

<p><b>General Area of Interest:</b> Homelessness</p>	<p>This area is relevant, contemporary, interesting, and easily lends itself to pro and con discussions. I'm pretty sure I'll be able to get a researchable question out of this topic. It is also well covered in various academic disciplines (sociology, anthropology, urban studies, gender studies, criminal justice, psychology, etc.), so finding scholarly research should be no trouble. However, as it stands, it is extremely broad.</p>
<p><b>Narrowed:</b> Homelessness among women</p>	<p>This narrows the topic to a subset of the homeless: women. This seems like a current topical subject, because I keep reading in newspapers, magazines, and online that poverty is growing most rapidly among women and children. This seems interesting to me, because I can look at different age ranges, too - from young adults on up to elderly. It's still looking like a researchable topic. I think I'm going to need to narrow this to a more specific take, though.</p>
<p><b>Further Narrowed:</b> Society's reaction to homeless women</p>	<p>After skimming through a few academic articles online at the library, I noticed that "public perception of homelessness" is a recurrent theme. I also came across an interesting-sounding book, called <i>Tell Them Who I Am</i> by Elliot Liebow (1993). This narrower theme of perception of and reaction to homeless women sounds promising, and it's starting to lead to a direct research question.</p>
<p><b>Get Specific:</b> Mainstream American society's perception of and reaction to homeless women in urban public spaces in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.</p>	<p>Before I get too far, I better specify exactly which populations and time periods I'm talking about. After all, the situation of both homelessness and women's issues varies tremendously from country to country and throughout history. So, I'm going to specify both the homeless population (women in urban public spaces), the "reacting society" (mainstream America), and the timeframe (20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries). Of course, I'll probably bring in historical and comparative material, and I'll define the age of the women and the poverty levels later (I just know for now that I will need to delimit those). Oh, and I'll have to define "mainstream America," too.</p>
<p><b>Research Question:</b> How do members of contemporary mainstream America perceive and react to homeless women in urban public spaces?</p>	<p>That narrowed-down research topic was pretty easy to translate pretty directly to a research question. Now, I need to do a little more background reading to help inspire an introduction, background, thesis statement, and general plan for how I expect my paper to go.</p>

Even academic papers have the basic outline of a beginning, middle, and end. Using the classical argument format (*Hodges' Harbrace Handbook*, Ch. 36), an argumentative research paper or essay would include these features, in this order:

### I. Beginning

1. Introduction: attention grabber, foundation
2. Background: paper plan, operationalizations (definition of important terms)
3. Thesis statement: the point/purpose of this paper; what this paper will do (identify, discuss, classify, explain, etc.) and what point(s), if any, it will argue

### II. Middle

1. Development of background: definitions, history, theory
2. Substantiation of thesis: carefully and purposefully lay out the points, identify the issues, discuss the various arguments, find connections and relationships and try to classify and categorize (theory building); offer explanations and arguments (theory).

### III. End

1. Refutations: identify alternative explanations and opposing arguments or theories
2. Concession: recognize and validate those elements of the alternative and opposing arguments that you feel do have value or show under what circumstances they do have value and how those are limited; use those limitations to strengthen the case for why your own explanations and arguments make more sense.
3. Conclusion: summarize key points; restate your thesis, arguments, and explanations; connect back to the introduction; suggest areas in which further research is needed; provide an "elegant exit" that leaves the reader satisfied, yet wanting more and with a sense of "closure" to a well-written paper.

The following is a sample **Beginning**.

The poorest of the poor - the homeless - are often "invisible" to the rest of American society. Whether mainstream society perceives the homeless as embarrassing, threatening, frightening, or shameful, as victims of an unjust economic and social system or as victims of their own misguided choices and irresponsible decisions, most Americans make it through the typical day without even seeing the homeless. It is possible, for example, for people to go weeks without seeing a single homeless individual if their daily commutes, errands, and pleasure outings do not happen to take them through those parts of town where the homeless spend their days (for example, on public streets in the business district) - or their nights (in a temporary lean-to tent underneath a bridge). It is also true, though, that the average American may pass by countless homeless people every day and, for a number of reasons, see the homeless but somehow look through them, ignoring and passing by them as if they were, for all intents and purposes, literally invisible.

This paper will examine how this "invisibility of the homeless" manifests itself in the public consciousness; in particular, it will focus on the public perception of and reaction to homeless women in public spaces in contemporary urban America. First, this paper will define homelessness for purposes of this paper and present basic descriptive statistics regarding the attributes of the urban female homeless population in particular. The next section will present a brief historical background of urban homelessness in general and of female homelessness in particular. This section will include an overview of the dominant theories regarding homelessness and female poverty.

The body of the paper will attempt to identify and classify public perceptions of and reactions toward homeless women in America. I will argue that mainstream America's primary perception of homeless women is one of invisibility - in other words, that most people simply do not see, or look right through, the population of homeless urban females. Secondly, I will argue that the primary reaction to homeless women is, for most of mainstream society, a combination of guilt and confusion: guilt that an economically privileged society would allow our grandmothers, mothers, sisters, and daughters to live in abject poverty without the minimum basic human requirement of shelter, compounded by confusion - an inability to grasp and fully understand how and why this phenomenon could occur in a country with an advanced economy and a culture that emphasizes gender equity.

Finally, I will identify and discuss those arguments that present opposing theory and attempt to make a case for the primary argument of this paper: that homeless women are essentially "invisible" and that the pervasive public reaction to homeless women is a combination of guilt and confusion.

### Introduction

- starts off with attention grabber
- maintains active voice
- lays foundation
- sparks interest

### Background

- general thesis/paper purpose
- plan laying out how paper will proceed
- commits to definitions and statistics
- promises historical background and overview of theory

### Thesis Statement

- clearly states purpose and thesis (or argument) that body of paper will address
- paper plan continues and concludes by promising to present, refute, and concede to opposing arguments and theories.