theme Five – Faith Foundation

Another theme that was certainly present at Sharing and Caring Hands was the presence of faith – specifically faith as expressed through the Catholic religion. Mary Jo is a devote Catholic, and religion is certainly present in many of the artifacts that fill the walls, and the themes of relationships. Many volunteers come from churches.

While faith is present at Sharing and Caring Hands, adherence to any one religion is not a significant point of note. While conducting fieldwork I met people who viewed themselves as Christians, Jews, Muslims, and some that had never really thought about categorizing themselves from a religious perspective. Perhaps the best example of how religion is viewed at Sharing and Caring Hands is a comment that Dick Copeland made to me. He said that “we are all praying to the same God. We just don’t know which group is right yet” (M. J. Copeland, personal communication 2010). His point was that while we

may have many different traditions and subtleties in our various religions, the aspect that binds us is faith. And, in his view, we all believe in something.

An example of how faith is frequently presented by the homeless at Sharing and Caring Hands is conveyed in a conversation that I had with a man as he was soaking his feet before Mary Jo was going to wash them. The man asked me if I was a father, meaning a religious leader. I said yes, meaning that I have two children. He then asked me if I could share some scripture and pray with him. Upon this request, I realized that we were talking about two very different things. I clarified my response and we both laughed. I then told him that I was probably not qualified to lead him in prayer, and that I quite possibly have a different religious background. He responded that “it doesn’t matter; we can just talk to God together.” We then prayed together. We did indeed have very different religious backgrounds, but we talked about the commonality rather than the differences.

The theme of faith foundation is not significantly different than most shelters in one regard. Most shelters that I visited had consistent and frequent references to a higher power. These references ranged from very sectarian based service delivery models to a modest “God is good” type of reference. Chaves (2001) documented the prevalence of the impact of religion on social services. Religious observance is conducted openly among government funded child service entities at a rate of seventy seven-percent (Chaves, 2001).

The theme of faith foundation is significantly different from other shelters in another regard though. At Sharing and Caring Hands the theme of rebirth that is central to Christian teaching is in some sense the very core theme to the entire service model of the

organization. Christian teaching states that God was made incarnate in Jesus Christ. In this teaching, God became human to share love and teach love. This core teaching of the Christian faith is also the absolute core belief structure of Sharing and Caring Hands in the sense that there is a belief that the organization exists to care for the poor and help them be 'reborn' into a stable environment. Sharing and Caring Hands helps the poor experience this rebirth by loving them, helping them believe in themselves again, and teaching them skills that will help them succeed in a new life. In this sense Sharing and Caring Hands exists for the same purpose that God was made human in the form of Jesus Christ.

The modern perception of Christian sacraments in churches with a liturgical tradition, like the Catholic Church, is frequently focused on the symbol itself, rather than what the symbolism means. The meaning of the sacraments, however, is primarily about what is being symbolized. Charry (1995) wrote that the true meaning of the Christian Sacraments is "concrete actions" (p. 1076) by which we are "marked, fed, and touched by the Holy Spirit" (p. 1076). The "concrete actions" create the connection and fellowship that occurs. O'Malley (1992) calls it the "personal empowerment" (p. 186) that comes from the unconditional love and caring that comes in the form of connection to another through the Sacraments. It is the symbolism of how Christ loved us that shows us how to love others. In this manner, when Mary Jo washes feet or serves the poor, the symbol of service and love is important, but even more critical is the real connection and fellowship that occurs to allow the people to feel the potential of unconditional love.

If taken on the surface, the theme of religion does not get to the how or why Sharing and Caring Hands is successful. If taken as a belief structure and an ontological

perspective, it is core to both the how and the why. According to Mary Jo, the foundation for her belief system is her faith and belief in Jesus Christ, as it is nurtured and expressed through the Catholic Church. This foundation is the basis for all that is Sharing and Caring Hands. The belief in rebirth which is central to the Catholic faith is also the faith that Mary Jo exudes every day. She believes that the people her organization serves can be loved, which helps them become successful members of society – and frequently she helps make that true.

Theme Six – Transition

Another key theme from the fieldwork was that the residents view their stay at Mary's Place as a transition. There are several possible housing status transitions possible regarding this population. There can be a transition from stable housing to homelessness, from homelessness to a shelter, from a shelter back to stable housing, and so on. Some of the people at Sharing and Caring Hands had been there only a few weeks, others a few months, but all of them viewed the stay as a transition to a brighter future. The consistent theme from the interviewees was that their stay here was caused by a setback, but they would get things straightened out and be to a better scenario soon.

The longest stay of any of my interviewees was nine months. This was a person who had an apartment and job prior to becoming homeless. While she was by no means well off financially, she did have a stable life and a stable housing situation.

Unfortunately however, she had a severe medical issue that caused her to lose her job, which in turn caused her to lose her apartment. As is common with the people staying at Mary's Place, she lacked a social safety net of family and friends to help her through the tough time. She was still working through medical issues when I met with her, but she

was anxious to get her life back on track and move out of Mary's Place. She stated that "when my eyes went bad, I lost everything. Now I am trying to get it back." She had spent only a few nights on the streets, but it could have been a deadly experience given her diminished eyesight from medical issues. She was now indeed working to get her life back.

Another person whom I met at Mary's Place had been through several transitions of homelessness. Her view of her experience was that there was a consistency of habits and housing for her. When she was in the habit of "partying", she eventually found herself homeless again. When she was in the habit of "doing my work and staying clean", she generally found employment and then housing. She did not consider herself an addict of any type, but said she just enjoyed partying. At twenty-three years old she said she had never really had a mentor to help teach her how to lead a healthy, productive life "until Mary Jo." She believed she was developing the correct skill-sets and habits that would help her stay in a stable housing environment.

Extensive research exists in terms of the nature of transition through a homeless shelter. Wong *et al* (1997) presented significant research regarding trigger events for moving in to and out of shelters. Kuhn (1998) also presented extensive research regarding the statistical data analysis of homeless shelter transitions in aggregate. These aspects of research certainly corroborate elements of this research in terms of timing of homelessness. They do, however, fail to fully engage the human aspect of this transition.

As with earlier themes, the transitional housing status theme is not evidentiary of anything unique about Sharing and Caring Hands, nor does it necessarily speak to the

source of success. It is a theme found in many shelters and day centers. It exists here as well, but it is not a distinguishing trait.

The theme does, however, differ a bit in the end point of the transition and how it is accomplished. As earlier described, often the transition is focused on the status of residency. The transition that occurs and is the focus at Sharing and Caring Hands is a transition of self. It is frequently the personal transition of people who have experienced significant difficulty in life and they need to learn to believe in themselves again. The transition of learning to believe is the transition of importance at Sharing and Caring Hands and the one on which Mary Jo is laser focused. The belief stated frequently by the Copelands and Chris Moore at Sharing and Caring Hands is that when people make the transition in their ability to believe in themselves, they will be able to successfully transition residency as well.

The transition that Sharing and Caring Hands is primarily working to impact is the transition of self-perception of the homeless and urban poor. Masten, Miliotis, Graham-Bermann, Ramirez, and Neeman (1993) determined in a series of studies conducted in a Minneapolis homeless shelter that homeless report a lower self worth and negative perceived academic competence. This is the specific aspect of homelessness that Sharing and Caring Hands understands and systematically seeks to change.

Kurt Lewin (1947) conducted significant work regarding change. He presented a relatively simple model for change offering that there is a need to “Unfreeze”, a process that includes dismantling the existing mind set, from the current condition, “Change”, a process that frequently includes confusion and transition, to the new state, and “Freeze”, a process that includes solidifying the new state as the new normal state in the new, more

positive, state. Sharing and Caring Hands seems to understand this transition of mind set and self perception and systematically drives to help people transition and then “freeze” in a new frame that is conducive to living lives that are much more stable and fulfilling. While there was not one person at Sharing and Caring Hands that used these words in the interview process, staff frequently spoke of “helping them (the homeless) get used to stable housing and a positive routine” (Moore, Personal communication, 2010).

Theme Seven – Self Determination

As a corollary to the theme of the transitional nature of the stay for the residents, Mary’s Place was commonly viewed as a place to begin to experience safety and support, which, in turn, enabled the transition described previously. As Bandura (1990, 1993) presented, individuals’ belief in their ability to determine events in their life (self efficacy) is critical to motivation and accomplishment. For some of the residents, their homelessness was simply a detour from an otherwise ordinary life. They had experienced some type of individual setback, and consequently many had lost hope (Single Calamity Theory (Craighead & Nemeroff, 2004)). Mary’s Place was giving them a chance to start over and build a structure that would be sustaining in their life. Others experienced more systemic issues and expressed that they had lost hope and stopped believing that they could achieve anything (System Theory (Craighead & Nemeroff, 2004)). Still others simply had never believed in their self efficacy. They believed that they were born with no control and continued to have no control.

Many residents, regardless of what prompted them to lose belief, also expressed that Mary Jo and the staff at Mary’s Place believed in them, which enabled them to start believing in themselves. One resident commented that “Mary Jo thinks I can do this”

when referring to a job search. This change in belief is not a quick fix process, and does not happen easily. Mary Jo believes that the entire environment, inclusive of all of the rules and structure, is paramount in creating an atmosphere where people can start believing in themselves again.

Another resident who struggled with Self Determination was a young man named Bill that had emigrated from another country. He had come to the United States full of hope, but with no support mechanism. He started life here with a job and apartment, but also a feeling that he did not fit anywhere. Bill soon found himself living in the streets and completely overwhelmed by the world around him. He had technically become a citizen of the United States, but had no belief in his ability to “build a life here.” He came to Sharing and Caring Hands simply because he “was cold and hungry.” Bill gained transitional housing at Mary’s Place and eventually found his own apartment and job as a janitor in downtown Minneapolis. He was still connected at Sharing and Caring Hands as a part-time, volunteer janitor. In his four month stay at Mary’s Place he had developed a solid belief in his ability to achieve stable housing and employment, and he was living that belief when I met him.

The final aspect of the Self Determination theme that emerged during my fieldwork experience was that we definitely are not all born with the same opportunity. The concept of equality has been debated since Plato. Western society frequently asserts that we are all born equal, and then places extreme value on the ability to ‘pull yourself up by the bootstraps.’ Self determination and personal initiative are certainly traits worthy of admiration. Not all people are born with the personality trait of strong personal

initiative, however, or born into an environment in which these traits are either taught or valued.

One individual whom I interviewed had a significant learning disability due to being born with drug addiction. She had been homeless on a frequent basis for several years and was just beginning to learn the structure and planning practices required to hold a consistent residence and job. She had never thought those things were possible for her, but she was learning and definitely believed it was possible after spending three months at Mary's Place. She viewed her life as lacking self determination, but that there were other possibilities. Her most telling comment was that she "can get a steady job and an apartment" if she followed the game plan at Mary's Place. That game plan included "doing my job search," "practicing my interviews," and "working on how to look nice for my job." All of these steps were elements of her taking control of her life and creating a scenario where she could take significant steps toward self-sufficiency. She did not necessarily see the grand design of the efforts, but saw each step as an incremental move toward gaining a life she desired.

Another individual whom I interviewed had been prostituted out by her mother beginning at age fourteen. She had serious self esteem issues and, at nineteen, was just beginning to see the potential for a life with structure, consistency, and love. She had spent four months at Mary's Place, had a job, and was learning to live a productive life. Mary Jo believed, and this interviewee was also beginning to believe, in new possibilities. She commented that she had wanted to have a good life and "maybe I can go to college some day and work in an office." She was hopeful of someday having a "real family."

Given the fieldwork experience, it became clear to me that it is simply not reality to assert that we all come from the womb with the same start or potential. As Bee (1972) demonstrated as early as 1972, both physical environment and early childhood healthcare have great impact on the lifelong opportunity for success in human beings. These, and other fieldwork experiences, present a very clear picture of people beginning at very different points in life. A vast majority at Sharing and Caring Hands started life in very difficult circumstances. All were trying to improve their station in life. None that I interviewed, however, had started life in a loving, stable, well educated home. This clearly indicates that, at least within this group, homelessness was not caused by a 'single calamity' in an otherwise stable life, but instead it was caused by either a 'single calamity' in an already unstable life or, more commonly, a series of events driven by systemic forces.

The theme of Self Determination and how it is manifested began to hit the very specific point of how and why Sharing and Caring Hands is successful. All other organizations that I visited through fieldwork were focused on providing a specific deliverable. They served a meal, provided a bed, or delivered some other very tangible result. Indeed, if the entity is publicly funded, that is exactly how they would need to operate. Achieving the result associated with the mission of the organization is how they are measured and rewarded. Sharing and Caring Hands operates quite differently however. The first and primary focus of Mary Jo and her organization is to provide unconditional love. This point is made every day at meal time, every day in the residence, Mary's Place, and in many interactions everyday. The unconditional love is then the

catalyst to begin the process of helping someone become a self sustaining member of the community.

Theme Eight – Love

The most important and universal theme that emerged during fieldwork is the sense that Mary Jo loves the people for whom she is caring. For the purposes of this research, love is the agape love based on patience, kindness, and sacrifice. There seems to be a common process of success at both Sharing and Caring Hands and Mary's Place – people start to see that Mary Jo will love them unconditionally, they start believing that they are worthy of love, they start believing that perhaps they can achieve more, they start achieving more, they begin to believe in both their worthiness of love and their ability to contribute to society, they become a contributing member of society.

This process is lengthy and fragile. It is predicated on building quality human relationships. Each step must be preceded by a successful prior step. This cycle, however, is how Mary Jo sees recovery and success for the homeless served by Sharing and Caring Hands. The continuum is also replicable as is evident by the volume of people that move on from Sharing and Caring Hands to an existence free from the burdens of homelessness.

The feeling of caring was also pervasive with the volunteers and other staff members. The general attitude of these workers was one of “if Mary Jo cares that much, so should I,” and “if Mary Jo is willing to work that hard for these people, so should I.” The workers then follow the leading example that Mary Jo presents and provide an exceptional level of service and caring to all consumers of services at Sharing and Caring Hands.

Perhaps the most pervasive theme that emerged during my interviews at Sharing and Caring Hands was the perception that Mary Jo, and the other permanent staff members, care about and love the people receiving services. In nearly every conversation that I had during my field work experience, the interviewee made mention of the feeling that Mary Jo wanted to help them and that she cared about their well being. Several at Mary's Place also attributed this theme to Chris Moore. The important element in this theme is that the homeless feel that the Sharing and Caring Hands staff values them individually. A frequent comment from the homeless being served was that "Mary Jo really likes me." Each person feels special, cared for, and loved. This type of caring and support is a growing aspect of research in what works for supporting the homeless (Hill, 2002).

This process seems so simple, and so complex, all at the same time. The simple nature is that it all seems so self evident. The complexity is that someone has to first believe. Frequently that someone is Mary Jo.

Sandra Murray (2001) reduced to a mathematical formula the impact that self perception has on relationships. Her work presents a valid analysis confirming that "individuals troubled by self-doubt are typically involved in less satisfying and less stable relationships than individuals with a stronger sense of self-worth" (p.426). The weaker self worth, and its impact on relationships, is the focal point of all of Mary Jo's work. She believes that better relationships will lead to positive housing and life outcomes. Sharing and Caring Hands focuses immense effort on impacting self perception, and in turn human relationships and outcomes.

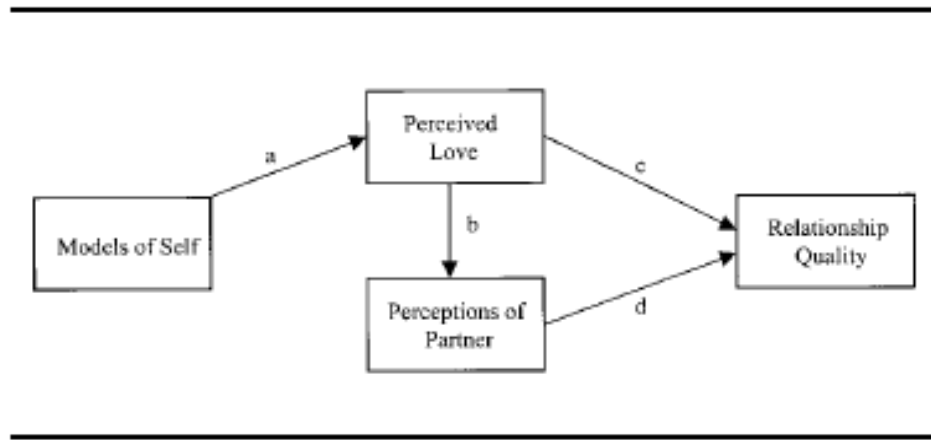


Figure 19. Sandra Murray (2001)

The theme of love and caring is the primary difference between Sharing and Caring Hands and any other shelter of which I am aware. Love is what drives the success at Sharing and Caring Hands. Love is a primary focus on all levels from the moment one first walks in the door – whether employee, volunteer, or consumer. This paradigm is so hard-wired into how the organization works that it is omnipresent. Most connected with the organization do not even see the unique nature of Sharing and Caring Hands. They just know that that is how it works.

The theme of love and caring as a primary component of relationship between the organization and the poor being served ultimately explains both what is happening at Sharing and Caring Hands, and why it is working so well. The loving relationship is unique in that other shelters have a relationship with the transaction as the focal point. That transaction may be a meal at a soup kitchen, a cot at an urgent housing center, or the disbursement of money at governmental offices. All of these same transactions occur at

Sharing and Caring Hands, but not until the loving relationship has been conveyed as the first step.

Frequently other social service organizations view the transaction as the goal. A soup kitchen is focused on, and measuring the success of, delivering a warm meal. A temporary residence measures the number of homeless receiving shelter. Sharing and Caring Hands, however, is solely focused on the people that need help. The organization provides service and delivers goods which are not on any menu of collocated services. The organization is simply focused on serving the poor. In this thought paradigm, the success in feeding and housing the poor is a byproduct of helping the poor. Service delivered is an outcome of success, not the primary goal. This polar opposite view of homelessness explains the 'how' on a very fundamental level and is the key finding in this study.

Another area of potential future research is regarding the necessity for a larger-than-life figure to head this sort of mission. Sharing and Caring Hands is unique in my experience as an organization that is focused on *servicing the person*, rather than *servicing the needs of a person*. Can this sort of organization function if it is structured using more of a business model approach, or is a Saint a necessity of success in this model? There are examples of organizations that started similar to Sharing and Caring Hands and later morphed into more of a business model, only to see their service to the urban poor diminish greatly. In one case documented by Adkins and Kemper (2006), the Oasis Housing Corporation, the organization eventually failed completely when attempting to move from a faith-based missionary zeal to a more business style approach. The organization had been founded through a church congregation, moved to a structure

driven largely by an outside Board of Directors, and eventually lost its mission. The organization was still doing all of the right things, but it had become far more focused on the business of running the shelter than serving the people. At one point, the focus on changes in the composition of the Board “caused interest on serving the people to wane” (p. 246). The more businesslike approach led to expansion which eventually led to the organization’s demise.

Additional Literature Review Conducted During Fieldwork

As research progressed, it became apparent that the real work being done at Sharing and Caring Hands is more about helping people grow and learn to believe in themselves, than simply serving the homeless. The fact that the people were homeless was certainly a major factor, but it was secondary to the peoples’ need for love and belief. The love and belief themes, therefore, became central areas of research and required a literature review based on that subject matter.

While there are many books and articles written on the lived experience of the homeless and urban poor, there are few academic works that endeavor to investigate why love and belief are important steps in the healing process. Books such as “Breakfast at Sally’s: One Homeless Man’s Inspirational Journey” (LeMieux, 2009) and “Breaking Night: A Memoir of Forgiveness, Survival, and My Journey from Homeless to Harvard” (Murray, 2010) tell wonderful stories of the experiences of homeless people and their recovery. Some even anecdotally present a healing message. I could not find any academic works, however, which draw the linkage between healing of the person in terms of creating loving relationships, which in turn propel the person to lead a healthy life with stable housing.

Specific Literature Review through Fieldwork

The review of related literature certainly expanded as this research project unfolded. Specifically, it became necessary to more fully understand how the operations of Sharing and Caring Hands differ from other social service entities. What was learned about the basis for success at Sharing and Caring Hands has been consistently tested against current literature to determine the thematic basis for the findings of this research. There is significant existing literature supporting each of the findings.

As themes emerged from fieldwork, it became necessary to conduct much more targeted literature reviews consistent with the themes that were discovered. Each theme was reviewed to gain an understanding of its context within existing literature. In each case, there was existing literature which supported and brought more meaning to the findings.

The first theme that required specific literature review was the theme of Thankfulness. The most closely related work regarding the thankfulness of the residents of a homeless shelter has been conducted by Adkins (2010). Adkins studied a homeless shelter in Dallas called the Stewpot. The Stewpot is also a faith based organization, which created additional information and context, although the organizational structure was substantially different. Nuncz and Fox (1999) also documented the thankfulness of shelter residents in their study of shelter residents across the nation. The cited studies shared thematic concepts consistent with this research.

As the theme of residents desire to give back emerged, specific review of literature related to this theme was also required. Benzies, *et al.* (2008) documented several studies which identified the theme of shelter residents desire to give back to the

people and organizations that were helping them. Benzies *et al.* (2008) also documented this theme first hand in their qualitative study of homeless shelter residents in Calgary, Canada.

Williams, Lindsey, Kurtz, and Jarvis (2001) also bring focus to this particular theme in their interpretive case study work in interviewing homeless youth. One particular finding in their study is that the initial focus of a homeless person is frequently an effort to find “meaning” in life. Given that the homeless shelter may be the only quasi-positive relationship that exists for this person, frequently that meaning becomes a desire to give back to those that have invested energy in helping.

Targeted review of literature was also required to draw greater understanding of the theme of the impacts of a quality environment. Environment is a broad, encompassing term. When researching homeless shelters, environment refers predominately to physical surrounding, relationship structures, basic shelter conditions, and cultural forces. Research exists documenting many different environmental attributes regarding homeless shelters. The research most germane to this study was conducted by Ovrebo (1994), who documented in great detail the healing nature of a quality environment. Specifically, Ovrebo (1994) documented how a mentor relationship with homeless, pregnant, single women which was focused on building “self-esteem, increased self-efficacy, and reduced self-blame” (p. 190) helped reduce infant mortality and increase infant health scores. Shultz-Krohn (2004) also documented the efforts to preserve, and importance of, family routines for families dealing with homelessness. Specifically, Shultz-Krohn (2004) found that the “meaning of family routines held for parents was that of hope for the future” (p. 539). Work by both of these researchers was consistent with findings from this study and

highlight some of the primary areas of importance, and difficulties in recovering from chronic housing instability.

One element of environment which also required more detailed review was the rules structure within homeless shelters. Stark (1994) and Broadhead-Fearn and White (2006) have both documented elements of the sometimes regressive nature of some rules based shelters. Conversely, this study documents the positive impact of various rules at Sharing and Caring Hands which are designed to facilitate action and behavior that will lead to healthy, growth-oriented life activity.

Faith is a significant influence in many shelter environments. Chaves (2001) provided context of the impact of faith-based organizations. Chaves documented the benefit of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 in expressly stating the legality of religiously affiliated social service receiving federal funding, without curbing religious expression. He documented that, while the de facto reality had been that these organizations had already been receiving funding, the legislation provided a clear acknowledgment and acceptance of the practice. This has allowed religiously affiliated organizations, with their already established foundation and administrative structure, to become more prevalent service providers. Chaves also documented that “congregations are far less important actors in the social service arena than are religious social service agencies” (p. 122).

Esparza (2007) documented the increased likelihood of long term survival for shelters faith-based organizations. In her multi-method research of 4,765 organizations serving urban poor, she studies how the economic, “political, and social and political context affect the inter-organizational dynamics and distribution of homeless services”

(p.32). Her broad cross section of research enabled me to understand Sharing and Caring Hands from the context of the overall population of service providers for the homeless and urban poor.

Both researchers present additional context that augment the understanding of the current and historical success of Sharing and Caring Hands. Chaves added context from the perspective of the role of religion in service. Esparza added context from the perspective of other governing attributes such as politics, economy, and social environment.

Extensive research has been conducted on the transition into and out of homelessness. Various governmental agencies have conducted and sponsored research regarding trigger events and the experience of homeless transitions. Wong, Culhane, and Kuhn (1997) and Kuhn and Culhane (1998) provided the context most closely aligned with the topics and goals of this research. Both provided extensive discussion of the timing of status of residence and how it impacts service requirements.

In 1997 Wong, Culhane, and Kuhn presented very specific timing and causal documentation regarding transition into and out of homeless shelters. Their extensive quantitative work was largely consistent with the qualitative stories that I found during my research. The quantitative effort, however, by its very nature, fails to unearth the why of the transitions. The quantitative work can, for instance, document that “the most common exit (48% of the 27,919 shelter episodes) was families exiting to subsidized housing” (p.444), and this percentage is roughly consistent with the anecdotal feedback from the staff of Sharing and Caring Hands. The quantitative work cannot, however, tell

the stories of what prompted people to move from the shelter to subsidized housing versus other potential alternatives.

Further, the work by Kuhn and Culhane in 1998 provides significant context of categorizing and classifying homeless as “transitional, chronic, or episodic” (p. 209). While this quantitative data is helpful in gaining and understanding of issues such as length of stay and likelihood of re-entry, it does not elicit the human difficulty of homelessness or the necessary ingredients to move toward housing stability. The quantitative data is helpful in providing context, but cannot tell the human story that is critical in understanding organizations such as Sharing and Caring Hands.

Self-determination, how individuals perceive their ability to impact their life outcomes, is a topic that has been studied and documented extensively. Albert Bandura (1990, 1993) provided the psychological context used most extensively in this research project. His work is prodigious and many of his findings were informative for this research, although the context of his work is far different than this work. Self-determination, however, was a theme that emerged as a very important attribute for this population.

Bandura’s (1986) extensive work on self-efficacy was particularly insightful. Perhaps the most illustrative text relative to the population in this study comes from the statement that “if people judge themselves as inefficacious in exercising control over potential threats, they view threats anxiously, conjure up possible calamities were they to have any commerce with them, and avoid them” (p. 1390). In this brief sentence, Bandura was presenting findings from extensive positive research that became very consistent with this interpretive research. The essence of many of the homeless with

whom I had the fortune of interaction, was that if they viewed themselves as able to determine their own future, they largely were on their way to doing so. Conversely, if they viewed themselves as unable to control their own outcomes, they were largely quite reliant on Sharing and Caring Hands. Sharing and Caring Hands consistently worked to move people toward feelings and positions of self-determination and positive mental modeling.

Bandura and Benight (2004) also contribute to the context of this research through their positivistic research work on self-efficacy and recovery from traumatic events. Again, what they have documented through positive research is consistent with the findings of this interpretive research. The homeless who believed in their ability to work through the traumatic experience of homelessness were much more engaged and driven to remedy their current station in life.

The final major theme that emerged was how love, the feeling of caring and unconditional support, impacts the service delivery for the homeless population. While there is existing research that is tangential to this topic, I found limited research that deeply explored how love impacts the development of homeless people, or if it even exists in the service model.

There is a great deal of literature that exists regarding ‘healing’ the homeless. This research deals with healing in the physical sense, or in some cases mental health. I was not able to find research that focused on the ‘healing’ of the person from a holistic perspective – meaning mind, body, and soul – as Mary Jo views, and works to serve, in her healing efforts.

Love and caring became a thematic capstone as this research progressed. Several elements of this theme presented important context to this research. First, love as is symbolically presented through the caring of the homeless by the staff at Sharing and Caring Hands was given context through structure presented by Conbere (1985). His commentary that “Symbols touch the soul in ways that logical discourse cannot, and are essential to a religious practice which would address the whole person” (p. 114) is a picture of sacrament that ties perfectly to the work performed by Mary Jo Copeland and her staff. The premise that the ‘whole person’ is being served became fundamental to findings in this research.

Another aspect regarding love and caring is that love is an essential ingredient for healing. Koenig (2007) describes “altruistic love” (p. 423) as “love that expects nothing in return, the kind that is given freely and generously with the other person’s good in mind” (p. 423). This is a frame of love that I would use consistently throughout this work. Koenig (2007) goes on to document the importance of love in the physical healing process. The findings from this research would indicate that love is also a critical ingredient to the other types of human healing as well.

The final aspect of love that was reviewed is how it is made incarnate through people in the actions and behaviors present at Sharing and Caring Hands. Particularly helpful in this understanding is work by Mickel and Hall (2006). The authors presented love as a behavior that is a primary component of healing and quality relationships, which frames the theme perfectly with this research.

In aggregate, there was a great deal of foundational research that frames this study. Bandura, Lewin, and Chaves provided extensive literature throughout many

different studies which was quite informative to this research. Further, there are literally hundreds of academic works which touch on various aspects of either the core topic or emergent themes from this work. The most informative work is referenced and described in context as the findings are presented.

Chapter Five

Discussion

Research Evolution

My research question began with a very basic question, “How does Sharing and Caring Hands heal broken people?” The question was grounded in a desire to understand how we could more effectively help a growing population of people with unstable housing, find stability. Sharing and Caring Hands appeared to be yielding positive results and I wanted to understand ‘How’ it was working, and what it was doing to effectively serve this population.

While there is a great deal of research and academic study surrounding the issue of homelessness, there is actually exceedingly little interpretive research conducted which simply examines how we can help this population. A vast majority of the research is centered on counting the homeless, describing the population, or ending homelessness. All of these endeavors are valid and important. These endeavors, however well-intentioned and rigorous, continually focus on the transaction rather than the relationship with hurting people. Focusing on the transaction causes us to become efficient at serving the transaction, but it does not solve the root cause. A frequent quote from Mary Jo is that “the people are not homeless, they are loveless” (M. J. Copeland, personal communication, 2009). She is commenting on her belief that when we solve the broken relationships and help the people develop skills to build quality relationships, the homelessness will also be solved. The hurting people were indeed the central point of this case study research.

The process of gaining an understanding of how Sharing and Caring Hands helps people was rigorous and extensive. Case study research methods were practiced. Fieldwork was comprised of hundreds of hours of observations and interviews. The data generated from the research, observation, and interviews was voluminous. These data were then condensed in to common themes and extensive member checks were conducted.

Theme Development

Ultimately, several themes presented themselves. Most of the themes developed were consistent with prior interpretive and positive research work. Themes such as Thankfulness and Self Determination have been replicated many times.

The theme that was most striking with this research study, however, was also one which is unique. The most significant theme that presented itself through the observation and interview process was the “Love” and “Caring” focus that exists at Sharing and Caring Hands. This is the theme that was both most persistent, and at the same time, a unique finding in academic research.

The message from the finding of this research is both simple and profound. Organization Development practitioners have long understood that love is a necessary ingredient for healthy humans during developmental years. This research presents love as an ingredient for healing people with troubled lives.

The importance of this research is that it does indeed present a road map for serving the homeless. There is a model of service to this disenfranchised population, and Sharing and Caring Hands has implemented it well. The service goes well beyond providing a specific tangible need. The service goes to serving the person.

Dilemma of Findings

This model of service that works well for serving the urban poor is not without difficulty however. To a great extent the service model works because of the combination of a unique organizational structure which places unilateral control of all aspects of the service model with one person. Then, that person is benevolent, loving, and believes in the human ability to be transformed and saved. Absent any one of these ingredients the system and structure likely would not function.

It is important to note that, while the organization is intently focused on serving its constituents, the organizational structure is not based on a 'servant leadership' model. Rather, the organizational structure and operational methodology is quite unilateral in decision making. The approach with the homeless is where the pure service approach begins and is perpetuated.

Further, replication of this system presents a problematic series of issues. If the system were supported on a broad scale, government funding would be required. With government funding, specific measurement documentation would be required. With the measurement and documentation, many of the aspects that make Sharing and Caring Hands work so effectively would be eliminated. Mary Jo Copeland would no longer hold the unilateral decision making power which allows her to love and care for people without constraint, nor could she withhold service when that approach is more appropriate.

The difficulty associated with breaking down service delivery to the homeless to reportable statistics is similar to the current national debate regarding healthcare. It is not possible to measure what does not happen. In the healthcare arena, citizens of the United

States experience a flawed system which rewards and compensates solely for services rendered, which frequently causes services to be rendered whether necessary or not because the service has a predetermined payer, while other services may not be rendered, even if necessary, if there is not a pre-qualified payer. The system does not reward or compensate for service avoidance through avenues such as preventative measures or wellness initiatives. Similarly, government sponsored programs for the homeless are structured to support the services delivered to the homeless rather than efforts to serve the person and break loose the shackles of poverty through compassionate care and love. Again, the existing governmental funding system promotes a measure of beds filled and meals served, rather than people saved. This research has identified a significant issue, although it has not yet identified a quality solution. Clearly this must lead to future research on this subject.

The dilemma of the findings in this research is as massive as it is difficult – the unique nature of this organization and the organizational structure are significant attributes in the success. This would lead one to advocate replication of this structure. It is difficult, however, to advocate the creation and replication of any entity in which control rests so unilaterally, and measurement and documentation are held to a minimum. Perhaps this can only work while the decision maker is also responsible for the funding sources. Certainly one could not advocate a governmental entity operate in such a manner.

Future Research

The dichotomy between the wonderful work that is accomplished at Sharing and Caring Hands through its system, and issues which make replication difficult create

fertile ground for further research. The first area of additional research that may be beneficial would be a study to follow people that have transitioned out of Mary's Place and attained stable housing. Both positive and interpretive studies could yield quality information to further define how this population is transformed and how best to keep the transformation fixed in the state of stable housing.

Given the other existing work that touches on viewing homelessness from a 'healing' perspective, research would be reasonable to examine specifically how this paradigm impacts the services available and success of homeless shelters. If there are other shelters that view work with the homeless in this manner, comparing and contrasting those organizations with Sharing and Caring Hands may elicit significant additional information. The paradigm of focusing on the relationship rather than the transaction, rather than as a consumer of a specific product, certainly creates a different relationship with the homeless. Examining additional permutations of this paradigm shift is warranted.

Further study is also warranted for the study of how financing and financial support impact both the structure and efficacy of service delivery. There is certainly at least some element of business in the operation of all homeless shelters. How this particular aspect of shelter operation is addressed may drive not only the services that are available, but also how they are delivered. As any organization grows, the challenge to stay focused on the mission at hand also grows. Study is certainly warranted to help understand how these influences impact the mission of organizations with stated goals of service to disenfranchised populations.

Another area of additional study would be to examine the organizational structure of other entities which serve the homeless. One of the significant advantages that Sharing and Caring Hands enjoys is the streamlined and efficient organizational structure. This structure should be studied on a detailed level and compared at that level with other organizations. Perhaps there are methods to gain the efficiency of the streamlined structure even within more conventional organizations.

Further study would also be appropriate into understanding how the primary learning from this study, the fact that love and caring helps people develop, could be applied in other settings. This area of study could have significant impact on gaining a better understanding of how to help employees in a work-force gain optimal performance. If providing a loving, caring environment helps homeless find stability, could it also help troubled youths achieve better in school or struggling workers achieve success in the workplace?

Implications for Organization Development

This research has several important implications for the field of Organization Development. The first important implication for Organization Development is that the findings of this case study are consistent with the very foundational values inherent within Organization Development. This case study clearly indicates that humans in all walks of life are filled with potential. Further, that potential is best realized when people are led with a supportive structure, and involved with the decisions that impact them most directly.

This case study also presents findings that are consistent with interventions using the Socio-Economic Approach to Management. While the interventions using the Socio-

Economic Approach to Management may look like other interventions, the difference is in the inherent value system and belief structure. Per Conbere and Heorhiadi (2011), the Socio-Economic Approach to Management “factors both people and finances into the analysis” (p. 6). Similarly, Sharing and Caring Hands may look like most other homeless shelters. The difference, however, is in the value system and belief structure. There is a consistent belief in the innate value of people. The belief is in the relationship, rather than the transaction.

Finally, this case study presents a methodology for intervention that is largely focused on love without expectation. The case study clearly documents individual interventions that are successful primarily because of the concentration on caring for the person. The love and caring that exists without expectation is the essential element of the Sharing and Caring Hands relationships that drives successful outcomes.

The field of Organization Development should be heartened findings of this case study - caring about individuals matters. It is not only ethically right to treat all people well; it also results in more successful people. The foundational value system embedded in Organization Development has been once again proven valid.

Personal Impact

This research work was truly a labor of love. The people that I have had the good fortune to meet through this experience have been a blessing. Whether the people were serving, or being served, they had a genuinely positive outlook on life and were happy to be at Sharing and Caring Hands on the particular day that I was visiting with them. All presented a positive attitude about life that is infectious.

The best part of this research experience was the fieldwork. Working with this population was always enjoyable. Every person with whom I interacted was friendly, and supportive of my research. The counterbalance to this was transcription of interviews. Because of absolute critical importance of keeping confidentiality, I transcribed the data personally. The process became long. It was worth the effort if I was effective at telling this story to even one person. This is a wonderful population of people, filled with potential. Our society can do better for them.

The experience of working with this disenfranchised population has been life altering. It is impossible to not think about, on a daily basis, the pain that goes with homelessness. The phrase that frequently comes to mind is: "But for the grace of God, there go I." Given my interactions with the people of Sharing and Caring Hands, I think this is true. No person wanted to be there, and all of the people there had stories of success in life. They had all had their moments, and wanted to get back to those moments of success and happiness. During conversations with individuals experiencing homelessness, the conversations were frequently tragic, sad, and heart-breaking. Other times the stories and conversations were uplifting, joyful, and inspiring. Sometimes these attributes could describe a conversation with the same person, all at the same time.

Perhaps the most significant change in paradigm for me through this research has been my aggregate view of homelessness. Entering the study, I expected to find some sub-population that was satisfied with a life of shelters and government assistance. I did not find that population, or even one person. Every person that I visited with, a number which easily exceeds one-hundred, was looking to improve their station in life and

achieve self-sufficiency. As Mary Jo says, “Being poor is so hard.” It most certainly is, and the people of this study are living it each day, yet yearn for something better.

There is a great deal to be done in the future based on this study. While we, as a society, must acknowledge that we cannot effectively measure the absence of pain and suffering, we must move beyond the simple measurement of service delivered. When we disregard, or minimize the outcome, we become focused on the repetition of service, rather than service itself. We become focused on the transaction, rather than the relationship. This line of thought may lead us as a society to feel better about ‘serving more meals to the homeless’, but it also distracts us from what our goal should be – an end to homelessness.

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Addendum A

Clients

Why do you come to Sharing and Caring Hands?

What benefit do you derive from Sharing and Caring Hands?

What are other options?

Do you live in the residence?

Do you think Sharing and Caring Hands is helpful? How?

Where are you from?

What brought you here?

Others

What is the value of volunteer services? Professional, Other?

What do the various groups think of the governmental agencies?

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