

EXPLORING THE LIVES OF INDIVIDUALS WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS  
LIVING IN A RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITY: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Renee Desneige Christensen

Dr. Benyamin Schwarz, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

Since deinstitutionalization began in the 1950's hundreds of thousands of individuals with a Severe and Persistent Mental Illness were forced out onto the streets. While society may have seen deinstitutionalization as a positive direction for society, the outcome of this grand plan is obscure because the plan had no provision for new living environments for this population.

In this qualitative study I interviewed residents living in a RCF, their guardians, the Administrator, and staff members of the facility in an effort to understand the daily lives of the residents living within the confines of a RCF.

The findings from this study illuminated the daily struggles of individuals with a mental illness and the substantial effect of the interaction between their social and physical environments. This study recommends further thinking and research on the possibility creating specialized environments for individuals with a mental illness based on a social ecological model.