

Latent forces affect the lives of individuals greatly, changing how they live and what privileges they have. These forces are hidden, unintended consequences of the societies and social structures that people live in. The power that these unintended social structures, such as schools, family and other communities have is often a result of the people living in them learning from past generations or attempting to navigate their lives with resources that society has hindered. Different dynamics and communities may also clash, especially in schools where many different types of people are put together and interact. These forces can affect how people view others, how they act and how they live their lives.

A common theme I noticed between the two works, *Tell Them Who I am* by Elliot Liebow and *Behind The White Picket Fence* by Sarah Mayorga-Gallo was the emphasis on social structures and the effects that it has on the lives of people. In the case of the Liebow work, the social structure of the shelter affected how the women lived and went about their days. Boredom throughout the day being an unintended consequence of the shelter sending people out at 7 in the morning, another consequence of this is the homeless women not having the opportunity to sleep in like many of who don't live in shelters can. In the Mayorga-Gallo work, the social structures affect individuals in a different way. In the work, CreekrIDGE is described as being a diverse community, but when it comes to board meetings and events, most of the members and/or attendees are white, with those not being white often being excluded. This has a lot to do with how diversity is defined by outside groups as well as the placement of these events not allowing a more even balance of people.

The research methods that were used in the Liebow work was the use of field research in the form of helping at the homeless shelters as well as interviewing the homeless women. By using this method he was able to gather first hand accounts from the people actually living through the shelters as well as experience for himself the schedules of the shelter and see how both the volunteers and those who needed the shelter interacted with each other. The central claim that Liebow makes after conducting and discussing his research, is that homelessness isn't caused because people are disabled, abusing substances or mentally ill, but instead is caused because of poverty. Liebow also claims that homelessness is the fault of society rather than just a small problem only a select few people face. Liebow points at the connection between homelessness and poverty, showing that poverty is directly the cause of homelessness and is an issue that faces the whole country and shouldn't just be viewed as something a small number of people have to deal with.

In chapter one titled *Day by Day* of the Liebow work, the author writes about the daily lives of people who utilize homeless shelters. This chapter covers how difficult it is for people who are homeless, describing the different struggles they have even if they are able to get access to a shelter. Fortunately, things like food stamps, medical aid and donations help the homeless women to survive. Although it still doesn't make their lives

as easy as those who have homes and more resources. In my weekly posting for week 7, I wrote about how close many people are to becoming homeless. Before learning this, I always felt it was something that only happened gradually to an unfortunate few people. Some other struggles that Liebow writes about are how the people who use these shelters have to wake up at 5:30am and then leave at 7am, making sleeping in impossible. Even though they can get some sleep, the amount of noise caused by others can cause people to get little to no decent sleep. There's a few of the homeless women who some weekends find other places to sleep such as cars and motels just so they can sleep in and sleep in quieter places. This is shown when one of the women Liebow interviews says, "She went to a motel for the weekend so she could sleep in" (Liebow, 28), when talking about another woman who often was absent from the shelter on weekends. During colder months, having to leave a shelter at 7am is even harder due to the harsher weather, causing many of the women to search outside for places safe from the wind and cold in order to stay warm. A different struggle that homeless women face is boredom. Since the shelters have everyone out so early and only allow them back in much later in the day, many women try to find ways to "kill time" as Liebow writes. Some of the women spend their time just walking the streets for hours at a time or spacing out different activities over the span of days just to make time go by faster. Health and lack of healthcare is another major issue for the homeless women, as most if not all of them can't afford proper health care. This causes the women to go without treatment even for more serious conditions. If something is life threatening, they may still go to the emergency room, but for other ailments that they deem not life threatening, they self treat with over the counter medications. Liebow writes that "most women seemed to take aches and pain for granted; they came with the territory" (Liebow, 38-39).

In chapter 5 of the Liebow work titled *My Friends, God and Myself*, he writes about the relationships that the people in the shelter have with each other and those outside of it. In my weekly posting for week 9, I wrote about how one of the women in the shelter named Patty had a romantic relationship with a married delivery driver. Even though this driver was only around a couple times a month, the two were still able to foster a relationship where Patty got pregnant. Unfortunately, the driver made it clear that he would take no responsibility for Patty or her unborn child. This chapter covers other stories of the difficulties that the women in the shelter have with romantic partners, but emphasizes that it wasn't a priority for many. Some of the other types of relationships that Liebow discusses in this chapter are churches. The churches in the area often did help the women out, some referring the women to the shelter as well as allowing the women to store their belongings in the church or calling on a church member to help with storage or a spare room. Liebow also writes about how the homeless women were often not welcomed into retail spaces, forcing them to have to rely on the kindness of a few workers who would treat them with respect. This chapter

also discusses the friendships that the women have with each other, sometimes for being the same race or age and sometimes for having known each other previously. Even though these women don't have much, those who are friends do make an effort with each other, occasionally giving each other gifts.

In chapter 6 titled *Making it Together*, Liebow writes about the different dynamics and social structures that are present in the homeless shelter. This chapter explains how hectic the shelters can be due to the many different personalities clashing as well as the overcrowding, but also states how this can change quickly as the dynamics in the shelter are never stagnant. Liebow also writes that "Race was the most divisive and destructive force in the shelter, although in practice it was usually contained" (Liebow, 189). While some women in the shelter did view race as a major topic, others paid it little to no mind, often viewing it in the same way someone would view height and/or weight. In this chapter, Liebow also writes about how those in the shelter who are racist will treat others, including those who volunteer at the shelter. He describes how two women named DeeDee and Hilda were often saying slurs and/or lashing out at other non white residents and volunteers of the shelter. He also writes about how some of the women are xenophobic, with one of them stating that "There is public housing, but it's all political. It all goes to the Cambodians and Vietnamese" (Liebow, 195). While not true, there are a couple of women in the shelter who believe this, Liebow theorizes that the women saw prejudice for foreigners as a way to create solidarity between black and white Americans. Liebow then goes on to write that the only other threat to the homeless women's solidarity is class. Many of the women in the shelter view themselves as working class and underdogs, with some even having disdain for others not in the same class. When walking past a woman in a tailored suit, Liebow tells one of the shelter women that she could be like that some day, to which she replies, "But she's The Enemy!... 'Do you really want me to join The Enemy?'" (Liebow, 197). This interaction shows how the women view others not in their social class, as well as their disdain for them.

In chapter 7, *Some Thoughts on Homelessness*, Liebow concludes his research and accounts with what he learned from his experiences. He writes about how homelessness is a fault of society and emphasizes that people aren't homeless because of disabilities, being mentally ill or because they abuse substances, but instead people are homeless due to poverty. This chapter also covers how homelessness isn't just a small issue of a few unfortunate people, but rather a "social class phenomenon". Even those who aren't homeless and still work remain poor, further showing how difficult it is for people to get out of homelessness when those who are fortunate for them aren't even able to improve their financial situations. Liebow also explains how like homelessness, "Unemployment, underemployment, and substandardized wages are system failures only when viewed from the bottom" (Liebow, 225), while those at the top see them as "natural" and necessary to a healthy market system.

The research for the Mayorga-Gallo work was also conducted through the use of field research. Mayorga-Gallo, like Liebow, used field research to gather information by interviewing residents in CreekrIDGE, as well as attending events in the town. Other research was conducted outside of this, as Mayorga-Gallo used statistics for the area and research from other areas to compare how diversity is defined and to show if towns that are labeled as diverse actually are. The main point of Mayorga-Gallo's work is how a diversity ideology often upholds the privilege of white people rather than actually creating a diverse community.

Chapter two, titled *White Habitus and the Meanings of Diversity*, in the Mayorga-Gallo work is about how the white residents of CreekrIDGE define diversity as well as the central ideas of diversity ideology to the white middle class. In my weekly posting for week 11, I wrote about how important sociological skills are to have when it comes to understanding the lives of others. I think that this can apply to this chapter as a major part of this chapter is about how the white residents don't put as much understanding to their black and latino/a neighbors, causing them to not acknowledge their privilege as well as unintentionally alienate them. Also in this chapter, Mayorga-Gallo writes about how "diversity ideology dictates that intentions, as opposed to outcomes, are what truly matter" (Mayorga-Gallo, 23). The chapter makes it clear that this line of thinking is flawed, as it doesn't help with the true issues regarding injustices and inequality. Mayorga-Gallo writes about how diversity ideology doesn't force people to take meaningful action to promote true equality and inclusion, rather they focus more on their intentions and own thoughts and feelings rather than truth. This chapter also covers the reasons people chose to move to CreekrIDGE park, many of whom stated affordability as their reasons. Some white residents also stated the "aesthetics" of CreekrIDGE as a reason for wanting to move there. This chapter also shows how diverse CreekrIDGE actually is by using data, rather than just the accounts of those living there. While it's described as diverse by many of the white homeowners, the data shows that it is still primarily white, as well as people of different ethnicities still being divided by the layout of the town.

In chapter five titled *Solving the Wrong Problem*, of the Mayorga-Gallo work, she writes about the issues that segregation causes in communities and the effects it has on housing. In my weekly post for week 12, I wrote about how this chapter discusses the housing and income issues in CreekrIDGE and how segregation and other discriminatory practices has played a part. This chapter goes more into depth on how even the diverse areas like CreekrIDGE have been heavily affected by discriminatory policies. As Mayorga-Gallo states, "diversity, in its current forms, is about neither equity nor justice, but rather, reinforces white privilege" (Mayorga-Gallo, 148). This is the case because while white residents in these diverse areas speak highly of having multiethnic communities, many of them still have a primarily or entirely white social circle.

Mayorga-Gallo writes that this happens because the current state of diversity accepts differences, but still doesn't challenge the current state of racial equity.

Chapter 10 of *Essentials of Sociology* by James M. Henslin discusses gender and age discrimination and the effects that it has on society. In my weekly posting for week 9, I wrote about how gender inequality affects women in healthcare, education and their careers, causing women to not be taken as seriously, not getting proper education and causing them to rely on their husbands for money. This chapter ties in well to the Liebow work as the women from the shelter that he interviews are oftentimes victims of gender discrimination, with some of the older residents being victims of age discrimination. The Henslin work covers how men and women are given different access to resources, often resulting in less being offered to women which helps shed new light on the Liebow work. By comparing these two, I've gained even more of an understanding of the women interviewed and talked about in Liebow's work, while not shown there, the Henslin work can be used to further understand how these women end up in these situations.

Chapter 11 of the Henslin work is on politics and the economy. This chapter can be related to both the Liebow and Mayorga-Gallo works. For the Liebow work, it related to this chapter due to the discussions about the economy and poverty. The Liebow work puts heavy emphasis on the fact that poverty is the fault of society, and chapter 11 of the Henslin work discusses the stagnation of workers' wages over the years, despite an increase in prices. This stagnation causes an increase in poverty, which in result causes more homelessness, reinforcing the themes of the Liebow work. When it comes to the Mayorga-Gallo work, chapter 11 relates to it through the descriptions of different types of authority. One of the ways that authority is kept, as stated in chapter 11, is through tradition. This can relate to the Mayorga-Gallo work through the lens of how privilege is upheld in CreekrIDGE, intentionally or not. This chapter uses sociologist Max Weber's identifications of authority, those being traditional authority, rational-legal authority and charismatic authority. Traditional authority is power that was set up in the past and persists on, rational-legal authority is power that comes from written rules and laws and finally charismatic authority is power that comes from loyalty to an individual. In my weekly posting for week 12, I wrote about how in the Mayorga-Gallo work, white residents of CreekrIDGE claimed that the town was diverse in terms of income while the other residents disagreed.

Chapter 12 of the Henslin work focuses on marriage and family, this relates to the Liebow work. In the Liebow work, one of the chapters discusses a lot about the women's families and their relationships with them. This chapter discusses the different types of family dynamics, as well as the increase in divorces. A lot of the women interviewed in the Liebow work had experienced divorce, some of which eventually lead to them becoming homeless.

In chapter 14 of the Henslin work, he discusses population and urbanization. This chapter can relate to the Mayorga-Gallo work as it discusses an increase in diversity around the world. This chapter does comment on living in a city and the communities it has, but also discusses alienation. This can relate to the Mayorga-Gallo work as while many of the white residents are able to make a community, the others who live in the area who make it diverse, are often excluded or alienated. In this chapter Henslin references sociologist Louis Wirth and the essay he wrote about those living in urban areas living anonymously. Through living this way, people live freely, but end up alienating themselves from their communities.

Finally, in chapter 15 of the Henslin work, he writes about social change and the environment from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*. This chapter relates to both the Liebow and Mayorga-Gallo works because it discusses the effects that a changing society has on people and the economy. For the Liebow work, these changes are shown through the increase in poverty, resulting in homelessness. This chapter also relates to this work by describing how older societies were similar to the way the homeless community that Liebow spends time with is. They are similar in that the people there tend to be more of a closer community due to being so close, as well as many of them having "reciprocal obligations" as mentioned in the Henslin chapter. As for the Mayorga-Gallo work, this change in how society functions can be shown in the dynamics between the white residents of CreekrIDGE, and the black and latino/a residents. While the community that CreekrIDGE attempts to have may seem similar to that of *Gemeinschaft*, the fact it is upholding white privilege even in a diverse area clearly shows the negative affects the change in society has had.

In conclusion, I find that sociology does allow me to move past common sense ways of thinking, especially in regards to the Mayorga-Gallo and Liebow works. Both of these books challenge the readers' thinking by presenting them with views they may have never even thought of or realized were happening before. I find both of these works to be very important sociologically because they cover dynamics many people including myself may not think of. For the Liebow work, I hadn't put much thought into how the community of homeless women would act in a shelter nor the boredom and other struggles they'd face throughout the day. As for the Mayorga-Gallo work, I hadn't thought about how a town being labeled as diverse could hide how white privilege is still very much present, or how even in a diverse community, white people still end up holding the most power. I enjoyed reading both of these works, but in particular I enjoyed the Liebow work and learning how homeless shelters work and the bonds that those who need them form. These works and this course will certainly help me with having a more critical view of social structures and allow me to want to look more in depth at things rather than just take them at face value. While I did find it difficult and confusing at times, at the end of the day I did enjoy learning about sociology, and I hope that I'll be able to take away a decent understanding of it.