8-2013

Interactions Between the Urban Environment and "The Homelessness": Observations and Responses

Jeffrey Charles Stahl
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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Jeffrey Charles Stahl entitled "Interactions Between the Urban Environment and "The Homelessness": Observations and Responses." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture, with a major in Architecture.

Matt Hall, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Thomas K. Davis, Avigail Sachs

Accepted for the Council:
Dixie L. Thompson

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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<div align="right">Accepted for the Council:
Carolyn R. Hodges</div>

<div align="right">Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School</div>

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Interactions Between the Urban Environment and

"The Homelessness": Observations and Responses

A Thesis Presented for the

Masters of Architecture

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Jeffrey Charles Stahl

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Acknowledgments

This thesis is dedicated to my father Marc, mother Yvonne, brother Greg and sister-in-law Karen, and to all my friends who have always been there and supported me in all my endeavors. Without their support I would not be the man I am today. This thesis is written in the hopes that it will facilitate a better understanding and compassion for the many members of the homeless community and as such is dedicated to them as well.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank all of the advisors, professors, and staff that have helped throughout my time at The University of Tennessee with special acknowledgement to my thesis advisor, Dr. Avigail Sachs, and thesis committee, T.K. Davis and Matt Hall, for all of their hard work and dedication to the process of my education.

Abstract

Homelessness and people living on the streets is a phenomenon that is facing every major urban center in the United States. These people are a commonality in the urban landscape and are often seen a problem to be fixed. Due to the interactions between the urban environment and persons experiencing homelessness, there needs to be a paradigm shift in how policy is written and how we design an intervention for these forgotten people. The goal of this thesis is to gain a clearer understanding to what it is like to survive on the streets: how dose someone find shelter in the urban environment? This research also examines the reasons, if any, that homeless people do not always use the homeless shelters at their disposal. The data for this project was taken from direct personal observation and first-hand account from homeless individuals. Many homeless people keep a blog and provide detailed information about their experiences on the street. Using this information, I have created a possible design solution to the issues raised by the research. This is not an example of what should be done but rather an example of what could be done when there is greater understanding of the homeless culture.

"You can easily judge the character of a man by how he treats those who can do nothing for him."

-Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

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Introduction

Many of us see the urban landscape as a graceful beauty, with its steel and glass towers, majestic boulevards; a place for commerce and social activity. Others may view it as a noisy, bustling, overcrowded nightmare where people are rude and move too fast. Others see those same urban streets as home. Homelessness is a part of the city landscape as equally as those towering skyscrapers (Fig 0.01). The city lives and breathes and dies with its people. "The single story is where the same story gets told over and over again about a people or a place we do not know first-hand. The danger is that it leads to stereotypes, to half-truths not the full truth" (Abagond, 2009). This is quite common with the subject of homeless individuals. Sadly, homeless people are seen as a problem within the city; a problem that people try to "solve" or cure. Homelessness is not a problem, although they are commonly perceived as a problem, but homeless people have problems. They should not be treated as something that needs to be cured (Homemaker, 2011)

Approximately 637,000 people in the United States are homeless in a given week with 58% finding shelter in emergency homeless shelters while the other 42% were left unsheltered (PBS, 2009). 3.5 million people experience homelessness in the course of a year, representing the lowest socio-economic status in society experiencing stressful environmental factors such as social exclusion, exposure to the elements, sleep deprivation, and malnutrition (Stahl, 2007).

"Any society, any nation, is judged on the basis of how it treats its weakest members; the last, the least, the littlest."

- Cardinal Roger Mahony

Fig 0.01

1

The most common result of marginalization of an individual or group is material deprivation. Material resources such as food and shelter are unfairly dispersed in society. "Along with material deprivation, marginalized individuals are also excluded from services, programs, and policies" (Young, 2000). The homeless culture is too often marginalized and taken for granted. Most people are guilty of having a single story of the homeless person and their culture. (Fig 0.02)

Social consideration of the homeless population is flawed, outdated, and in need of revaluation and complete overhaul. There needs to be a change in the attitude of the general public toward the homeless population. There needs to be better understanding of the homeless phenomenon amongst policy makers and they need to rewrite policy based on that new understanding. Designers have to think in broader strokes with further implications that challenge the status quo of design. There needs to be a paradigm shift in the current opinions and model of a shelter from the general public and policy makers to the designer implementing these changes.

Fig 0.02

Chapter 1
Contributing Factors and Demographics

Homelessness is an often misunderstood phenomenon interacting negatively with the overall population of urban centers. Homeless individuals are often perceived as mentally unstable, drunks, thieves, or drug addicts. While there are those members of the homeless population that fit into those categories, that should not define them as a people. This is the danger of a single story.

Homelessness is a life event that is defined by The United States Government as "persons sleeping in a shelter or in places not meant for human habitation such as vehicles, abandoned buildings, outdoor locations, or transportation facilities or stations" (Stahl, 2007). According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, homelessness encompasses three different categories: transitional, episodic, and chronic Transitional homelessness is a single episode of homelessness that lasts between three and twelve months which is often caused by something catastrophic and sudden (loss of job, sickness, natural disasters, etc.) Episodic homelessness is defined by the National Coalition for the Homeless as a series of episodes of going in and out of homelessness; lasting between one and three years. Finally, chronic homelessness is seen as an extended period of homelessness. Chronic homelessness typically has few to no non-homeless episodes and lasts more than three years.

According to national, state and local reports, there is not one single cause that leads to homelessness. However, individuals and families become homeless when they do not have the financial ability to make ends meet and afford an apartment or home (HCHC, 2011). The Hillsborough County Homeless Coalition states that financial reasons are the leading cause of homelessness, however, other life events leading to homelessness include: domestic violence, physical and mental disability, death of a family member, natural disasters (fires, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornados, etc.), catastrophic illness, immigration, and other family crises (HCHC, 2011). In Hillsborough County Florida, during the 2011 homeless count, homeless people (when given a list of options) identified the following reasons for their homelessness: (see figure 1.02 p.52)

With the economic recession that began in 2008, more people are finding themselves dangerously close to becoming homeless. Homelessness, especially of entire families, has dramatically increased. With wages declining all over the nation and the crash of the housing market, people who never thought that they would be out on the streets suddenly find themselves swelling the ranks of the homeless community. This economic downward spiral has been compounded even further with spending cuts by federal, state and local governments directed at the disenfranchised. Many homeless outreach programs have had funding decrease or altogether disappear (Huus, 2009). According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, in the past 20-25 years, two major trends have been responsible for the rise in homelessness. First, there has been an increasing shortage of affordable rental housing while secondly; there has been a simultaneous increase in poverty.

The federal government stipulates that for housing to be affordable, meaning rent and utilities, it must be no greater than 30% of a person's total wages (Stahl, 2007). A person making $8.00 an hour while working 40 hours per week will earn roughly $1280.00 before taxes. That person should only spend $384.00 per month on rent and utilities. In the current market, only paying 30% you your wages is near impossible to achieve, even with the assistance of having a roommate or spouse with similar earning potential. Through gentrification of many urban areas, property values are increasing far beyond the means of the current resident of those areas.

Poverty is an ever growing concern in the United States. Loss of income due to being laid off, fired, cut back in hours, or death of the major breadwinner can thrust a person or family below the poverty line. People who live in poverty are at greatest risk of becoming homeless. Also, demographic groups who tend to experience poverty are more likely to experience homelessness (NCH, 2009).

Domestic violence is a major problem around the world. Not only is it a detestable act in itself, it is a large reason why women find themselves living on the street. Leaving their home to escape the violence does offer a solution to the problem, but the lack of affordable housing and employment increases their risk of becoming homeless (Nooe, 2010). In the aftermath of domestic violence, many women find that landlords and

employers are less likely to rent housing or hire them when the issue of violence is discovered. "In a sense, the victimized woman is a primary victim of domestic violence but then experiences secondary victimization as she is denied housing and employment because of the history of abuse" (Nooe, 2010)

One of the largest hurdles facing the homeless community is the ignorance and lack of education of the non-homeless of society. The homeless population is multi-faceted and complicated. Their demographic composition is very similar that of the housed population. Across America, 76% of the homeless are single individuals, with 67.5% of them being male. The other 24% of the homeless population are homeless families, with 65% of the parents being female. According to the National Law Center report on Homelessness and Poverty in 2004, 39% of the homeless population is children under the age of eighteen. Of that 39%, 42% were under the age of five (Fig 1.02). 25% of homeless people between the ages of 25 – 34 with only 6% of homeless people in the 55 – 64 age group (NCH, 2009). Veterans of the armed forces make up 40% of homeless men compared to 34% of men in the general adult population. The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans estimates that on any given night, 271,000 veterans are homeless. According to the 2010 United States Census, African Americans represent 13% of the total population while amongst homeless individuals; African Americans represent 42% of the population. Whites make up 38% of the homeless population with Hispanics at 20% (NCH, 2009). Regardless of race, religion, or economic status, every person could be at risk of becoming homeless. Therefore, homelessness is a phenomenon that should be understood by all of society rather than a fringe social issue.

Fig 1.01

Chapter 2

History of Environmental Responses to Homelessness in US Urban Centers

As long as there have been cities, there have been people dwelling in the streets, alleys, and nooks of those cities. These people make their home where most of us would not ever dream of resting our heads, nor consider surviving on the same diet and means of obtaining a meal. Homelessness is one of the oldest social problems in the world. The simple fact is that there have always been those members of society that survive this way (Fig 2.01). There have also always been those who strive to care for these forgotten people.

In the United States, private and religious-based charities and organizations have led the effort on caring for the poor, the weak and the homeless people. The first rescue mission in the United States was the New York City Rescue Mission, originally McAuley Water Street Mission est. 1872 (NPACH, 2011) (Fig 2.02). Started by Jerry McAuley, the missions goal was to provide spiritual hope, clothing, food, and shelter to the poor and destitute who arrived at their door (NYCRM, 2012). The Federal Government did not get involved in the effort until 1983 when the first federal task force was established through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (NCH, 2009).

Fig 2.01

Fig 2.02

This task force was established "to provide information to localities on how to obtain surplus federal property; this task force did not address homelessness through programmatic or policy actions" (NCH, 2009). The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, led by Stewart B. McKinney, was established in 1987 and was the result of this task force. It was the first - and remains the only - piece of major federal legislation to address the phenomena of homelessness (NCH, 2009).

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance originally consisted of fifteen programs providing a range of services to homeless people, including emergency shelter, transitional housing, job training, primary health care, education, and some permanent housing. The McKinney-Vento Act contains nine titles (See appendix p.49). In May 2009, President Obama signed the Homeless Emergency and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009. The HEARTH Act amends and reauthorizes the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act with changes, including:

- A consolidation of HUD's competitive grant programs
- The creation of a Rural Housing Stability Program
- A change in HUD's definition of homelessness and chronic homelessness
- A simplified match requirement
- An increase in prevention resources
- An increase in the emphasis on performance (HUD, 2012).

The country has faced several ebbs and flows of homelessness due to a myriad of events. The Great Depression in the 1920's and 30's saw a very sharp spike in people without homes and living on the streets. It is estimated that there were over two million homeless people at the peak of the depression (NPACH, 2011). The numbers were slowly declining up until the early 1940's. The second World War saw homelessness almost disappear in the United States. Because the largest demographic amongst the homeless community was men, most of them were absorbed into the armed forces or into the burgeoning military-industrial complex (Denuyl, 2011). After the war, there was a demand for workers for the housing boom to support the returning GI's. The time of prosperity for the country and low homelessness numbers continued until the 1960's and 1970's when several laws were passed that ended up cutting the funding for many psychiatric hospitals

causing several thousand mentally ill patients to suddenly find themselves on the streets with little to no access to treatment (NPACH, 2011). Economic prosperity continued to increase while homeless numbers increased as well. The problem has grown steadily since then. The availability of affordable housing has greatly changed over the past several decades. Through gentrification, many single-room occupancy housing were lost as urban renewal strategies flourished. Affordable rental housing was converted to higher priced housing, and condominiums (Denuyl, 2011).

Most shelters and programs are still run by private and religious-based charities. However, funding for these shelters and programs are a combination between private donations and state or federal funding as well as state and or federal subsidies, tax breaks and incentives. For the past twenty years, public and private solutions to homelessness have focused on providing homeless families with emergency shelter and transitional housing (Fig 2.03). These programs provide vital access to services for families in crisis but they often fail to address the long-term needs of homeless families. Families need help in many ways, from finding affordable housing and negotiating a lease, to staying housed and being financially stable (Beyondshelter.org, 2011).

The institution that most people think of when they hear the term "homeless shelter" is set up on a series of tiers (Fig 2.04). A homeless person works their way up from the streets to moving to a public shelter, and then you move from a public shelter

Fig 2.03

Fig 2.04

to permanent supportive housing (Beyondshelter.org, 2011). To be allowed to move up in the system, a homeless person must seek treatment in exchange for shelter. This will often add a great deal of pressure on the individual, and if they have a relapse, they could find themselves back out on the street with no help. A more recent model that somewhat challenges the current system of sheltering, is the "Housing First Initiative". This model suggests that people cannot begin to address the issues that led to them living on the street without first addressing the first levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of needs of physiological and safety needs. When these needs are met, they are able to focus on the higher levels of the hierarchy of needs of love, esteem, and self-actualization. Housing first immediately places a homeless person into permanent supportive housing directly from the streets (Beyondshelter.org, 2011).This is typically done so by the use of single room occupancy housing (Fig 2.05).

While there have always been people to care for the less fortunate members of society, there have been those who oppose and actively fight against the efforts of these people. State and local governments have taken steps to actively discriminate against persons experiencing homelessness as well turning a blind eye to the current status of homeless shelters and assistance programs. Laws have been passed that hinder the actions of those people trying to help as well as laws, when skewed, essentially make it illegal be homeless. Local governments, such as New York City under Rudy Giuliani, enforced cleverly written laws to move the homeless population out. "Giuliani ordered that all "able-bodied" homeless people must go to work or risk losing their city-provided shelter

Fig 2.05
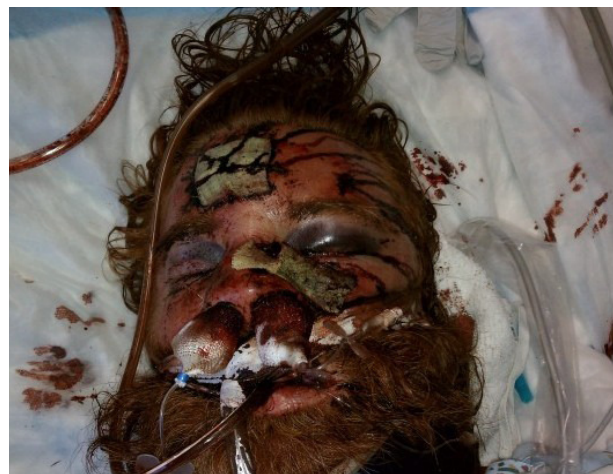
Fig 2.06

and possibly their children to foster care" (Morse, 1999). The Giuliani administration was also enforcing an obscure anti-tent law "which stated that any structure 3.5 feet or taller set up on city property would be considered an illegal encampment" (Rakowitz, 2011). These actions have given the police new authority to use questionable and even brutal tactics on people who are only attempting to sleep. Police officers have been knows to harass, intimidate, and physically assault people living on the streets (Toms, 2009) (Fig 2.06). Mayor Michael Bloomberg has continued this despicable treatment to the homeless population of New York City. As Toms explains:

> "In his attempt to display New York City as "Emerald City", is not only supporting the idea of one-way tickets for the homeless to get rid of them, he is blatantly ignoring dangerous situations and extremely unhealthy conditions within the city's shelter system" (Toms, 2009).

Government policies have been put in place to make it very difficult to be without a home. The design industry, with the help of private enterprise, has exacerbated this dilemma with designs intended to disrupt the activities of homeless men and women. Private business and local governments have sought to combat the "homeless problem" by making it more difficult or impossible to use urban elements for sleeping. It is common knowledge that persons experiencing homelessness will often utilize park benches to sleep for the night. Designers have created anti-loitering benches which are numerous

Fig 2.07

Fig 2.08

Fig 2.09

Fig 2.10

and inventive. Some of these designs are downright insidious. The most common negative impact designs add arm rests to the bench, preventing anyone from lying down. Others have round or steep sloping seats to discourage lying down. (Figs 2.07-2.10) The worst and most treacherous design was originally designed as an art exhibit by artist Fabian Brunsing. He put a set of coin-operated spikes on a park bench. When your time runs out, the spikes come up and make the bench unsuitable even for sitting. This exhibit was protesting the commercialization of modern life, but the Chinese government saw it as a solution to people loitering in the Yantai Park in the eastern Chinese province of Shangdong and installed several of them in the park (Hogan, 2010). (Fig 2.11) Some designers and policy makers have understood the problems facing persons experiencing homelessness and have responded accordingly. Michael Rakowitz is an artist that has attempted to address the issue of housing homeless persons and providing them with a modicum of space while using parasitic constructions. His ongoing project, ParaSITE, encourages artists to design inflatable shelters for homeless people that attach to the exterior outtake vents of a building's Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) system. (Figs 2.12-2.14) The warm air leaving the building simultaneously inflates and heats the double membrane structure. Built and distributed to more than 30 homeless people in Boston and Cambridge, MA and New York City. The project has seen some success in that police officers can no longer cite a person for violating the anti-tent law
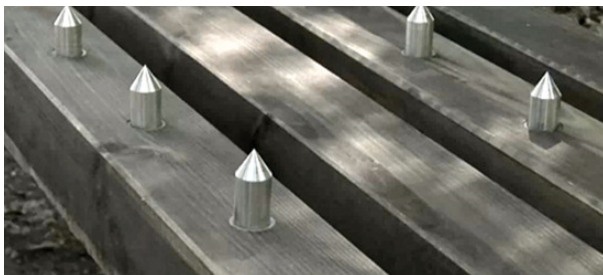
Fig 2.11

Fig 2.12

Fig 2.13

Fig 2.14

and leave the person alone (Rakowitz, 2011). Although this intervention does seem to work, it does not appear to be able to be done on a large enough scale to truly address the demand for a new shelter paradigm. In response to the obvious flaws with bench and transit shelter design some designers have created responses to address these flaws. Sean Goodsell is an architect from Australia who has developed several interventions to address homelessness. The park bench house is a normal park bench at first sight. If necessary, the bench seat can be lifted up to reveal a sleeping area. The bench seat stays open at an angle creating a roof for the person sleeping within (Fig 2.15). The picnic table house is a picnic table by day and a shelter complete with emergency food rations by night. The sides of the table can be folded down to create an enclosed roof. The legs of the seating area are compartments housing the emergency supplies and provide a place to store belongings (Urbanist, 2007) (Fig 2.16).

Portland, Oregon has allowed a unique social experiment to take shape for persons experiencing homelessness. Dignity Village was founded by eight homeless men and women in 2000 by setting up their tents in front of the city's leaf and grass compost yard near Portland International Airport. Through discourse between the city and the homeless men and women, they reached an agreement that would allow the homeless people to create a community. Dignity Village evolved into a self-regulating and city-recognized community, thanks to the city rezoning the land to "transitional campground" (Press, 2012). The city leases the land to the village at no cost. The village also maintains insurance, and provides a modicum of electricity to the residents.

Fig 2.13

Fig 2.14

Dignity Village offers its 60 occupants showers, a kitchen area, Internet access and emergency transportation. The village, which harbors tarp-tents, straw-bale bungalows, teepees, wooden shacks and pitched tents, costs about $3,000 a month to maintain, its website states, which it funds through donations (Press, 2012) (Figs 2.17-2.20).

There are rules, however, set up by the community. "Children are not allowed to live in the village, and members must abide by rules against violence, drugs, stealing and disruptive behavior" (Press, 2012). Anyone wishing to live there must abide by those rules. Dignity Village is an is an example of what can be done if city policy and attitude towards homelessness would change (Foden-Vencil, 2009).

Fig 2.11

Fig 2.12

Fig 2.13

Fig 2.14

Chapter 3

Why Traditional Homeless Shelters Do Not Work

Homeless shelters may provide a modicum of shelter; a bed to lie down on, dry and away from the elements of nature, maybe even a slight feeling of comfort. But, these shelters are little better than examples of an antiquated model for sheltering people. In the United States, shelters first appeared in the late 1800's. They were started with good intentions but they were started at a time when little was understood about the homeless phenomena. These shelters are, for the most part, privately run; typically by religious organizations and other non-profit organizations with funding coming through donations and government grants. Others are run and funded by state and federal government.

The traditional homeless shelter is a flawed model in great need of re-assessment. As one homeless blogger put it;

> These places, these pockets of hell staffed by well meaning, misguided people; these are the most degrading, humiliating, stigmatizing places in the world. I've actually never spent the night in anything called a homeless shelter. I preferred to return to the cold, rather than sit in the pew (Homemaker, 2011).

There are several reasons that many homeless prefer not to utilize the shelters available to them. These reasons include: lack of handicapped accommodations, danger of rape or assault, disease, invasive and disrespectful check in process, separation of family members, assumptions about drug use and criminality, drug addictions, theft, religious differences, lack of privacy and fear of crowds, lack of control, and lack of available beds. There are several things that may seem small to the average homed person and may be seen as superfluous or "not that big a deal". But, when you have very little, these become very important considerations.

Fig 3.01

Many homeless people are in relationships (Fig 3.01). Whether they became homeless with their significant other or whether they met on the streets, they have the same desires and needs the rest of us take for granted. They wish to stay with their partners, not only for comfort, but for protection as well. For obvious reasons, shelters do not allow men and women to stay in the same rooms; most of the time, they are on separate floors or entirely separate buildings. This is done for safety reasons but exceptions are not made to accommodate for married couples. Pets and service animals are barred from most shelters. Many homeless people actually have pets and service animals, the most common being a dog. (Fig 3.02) Pets are kept for all of the same reasons the most people have a pet. They offer companionship, they encourage caring for another creature, and they provide protection. This last reason is of great use to the homeless person living on the street for obvious reasons.

Because many shelters are placed in older buildings to cut costs, they are often not accessible to wheelchairs nor do they meet other ADA requirements. Some shelters will actually turn people away; leaving them to the mercy of the streets. (Fig 3.03) Sometimes the building will be ADA accessible but the facilities within the facility will not be accessible. There are certain requirements about sizes of hallways, showers and toilets that are not met. "Regardless of what the Americans with Disabilities Act says, some shelters turn away people in wheelchairs or with other mobility limitations such as the need to use a walker or crutches to get around. While sometimes they will offer a hotel voucher to the disabled person, that doesn't always happen" (Kylyssa, 2011).

Fig 3.02

Fig 3.03

There are many health factors to take into consideration when understanding why homeless people tend to avoid homeless shelters. There are diseases and parasites that sometimes run rampant in shelters. Colds, influenza and tuberculosis are quite common. Many develop what is called a "shelter cough". This is because diseases, like the average cold, do not affect the homeless population the same way they affect everyone else. Because of the often crowded nature of the shelter the illness gets easily spread around the shelter. (Fig 3.04) Normally, a cold or the flu can be easily overcome with medicine, bed rest, and fluids. However, when living on the streets, medicine and bed rest are almost foreign ideas so the illness stays and becomes worse. (Fig 3.05) The most common diseases are potentially life threatening to the homeless population. Parasites such as lice, fleas, scabies, and bedbugs are spread with ease in a shelter. Because of the tendency of homeless people to sleep in several different locations, they carry parasites and disease from one group to another. Getting rid of parasites is extremely difficult when you are homeless as well (Kylyssa, 2011).

Fear is a common reason to why many homeless people do not use shelters. Violence and theft are very commonplace within shelters. The violence and theft that people face in a shelter can come from people other than other homeless people. Not only do they have to worry about their fellow residents, they cannot rely on the staff either because the staff are sometimes the offenders. The shelter does not always provide safety from sexual assault. Rape is a normal occurrence in some shelters (Toms, 2009). Not all shelters are separated into men's and women's buildings.

Fig 3.04   Fig 3.05

Sometimes, they are separated into different floor for the different genders, but more commonly, men and women will be housed on the same floor with a separation of rooms only. One homeless man in New York remarked:

> You got some crazy-ass, out of control people here, man. You got convicted murderers, gang members, mental patients, rapists and pedophiles mixed with members of the general population. That is a recipe for disaster. The shelters are the worst place for children because of what they see and what can happen to them. This is why people don't want to go and would rather take their chances on the streets or subways. (Toms, 2009)

If a homeless person wants to sleep in a shelter for the evening, they have to begin preparations much earlier in the day. Many shelters have a check in time early in the afternoon and to get a bed you have to line up earlier than the check in time. (Fig 3.06) If you are a working homeless person or if you are a panhandling homeless person, you either have your earning time severely cut down or you cannot get into the shelter at all (Raymond, 2010). If you manage to get into the shelter for the evening, you are not allowed out again until morning. Some shelters have an outdoor secured courtyard but many do not (Toms, 2009). You become prisoner for the simple need of a place to sleep. If the shelter

Fig 3.06

is affiliated with any particular faith, many of them will require that you attend a service if you wish to stay. If you refuse, you could be kicked out. (Fig 3.07) There are often degrading and dehumanizing questions asked upon check in. Many women are asked if they have an old boyfriend that they can stay with. This is seen as trading sexual favors for a place to sleep by many homeless women (Kylyssa, 2011). If you manage to jump through all of the hoops, you are often put in a large room with many beds and have no privacy. (Fig 3.08) A good summary of life in a homeless shelter comes from a formerly homeless man in New York City Gary Glennell Toms:

> I ultimately formed a unique bond with some of the men at the shelter, and it was from them, as well as frustrated and tenured shelter administrators, that I discovered many of the New York City shelters were just as appalling as the 30th Street Men's Shelter: from the moldy, feces-smeared shower curtains and slimy, bacteria-filled shower floors....to the callous, rude and judgmental security personnel (Toms, 2009).

While homeless shelters are a step towards helping people, they are executing their mission poorly. From the early check in times to the invasive check in questions, just getting into a shelter is an ordeal. If a homeless person manages to get into the shelter, they face trading prayer for a bed or face violence and theft within this "safe" haven.
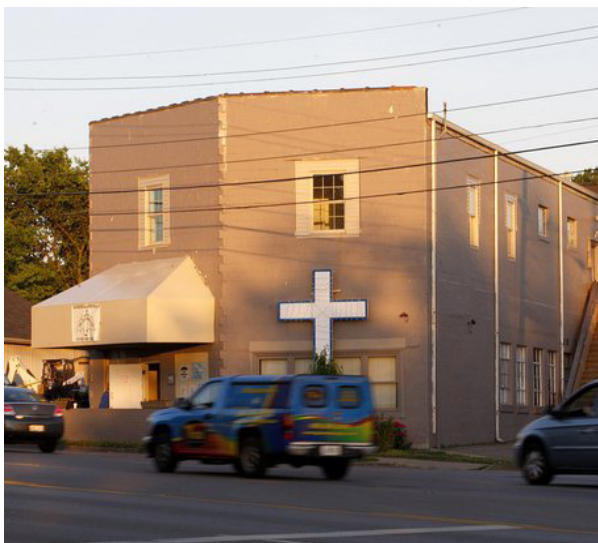

Fig 3.07

Fig 3.08

Chapter 4
Critical Response

Homeless people are often treated as a mere statistic. They are viewed and categorized as a group set apart from society. This is tragically incorrect. A homeless person is still a part of society, they just have different means. All of the ailments commonly associated with homelessness such as addiction, domestic violence, mental instability, and poor financial management can be found easily in the housed population too. The average housed person has the same tendencies as the average homeless person but it is mostly unseen because of the walls; not only from the physical walls, but the societal walls as well. Policy needs to be changed; not changed to benefit just the homeless individual, but changed to stop actively working against the homeless population.

Social consideration of the homeless population can be seen as flawed, outdated, and in need of revaluation and complete overhaul. There needs to be a change in the attitude of the general public toward the homeless population. There could be better understanding of the homeless phenomenon amongst policy makers and they need to rewrite policy based on that new understanding. Designers should think in broader strokes with further implications that challenge the status quo of design. There needs to be a paradigm shift in the current opinions and model of a shelter from the general public and policy makers to the designer implementing these changes.

In the case of homelessness, designers must first understand the culture of the average homeless person and realize them as clients. The complexity of the homeless phenomenon and severe departure in cultural differences offers designers a unique opportunity to challenge themselves instead of going along with the status quo. If the homeless culture is better understood, better design solutions will follow. The homeless are viewed as undeserving of consideration or a second thought. Because there is not a profit in helping the homeless, the quickest and cheapest solution is typically the one used. Designers have been falling into the trap of designing without knowing the client; just as policy makers have done the same with the policies they create and enforce without representation from homeless

people. They are making policies to benefit themselves or the bottom line with little to no thought about broader implications.

Education is paramount for any society to thrive and every society is only as strong as its weakest members. Our society is making great strides in social reform but the homeless are still a forgotten people. If the average person was educated about the homeless population, they would be able to make their voices heard by electing officials that would enact change. These people would also have the understanding to vote these changes into action.

Many anti-loitering laws that cities have on the books are intended to address homelessness and prevent homeless people from being seen. This exacerbates the problem of the single story that the general public have of the homeless. The laws and policies are also in place to protect property values and "protect" the general public. Some homeless people are a nuisance and harass passersby's. Typically, property values are affected by the presence of homeless people in the area. This is why homeless shelters tend to be in the more dangerous parts of town where property values are already low and there are generally less people to harass. These laws and policies need to be reexamined and rewritten in a manner that is beneficial for everyone. It is not illegal to try to survive; whether you're a homeless person or a member of the general public. Instead of funding a system of shelters that are ineffective and throwing away money on passing and enforcing anti-homeless laws, this money could be used to better the situation of the average homeless person and thus allow them to change their situation.

Homelessness has been around for centuries and may continue to be around for several centuries more. They have been shunned from "normal" society and are not welcome in many places. In response to this ostracization, homeless people have created their own sub-culture. Instead of trying to "solve" homelessness or trying to end homelessness, we need to accept that homelessness and its culture will most likely never end. Therefore, our way of thinking about the issue should shift from "ending homelessness" to mediating through policy change and more direct decision and working with homeless people in a dialectic manner.

To come to a solution regarding the homeless population, there is no solution because there is neither a single method of thinking, nor is there a single type of design that will benefit the homeless population as a whole. The conversation between all members of society needs to be dialectic. The solution to the question of ordering the city is found in the contradiction and layering of space. The inherent physical and ideological contradiction of parasitic architecture against the existing urban form makes the antithetical statement where Ungers felt the true city emerges. German Architect O.M. Ungers states:

> The modern city is dialectic; it is both thesis and antithesis. It is no longer possible to find unified forms or consistent solutions which still incorporate everything in a single system as in the historical city up to the 19th century… Hence the theme of fragmentation, of dialectical contradiction, by no means needs to be romantic. Instead it adds to the awareness of a process that makes the individual object, or even the urban structure, stand out, freeing it from dependence on time or from formal rigidity (Ungers, 1997).

Architectural intervention with respect to the homeless population should be this freedom stemming from dialectic contradiction that Ungers discussed. A unique solution to a complex issue, such as homelessness, could be the conduit for understanding for the welfare of the entire society. Society and the urban fabric share a common flaw in that they are both frayed and disconnected. The social rifts, caused by ignorance and fear of other cultures, have left the city torn into many fragments; a divide which needs to be repaired.

Chapter 5

Observations on Homelessness in the Environment

When an animal builds its home, it takes in to account several different factors on where, when and how to build a shelter. There are atmospheric conditions of the region to consider such as heat, cold, rain, snow, wind, etc. There are adjacency factors, such as how close is the nearest food and water source… is there enough room to flourish? Most importantly, there is a great care to meet security and safety needs. Is the home concealed from predators? Can I see danger before it sees me? These are the basic means for survival for every species.

There are several survival issues that need to be considered when attempting to make it on the streets:

1) Where am I going to sleep tonight?
2) What am I going to eat tomorrow?
3) How will I keep clean?
4) What do I do when I need to use a toilet?
5) How will I keep warm in cold weather?
6) How will I keep dry in wet weather?
7) What if I get sick or hurt?
8) Where can I store my belongings while I am away?
9) How do I protect myself from other people?
10) What will happen to my body if I die?
11) How will I keep from being bored? (Allen, 2012).

These issues are taken for granted by the average member of society. When a person suddenly finds themselves on the streets there is a great amount of fear and uncertainty about answering these questions that they did not have to consider before. After a few weeks, a homeless person starts to get used to surviving on the streets. After an extended period of time, some people begin to take comfort in life on the streets;

finding it difficult to rejoin the "average" society.

The architecture of the animal kingdom is an excellent tool for examining the basic needs of an organism without being diffused by pomp and circumstance. As Curtis explains, "Animals build homes for the same reasons people do: protection from predators, shelter from weather, and sanctuary for raising offspring" (Curtis, 2005). A major difference between human and animal architecture is that animal architects tend to build their shelters in equilibrium with the environment around them. We, as humans, are so often remonstrated by the architectural prowess of our animal counterparts. Their constructions are awe-inspiring examples of engineering, improvisation, precision, and ingenuity (Hancocks, 1971). While many animals create a freestanding structure, there are several species that create a home that is a parasite dwelling. The woodpecker burrows a hole into a healthy tree to create a safe environment to lay their eggs and forage of wood dwelling grubs (Fig 5.01). The tree is partially harmed by the woodpecker digging into its flesh but the tree gets the benefit of the woodpecker eating other potentially harmful parasites like grubs and other insects. The Sociable Weaver Bird of Africa creates an intricate and massive nest that houses hundreds of birds for several generations (Fig 5.02). These nests almost consume an entire tree and can sometimes become too heavy for a branch to handle and the branch will, unfortunately, break off. While providing structure, the tree keeps the nest out of reach of many predators and provides a modicum

Fig 5.01

Fig 5.02

of shade for the nest. The tree itself does not receive a benefit from being the host to the nest, but it can be argued that the birds may carry seeds from the tree to other locations thus continuing that species of tree's survival.

Homeless people living on the street share something in common with the aforementioned animals. These animals, and many like them, have a parasitic relationship with their home just like homeless people who find shelter on the street have a parasitic nature with the environment around them. The paradigm of parasitic architecture can also be examined as more than just an architectural study but rather a possible solution to housing persons experiencing homelessness.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs addresses the biologic and physical nature of health and wellness. Humans, like others animals, cannot live without these needs being met. Humans differ from many other species in the fact that we are a psychological and social species. On the streets, homeless people will often perch with or near other homeless people. How homeless people meet these needs are very important to understand when observing their culture.

Living organisms have four basic needs: food, water, shelter, and space (Maslow, 1943). When a person finds themselves living out on the streets, they will often display the same instincts of shelter building as the rest of the animal kingdom. When faced with a survival situation, these instincts reassert themselves. Many homeless individuals will create a "perch" for themselves under a bridge or some other overhead structure. It is ready-made protection from rain, sun, and snow. They will also try to conceal themselves or find an elevated position. This gives them the ability to see danger coming and gives them enough time to escape if necessary.

Homeless people tend to have a preference to be directly adjacent to a large mass like a bridge column, retaining wall, berm, etc. (Fig 5.03) This gives a modicum of shelter from wind and sun but more importantly, gives an extra layer of concealment from the eyes of would-be

Fig 5.03

24

predators. If you cannot be seen, you cannot be harassed. Bridges also often traverse areas of land that have little to no buildings, activity, or habitation. These elements can be found in every urban center in the country and are used by the homeless population to their advantage. Bridges, elevated highways, and

on-ramps are not only a convenient path for vehicles, but they are a highway for travel underneath as well.

The often barren landscape underneath these elements offers a perfect place for people to travel, congregate, and sleep (Fig 5.04). A transit shelter is a ready-made refuge for someone attempting to find shelter from rain and snow. Although transit shelters are typically open on one or more sides, they offer a place to sit or lie down that is elevated off the ground and covered (Fig 5.05).

The image of a homeless person on a bench seems a bit cliché, but it has received this stigma for a valid reason. A bench is an elevated platform often with the dimensions that would allow a person to lie down (Fig 5.06). Many benches have backs which can satisfy the behavior of being adjacent to a mass like a wall. The back of the bench offers, depending on orientation, some protection from the wind and can somewhat hide a person sleeping. Being elevated and not sleeping directly on the ground prevents animals and many insects from molesting the person trying to sleep. In the warmer summer months, having the airflow above and underneath a bench can make a quite comfortable place to sleep.

Fig 5.04

Fig 5.05

Fig 5.06

Fig 5.07

The homeless population often creates its own communities within its ostracized culture. Many major urban centers have "tent cities" on the outskirts of the city (Fig 5.07). These cities create a separate community with its own hierarchy and rules. By combining their efforts, homeless people have created a community similar to the Sociable Weaver Bird of Africa. Within these communities, the people will live by a particular set of rules formed from within. Because these people live outside of the law, they have to create their own rules and code of conduct. Just as every other society, there are those members of that society who choose to ignore these rules. These individuals are a source of great danger to the majority of homeless people. Whether in shelters, or out on the streets, these dangerous elements have little to no separation from the rest of the community. Banding together as a community adds much needed security to the lives of the homeless population.

Another danger facing homeless people are members of the "average society". A homeless person is constantly being harassed by the police, gang members, as well as the typical person walking by. It is for this reason that most homeless people tend to prefer to live and move about under the cover of a bridge. Bridges often traverse areas of land that have little to no buildings, activity, or habitation. It is one more layer of protection for the homeless person. If you cannot be seen, you cannot be harassed.

The instinct to survive will help keep you alive. The average homed person may never consider doing what many homeless people do in their normal day. This instinct is not a regression nor is it a negative trait in any way. The way that homeless people meet their basic needs is remarkable. This method of sheltering themselves may be learned, it may be a latent survival mode, or it may be a combination of learned and inherent survival instinct. No matter the origin of these behaviors in homeless people, they are found throughout the animal kingdom and should be learned from. This instinct is very primal in nature and it is what has allowed us as humans to survive for thousands of years.

Chapter 6
Health Factors Facing Public Place Dwellers

Wellness is described as the integration of six dimensions: social, psychological, emotional, physical, spiritual, and intellectual, which together allow for successful functioning in society. Homeless individuals' exposure to stressful personal and environmental factors such as social exclusion, exposure to the elements, sleep deprivation, and malnutrition directly affect their wellness. Consequently, prevention and recovery from homelessness is significantly hindered by the effect that homelessness has on the social, psychological, emotional, physical, spiritual, and intellectual wellness of an individual (Stahl, 2007). (Fig 6.01)

Animals, including humans, adhere to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: Physiological, Safety, Belongingness and Love, Esteem, and Self-Actualization (Maslow). (Fig 6.02) (The physiological needs are the most basic needs) food, water, shelter, sleep, and space. The first three base levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is clarified in the biopsychosocial model of wellness. (Fig 7.03)

If a homeless person chooses to sleep in a shelter, of if they have to shelter themselves on the streets, they are seriously lacking in their requirements for space. Even when a homeless person manages to get into a shelter for the evening, they have no space that they can claim as being their space. Shelters
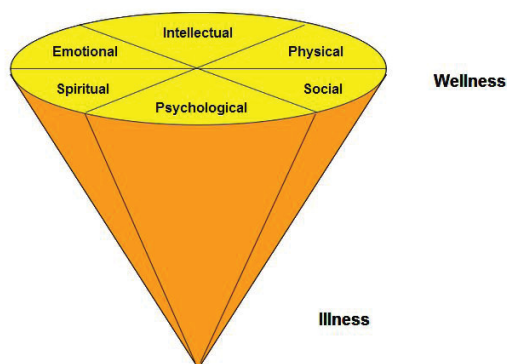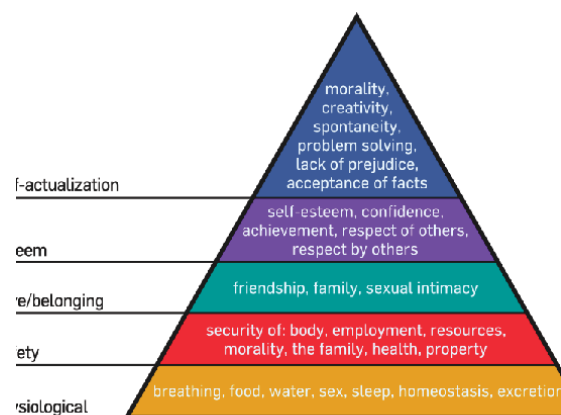
Fig 6.01

Fig 6.02

don't have much room for personal belongings and most have rules about the amount of belongings allowed inside. Also, because a person has to leave every morning, the bed is not really their bed nor is the space around them theirs. If they come back the next night they will most likely end up sleeping in a different bed. If they had a bed to call their own, even if it is semi-permanent, it can cause a very beneficial effect on the psychology of the individual. The built environment has a direct relationship to, and contributes to the homeless population's problems with exposure to the elements, sleep deprivation, and personal space. If a person cannot get out of the rain or cold, their wellness and health are severely affected. If a person cannot get an adequate amount of sleep, there are a myriad of health problems that will arise or be exacerbated (Hartman, 2011). All of these not only affect the physical well-being of the individual, but the mental well-being as well.

The first built environment factor contributing to the wellness of persons experiencing homelessness is exposure to the elements. It is easy to see why but it is hard to comprehend. Most people have always had a roof and walls to protect them. Again, most have also had the luxury of climate and humidity control. For the homeless population, they do not have any of these benefits that most people take for granted. While a homeless shelter provides a modicum of protection and comfort, if a homeless person gets into a shelter, they still are lacking in their shelter needs when compared to the average homed person. The atmospheric elements of the sun, rain, wind, heat, cold, snow, etc. are very detrimental to the human body if not adequately prepared. (Fig 6.04)
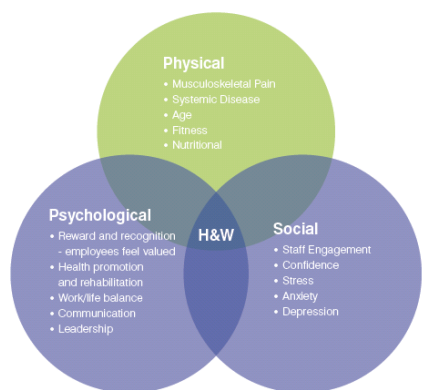

Fig 6.03

Fig 6.04

Overexposure to the sun can cause cancer such as melanoma, lead to several skin problems, cause eye damage, and lower the body's autoimmune response. "Scientists have found that overexposure to UV radiation may suppress proper functioning of the body's immune system and the skin's natural defenses. For example, the skin normally mounts a defense against foreign invaders such as cancers and infections. But overexposure to UV radiation can weaken the immune system, reducing the skin's ability to protect against these invaders" (E.P.A., 2010).

Humans have spent most of their existence dealing directly with the elements. Historically, people would build their own shelter and collect food and water. It is only in recent history that humans have had and gotten used to the luxury of central heating and cooling, running water, grocery stores, electricity, and mass construction. Open areas for building a shelter are almost nonexistent, clean available water no longer flows through the city unless it is through a pipe. Game animals do not forage for berries on Main St. You would be fined, if not arrested, for using fire for cooking, warmth, and light.

Homeless people have to make do with what is available to them. Four walls and a roof do not only protect you from the atmospheric elements. Another element that people often forget about is animals. Rodents and insects wreak havoc on the homeless community. Mosquitoes and other biting insects cause immeasurable harm, not only from the annoyance of being bitten and stung, but the after effect of the stings and bites themselves. Even for a healthy person, multiple insect bites can cause great sickness and an overall feeling of exhaustion. They carry all kinds of diseases and are a general nuisance that harass them throughout the day and into the night, not allowing them a good night sleep. "When all is said and done, a house is not a container for domestic activities but a place where the human body can achieve repose; soft and pleasurable and at the same time affording protection against the weather and against violence" (Allen, 2003). The yearly cycle of winter, spring, summer, and fall play a role in life on the streets as well. Many homeless people will travel to warmer states during the winter months and then back "home" in the spring. Due to favorable climate, Florida and Texas are popular "destination states" for many homeless people to flock to during the winter, but any state that does not drop below freezing often will see an increase in the homeless population during the winter months. For those who do not travel with the seasons, most cities will open crisis shelters when temperatures dip below 32 degrees.

winter months. For those who do not travel with the seasons, most cities will open crisis shelters when temperatures dip below 32 degrees. These crisis shelters can be anything from churches, community centers and schools, to providing homeless people with motel room vouchers. These shelters, however, are only in use for this purpose during the evening. During the daylight hours, people must go back out side and search for their own warmth (Donaghy, 2011).

Sleep deprivation is another dangerous health factor facing persons experiencing homelessness. Many people do not think about the implications of sleep deprivation because most of us have never been faced with it. "Whether they sleep rough or find room in a shelter, it's very difficult to get uninterrupted, restful, and sufficient sleep" (Hartman, 2011). (Fig 6.05) Dr. Eve Van Cauter, professor Department of Medicine University of Chicago, states:

> Chronic sleep loss may not only hasten the onset but also increase the severity of age-related ailments such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and memory loss. Also, it is believed that people, especially men, who fail to get good quality sleep, often are more likely to experience depression (Hartman, 2011).

In a study done in Austin TX, more than 200 participants were asked what keeps them from getting to sleep in a shelter: Over 51% responded that their mind keeps racing. Over 27% responded that they fear being hurt. 10% responded that they hear voices in their heads (Troxell, 2012). Sleep is difficult to come by in a shelter.
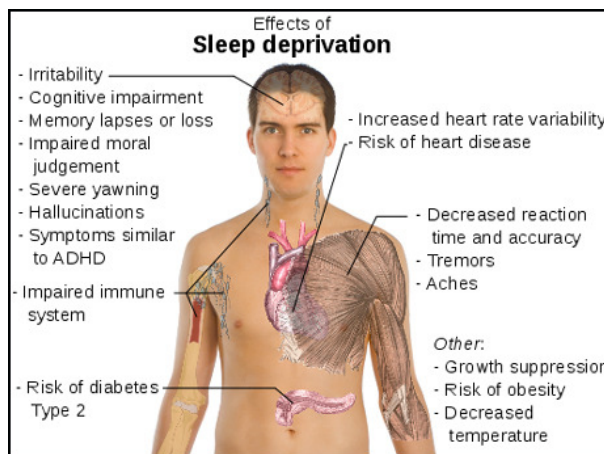

Fig 6.05

Sleep on the streets is far more difficult. The sleep deprivation that the homeless face on the street has many causes: Comfort, stress, depression, temperature, light, sound, physical injury, weather. But, the greatest reason for their sleep deprivation is lack of security.

Fear could be considered one of the strongest emotions. It drives people to madness at times. Most, if not all, homeless people have been the victims of violent crimes. Rape and other forms of assault are commonplace. This leads to the dread that someone is going to attack you at all times. Many homeless people may only get a few hours of poor sleep on any given evening. Through e-mail correspondence with a formerly homeless woman Kylyssa, I asked about her feelings and thoughts about the physical nature of her environment when she was experiencing homelessness. This was her response:

> Generally, I was unconcerned about the physical nature of my environment while I was homeless except regarding how well it protected me from other people. Physical comfort was low on the list of priorities when I was homeless. I was more concerned about being visible to people who would either harass or harm me. My most burning desire was for a locking door. I'd have been thrilled by a body-length sleeping pod if it had a locking door of some kind. It's difficult to sleep without some sense of security after the first few assaults and it only gets worse. The next best to a locking door is someone you trust to take turns standing watch and sleeping. Being hidden is next best after that, in my opinion. No matter how physically comfortable a place is, if it doesn't feel secure, it isn't a good place to sleep. The elements of nature are easy to survive, other humans are not. I'd wager most people think of lack of a home as primarily a lack of shelter from the elements but the most dangerous and tiring aspect of it is actually the lack of shelter from dangerous people. Most homeless people are either victims of or witnesses to violence at some point during or before their homeless experience. So, in my opinion, security comes first and everything else is just icing on the cake. If I had to list my other priorities regarding a sleeping place, cleanliness would come next, followed by access to a bathroom, privacy, and appropriate temperature (Kylyssa, 2012).

20% - 30% of homeless individuals have a mental health disorder (Stahl, 2007). The health risks they face due to built environment factors exacerbate these disorders making it more difficult to get off the streets. It is a compound problem because continued living on the streets also exacerbates the health problems. This leads to an increased rate of early mortality. The mean mortality age of homeless adults is 34 – 47 years old, which is three to four times higher than in the general population (Stahl, 2007).

The health and wellness of the homeless community is directly tied to the environment that they are a part of. Cramped spaces and poor circulation in shelters lead to common illnesses becoming chronic and life threatening. The threat of violence against a homeless person causes broken limbs from attacks, sexually transmitted diseases from rape, and many sleepless nights due to the fear. Sleep deprivation exacerbates the already long list of health threats facing the homeless community. The overall health and wellness of a person depends on their physical needs, their psychological needs and their sociological needs. Not addressing these three aspects of health and wellness is an unsound practice.

Chapter 7

Humanistic Dialectic Design:

An approach to sheltering individuals experiencing homelessness.

To address the issues of why many homeless individuals prefer not to use traditional homeless shelters, I first had to look where homeless people live. The general public often takes issue with a shelter being anywhere in the vicinity of their home or business, therefore, homeless shelters are typically disputed and often clustered around other homelessness services such as counseling and job placement centers in dangerous parts of town. This causes homeless people to move through the city to get to the shelter locations. This transit to the shelters can be very dangerous because of the homeless person having to move through the dangerous parts of a city.

Homeless people tend to spend a great deal of time under the cover of bridges, overpasses and raised highways. The most logical place to begin to redefine a homeless shelter is under these aforementioned structures. The land underneath them is typically free from any other structure and the local municipality usually owns the land. The structure above and the support for that structure already provide people with protection from the elements; it can be utilized in a design to reduce construction cost and play a vital role in the overall design and feel of the intervention. Because most major cities have overhead elements like bridges, overpasses and raised highways, this model can be adjusted and utilized in any major urban center in the United States. The city used in this design research was Baltimore, Maryland.
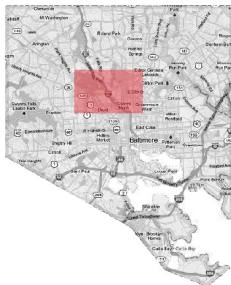

Fig 7.01

Fig 7.02

The overall goal of the design research was to design a new way of sheltering individuals in the nooks and crannies of a city that they already occupy, rather than designing a "one size fits all" building. The shelter is comprised of two main elements: the first element is the amenities and service building, (Fig 7.03) and the second is the collection of Private Occupancy Domiciles (P.O.D.s) making up the "village." (Fig 7.04)

Fig 7.03

Fig 7.04

These two entities are independently operated, with the amenities and services building being run by volunteers and the Village being run by the residents themselves. They are separate but have a symbiotic relationship and work in conjunction with each other to function as a whole. It is the combination of the two that creates the "community" (Fig 7.05). The village is the only piece of the program that would be under the bridge, highway, or raised highway. The overall design would have several communities along the city's highway or bridge systems, one being the central community and the other being satellite communities. (Fig 7.02) In the event a suitable location under a bridge, overpass, or raised highway cannot be found, a pavilion or shed could be built adjacent to the amenities and services building. This would still provide the benefits of the overhead structure with only a small increase in cost.

Fig 7.05 (NTS)

The amenities and services building, a single level building running alongside the village, includes a soup kitchen and cafeteria, men's and women's showers, a laundry facility, a clothing exchange room, a place to receive toiletries, a set of toilets accessible from the exterior, a mailbox bank, security office, and lockable storage inside the building (Fig 7.06). The lockable storage can be used by someone that wishes to leave the center for an extended period of time while keeping their belongings safe. The central community would have all of the aforementioned amenities while also housing the services such as the library, life learning classes, and counseling center, and the medical clinic on upper levels which are accessible through a reception area separate from the rest of the first level. (Fig 7.07-7.08) The separation allows for the upper floors to be more secure and to allow for the first level to remain open later into the evening. Ideally, the center would be run through a 100% volunteer effort with nominal cost incurred by the local government.
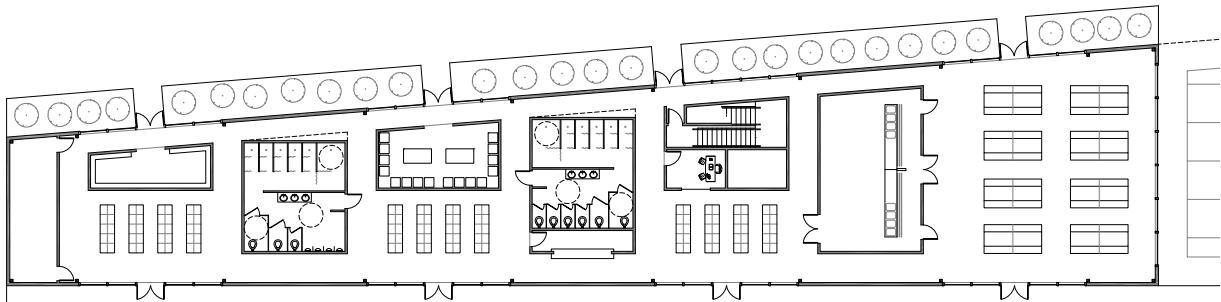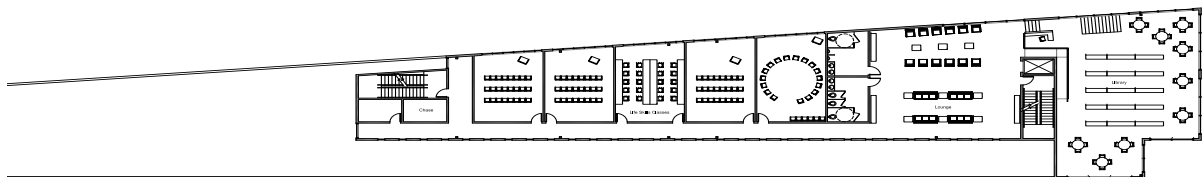
Fig 7.06 (NTS)

Fig 7.07 (NTS)

Top: First Level Amenities

Middle: Second Level - Life Learning Classrooms, Lounge, Library

Right: Rendering of Library

Fig 7.08   Fig 7.08

The village is where homeless people would live and sleep and is divided up into a collection of "neighborhoods." (Fig 7.09) Each neighborhood sits between the vertical supports of the roadbed and has a small block of P.O.D.s facing each other. In the middle of each neighborhood are water fountains and a sunken fire pit. There is also a message board for listings of rules, barter, reminders, educational information, news, P.O.D.s available, job postings, and any other pertinent community information. Also included in each neighborhood would be an emergency call box similar to the call boxes found on most university campuses. The neighborhood gives the residents a sense of belonging and a place to commune as neighbors. Adjacent to each neighborhood, depending on the location in the city, would be either a bank of solar panels or wind turbines to generate power either on the land adjacent or attached to the bridge or overpass, providing the residents with electricity.

It is the hope that setting up the community would offer stabilization and a sense of belonging to the homeless person. The social nature of the community would give them a forum to use some of their social skills that have often been long forgotten. This is one of the key issues this project addresses. Many programs and shelters do not take the social interactions of homeless people into consideration. This prototype would also act as a forum for members of the non-homeless community to volunteer and interact with homeless individuals. The openness of the design creates a sense of welcome to everyone and invites understanding by letting people learn about and from each other.
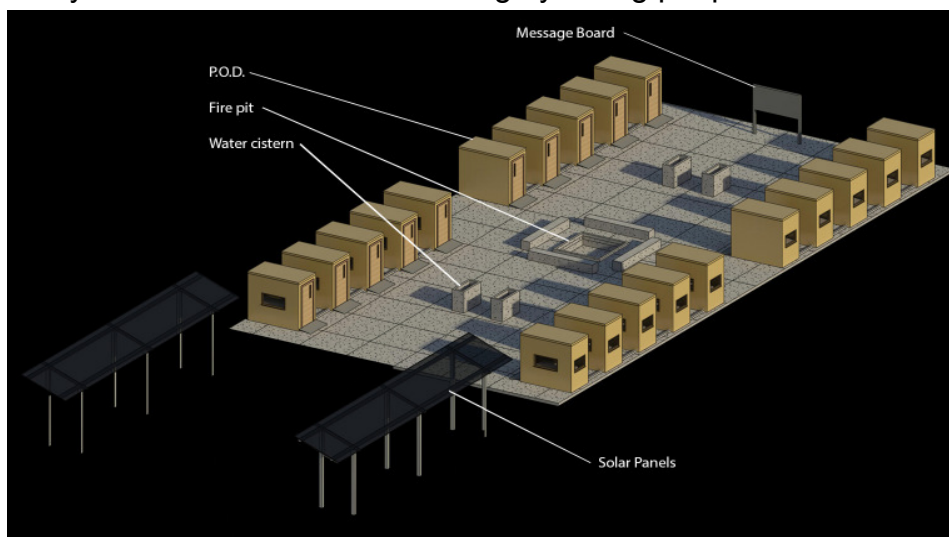

Fig 7.09

The living P.O.D. was inspired by the combination of Japanese pod hotels and single room occupancy hotels (SRO's). (Fig 7.10) The P.O.D. is designed to meet a minimum standard for obtaining and maintaining rest. While it gives the resident their own space, due to its limited size, the P.O.D. is designed for sleeping and resting. However, the residents are welcome to come and go as they please throughout the day or night. They are not required to leave in the morning and check back in at night. It is their P.O.D., they may stay for as long as they like. Because of the complexity of the homeless population and the variety of people and their individual situations, these P.O.D.'s can be used anywhere from one night by a nomadic homeless person to one being occupied for several years by the same person.

The P.O.D. is constructed of structurally insulated panels (SIPs) coated with spray-on rubber lining and the dimensions are 6 feet wide by 8 feet deep and 8 feet tall. The SIPs create a sturdy insulated shell while the coating offers protection from the elements. The coating also allows for easy clean-up of the interior of the P.O.D. when necessary. There is one entry door with keycard access and two operable windows for ventilation. The roof of the P.O.D. has an operable skylight to allow for additional ventilation and light if desired. The wall that does not have the door or windows is split horizontally through the middle. The wall is able to open up and create a floor and roof of an exterior space. (Fig 8.11) The intent is to allow people the freedom to control their own environment and create an outdoor space for themselves. In the event of a couple wishing the share space, the walls can be removed and two P.O.D.'s can be pushed together to create a single larger P.O.D. Combining two P.O.D.'s together cannot be done by the residents at any time. They must have the volunteers at the center assist them.
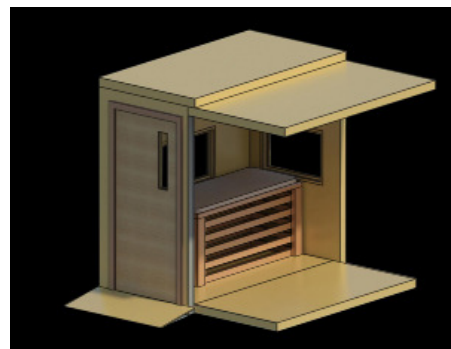

Fig 7.10

Fig 7.11

The bed is a 7 foot by 2'-6" box made up of recycled plastic with a vinyl pad on top. The top of the bed acts as a lid so the bed can pull double duty as a storage bin for their personal belongings. (Fig 7.12) The bed is not attached to the floor so it can be moved around to accommodate the resident's desire to adjust the placement. This also allows for the addition of another bed to be pushed up next to another bed when two pods are joined together. The simple act of not sleeping on the ground is a huge psychological and physical comfort.

When a person wants to move into the community, they will find it to be open and accessible. (Fig 7.13) They can walk around all of the neighborhoods reading all the message boards, perhaps to see what P.O.D.'s are available. (Fig 7.14) They would then proceed to the first floor reception office and register themselves with which P.O.D. they will be living in. It is the reception desk run by the volunteers at the center where the residents receive there photo ID access card for the lock on the door of their P.O.D. This electronic lock would also give the center a way of knowing who is in what P.O.D. and make is easier to know when one has been vacated. If a P.O.D. that has been checked out does not have its lock activated for 48 hours, a volunteer will check on the person to see if they have left, if they are sick and need medical attention, or worst case scenario, they have passed away.

Fig 7.12

Fig 7.13

Fig 7.14

Chapter 8

Conclusion

The reasons for homelessness are varied and complex: without appropriate services in place, it is difficult for an individual to escape the cycle of homelessness. Although there are services and shelters in place, they are not performing to the standards that are necessary to properly address the present issues of homelessness. The general public needs to be educated about the homeless population. Policy makers need to stop implementing policies that create barriers to the betterment of the homeless person and develop and implement new policies that work to benefit the community holistically. Designers need to reevaluate design methods for the urban environment. There are many dangers facing persons experiencing homelessness, ranging from those posed by their natural surroundings such as exposure to the elements and threats from external forces like the violence often found on the streets. The interaction between the urban environment and homelessness supports the need for a paradigm shift in the approach to the attitudes and evaluation of service and shelter for individuals experiencing homelessness.

By far, education is the primary issue that needs to be addressed with regards to the homeless community. Most people who have never experienced homelessness have only a single story or a personal opinion about "the homeless". The dirty beggar on street corner and the mentally ill person muttering incoherently represents a small percentage of the homeless population. When the general public begins to absorb and comprehend the depth of the issues facing marginalized and vulnerable people, they can begin to open the lines of communication and address how to help people help themselves.

Currently, there are too many policies on the books that make it essentially illegal to be homeless in the United States. In addition, policies and building codes prevent measures from being taken to address the issues of sheltering individuals in distress.

These measures are in place for valid reasons but they tend to be inflexible and too strict, the policies are dated and do not address the current economic hardships that have recently plagued the entire population. In turn these policies prevent designers from developing innovative and economically sound designs that could be affordable to the population in need.

The designs professionals need to be encouraged and motivated to create and present new ideas for shelter. Through design exploration, solutions can be discovered that will benefit every member of society. It should be the responsibility of every designer to contribute to every community a space for the members of the community in need. Ideally, any new or existing community that is developed allows for a space to address the needs of the marginalized of society.

The design project discussed in this thesis is not the definitive solution to the issue of sheltering homeless individuals but rather an example of a vision as to how the delicate issue of homelessness could be approached and addressed. A community includes all members from the elite to the marginalized, with each member entitled to shelter. Society cannot begin to address its problems without considering every member. It is time to stop the practice of disregarding marginalized people. A society is judged on how they treat those members who can do nothing for them. We are all people and we are all in this together and have an obligation to each other.

> When we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise (Adichie, 2009).

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Chapter 8 - Humanistic Dialectic Design:

An approach to sheltering individuals experiencing homelessness.

8.01 – 8.14– Images and drawings by Jeffrey Stahl

Chapter 9 – Conclusion

No Images within this Chapter

Appendix

Figure 1.02 - Causes of Homelessness - 2011

Causes of Homelessness - 2011

financial ability to make ends meet and afford an apartment or home, individuals and families become homeless.

Other factors that contribute to homelessness include:

Loss of Job	Domestic Violence
High Housing / Rental Costs	Disability - Physical/Mental
Death of a Family Member	Low Paying Job
Natural Disasters (fires, storms)	Catastrophic Illness
Family Break Up	Lack of Transportation (car or public system)
Family Crisis (loss of hours; car break down)	Lack of Affordable Health Care

In Hillsborough County, during the 2011 homeless count, homeless people (when given a list of options) identified the following reasons for their homelessness:

Employment/Financial Reasons	49.38%
Family Problems	12.72%
Medical/Disability Problems	7.91%
Housing Issues	7.77%
Drugs/Alcohol	6.98%
Forced to Relocate	6.93%
Jail/Prison/Hospital	1.77%
Recent Immigration	0.31%
Other	6.23%

(2011 Homeless Count)

Why Affordable Housing is the Root...

When a household is using more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs, they frequently have to make difficult decisions about what to pay - housing, utilities, food, childcare, health care, education, transportation. With limited resoureces, one emergency or unplanned situation can begin a downward spiral to homelessness.

What's Affordable?

When a household spends more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs, their housing is considered unaffordable and the household could be at risk of becoming homeless. In the table below, you can see how the wage a household needs to afford an apartment based its size with fair market rents in Hillsborough County (from the National Low Income Housing Coalition's 2010 Out of Reach report).

Apt. Size	Fair Market Rent	Wage Needed
0 Bedroom	$ 714	$ 13.73 an hour
1 Bedroom	$ 793	$ 15.25 an hour
2 bedroom	$ 959	$ 18.44 an hour
3 bedroom	$ 1,215	$ 23.37 an hour
4 bedroom	$ 1,467	$ 28.21 an hour

A person whose sole income is SSI receives $674 a month and can afford no more than $202 a month for rent.

Appendix

The McKinney-Vento Act

Title I   Findings by Congress and provides a definition of homelessness.

Title II   Establishes and describes the functions of the Interagency Council on the Homeless, an independent entity within the Executive Branch composed of the heads of 15 federal agencies.

Title III   Authorizes the Emergency Food and Shelter Program, which is administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Title IV   Authorizes the emergency shelter and transitional housing programs administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, including the Emergency Shelter Grant program (expanded from the program created by the Homeless Housing Act in 1986), the Supportive Housing Demonstration Program, Supplemental Assistance for Facilities to Assist the Homeless, and Section 8 Single Room Occupancy Moderate Rehabilitation.

Title V   Imposes requirements on federal agencies to identify and make available surplus federal property, such as buildings and land, for use by states, local governments, and nonprofit agencies to assist homeless people.

Title VI   Authorizes several programs administered by the Department of Health and Human Services to provide health care services to homeless persons, including the Health Care for the Homeless program, a Community Mental Health Services block grant program, and two demonstration programs providing mental health and alcohol and drug abuse treatment services to homeless persons.

Title VII   Authorizes four programs: the Adult Education for the Homeless Program and the Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program, both administered by the Department of Education; the Job Training for the Homeless Demonstration Program, administered by the Department of Labor; and the Emergency Community Services Homeless Grant Program, administered by the Department of Health and Human Services.

Title VIII   Amends the Food Stamp program to facilitate participation in the program by persons who are homeless, and also expands the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program, administered by the

Department of Agriculture ("McKinney-Vento Act," 1987)

Vita

Jeffrey Stahl was born in Elkhart Indiana to parents Marc and Yvonne Stahl. He is the younger of two sons: Gregory. Jeffrey moved to Ft. Lauderdale with his family when he was two years old. He attended Piper High School where he lettered in band and in volleyball and graduated in 2000. He later went on to study civil engineering at The University of Central Florida where he earned his associates or arts degree. Jeffrey then attended The University of South Florida to pursue his passion for architecture. In 2006, he transferred his credits to The University of Tennessee where he graduated with his Bachelor of Architecture in 2011. Jeffrey then decided to continue his education and attend graduate school at The University of Tennessee.