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# What Provides for Me as I Provide for Others? A Study of Homeless Shelters Employees Within Kalamazoo, Michigan

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**WHAT PROVIDES FOR ME AS I PROVIDE FOR OTHERS?  
A STUDY OF HOMELESS SHELTERS EMPLOYEES  
WITHIN KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN**

by  
Melanie Jezior

A thesis submitted to the Graduate College  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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Melanie Jezior, M.A.

Western Michigan University, 2018

Homeless shelters run on one thing: workers. Without workers there is no supportive aid for the homeless. A daunting and emotional job that is taken on by thousands, but why? Is the goal in entering this line of work to make an impact on homeless populations, a lasting difference? Everyone has their own personal reasons, however what are the main reasons for people going into a job like shelter work? What is it that motivates these workers to continue this line of work or motivates them to leave? It is a job that offers low pay, and emotional settings. A job that is held by a structure of the system that could lead one questioning their autonomy. Despite the low pay, less than joyful settings, and inability to make structural changes? It is important to find these reasons, look at those who work in this field, and those who have fled due to burnout. Through previous literature and interviews we get a look at these questions. This thesis provides insightful information as to why individuals decide to work in homeless shelters.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### CHAPTER

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
	Working Among The Homeless.....	1
	Reasons and Beliefs of Burnout Rates.....	5
	Homeless Population.....	6
II.	LITERATURE REVIEW.....	12
	Existing Literature.....	12
	Research Methods.....	18
	Background Significance.....	19
	Research Findings.....	20
	Discussion.....	29
III.	CONCLUSION.....	30
	Suggestions for Future Work.....	31
	Prevalence of this knowledge.....	32
	Factors involved in research.....	33
	Study Limitations.....	34
	REFERENCES.....	35
	APPENDICES	
	A. Sample Interview Questions.....	37
	B. HSIRB Approval Form.....	39

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Working Among the Homeless

In the United States homelessness has become a growing trend, and a normal part of everyday life. It is an all too common crisis that needs to be overcome. The National Alliance to End Homelessness, as of 2017 puts the number of homeless as being approximately 553,742 nationally. This estimate includes those living in shelters and on the streets. However, this estimation does not reach every homeless individual out there, as situations and circumstances can change overnight (showing that these numbers can be much higher. From 2016 to 2017, homelessness increased nationally by 0.7 percent. The largest increase were among unaccompanied children and young adults (14.3 percent increase), individuals experience chronic homelessness (12.2 percent increase), and people experiencing unsheltered homelessness (9.4 percent increase).<sup>1</sup> While once sparse, today social service and religious interventions working to assist homeless people exist in virtually all communities across the nation. Much research has been conducted over the last three decades to understand what is causing homelessness, the characteristics of homeless people, and what might be the most effective interventions to address homelessness. This work has helped us greatly to understand homelessness. What has received less attention is an effort to understand the motivations and challenges faced by those who work with the homeless. What is it that drives an individual to enter the field of homeless shelter work? What keeps them in the field and what

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<sup>1</sup> "The State of Homelessness in America." National Alliance to End Homelessness, [endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness-report-2017](http://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness-report-2017)

drives them away? What challenges and opportunities are there for these workers homelessness? It is these questions that drive this thesis.

To address these questions about shelter workers, I went out and interviewed those working or formally working at homeless shelters in the city of Kalamazoo, Michigan. Kalamazoo is a city of more than 325,000 residents and is the sixth largest metropolitan area in Michigan. It is the original home of the Stryker Corporation, one of the top medical technology companies in the world. A city with dedication towards education, hosting three colleges and the Kalamazoo promise; a program guaranteeing college tuition to the cities passing high schoolers, a major prospect for the children of the city and one of the largest programs of its kind, promoting a brighter future inclusive for those who might not have been able to afford college. With these opportunities for a prospering community there is still a large issue with homeless figures. There are over nine different homeless shelters and outreach centers working to address this issue of homelessness, making this an ideal location to study. Through this research, several themes emerged here which will be discussed in this paper including burnout, gray zones, and happiness in work.

I sought to know the different reasonings behind choosing this low paying and high stress line of work, as well as reasons for why they leave. There is a lot of current research available on homeless individuals themselves, but not as much on those who serve them. There are different footpaths for those that serve. For my own research I did not choose to focus on individuals who have or are volunteering. While volunteers play a vital role in the shelters, they were not what I was looking to focus on. Instead, it was the individuals who have chosen to make this their career that I wanted to study. Those who work day by day with the homeless. These careers include working to find funding, provide social service assistance, and keeps things running for continued

care of the homeless. Is it with early optimism that they enter this field, wanting to make a change helping people down on their luck? If this is the driving force into entering this field, does this optimistic mood change throughout the process into a more pessimistic view of the system, does it lead to burnout. I am interested in the jobs and daily tasks of these workers; Do they have this early sense of optimism, or is that a broad assumption? The more I can find out about their daily duties and feelings will give a better reasoning to their choice. I want to know the answers to all these questions to get a better understanding of the job and workers and to find out what motivations are the driving force of these employees, whether they stick through the field or choose to leave. I sought to know the different reasonings behind choosing this low paying and high stress line of work, as well as reasons behind why they leave.

Through the results of my data I have been able to see a deeper reasoning for why my subjects choose to work in homeless shelters. To be frank, they join the field because they are passionate about helping others. They feel a deep compassion for the individuals that they are serving and working with. In the instances where employees have decided to leave they still shared those optimistic feelings in the beginning of their career. While initially I thought that burnout would be a higher factor, it was limited in my research. While I did have some that have or are feeling burnout, only one of my participants felt it bad enough to leave the work. For those that are currently feeling it and looking for a new job, they are still hesitant in ways as they do not want to leave the people they serve. They still feel that if they have just one more good outcome, it could make a difference in their feelings of departure. Apart from this burnout, I would say our newly found “gray zone” is a precursor to burnout which in a way helps or hinders them when they realize it. The gray zone was introduced to me by a participant, it indicates when you shut off emotionally, looking at the job in black and white. This can put them back into the perspective of why they

entered work in the first place or it can truly suck them into burning out. It was also to my surprise that for nearly all my interviews, pay was not a true concern, or reason for wanting to leave, more of just an afterthought.

It is this work that is quite valuable to a community in need, and a job that may not often get the respect it deserves. This research has shown the importance of careers in shelters, along with the emotions and stress involved. For those that have continued to work under these conditions, this research may be insightful for how we can promote and handle these careers that are impactful and necessary to our communities. This research has shown a direct benefit to participants by allowing them to share their stories of how they have directly aided their community and shows the importance their careers hold. While in some situations the interviews have had emotional tales of poor work environments, not a single interviewee questioned their current or previous choice to work within shelters. Every interview that I have been involved with has had stories of emotional distress, either in their work environment or home life and yet as one interviewer stated, “It comes with the territory, you need thick skin, you need to let it go, and you need some sort of support: family, friends, colleges.”

In my life I have done few volunteer projects. These projects consisted of working with animals, volunteering with at risk youth, and helping with Habitat for Humanity; nothing providing me incite to my current research. While taking an interest in, and studying poverty I will be honest, volunteering with homeless populations and shelters had never crossed my mind. That was until my advisor at Western Michigan University, Dr. Vincent Lyon-Callo, introduced me to his own work within the homeless communities. Lyon-Callo did a study on how homeless communities are still prominent at significant levels, as addressed in his book: *Inequality, Poverty and Neoliberal Governance*. His own work and experience intrigued me and while searching to find a

thesis project, I decided to take a branch down his path and investigate those who devote their time working with the homeless in the shelters. Instead of focusing on the homeless population, it is the workers that I focused on.

### Reasons and Beliefs of Burnout Rates

When you decide to go into a field like homeless shelter work, it is not for the money, so it must be for the fulfillment you get from aiding those in need. Or is their goal in entering this line of work to make an actual impact on homeless populations to make a lasting difference? For those that have been homeless themselves this job holds a more meaningful path, as they have experienced this and were able to overcome, making them an important asset. Entering this field can also be through a religious calling of wanting to give aid to those in need. There are many varying reasons for entering this field. However, in a system that seems built for the temporary aid and release of those in need, that does little to change the conditions that contribute to this problem. While some shelters have programs to help homeless succeed these can be costly endeavors. Can this goal for impact satisfy the hopeful workers, or leave them hopeless and turn them cynical, to the system they once passionately joined, causing them to burnout. Before conducting my research, I believed burnout would be more prominent than my findings came out. I believed this was going to be the key reason for the turnaround of employees, and while it played some factors involving the feelings of burnout this was not the case. As homeless populations are something that do not appear to be going away anytime soon it is invaluable to have workers willing to help.

The term burnout was brought into the field of academia to show how workers are dealing with their demanding jobs and the services they provide to their clients. Maslach and Jackson conducted research on this issue addressing back in 1986<sup>2</sup>, addressing the components. While looking into emotional exhaustion, growing criticism, and losing personal attachment to the work based on lack of personal accomplishment based on the work they are doing along with their lack of system access and client willingness. Along with these issues, they must deal with the high turnover in their field which impacts their personal job advancements and workload as well as the trust in those they serve.

The focus of this paper and my research is to better show the reasoning as to why individuals choose to go into shelter work, and to investigate why they leave. Is leaving their jobs personal, emotional or based on burnout. When it comes to this look at burnout rates, we must look around us in all different areas of work. This burnout is not a special circumstance that is secular to social service work. Burnout is something that occurs in many lines of work across the world. I will get into this later in terms of a specific look at social fields and their burnouts as it is easy to look for broad answers.

### Homeless Population

In Kalamazoo there are over eight thousand renters with incomes less than 30% of the area's median income. For a single individual this equates to an annual income of less than \$13,300 and for a family of four this is \$24,300. In these low-income homes they are paying more than half of their incomes on housing alone. A parent who works forty hours a week must

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<sup>2</sup> Maslach, Christina, and Susan E. Jackson. Maslach Burnout Inventory. Consulting Psychologists Press, 1981.

be making at least \$14.79 an hour to afford a typical two-bedroom apartment in Kalamazoo County. In Kalamazoo as many as four hundred people stay in an emergency shelter every night. While circumstance vary by individual a large reasoning behind this lies in a lack of affordable housing and underpaying jobs. It is from these shelters and workers that individuals get a chance to get off the streets and to help piece their lives back together. Many of the information available through the state or other programs is inclusive to the state of Michigan. One of the most in-depth surveys I found on homeless statistics dates to 2010. The Homeless Management Information System did a statewide focus on homeless populations. Between 2009 and 2010, Michigan, went from 12,309 to 13,128<sup>3</sup>. This was only an increase of 819 homeless, but an increase none the less. The most recent study from the Michigan Statewide Homeless Management Information System in 2016, states that our region has had a 5% decrease in homeless populations putting us at 7,553<sup>4</sup>.

Kelly Rose, Chief Housing Solutions Officer for the Michigan State Housing Development Authority states that we are currently down 9%. While the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development places the state of Michigan at 9,316 totals<sup>5</sup>. All of these numbers quite varied with estimations from different sources. In some of these considerations they are taking their statistics from the homeless that are and are not sheltered. This then creates a dividing line, as the Department of Housing claims that 88.7% of the homeless were in shelters, and 11.3% unsheltered. This is not considering many of these shelters are emergency or overnight shelters. Without individuals choosing to go into this field threatens the lives of these at-risk group of

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<sup>3</sup> "Homeless Management Information System." HUD Exchange, 2010, [www.hudexchange.info/programs/hmis/](http://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hmis/).

<sup>4</sup> The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 2016 Annual Homeless Assessment

<sup>5</sup> HUD, 2016

people down on their luck. For my own research we are looking specifically at Kalamazoo narrowing down from the west county and the state itself.

There are many different homeless and emergency shelters within the city of Kalamazoo. These shelters all have different structural setups. I conducted my research within different shelters in the city of Kalamazoo, Michigan. These homeless shelters focused on prominent emergency shelters in Kalamazoo: Ministry with the Community, and The Kalamazoo Gospel Mission. These shelters all have different orientations and goals.

The Gospel Mission offers different types of assistance to those in need. Gospel Mission statistics state that their clientele is 42% male, 33% female, and 25% children. They have their men's shelter, and women's shelter each of which has accommodations for 150 individuals each night. Here there is long term programming for new life recovery and job skill training. They also have their children's ministry with additional programs for children, Sunshine kids and Creation Station. The Sunshine kids is a weekly Monday through Friday program that offers a free activity center for infants to Pre-K, this allows parents to drop children off, so they can work or look for work. Creation station helps students from kindergarten to 8<sup>th</sup> grade with after school tutoring and homework assistance. They have had instances of over one hundred children a night. Two other helpful programs consist of Rescued Wheels, and Rescued Treasures. Rescued Wheels offers vehicle refurbishment for low income members, while Treasures is a thrift store offering low prices on merchandise. As of May 2018, Gospel Mission served over 15,000 meals, and had 8,883 members sheltered, 1,856 of these being children.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> "Kalamazoo Gospel Mission." Kalamazoo Gospel Mission, 2018, [www.kzoogospel.org/](http://www.kzoogospel.org/).

Ministry with the Community has a focus on welcoming all that may be struggling in the community with no focus on religion. It is not an overnight shelter, offering its services throughout the day, closing each night. Ministry with the Communities most recent available annual report dates to 2015. In 2015 alone, they had distributed over \$100,000 personal hygiene products, added in with 10,000 showers, 20,000 loads of laundry, and served over 120,000 meals. Their total expenses for serving the community was estimated at \$1,276,031. These numbers are divided between: meals, drop-ins, life skills, administration, fundraising, and manning the front desk.<sup>7</sup>

The Open-Doors system offers three different shelters. The Open-Door and Next-Door shelters provide for women in their time of need. The Open-Door offers an emergency shelter, while The Next-Door is a residential program for these women who have nowhere to live. In the program they work with women towards becoming financially stable and self-sufficient. Those who are struggling with substance abuse or addiction are helped by making a personal recovery plan involving 12-step groups. There are also programs to help those who have not graduated high school, obtain their GED. Next-Door assigns a bed and dresser while also providing food, hygiene products, and bus tokens. Everyone must complete assigned daily chores. They have a curfew of 9:30 pm, and these women must leave the shelter between the hours of 9am and 3pm to be either working or looking for work. The average guest stays sixty days. Through these opportunities 67% of guests have obtained jobs. The Open-Door shelter for men, is a residential program for homeless males. Like the Open-Door women's shelter, they are working towards becoming self-sufficient and financially stable, implementing that for those working, one third of each paycheck is saved towards future housing costs. They are also aided in obtaining a GED,

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<sup>7</sup> Ministry with Community Annual Report Fiscal Year 2015

and the same housing opportunities with assigned beds, products and bus tokens. The hours of operation are the same as the women's shelter, maintaining the curfew seven days a week. The median stay for the two shelters is 14 months, forty percent of members staying under a year.

Open-Doors also hosts, The Residence Community offering private rooms and apartments ranging from studio to three rooms, for low wage individuals and their families. Here there is a monthly program fee that includes the housing, most utilities and personal support systems. Rent here makes up for 35% of the funding for the shelters. In this drug and alcohol-free community, residents are expected to earn enough money to pay for their own food, transportation, clothing, and childcare.

Housing Recourse INC is more than just a homeless shelter service, they also offer five other programs to assist those community members in need. Here there are crisis-oriented programs. They collaborate with local agencies and shelters to help find a place for those going through crisis situations. They host the Eleanor House, which provides short-term shelter for families. The Eleanor House has twenty-beds, offering a homelike setting 24/7. They offer this shelter while guests plan for independent housing. More than 60% of their guests are children averaging eight years old. Guests receive on-site assistance in finding housing and referrals to vital community resources. HRI works with the City of Kalamazoo District Courts and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services through the Eviction Diversion Program, to help avoid evictions for those with homes. They work to make guests housing situations stable. They offer supportive services to promote self-sufficiency: Financial management, Employment, Education training, transportation and child care. For those prone to episodes of homelessness they work to get permanent housing, HRI operates fifty-five subsidized rental units for families.

They also work with area landlords in four different apartment buildings to provide affordable housing options for low income families.

While studying in these locations, what they all have in common are employees that are working to make the lives of those in need better. I have conducted extensive interviews with ten different employees that hold diverse positions. I was hoping to find some common ground for why these individuals choose this field to work in, as well as get a sense of how long they have held these positions, and if they do any other type of work to help make a difference within the community.

In Kalamazoo the community is aware of the number of homeless community members, aiding in as many ways they can. With all these shelters there are also a plethora of other ways in which the community is active in helping the homeless. There are many other resources available for those in need, that many people do not know about. Those in the blind are also those who could need it the most, making outreach crucial. The Community Action Agency works with community organizations to assist in helping low-income resident become self-sufficient members of society. There are many different non-profit organizations that help the homeless and former homeless succeed. Community HomeWorks exists to help low-income individuals maintain their self-sufficiency and ensure their safety and homes. The Partners in Housing Transition has been around since 1991, they help those former homeless transition into their new lives by providing home furnishings. The LIFT Foundation has been working since 1966 to operate and maintain home for low income families. The city has the well-known organizations that assist, Salvation Army, local food banks and Habitat for Humanity. While there are many more organizations Kalamazoo has no lack of support when it comes to aiding those in need. Showing through the community a sense of care and comfort, that is utilized by many.

For the remainder of this paper I will be looking at existing information regarding different lines of work and specific duties, the relevance of this research along with personal examples from those currently in the field; what they experience daily as well as their views on the high turn around rates of their fellow workers, as well as those whom have become burnout and have left themselves.

## II.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Existing Literature

It would be easy to assume the cause of burnout is simply stress, stress is a broad category which can account for many separate issues people are facing. Placing such an expansive label onto these individuals discredits their issues, by lumping everyone's experiences together, when the answer is not that simple. While burnout is a stress syndrome it has varying layers. One of the key studies conducted on burnout rates exists through the Maslach Burnout Inventory, this study is what many will turn to in addressing these issues.

*A key dimension of the burnout syndrome is increased feelings of emotional exhaustion where workers feel they are no longer able to give of themselves at a psychological level. A second dimension is depersonalization, meaning that workers respond to persistent stress by developing negative, cynical attitudes and feelings about their clients. The third dimension is reduced personal accomplishment, meaning the worker views their work negatively and feels dissatisfied with their work accomplishments (Maslach et al., 1996).*

While conducting these interviews and researching into the matter of burnout, I discovered some other aspects involved. Through the process of becoming “burnt out,” our employees are becoming overworked and overstressed based on their work environments and job requirements. Another factor driving this burnout comes from secondary trauma (Maslach 1996). While handling clients, our workers oversee trying to help with the circumstances that have led to becoming homeless, while guiding them during this stage of their lives. In many of these cases, there has been an onset of trauma that has led to these circumstances. These vulnerable clients are placed in the hands of a worker, as they must navigate through the painful stories of circumstance, often affecting their own emotional wellbeing as they are taking on the trauma. In dealing with this burnout and secondary trauma workers can develop compassion fatigue, they simply can no longer deal with the stress of the work and choose to move on for their personal benefit, this can be seen in some of my interviews.

There is another branch involved here, compassion satisfaction. Dr. Beth Stamm discusses compassion satisfaction in her work “Measuring Compassion Satisfaction as well as Fatigue: Developmental History of the Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue Test.” Compassion satisfaction can be seen with nearly all of my interviewees. While dealing with the stressful work environments and their clients, they find personal satisfaction in the work of caring and helping individuals. This motivates them to keep working in this field despite the personal stress of the matter. As an interviewee stated, it only takes one success case to make it all worth it, seeing the individual change their lives and succeed.

In recent years there has been a focus on eliminating state-run social programs. The alternative to these programs can be seen in privatized, and market-based efforts.<sup>8</sup> These efforts have changed for the homeless and those in need to self-govern themselves. They are being held as individuals that now must take to becoming a contributing member of society, to receive any sort of assistance. This takes issue as many homeless are unable to self-govern themselves without help from others. It is a daunting task to try and take on these steps towards self-sufficiency alone. By denying assistance to those who cannot take care of themselves the plot thickens as they can spiral down further. This dismantles the stereotypical thoughts that majority of the homeless are in some way mentally ill or nonstandard. This is demoralizing to everyone. By lumping the homeless into such categories, it takes away from their own personal life stories, many of which do not include substance abuse or mental health. During Lyon-Callo's research he was faced with these issues first hand,

*"If I tried to intervene and change the practices, was I stepping outside of myself as an ethnographer? I decided that, while I did not have adequate answers about what we should be doing instead, I also realized that I could not keep myself from engaging people in a critique of our practices when I saw people being harmed by those very practices."*<sup>9</sup>

By attempting to change these practices for the good of their guests, it was still met with some resilience.

Working in homeless shelters our employees have their fair share of success stories, making their mark on these people's lives and seeing through as they move on from the shelters

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<sup>8</sup> "Chapter 5." Inequality Poverty and Neoliberal Governance: Activist Ethnography in the Homeless Sheltering Industry, Univ of Toronto Pr, 2008, pp. 109

<sup>9</sup> Lyon-Callo, 113

to making it in society. These success stories are what can help keep many employees to avoid burnout. But as we know these success stories do not come without struggle on the part of workers. They are faced with hard-hitting decisions that directly affect the homeless they are trying to aid.

In Lyon-Callo's work, the discouraging task of aiding the homeless is taken deeper as he discusses with his shelter: Who deserves a bed? Homeless shelters do not have an unlimited amount of beds or resources to take care of all of those in need, being faced with inadequate space and funding. At Grove Street, the site of Lyon-Callo's work, they were faced with this issue, there were too many homeless and not enough beds. They developed waiting lists, to ensure a fair system that would try to accommodate those that they could not immediately take in. Waiting lists are not an uncommon occurrence with shelters. In Kalamazoo, we see that our shelters must also place individuals on waiting lists. The Gospel Mission and the Open-Door Shelters are just two of the locations I researched that have had to take this step with its homeless population. The situation at Grove Street faced further dilemmas over the fairness of there waiting lists. As we know everyone comes to the shelters in their times of need for whatever possible circumstance that has brought them to this point. In case by case situations sometimes they would have to make a choice whether or not to bump somebody up the list to help their prospects. Employees here began critical dialogs on how this is a situation of "playing god" by prioritizing members, over who is "worthier." Is it a mother, a former guest working hard to get on the right track with nowhere to go, or an individual who needs temporary help due to a new job that will help him receive the pay to take a step forward towards being self-sustainable?

The stress and responsibilities of staff is a never-ending story. In *Hobos Hustlers and Backsliders: Homeless in San Francisco*, a study done by Teresa Gowan we are given a look and

the continuing frustration of caseworkers. In this one case we look at the issue of substance abuse in shelters. Ricardo, a caseworker had growing frustrations as he believed shelter management was more interested in monitoring clients as opposed to listening to how the clients were doing successfully. He had a case where his client had been doing considerably well, making great progress, and yet he was expelled from the shelter for missing an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. This situation of frustration caused a divide between caseworkers and management. Management is overbearing on clients and pushing them away through their strict rules and monitoring. While it is true that monitoring and rules need to be in place for progress to be made, it seems in this case it was having a backwards effect. This was an issue I came across in interviews I conducted with workers. They are trying to do the best for their clients working with them on their journeys, but they are stunted by management regulations. Leading them to feel useless as their autonomy is put into question. Like Ricardo, I interviewed a social worker with a very similar situation. While she stated that it was often hard to get clients to follow through with their meetings, there are cases where they are fully dedicated to receiving the help and directions when another setback occurs. In one example she disclosed to me an individual who was taking classes and got a job but still needed some assistance, but he got into a fight on the grounds and was then banned for thirty days. She stated he did not come back, she is not sure about how he is doing now.

It is a double edge sword. Rules are rules, but in some cases these rules can be more detrimental to the clients than the original offense. For example, the stereotype of homeless being drug users, workers want to get them off drugs to get on the right track, understandable. Yet, in the former mentioned case Ricardo dealt with, his client was off drugs, was doing well for himself, but just was not willing to attend the meetings, causing them to cut off all ties of

support. Ricardo did not go into detail of this man's whereabouts now, but hopes he stayed on the path he was going. This job is an emotional labor, amongst all things. These workers are dedicating themselves to help others but are being halted by those in charge to support them in this endeavor.

Not all homeless are treated fairly. While they are all in need of assistance, one way or another, their lives are not treated equally. Joanne Passaro speaks on this in her book, *The Unequal Homeless: Men on the Streets, Women in Their Place*. She states how the system is bias towards males and females, even more so in terms of race. In many cases women and children are given the chance to move through the shelter system faster, even as far as subsidized housing before African American men are even looked at. These gender and racial stereotypes produce a pattern of discrimination perpetuated by social welfare legislations.<sup>10</sup> The homeless and the houseless. The houseless are those who are temporarily without a home, families. When we think of homes we picture a comforting place with the stereotypical nuclear family. In opposition, a house is just a dwelling. When chatting with fellow students they talk about going home, when they say home it is not their local residency, it is their childhood homes. The terms are the same, yet different. For those labeled as homeless, they are single childless individuals. While this is not stating that it is unimportant to keep women, families and children off the streets, it is arguing for fairer treatment of all the homeless. Single men of all races need this support as well to get their lives together, so they have a chance for a nuclear family if they so choose. No one should be looked over based on their status or race, a concept that should be used in every aspect of life. Passaro's work mirrors Lyon-Callos, in choosing who is deserving and who is not.

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<sup>10</sup> "The Unequal Homeless: Men on the Streets, Women in Their Place." *The Unequal Homeless: Men on the Streets, Women in Their Place*, by Joanne Passaro, Routledge, 2014, p. 29.

## Research Methods

I have been in contact with individuals that are currently involved or have previously worked within homeless shelters throughout Kalamazoo. These interviews were conducted with ten different individuals of varying work levels within the homeless community. I have focused my efforts on are the active employees that work at the different shelters around town, as opposed to the volunteers or the individuals staying in the shelters.

My key method of research in this project has been interviewing. Interviews have been both structured and non-structured. My ten lead interviews were formal with side discussion and follow up interviews existing with reoccurring contact via email. Due to time constraints two of these interviews were carried out via telephone, altering the process for the convenience of my informants. I had initially set aside a one-hour slot for each interview. Only in one instance of my research was I able to complete this process in the time slot. On average the formal interviews lasted around ninety minutes, this is not including two instances where the process went over two hours. Each interview came with the same set of questions, however once we got into the process it was very clear that individuals wanted their story to be heard.

I had the opportunity at Ministry with the Community a tour of the entire facility, something I feel gave me a deeper insight. This tour showed the backgrounds and interworking's of the shelter. While touring the building I was able to stop and talk to nearly all the associates working behind the scenes, these interactions were fleeting as they were in the middle of their work day setting up and preparing to help their members. The time that was taken by the employees of Ministry to help in any way they could was a thoughtful help that showed the true care they have for their jobs and members. Regardless of any personal burnout rates that individuals have, the care and dedication can be seen.

The identity of my subjects will be protected through different outlets. Names have been changed throughout the whole of my research; instead pseudonyms will be used in their place for confidentiality. Locations have been left out by request of workers to further keep their identities protected in instances of current employers.

A list of initial questions I began with in interviews can be found under the bibliography.

### Background Significance

Within homeless shelters there are separate rows of work. These levels include the administrative staff, programs staff, kitchen and service staff, as well as security. Each sector holds an invaluable contribution to the shelter system. Among staff no one position is to be discredited as lessor than others. This can lead to the mentioned issues of autonomy, while working under separate sectors, I found that some of my informants did not always feel confident in the work they were doing and would seek answers from higher ranks to not make the wrong call or get permission on an issue. When these individuals second guess their work or do not feel that they can confidently make certain calls on their own, this can lead to feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization or cynicism as their personal accomplishments are being looked at negatively. While being involved in human service work internal and external issues are going to arise as this work is central to the relationships of clients. The work that they are doing will directly affect a vulnerable individual's life. This important task can lead to feelings of guilt and responsibility of care over members, in cases where failure is seen. Personal judgements and feelings need to be left at home to best serve clients, easier said than done. Among all my interviews, everyone states they came into the field with a confidence and eagerness to make a

difference in the lives of others. The extent of stress they were going to undertake is often underestimated with such encouraged individuals, the background knowledge can never be entirely evident of the first hand experience that will be faced once in the field.

### Research Findings

Among my individual interviews I have gained knowledge of ten very different scopes and experiences that have come while working in these shelters. These interviews included social workers, desk workers, and high ranking administrative level workers. Within the first of my interviews I was given privy of what I thought would be the flow and basis of my research, my very first interview gave me the answer I was hoping to find, an immediate admission of burnout. Though none of my other interviews would be like this I found her story to be an outstanding example over the others. This first interview was a former employee at one of the above listed shelters, and her journey did not begin out of a desire to help others. This journey began oddly enough through a play on my own research title, to help herself. While in graduate school, like many of us, Ashley was finding it hard to make ends meet; through this she turned to government to receive food stamps. While gaining food stamps she then had to participate in community service. Through this community service she worked in a shelter kitchen, gaining knowledge and relationships with the members (this was the category name given to the homeless). Through this community service she got brought on part time to the kitchen staff. She states that she had enjoyed her time volunteering, however once she was brought onto the staff, even at part time, there was a definite change in her attitude. While she was just washing dishes and helping preparation, she now had a new authority that brought on a different relationship

with the members. The friendly banter and remembrance of names and stories stayed intact, but there was now a divide.

This stair climbing of positions continued as she would soon be brought on full time, not a common occurrence in my interview pool. Ashley states that now that she was able to “say no,” to the members it created a barrier that did not exist before. While exhibiting this new-found power, not as an abuse, she experienced two altercations with members. While not a psychically violent altercation there were moments that made her question her work. The denying of seconds was within the process of the establishment, no seconds until everyone has been served. In one instance this denial led to an escalation of shouting and threatening, catching her off guard as it had been a regular she served many times before. The second negative interaction was a bit more meaningful to her. Within this instance a member got into an intense argument with the current director, Ashley was left with the responsibility of barring the member and escorting him off the premises; to be bared was to be banned from the institution for different amounts of time depending on the issue at hand: a day, a week, or even permanently. Throughout this escort she was threatened by this member, something that she was able to initially shake off and take in stride, as she tried to see it from his point of view. This shake off would not last, while she was out for a bite to eat at a local McDonalds she ran into this former member. During this run in, he “referenced some lines from the God father, indicating the he was going to shoot me to death.” It was through these, and other instances that she began her journey to burning out and losing her compassion for wanting to help.

While Ashley’s experience was unique to herself, there was one statement that she brought to my attention. This was the “gray zone.” She described this gray area as seeing things in only black and white, eliminating personal feelings from the work and simply viewing the entire

situations and altercations as right or wrong. I brought up this “gray zone” in all my interviews, none of them have ever heard a term like this, yet once mentioned I got a somewhat unanimous agreement that they all understood these feelings but never had a true name for it. This gray zone took out what former compassion and non-judgment she had amongst members. In this gray zone these members were simply her job to handle, leave it at that. No longer did she care to hear their sides of the story when an altercation occurred, or a member had a complaint. She wanted it to be known that she was not being heartless, that she still cared for what would come of these people’s lives, she just could not mentally let it continue to take a toll on her own mental and even psychological health. Once entering this zone, she had checked out and was ready to leave, even though numerous times trying to come back from it. She is currently working in a separate line of work and has no desire to return to this field, as she is happy with her work. It should be stated that she does credit working there as helping build her own character.

Amanda is a good follow up interview to Ashley as she is currently working in the field and currently experiencing this new-found explanation of the gray zone. She started working a front desk position before being moved into a different less in person contact position within a few months. Amanda started out with a full understanding and compassion for the members she served. She was previously from San Francisco and was aware and compassionate to the homeless situations. While working at the front desk she had varying experiences of getting to know members and enjoying their connection, as well as being berated for not giving them what they asked for multiple days in a row (once again against the rules, such as the coffee). This frustration grew deeper as she began to see many of the members becoming seemingly entitled to the resources they were being given. While constantly reminding herself of their backgrounds as well as her own background of privilege, she still struggled with the members coming to

“expect,” as well as them seeing this as “their house that they were running.” The facility she works within is quite new with many resources. They have grown to expect items, while not doing anything to change their positions when it comes to the other services that this establishment provides for their members. For instance, they have a recovery resource center, which is not being utilized to the extent it should and could be. In one confession of frustration she states, “there is a drug van parked right across the street,” she turns to point out the open window behind to where there is indeed a less than promising, run down looking van parked right there, with members going straight up to it. “There is absolutely nothing we can do about it as it is not on our property and nothing can be proven.” Drug use is also heavily reported by word of members as being taken in there restroom right inside the building. There are no cameras located in these restrooms, even though the visibility of change in character can be witnessed when exiting. I can visibly see and hear the frustration in her voice. She states plain and simple that she is burnout out like others before her that come and gone due to these same issues, adding that the only thing keeping her in this position is the closeness and comfort among other staff members. She came into this field bright and full of compassion, wanting to help members but has found it hard with these light regulations held towards the members allowing them to do really what they want without any consequences. Like all my interviews conducted she only wants to see things change for those down on their luck, she has realized she cannot handle this position any longer. She feels she has no personal life, living downtown, she is seen and approached while off duty daily, this is bringing a stress to her own life. Another driving factor at her feelings of burnout.

In stark contrast to those experiencing burnout I had two individuals that while now an again get down, they have no intention of leaving anytime soon and still feel very passionate

about their work. For the record, while it may not be notable, these two interviews were conducted within the top three positions available among these shelters. With that previous statement I am not trying to make any arguments for or against the pay rates or less personal contact with members, and I am now aware of the high responsibility and duties among their positions, I felt like I should add that as their interviews were also differently structured. As it was only these two higher ranking individuals, that I interviewed I cannot make any assumptions and far from any deep analysis regarding their positions vs lower ranking workers.

One of my more positive interviews is especially unique in terms of this individual's back story, it is with this exceptional personal background that I believe he is at a strong advantage of avoiding becoming burnout. Alex is head of member services. This position carries a large amount of responsibilities: overseeing the food program, hiring and training of the hourly staff, and just about all other aspects that keep the facility running. While this background might leave much to be desired I am going to remain vague as to further maintain the privacy of my interviewee. Alex is a highly skilled and educated individual, receiving degrees within the musical arts and achieving elite positions, putting this higher education to use. Through some unfortunate actions he went from having everything, to losing it all. Having to start from scratch with a now tarnished resume and prison record, lead to a second chance on life per say when he was given the opportunity to work at one of the homeless shelters. "Intelligence, heart, and mind cannot be taken away." One of the strongest lessons his past has allowed him is to "look at individual as a current human being, do not look or judge by their past." While he credits his past to these strengths life at the shelter still gets to him from time to time, however he focuses on "make one person's day, in the littlest way even small things can make a difference." When a bad day does occur, instead of letting it get to him, he mentions how he just puts the instance into

perspective of being grateful for what you have as it puts you in your place. He does not feel that his level of “superiority” or higher position makes a difference as, “we are all human, we are all on the same level.” One of the few negative aspects to be taken away from this interview is his feelings of distrust, not that he is untrusting but the frustration of finding out that the trust has been broken not only between members but with staff as well. This seems to be one of the few topics that seemed to be more upsetting in all sense. Furthermore, one of the many similarities between Alex, Amanda, and all the other interviews relays in the happiness and comfort they find within their coworkers, many stating that without the stability and strengths of their teams who are all in this together, they may not be able to hold on.

My fellow higher-ranking individual is about as high up as you can achieve. He has worked with the underprivileged from the start of his career days. Receiving a bachelor and master’s in social work, he has an outstanding resume, formally holding a twenty-four year position as an executive director elsewhere, only being at this locations for a few years now. Being in the position he is, one of the more surprising aspects is when I bring up the topic of a stressful environment. While he agrees that yes it can get stressful, it is not necessarily a bad stress starting, “stress is a good thing for my system, stress creates energy to focus on things to help solve problems.” When it comes to affecting family life his only complaint is that they tend to worry, not a worry of safety but of concern over happiness, they understand the intensity and pressure. He credits his wife and religion for being at his side and helping him bring humor to situations allowing him to roll with it, “you cannot control everything at once, it’s a step and a leap at a time.”

In a moment of personal honesty salary was brought into play, he mentions that salary has always been a sidebar, through different positions and adjustments he has taken up to 30% in pay

cuts, to do what he has wanted to do. While I can strongly credit that money is not the motive when coming into this field. Andrew lays it out flat and simple, as money has never been a part of his choices it has been the people, not the salary. He has had other options in higher positions that would have led to higher pay, but it would never be as connected to the roots and members as he would have felt comfortable with. He is on a first name basis with nearly all members, a position he takes pride in. When it comes to work he breaks it down: desk work, client contact, working with colleges, with members. A comfortable summary of what he needs to continue his work productively and happily.

When it comes to our infamous gray zone he states that he could not imagine falling into it at this point in time. Having been in the social work area for over thirty-nine years, his heart and soul still exist in the work. “When it starts to slip just tuff it out and hang in there, it will get better.” He did mention however that “moving paper” work can often lead to some negative feelings towards the position, but once again in his positively, “it comes with the job.” He has no negative feelings towards those whom fall into the gray zone, stating that some people just cannot handle it, it is not a personal slate, it is just a position that needs flexibility as it is not an open and shut case. Dealing with homeless community is never an open and shut case, these people have been through trauma in their lives not cannot be fixed in a day.

My final group of interviews contains those working specifically with advising and helping to change the lives of the homeless, the social workers. These workers share a common background, they have an educational background in social work and precise goal of working to help homeless and those in need. While their origins towards the work is familiar their statuses are different. Two of these individuals that I will address are new to the field, while the other is a

veteran at this career. Charlie and Charlotte have been working within the field for under four years now, while Eric has been here for seventeen years now.

Charlie and Charlotte were initially quite closed off to my interview questions, vague and brief. This was a first for me, even though all my interviews started with the same set of questions they were usually heavily elaborated on and continued in depth, often not being able to get a word in myself. As our interviews continued it became clear that they have a distinct difference to all other interviews. While of course their positions are different they deal with a much closer side of the homeless. They are there day in and out trying to personally help them. There interviews were a bit darker, not necessarily in a bad way. They told more personal stories of trying and often failing. In each case they told me you could tell they felt this as a personal fail. They would take on a case of trying to help somebody move forward in their lives, get clean, and get back on track. Many of these individual cases would disappear, stop showing up, or stop trying. They both spoke deeply of the toll this took on their lives, personally and professionally. They found it hard to leave it at the door, going home and still having thoughts of what they could have done differently. They held thoughts about why they chose this career, and why they were staying. However, they did have their bright moments, moments of success that they claimed to be the thing keeping them going. Charlotte acknowledged that she was beginning to check out, despite the push from her cohorts, she has begun looking for a different career. Charlie was taking a different route he was trying to push passed these feelings of doubt, though he was doubting indeed. He feels that if he can push a little further, help a few more that he will be able to make it, and make a difference.

Eric was a unique and intriguing individual. He is seventy-two years old and has lived an exciting and meaningful life helping many in need. While he is not a licensed social worker he

has been doing social serving jobs for years: group worker specialist, working with cps, protective services worker. He came into his job at the shelter eighteen years ago, building the social work program through life skills. The care and passion he feels for members can be heard in his voice, however he has decided it is time for him to live life for himself. While I would not consider this entirely based on burnout as he is getting older. He has not completely left the field as he is staying on part time, still contributing in many ways. He goes on to say that this field is not designed for everyone. While many come into the field bright eyed looking to make a lasting difference it takes much thicker skin than this. Eric goes on to state how there will be times and instances that you just simply cannot fix, however these workers need to be able to sustain themselves through their work and not various specific outcomes. He also gets down to an issue that many brought up but did not feel a need to elaborate on, the system. In the shelters there are different policies and procedures set up that will prevent you from helping individuals in ways that are needed, instead of giving up he states you must push passed and find a new route around it. Two of the hardest parts of the position for him was when it came to deal with such vulnerability: women, children, disabled, those being abused and exploited. With such vulnerability these individuals are taken advantage of if not placed in the proper hands, something he had little control over at times. His second frustration lies in ability to produce awareness. This passion that he feels for women and children ties in with Passaro's work. While he was not in the business of picking or choosing who received housing he was more concerned in women and children receiving help. These populations of homeless are not hopeless individuals looking for a hand out, they are down on their luck from one circumstance to another. While he states there are those individuals that will milk the system, a position you will find in any walk of life, it is those that are genuinely trying to help and better themselves that are not

being advocated for, something he has tried throughout his career to change. Along with this frustration we go back to a former interview with Amanda. As Amanda stated she feels the homeless community at her specific shelter is becoming entitled to items. Eric who works at the same location agrees. He believes that this sight is beginning to enable the members and make it too easy for them to come and go, without follow through or trying to change their positions. He believes that it is not for the lack of the homeless trying, but the ease it has become to gain certain sort term solutions. With staff coming and going it is hard to regulate this ease, as new comers are often taken advantage of by members who know they can, and senior members seem to have checked out and not care as much as they once had. Overall with Eric, his “gray zone” is coming from the staff and administration not the members themselves, many of whom he keeps in touch with to this day.

## Discussion

Through the process of these interviews I was able to gain many different reasons for why these came to be a part of this role in the shelters. Coming into this project I assumed a large part of burnout would be financial and stressful. To my surprise money was never brought up until I myself mentioned it as one of my generic interview questions. Once brought up every single individual stated that the pay was less than desirable, but it was not a major player. For those that are on negative terms with the positions, only four out of six individuals claimed that this played a part in their feelings of leaving. Due to my outside research I was expecting this to be one of the first three things mentioned, among the stressful environment and working conditions. While they all acknowledge the lack of pay it was refreshing to me that this was not a key component, as I believed it would be. In retrospect people come into this field not expecting high rates of

pay, and from what I have learned are entering with a compassion to help those in need and to make a change. The stress however, is very real. Not one interview went by without stress coming up multiple times. This stress varied with emotional being most prevalent. There was a distinct difference in stress levels when it came to the newcomers, and those who have been in this field for over three years. These veterans of the job have become used to the emotional aspects and are able to move past, accept, and leave their problems at work. This is not to discredit them entirely, they still have their stress factors, they have just become more manageable. As for the newbies, this has not quite happened for them yet. The aspect of “leaving it at the door” and not taking problems home with you is a learned process. The drive of wanting to fix all the problems they are faced with and the acceptance that you cannot control everything can only come with time and experience with different cases.

### III.

#### CONCLUSION

Through the results of my data I been able to see a deeper reasoning for why my subjects choose to work in a setting like homeless shelters. It is this social work that is quite valuable to a community in need, and a job that may not often get the respect it deserves. This research has shown the importance of careers in shelter work, along with the emotions involved, and the less than high rates of pay that may lead these people to high burnout rates. For those that have continued to work under these conditions this research may be insightful for how we can promote and handle these careers that are impactful and necessary to our communities. This research has shown a direct benefit to participants by allowing them to share their stories of how

they have directly benefited their community and show the impact their careers hold. While in some situations the interviews got emotional telling tales of poor work environments, and unhappiness of compensations not a single interview questioned their current or previous choice to work within shelters regarding the community they are working with. Every interview that I have been involved with has had stories of emotional distress either in the work environment or coming home from work.

### Suggestions for Future Work

For future work this study could have been done on a state-wide basis, reaching other metropolitan areas throughout Michigan. This would give a broader view on the different employees and their experiences, and how the different locations handle the care of their homeless. While Kalamazoo has such high rates of homeless, it does not compare in population with larger cities such as Detroit, Grand Rapids or Lansing. With higher populations trends of homeless rates rise.

While my focus has been solely on those who have found jobs in this field, to expand, I could look at those who volunteer. During my interviewing, I was informed by staff members that many of these workers started out through their volunteering process. As well as this ladder climbing, there are volunteers within the shelters that are somewhat “permanent” volunteers. As I say permanent I am referring to those volunteers that are coming in and working nearly daily to facilitate the shelters. Among some of the individuals, the staff has come to consider them as members of their team, and partners they rely on for daily assistance. These volunteers have come to know the members they are serving. Staff have noticed a positive impact on the

members by being a constant in their lives. This has helps to build comfort and stability by being there and conversating with them on personal levels. While this might be a bit challenging to weed out, it was the staff that gave praise to these hard-working individuals, through the staff's recommendations, I feel that these dedicated volunteers would have good insight and the burnout among volunteers.

I would also like to see more research be done on this idea of the gray zone in the workplace. While I am sure it is not a unique idea or one that has not ever been mentioned before, it did take all my participants (except the facilitator) off guard before realizing that it is a true feeling they have experienced, not ever knowing a way to label it.

#### Prevalence of this Knowledge

Prior to conducting those interviews and based off knowledge gained in preliminary research, I believed that high levels of burn out rates in this field were based heavily around low rates of pay and emotional working conditions. In going through with my own research and interviews I found this to not primarily be the case. In all but two of my interviews this was shown not to be the case. In going into a career in social work or administrative work in homeless shelters money was never a starting factor. People going into this line of work did so intentionally aware of the less than high figures of pay. Instead of course it was set in their desire to help indivual and make a difference in their community. With this is mind it was this compassion to lead them to work but the structures and regulations that started to deter them and lead to questioning their career choices.

## Factors Involved in Research

While initially proposing my thesis, I had intentions of reaching out to further my study to a larger range of shelters and different city locations. I was intrigued to reach out to larger cities to get a more varied view, wondering if larger more metropolitan cities would have different perspectives. As Kalamazoo has one of the highest rates of homeless populations per capita, it turned out to be an ideal location. Not to mention the location itself made it easier to do research as I was not limited by long travel distances, and scheduling interviews was made convenient for myself and my interviews. While scheduling was made easier, some phone interviews were conducted for convenience of those with whom I was interviewing, due to their busy work schedules. This was found to be very fruitful and more accommodating. While these phone interviews went exceeding well, even surpassing the time frames I gave to the interviews as they had much knowledge and more stories to share than I had originally intended, often going off on tangents that only benefited my research and findings. In one instance I did come across a great informant who I had a pleasurable and informative interview with. This informant, a social worker, was very knowledgeable about and optimistic about her career and field, only having a few minor disbarments with how some structures in place made some limitations in helping those she worked with. It was not until I had an in-person interview with one of her coworkers that I got a slightly different story. This interview was a lot more candid and personal about her feelings and beliefs in her career. While there were not inherently any major complaints she did speak about how she could very much so understand the development of burnout rates the longer an individual was working in this field. While she herself had only been working at this location for a short time, she spoke of some feelings that she believed could set her own development of potentially going through a phase of burnout rate herself. We then talked about some coworkers,

impersonally just who I had previously interviewed. I mentioned a worker who she is rather close with at their locations, and how in our previously phone interview she wished she had been a little more open and honest with very optimistic answers she relayed to me. While she still offered me great insight, she told her coworker that it was a bit impersonal and she felt like she gave me overly positive responses. I believe that if this interview was able to be done in person that she may have felt more comfortable offering me genuine response to my questions and her own personal stories.

### Study Limitations

The biggest limitations that came across in this research would have to be centered around time and availability of interviewees. While I had a huge support of willing subjects often their busy work schedules and personal lives made it difficult to set up a time for interviews to take place, while this was unfortunate, I was still able to get a well-rounded set of interviews. Time itself can be a constraint in any research project. While I wish I would have been able to get to a greater number of subjects for a more varied insight time was not necessarily on my side. Were this to be a longer in-depth dissertation, I feel like this could have been achievable in receiving out to further participants and going to more locations. With the time and locality of staying in Kalamazoo, I do feel that this limited my potential for a deeper investigate this field of study. While Kalamazoo was an ideal location based on the number of shelters we have so centrally located as well as the sheer numbers of our homeless population. While I can only speculate that my findings can be broad in terms of similarities, however, I am sure that this is limiting when looking at larger metropolitan areas within Michigan, Detroit or Grand Rapids; two cities with higher totals of homeless.

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## Appendix A

### Sample Interview Questions

1. What brought you into your current line of work?
2. What was your background in this line of work before entering your current position?
3. Did you ever volunteer at shelters prior to working here? What was your reasoning for volunteering?
4. What about this social work setting did you find appealing?
5. What aspects of this line of work do you enjoy?
6. What aspects of this line of work do you wish you could change? For the field of work, for those involved, or for the wellbeing of those you work with?
7. Do you find this job to be a stressful environment?
8. Does this job affect your life outside of work?
9. Do you sometimes find this job too straining on your personal life, emotions?
10. Have you ever felt emotional pressure or stress working in this field?
11. Have there ever been individual instances that have made you question your choice in career?
12. Do you feel that your salary is indicative of the work you perform here?
13. Have you ever questioned quitting your job?
14. What aspects of your position do you find you enjoy the most?
15. What aspects of your position do you enjoy the least?
16. Do you ever encounter people who criticize your line of work? Make assumptions or look down on the line of work?
17. What are some things you wish others knew about your line of work?
18. At your location do you find you have somewhat high levels of turn around rates among your employees?
19. Are there many chances of moving to higher positions within your career?
20. In what ways do you find fulfillment in your day to day work?
21. Do you think you will continue your work in shelters for a future amount of time?

22. What changes do you think you could make to this system of work?
23. Have you tried to input any sort of systematic changes as an individual or working unit?

## Appendix B

### HSIRB Approval Letter

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Date: January 25, 2017

To: Vincent Lyon-Callo, Principal Investigator  
Melanie Jezior, Student Investigator for thesis

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair



Chair

Re:HSIRB Project Number 16-04-20

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled "What Provides for Me as I Provide for Others? A Study of Homeless Shelter Employees Within Kalamazoo" has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note: This research may only be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project (e.g., you must request a post approval change to enroll subjects beyond the number stated in your application under "Number of subjects you want to complete the study)." Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation. In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

Reapproval of the project is required if it extends beyond the termination date stated below.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: January 24, 2018

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PHONE: (269) 387-8293 FAX: (269) 387-8276

CAMPUS SITE: 251 W. Walwood Hall  
Western Michigan University

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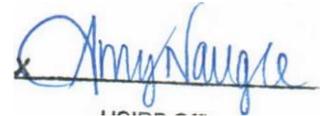
JAN 25 2017

Western Michigan University  
Department of Anthropology

HSIRB Office

Principal Investigator: Dr. Vincent Lyon-Callo  
Student Investigator: Melanie Jezior  
Title of Study: "What Provides for me as I Provide for others? A study of homeless shelter employees within Kalamazoo, Michigan."

This project will serve as a graduate thesis for Melanie Jezior. You are invited to participate in a research project, "What Provides for me as I Provide for others? A study of homeless shelter employees within Kalamazoo, Michigan." This consent document will explain the purpose of this research project and will go over all of the time commitments, the procedures used in the study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research project. Please read this consent form carefully and completely and please ask any questions if you need more clarification.



What are we trying to find out in this study?

We are trying to understand the jobs that homeless shelter employees are taking part in, to get a better understanding of why an individual would choose to go into a career at a homeless shelter. This will also be looking into the possible burnout rate of employees and any emotional stress that comes with these careers.

Who can participate in this study?

The only exclusions to participating in this study are you must be over the age of eighteen and work in a homeless shelter. Any age, gender, or affiliation may participate so long as they do not fit those two excluded categories.

Where will this study take place?

If you choose to participate, you will be contributing within an individual interview. In these interviews you will be discussing and contributing your opinions about work experience within a homeless shelter. The interview process will be approximately 60 minutes. You will be able to participate today. The location of this study will meet the convenience of those participating. The interview and data collection will be set in a location as decided upon by the interviewee.

What is the time commitment for participating in this study?

Participating in this study will involve an initial interview time of up to 60 minutes.

### What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?

By agreeing to participate in this study you will agree to being interviewed about your job and personal experiences working in the homeless shelters. The entirety of this interview will be taped and later transcribed. The data that is collected from this interview will be used in further research and help to develop theoretical concepts and ideas for a master's thesis. The final results will include quotations from interview that will remain anonymous, from those participating.

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These quotations will be used to strengthen the argument and form conclusions that evolved in the findings.

### What information is being measured during the study?

During this study I will be collecting information about working in a homeless shelter. By participating you will be contributing to that knowledge to have a better understanding of what life is like working in a homeless shelter. All the information that is being collected today will remain confidential. This is to say that no names or other identifying features such as job titles will be left out during the data reports, and final work. All transcripts will be retained and kept safely with only pseudonyms in place of identities. Only the principal investigator will have access to these files. These files will be stored solely on the principal investigator's private and password protected computer.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized? There are minimal risks to participating in this study. Some slight discomfort or emotions may come up during interviews while discussing work situations. You are able to end the interview or not answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable responding to. To avoid instances of employees fearing for retribution from employers for any comments made regarding their work, experiences or income; your name will be changed in the research to allow for reassurance.

### What are the benefits of participating in this study?

Through the results of my data I believe we may get to see a deep reasoning for my subjects choose to work in a setting like homeless shelters. It is this social work that is quite valuable to a community in need, and a job that may not often get the respect it deserves. This research may show the importance of careers in shelter work, along with the emotions involved, and the less than high rates of pay that may lead these people to high burnout rates. For those that have continued to work under these conditions this research may be insightful for how we can promote and handle these careers that are impactful and necessary to our communities. This

research may have a direct benefit to you by allowing you to share your stories of how they have directly benefited their community and show the impact your career holds. You will be able to share your stories and contribute to the knowledge base of homeless shelter employees.

#### Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?

The only costs that may be associated with participating in this study would be the taking up of time. To combat this, interviews will be scheduled at times and locations most convenient to you.

#### Is there any compensations for participating in this study?

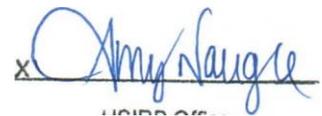
Any participation in this research will be done on a voluntary basis. During anytime of the interview you may choose to not answer any questions, or to end the interview without any judgment or penalty.

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If a participant decides later on throughout my research that they would no longer like to be involved, I shall pull their information from my records and destroy the files. Therefore, there are no compensations for participating in this study.

#### Who will have access to the information collected during this study?

The only people with access to this information will be Melanie Jezior and Dr. Vincent LyonCallo. The information will be keep confidential and in a locked room located on Western Michigan University, in Moore.

You can choose to stop participating in the study at anytime for any reason. You will not suffer any prejudice or penalty by your decision to stop your participation. You will experience NO consequences either academically or personally if you choose to withdraw from this study. The investigator can also decide to stop your participation in the study without your consent.

Should you have any questions prior to or during the study, you can contact the primary investigator,

Melanie Jezior at 224-475-5683 or [Melanie.a.jezior@wmich.edu](mailto:Melanie.a.jezior@wmich.edu). You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the

board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

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I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits been explained to me. I agree to take part in this study.

MELANIE JEZIOR

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Please Print Your Name



January 25, 2017

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Participant's signature

Date