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The structural causes of homelessness in America

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THE STRUCTURAL CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS IN AMERICA

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Sociology

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Scott Joseph Wagers

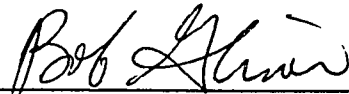
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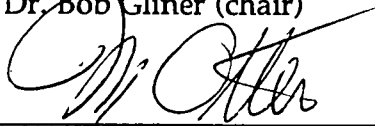
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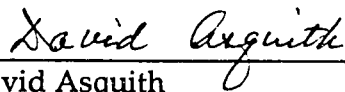
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ABSTRACT

THE STRUCTURAL CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS IN AMERICA

by Scott J. Wagers

Homelessness in the United States is often viewed as an individual rather than socio-economic and political problem. Assumptions about homelessness and poverty eclipse the political and economic implications of homelessness and the complex interaction of forces which contribute to it.

Part I of this thesis examines how structural forces in America's political economy--namely, the profit structure of housing, the distribution of wealth and income, and a changing employment--have contributed to growing homelessness over the last two decades.

The housing/homeless crisis in San Jose, California offers a concrete example of how structural factors interact and render thousands homeless each year. Part II also studies two results of the homeless explosion, the growth of homeless shelters and the formation of homeless encampments.

Part III summarizes Parts I and II and presents concrete recommendations for major cities in order to abate the growing homeless problem.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
I. Homelessness in America: Demographics and Structural Causes	3
II. Homelessness in San Jose California: A Case in Point	57
III. Summary and Recommendations	91
Bibliography	101

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Old and New Homeless	6
Table 2: Estimates of Homeless Children	13
Table 3: A Breakdown of Today's Homeless Population	22
Table 4: Distribution of Wealth and Income by Family Fifths, 1983	29
Table 5: Percentage of Households in More Severe Poverty in the Mid-1980s, by Nation and Household Structure	32
Table 6: Average After- Tax Family Income (in 1987 dollars)	34
Table 7: Comparative Attitudes Toward Inequality and Government Involvement in the Economy to Reduce Inequality, 1987	39
Table 8: Federal Housing Budget 1981-1987	44
Table 9: Cuts in the Federal Housing Budget in Terms of Dollars "Saved" by the US Government	46
Table 10: Estimates of Homeless Persons Requesting Assistance in Santa Clara County	58
Table 11: Projected Housing Needs for San Jose, 1988-1995	65
Table 12: Estimated Percentage of San Jose Households Able to Purchase a Home Based on Their Income: 1980 and 1987	67
Table 13: High- and Low- Growth Occupations: San Jose	72
Table 14: The Occupational Status of Men in Shelters, 1935	77

Introduction

Today, homelessness in American society is typically viewed as an individual rather than an economic, political, or social problem. Viewed as a product of alcoholism and drug abuse, mental illness, "amoral" behavior, lack of education, and a breakdown of the family, homelessness is commonly attributed to individual shortcomings. Research on today's homeless population, however, suggests that those who are homeless today have become so primarily because of interrelated economic, social, and political factors.

Part I of this thesis explores two dimensions of homelessness today: demographic information on America's homeless population, and the structural factors that have contributed to growing homelessness over the last two decades. America's homeless population today comprises at least four subgroups: families with children, the mentally ill, Vietnam Veterans, and the working poor. These groups constitute the "new" homeless which are contrasted with the "old" homeless characterized by the proverbial hobo and bum image. Structural forces that have contributed to homelessness today include the national housing crisis and the commodification of the housing market, governmental policies which favor the rich, the distribution of wealth and income, and the intensification of poverty and changing employment. These primary factors are inseparable from highly advanced capitalistic economic systems like America's; therefore, this thesis expounds the

relationship between the principles underlying the American System and the proliferation of homelessness within it.

Part II of this thesis critically examines the homeless explosion in Bay Area cities, focusing in on San Jose, California. The ascent of high technology and relative economic prosperity in the Santa Clara Valley has not occurred without consequence. Aggregate numbers of homeless people have quadrupled, engendering the phenomena of homeless shelters and encampments, the criminalization of the homeless, the elimination of Single Room Occupancy (SRO) and very low-income housing from the downtown area, and conservative policies which exacerbate the impending crisis. San Clara County's rapid urbanization, accompanied by a rapidly shifting economy and larger politico-economic forces, have rendered nearly 20,000 persons homeless in the last decade. The demographics, living conditions, and future implications of San Jose's homelessness reflect the failure of advanced free market capitalism manifested in rapidly expanding urban areas.

Part III summarizes previous chapters by tying together broader national trends with their concrete manifestations in San Jose, California. Emerging trends, as well as long- and short-term solutions to the growing homeless crisis are critically analyzed, and finally, specific recommendations for major US cities like San Jose that have experienced rapidly growing homelessness are outlined.

Part I. Homelessness in America: Demographics and Structural Causes

Homelessness Today, Demographics and Statistics

Unlike any time in American history, except the Great Depression, millions of people are falling into the abyss of homelessness. Today in America, people of all ethnic and educational backgrounds are susceptible to becoming homeless. Recent studies conclude that there are as many as 3 to 4 million homeless people nationally and that the demographics of this population challenge the image of homeless people as hobos, winos, and beggars.¹

Many researchers of today's homeless crisis argue that homelessness today differs qualitatively from that of earlier times because of the general characteristics of today's homeless population. Peter Marcuse points to three factors that differentiate today's homelessness from those of previous decades: 1) Homelessness today is not the result of general poverty like that occurring in third world cities; rather, it is occurring amid great resources and in one of the most advanced industrial economies of the world. 2) Homelessness today is a long-term, not transitional phenomenon. 3) Homelessness has increased during periods of relative economic prosperity--especially during the mid-

¹A 1960 survey of Philadelphia's skid row by Temple University found that 75 percent of the homeless were over the age of 45, and 87 percent were white. In 1988, 86 percent were under 45 and 87 percent were minorities.

eighties when the economy was recovering, though homelessness was worsening.²

Appearing on the streets in the late 1970s, families with children and young Blacks and Hispanics have become the fastest growing sectors of today's homeless population.³ Hopper and Hamburg refer to the "crossing of an invisible threshold" about 1978-79, a time that marked a dramatic increase in the number of homeless people nationwide.⁴ The number of mentally ill homeless on the streets also began to increase in the late seventies because the accommodations made available to them had significantly diminished.⁵ More recently, emigrant farm workers have become part of the homeless population in cities like San Jose that have undergone rapid urbanization and are experiencing the development of a dual labor market⁶ characterized by core and periphery industries.⁷

²Peter Marcuse, "Neutralizing Homelessness," *Socialist Review*, 1988, p. 73.

³Kim Hopper and Jill Hamberg, "The Making of America's Homeless: From Skid Row to New Poor, 1945-1984," *Critical Issues on Housing*, Temple University Press, 1986, p. 13.

⁴At this point, researchers believe the increase in homeless families began to "outpace" the increase in homeless individuals. Also, the late seventies was marked by a growing trend of urban renewal in major cities like New York in which affordable housing was demolished and replaced with higher-income housing.

⁵ "Homelessness and Mental Health: An Overview", reprinted in *Homelessness: Critical Issues for Policy and Practice*, sponsored by Harvard Medical School Dept. of Continuing Education and Division of Health Policy Research and Education John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University (unpublished document).

⁶ Michael Fabricant, "The Political Economy of Homelessness," *Catalyst*, November, 1987, No. 21. p. 14.

⁷Harold R. Kerbo, *Social Stratification and Inequality*. McGraw-Hill, 1991. p. 279; Beck and Tolbert (1978); and Horan (1980), note some of the characteristics of "core" industries include, 1) a high concentration of corporate assets within the industry (a few corporations do most of the business); 2) higher productivity; 3) higher profits; 4) more capital-intensive production, and 5) less economic competition. "Periphery" industries are essentially opposite of

In this analysis, the homeless will be divided into two subgroups: the chronically homeless (*old* homeless) and the *new* homeless.⁸ Associated with laziness, drunkenness and an unkempt appearance, the chronic homeless are exemplified by the hobo, tramp, and grate lady images familiar to the public. They have remained homeless throughout economic boom and bust. The chronic homeless constitute a small segment (less than twelve percent) of the overall homeless population today and will not be explored in great detail here. Nevertheless, the homeless of today are still portrayed as the homeless of old. In sociological lexicon, this misrepresentation of the homeless has been deemed the "individual-problem myth," which will be explored in the next section.⁹

The new homeless, the focus of this thesis, are directly or indirectly the product of conservative governmental policies, the commodification of the housing market, a shifting economy (deindustrialization), deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill, the reduction of real wages, cutbacks in social spending, urban renewal/redevelopment policies, and the distribution of income in America.

core industries. Examples of core industries include petroleum, auto production, and metal productions. Periphery industries are general merchandising (department stores), service stations, and restaurants.

⁸ This separation is not a moral distinction and in no way implies a "deserving" vs. "undeserving" dualism, though this distinction has been made in some research. The rationale here is to dispel the popular perception that the homeless are an amorphous subculture that has always existed and that homelessness is a natural, individual and unidimensional phenomenon.

⁹ Kim Hopper and Jill Hamberg, p.12-13, allude to the differentiation between the old and new homeless:

Grizzled veterans of the rails and flophouses have had to make way for unfamiliar cohorts of new arrivals: men and women of all ages and colors, the hale of the disabled, the newly jobless and the never-employed. In some places whole families on the road or in emergency accommodations outnumber the single male.

America's newly homeless comprise at least four subgroups: 1) the working poor and minorities; 2) the mentally ill; 3) Vietnam Veterans; and 4) single mothers and families with children. Though these categories overlap, their differentiation is based upon the characteristics, causation, and needs of each group. Each of these groups makes up roughly 30% of the overall homeless population, and all have become homeless due to political or economic factors.¹⁰

Different segments of the overall homeless population have varying underlying causes for their situations. Among researchers, two causalities--one being individual, the other structural --are used to separate the "old" and "new" homeless. ¹¹

¹⁰ These three subgroups are generally considered separately in sociological research and each have corresponding causes which will be considered later in this paper. Though these groups are sometimes dissimilar in terms of demographics, the structural causes for each are interrelated.

¹¹ Several attempts to differentiate and classify homeless people have been made. Mouren and colleagues have based their classification on differences in mobility and means of support. HUD uses factors such as chronic disabilities, personal crises, and economic conditions; Roper and Robertson (1984) have focused on categories based upon chronicity; see Fisher and Breakey, "Homelessness and Mental Health: An Overview", reprinted in *Homelessness: Critical Issues for Policy and Practice*, sponsored by Harvard Medical School Dept. of Continuing Education and Division of Health Policy Research and Education John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University (unpublished document).

Table 1: Old and New Homeless**Old Homeless**

<u>Typology</u>	<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Causes</u>
Bag ladies, grate men	visibly homeless, isolated	unexplored
Hobo, Tramp, Bum	skid row, alcoholism	individual dysfunction

New Homeless

<u>Typology</u>	<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Causes</u>
Mentally ill	require institutionalization	deinstitutionalization
Families w/children	single female parent, low-income	feminization of poverty/lack of housing
Working poor	laborers	shift in economy/housing
Vietnam Vets	seek Veteran shelters	lack of housing/funding
Migrant workers	immigrants	low wages/lack of housing

How Many People are Homeless Today?

Estimates of the aggregate number of homeless people in America vary greatly according to methodological techniques employed by various agencies and the political orientation of these agencies.¹² Despite the disparity in the figures, all agree that the problem is increasing. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) contends that homelessness has increased approximately 130 percent since 1980 (10 percent per year), while the number of shelters for the homeless has increased by only 66 percent since 1980.¹³ The US Conference of Mayors agrees that the problem is worsening, but it sets the rate of increase in homelessness at 38 percent between 1980 and 1985.¹⁴

Several studies have tried to determine the number of homeless people who sleep on America's streets each night. In 1988, Samuel Pierce, secretary of HUD throughout the Reagan Administration, acknowledged that an update of the 1984 HUD study would yield a nightly figure in the range of 500,000 to 600,000.¹⁵ If the revised report is true, then the growth rate was 17 percent per year instead of the 10 percent figure mentioned adopted by HUD earlier. The National Alliance to End Homelessness cites a figure of 735,000 as the number

¹² For example, the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) statistics are generally conservative: HUD's estimate for the overall number of homeless people in 1985 in America was 350,000, whereas the Community for Creative Non-Violence, based in Washington D.C. estimated there were 2-3 million homeless people nationally that same year.

¹³ Chester Hartman, *Report of the President's Commission on Housing*, "Housing Policies Under the Reagan Administration," *Critical Perspectives on Housing*, p. 356.

¹⁴ Richard Fogel, Director, "Homelessness: A Complex Problem and the Federal Response: A Report by the Human Resources Division, US General Accounting Office," *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, (October 1985), Volume 44, p. 386-87.

¹⁵ Joel Blau, *The Visible Poor: Homelessness in America*, Oxford Press. 1992. p. 24.

of people homeless nightly in America, and it contends that 1.3 to 2 million people were homeless for a period of time during the course of the year 1988.¹⁶

Whether one adopts the HUD figure of 250,000 or the National Coalition figure of 2.5 million, most studies conclude that during the late seventies and early eighties the numbers of homeless people in major urban centers exploded. For example, San Jose, CA, which will be used as a case in point in later chapters, experienced a fourfold increase in its number of homeless people between the years 1982-1988. In New York City, researchers extrapolate that by 1990, the number of homeless people had reached nearly 400,000--up from 12,000 in the early 1980's.¹⁷ Similarly, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit and Boston reported huge increases in their numbers of homeless; eventually, the homeless began to appear nearly everywhere:

The available evidence suggests that it was in the period from the early to the late 1970s that the relevant factors fell into place and their combined force gathered momentum. In the early 1980's, as the economy worsened and the housing market tightened even more, the limits of tolerance were reached, and widespread homelessness resulted. To be sure, the effects were differentially distributed. Groups whose hold on a settled mode of life was already tenuous were the first to be affected: Thus the arrival of ex-patients and of young, jobless minority men on the streets and in the shelters was apparent in some areas by the mid 1970s. As the decade progressed and the forces responsible for homelessness intensified, the numbers of the homeless grew, and their composition diversified. ¹⁸

¹⁶ Institute of Medicine, *Homelessness, Health and Human Needs*, p.3-4.

¹⁷Jonathan Kozal, *Rachel and Her Children*, Crown Publishers, New York, New York. 1988, p. 15. The number 400,000 includes what Kozal refers to as the "hidden homeless," who have not sought shelter and those individuals who will become homeless after 1988, the last year the numbers of homeless in New York was counted.

¹⁸ Kim Hopper and Jill Hamberg, p. 13.

The authors allude to an important point here: the causes of homelessness are complex and interact to produce a diverse homeless population that continues to grow.¹⁹ One observation upon which nearly all researchers agree is that homelessness in America continues to grow unabated.

¹⁹ Jonathan Kozal (1988), believes that the homeless problem today is not a "temporary crisis," rather, he views the growing numbers as a "sign of things to come." Kozal cites the House Committee on Government Operations finding in 1985 as evidence: "The committee believes that current federal housing policies, combined with the continuing erosion of the private inventory of low-income housing, will add to the growth of homelessness." The "harshest consequences," the committee said, are "*yet to come.*"

Who Are Today's Homeless?

Age: Consistently, studies today place the average age of a homeless person at about thirty five.²⁰ This figure is in stark contrast with the age of the average skid-row street person. A 1930 census of New York's Bowery found that almost 59 percent of the population was older than forty years of age.²¹ Experts have inferred from this information that skid row inhabitants were often retired, and that their relationship to the job market had become tenuous.²² Today's homeless belong to a larger pool of the young urban poor.

While economic changes of the Depression contributed to the skid-row population, the changes in the political economy after World War II brought about conditions which left thousands without a living wage. For example, the railroad industry left those too old or not needed on skid-row and without a home or future. Similarly, a whole underclass of young people is on the brink of becoming homeless while manufacturing jobs that could employ them are lost irrevocably. The factors that generated this trend will be discussed in the next section.

²⁰ Joel Blau, *The Visible Poor: Homelessness in America*. Oxford Press. 1992. p. 25. Blau sites several different studies from throughout the nation to extrapolate this figure. The only significant deviations from this average are the ages of thirty nine found in Rossi's Chicago study and the trend found among experts indicating that homeless women seem to be younger.

²¹ Ibid. p. 25.

²² Ibid. p. 25

Gender and Race: Approximately half of the overall homeless population is comprised of single men, while single women account for only about 12 percent. However, females head nearly all of the homeless families today. Thus, the *overall* number of homeless women is almost as great as the number of men. Three percent of the homeless are unaccompanied children.²³

In terms of race, a disproportionate number of the homeless today are minorities.²⁴ As Besser points out, "Blacks and other minorities--rarely seen in the skid rows of the 1960's--were increasingly counted among the homeless."²⁵ These changes in race and gender have moved some researchers to deem them the "new" homeless--those homeless who arrived on the streets after the 1960's and are identified as a segment of an even broader sociological category: the urban poor.

Families With Children

Among those falling between the economic cracks are mothers with children, who constitute the fastest growing segment of the overall homeless population. According to contemporary studies on this segment of the homeless, single parent families now account for approximately 34 percent of the homeless population--an increase from 27 percent in 1985.²⁶ Most striking

²³ US Conference of Mayors, *A Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness in American Cities: 1990* (Washington D.C., 1990), p. 25.

²⁴Kim Hopper and Jill Hamberg, "The Making of America's Homeless: From Skid Row to New Poor, 1945-1984," *Critical Issues on Housing*, Temple University Press. 1986 Peter Marcuse, p. 73.

²⁵Besser (1975)

is the number of children living on the streets, which is estimated to be between 62,000 to 100,000 on any given night.²⁷

Table 2: Estimates of Homeless Children

<u>National</u>	<u>California</u>
500,000 (Nat. Coalition for the Homeless, 1990)	200,000 (Wstrn. Cntr on Law)
310,000 (General Accounting Office, 1989)	
273,000 (US Dept. of Education, 1989)	156,000 (Dept. of Soc. Ser.)
100,000 (Nat. Academy of Sciences, 1988)	
68,000 nightly (Gen. Accounting Office, 1989)	
61,500 nightly (Urban Institute, 1988)	

Source: Children's Defense Fund

According to Jonathan Kozal, four out of ten poor people in America are children, though children make up only one fourth of our population, and children are joining the ranks of the homeless more rapidly than all others except mothers with children. He argues further that the number of children

²⁶Ellen Bassuk, "Homeless Families," *Scientific American*, Dec. 1991. Peter Marcuse, "Neutralizing Homelessness," *Socialist Review*, 1988. *Stanford Study on Homeless Families*, 1991.

²⁷ Ellen Bassuk, p.66.

living in poverty has grown to 14 million--an increase of 3 million since 1968--while welfare benefits to families with children have declined one third.²⁸

The *Stanford Study of Homeless Families Children and Youth* in 1990 found that the homeless they studied were predominantly long-term residents of counties in which they eventually sought emergency shelters. Also, though a majority of homeless families were headed by a single mother, a "substantial portion" contained both biological parents. These parents were found to have been younger and less educated than homeless individuals studied, and the families were less likely to have a history of drug or alcohol abuse or mental illness. Similar to other data on homeless families, the Stanford researchers found that disadvantaged minorities (African-Americans and Hispanics) constituted a larger proportion of homeless families than of homeless individuals.

The trend of single females heading homeless and impoverished families has been deemed by scholars "the feminization of poverty." More women are heading households than ever before in America. According to Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York as many as one fifth of all families are headed by females.²⁹ Of these families, at least one-third live below the poverty line. Since homelessness is an extension of extreme poverty, this economically marginalized population has spiraled downward due to urban renewal and subsequent loss of single room occupancy (SRO) housing, cutbacks in social spending in the 1980's, the skyrocketing changes in

²⁸ Jonathan Kozal, p. 5.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 68.

income and rent and the overall economic downturn.³⁰ These factors reflect the complexities of homelessness today and will be studied in greater detail in the next section.

Since women with small children constitute the fastest growing segment of homeless persons, the consequences of this trend are dire for the children especially.³¹ Bassuk has found medical, emotional, behavioral, and educational problems emerging among America's homeless children, and she further argues that though their homelessness may end, the problems developed during the homeless period may "plague them forever."³²

Similarly, the *Stanford Study of Homeless Families* in 1990 found that,

Homeless and formerly homeless parents agreed that their children's health had worsened as a result of homelessness. Parents who reported declines in their children's health were more likely to have been homeless more than once and to have been homeless for longer periods of time.³³

Further, Bassuk, Kozal and the Stanford group all agree that permanent housing is the primary solution for this sector of the homeless. The Stanford study conclusively states:

³⁰ Ellen Bassuk, "Homeless Families," *Scientific American*, Dec. 1991. Joel Blau, *The Visible Poor: Homelessness in America*, New York. 1990. Kim Hopper and Jill Hamberg, "The Making of America's Homeless: From Skid Row to New Poor, 1945-1984," *Critical Issues on Housing*, Temple University Press. 1986.

³¹ Ellen Bassuk (1991) is pioneering research on this segment of the homeless population which now comprises more than 34% of homeless persons.

³² Ellen Bassuk, p. 66.

³³ *The Stanford Study of Homeless Families Children and Youth*. 1991. p. 37. Not only did the study conclude that homelessness had an impact on the child's physical health, the findings also conclude that "the effects of the homeless experience on children had consequences of more negative behaviors and psychological problems, some of which persisted long after the move to more permanent housing." p. 37.

Personal characteristics did not seem crucial in getting out of homelessness. The levels of substance abuse and mental illness among formerly homeless families were not lower than those of the homeless families. The difference between homeless and formerly homeless families was not in their level of planfulness and determination. This finding questions the "bootstrap theory," at least for those who have been helped by service agencies. Once again, homelessness was associated with social circumstances more than with personal qualities.³⁴

The Mentally Ill

There is a general consensus among experts on the percentages of mentally-ill homeless people in America today. A 1990 study by the Public Citizen Health Research Group and the National Alliance for the mentally ill found that "twenty five to thirty percent of single homeless adults living in shelters are seriously mentally ill."³⁵ According to this study, "There are more than twice as many....with schizophrenia and manic depressive psychosis living in public shelters and on the streets than are in public mental hospitals."³⁶

Researchers agree that the mentally ill constitute a "special" sub-group among the homeless based upon three psychological characterizations posited by experts: alienation, competence, and isolation.³⁷ Many observers argue that

³⁴ Ibid. p. 38.

³⁵ "Why They're Still Homeless?" *San Francisco Focus Magazine*, November 1991, p. 77.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 77.

³⁷ William Breakey M.D, "The Homeless Mentally Ill: Clinical Aspects" *Homelessness: Critical Issues for Policy and Practice*, sponsored by Harvard Medical School

these concepts are useful in understanding patterns of homelessness among the mentally ill (Bahr, 1968; Fischer and Breakey 1986; Vaughn and Leff, 1981). Though these criteria may be used in analyses of the overall homeless population, they have greater explanatory value for the mentally-ill subgroup, and more readily fit the "clinical model."³⁸

Researchers of the mentally ill homeless further divide this population into three subgroups: the young chronics; the old chronics; and the personality disordered (Pepper and Ryglewicz 1984). Though the young and old chronics both are considered chronically homeless, the young have spent little time in mental institutions, are mostly schizophrenic and male, share a dislike for medication, and develop an unstable life style of wandering. The old chronics have long histories of being on the streets, while others among them have lived in some type of SRO housing but are generally without a permanent place to live. Many have a history of long-term hospitalization and some are willing to accept psychiatric treatment, while others seem very much like low-income people.³⁹ The personality disordered are primarily youths who are passive, alcohol abusers, and lack the skills and education to adapt to contemporary society. This group also includes young women who are severely abused and have run away or been thrown-out of their homes.⁴⁰

Dept. of Continuing Education and Division of Health Policy Research and Education John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University 1986, (unpublished document).

³⁸ Various models deal with different aspects of homelessness: the political/ economic and social, the pscho-biological, the institutional/clinical , etc.

³⁹William Breakey M.D. "The Homeless Mentally Ill: Clinical Aspects" *Homelessness: Critical Issues for Policy and Practice*, sponsored by Harvard Medical School Dept. of Continuing Education and Division of Health Policy Research and Education John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University 1986, (unpublished document).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

People who fit into these categories experience several obstacles to receiving the help they need. Experts list the following set of factors which pose particular problems for the mentally-ill homeless:

- √ Lack of support systems
- √ Lack of trust
- √ Ubiquity of alcohol
- √ Mobility

These obstacles are exacerbated by a set of systemic problems that confront a clinical service provider: the specialized nature of psychiatric treatment; impotence in the face of the patient's right to refuse treatment; and lack of adequate service networks.⁴¹ The interaction of the factors contributing to homelessness among the mentally-ill, combined with the inherent service obstacles, renders many of the mentally-ill homeless powerless in the face of finding shelter and contributes to their alienation.⁴²

Contemporary literature on the mentally ill homeless often emphasizes deinstitutionalization as its primary culprit.⁴³ But the overemphasis on mental illness has eclipsed deeper political, economic, and social ramifications. For example, estimates of substance abuse among the overall homeless population range from 20% to 46%, and estimates of the number of mentally ill nationally average around 30%.⁴⁴ Though the mentally ill

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Howard Bahr, *Skid Row: An Introduction to Dissalifiliation* 1973. Lamb (1984).

⁴⁴ Pamela Fisher and William R. Breakey, "Homelessness and Mental Health: An Overview", reprinted in *Homelessness: Critical Issues for Policy and Practice*, sponsored by Harvard Medical School Dept. of Continuing Education and Division of Health Policy

homeless have special needs: medical treatment, psychotherapy and in some cases, institutionalization, one solution that has been overlooked is affordable housing. San Francisco General Hospital spokesperson Dr. Robert Suber adds that, "Safe and affordable, decent housing is the first solution. The best treatment in the world, the best medication, the best counseling, is pretty much worthless unless a person has a safe place to be."

Homelessness in America is readily associated with mental illness as is the case with laziness and alcoholism.⁴⁵ The diverse populations whose overarching similarity is homelessness itself, have significantly different demographic characteristics, reasons for becoming homeless, and, as in the case with the mentally-ill, special needs. Marcuse, Hopper and Hamburg, and Hoch and Slayton agree that though the homeless mentally-ill are approximately one-third of the homeless population, they are a "special needs" group because they require social services that specialize in psychological and medical treatment.⁴⁶

Since only approximately 20-25% of the overall homeless population report having mental impairments,⁴⁷ the majority of the homeless do not

Research and Education John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University (unpublished document).

⁴⁵ One *New York Times* poll asked individuals at random what they thought caused homelessness; 20 percent said unwillingness to work, 20 percent said alcohol or drugs, 19 percent said bad luck, 12 percent said psychological problems. No one mentioned the lack of affordable housing.

⁴⁶ Peter Marcuse, "Neutralizing Homelessness," *Socialist Review*, 1988. Kim Hopper and Jill Hamberg, "The Making of America's Homeless: From Skid Row to New Poor, 1945-1984," *Critical Issues on Housing*, Temple University Press. 1986. Charles Hoch, *New Homeless and Old: Community and the Skid Row Hotel*, Philadelphia, PA. 1988.

⁴⁷ Dr. Marilyn Winkleby and Randall White, M.D. *Homeless Adults Without Apparent Medical and Psychiatric Impairment: Onset of Morbidity Over Time* (reprinted in

need the same services as those classified as the mentally-ill homeless. In Dr. Marilyn Winkleby's 1992 study of homeless single men who live in Santa Clara County's armories and shelters, out of 1,437 interviewees, 20.7% reported ever being hospitalized for psychiatric reasons.⁴⁸

The Working Poor

The second fastest growing segment of the homeless population is the working poor. Young Blacks and Hispanics, many of whom worked in the manufacturing sector, are now among the nation's homeless, as well as those unable to pay the skyrocketing costs of housing in some major cities.⁴⁹

Like thousands rendered homeless and jobless from the Great Depression, this population is composed of people who, because of the loss of a job or an eviction from a home or apartment, experienced homelessness for the first time. The demographic information on this group indicates that, besides being one of the fastest growing segments, the working poor are susceptible to greater homelessness in the future because thousands of well-paying manufacturing jobs have been lost irrevocably.⁵⁰

Hospital and Community Psychiatry) Stanford University , October 1992, Vol. 43. No. 10. p. 1017.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹ Like San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego, San Jose's rents are among the highest in the nation: recent studies indicate that a number of indigent people pay as much as 75% of their income for housing.

⁵⁰Exploration of the negative effects of shelter life is not readily available. However, the shelter industry depends primarily on the working poor and homeless families for its clientele. As we shall see in the next section, these shelters have replaced affordable housing and engenders a socialization process that contributes to alienation and dependency.

According to Fabricant , the working poor--as well as the homeless population overall--are disproportionately minorities:

It is important to note that women and people of color have been disproportionately affected by these trends. Women, blacks and Hispanics have incomes that are substantially less than the national median. It has been reported that when women are employed full time, they earn less than 60 percent of what men earn in full time work.⁵¹ Salary differentials are similar for black and Hispanic workers. Consequently, women, black and Hispanics have had to rely on social service programs.⁵² This reliance has increased in recent years as the share of the US population living below the poverty line has increased substantially. Census data suggests that between 1979 and 1982 the number of people living in poverty rose from 26.1 million to 34.4 million persons or from 11.7 percent to 15 percent of the population.⁵³

In sum, the information available on today's homeless population suggests: 1) that the homeless today comprise diverse populations of people including families with children and the working poor, neither of which have been historically associated with homelessness; 2) the number of homeless people in America is growing between 18% and 30% per year and the overall numbers have more than quadrupled in the last fifteen years;⁵⁴ 3) America's governmental agencies have not acknowledged the diversity among the

⁵¹ Coalition on Women and the Budget, "Inequality of Sacrifice: The impact of Reagan Budget on Women," unpublished paper (Washington, D.C., March, 1984).

⁵² Karen Stallard, Barbara Ehrenreich and Holly Sklar, *Poverty in the American Dream: Women and Children First* (Boston, South End Press, 1983).

⁵³ US Bureau of Census, *Current Population Reports: Money Income of Households, Families and Persons in the U.S.: 1982*, (Washington, D.C: US Government Printing Office, 1984). Also see, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings* (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1984).

⁵⁴ Whether one adopts the aggregate HUD figures or those posited by the National Coalition for the Homeless, the findings of both agree on this *rate* of growth.

homeless population, making no distinction between the working poor, the mentally ill, and skid-row alcoholics, though some attempt has been made to shelters families separately; 4) Some of the subgroups among the newly homeless have special needs and must therefore be approached differently than other subgroups.

Table 3: A Breakdown of Today's Homeless Population

<u>Category</u>	<u>Percentage of overall homeless</u>
Families with Children	34%
Working Poor	16%
Mentally ill	25%
Vietnam Veterans	20%
<u>Winos/chronic homeless (other)</u>	<u>5%</u>

*there is significant overlap among some of these categories

The Structural Causes of Homelessness Today

Voluminous literature on the causes of homelessness illuminate several interrelated causes: deinstitutionalization, rising rates of unemployment, the profit structure of housing, cutbacks in social spending, low wage employment, deindustrialization, governmental and housing policies, the maldistribution of wealth and income, the breakdown of the family, and the loss of social support networks.⁵⁵

These factors are actually precipitating events which may eventually render someone homeless. That is, loss of income, eviction, or loss of a job, may push an individual "over the edge" into homelessness. The dynamics that engender these events are the "true" or primary causes of homelessness and have been referred to as "structural" causes because they are inherent in America's political economy.⁵⁶ Marcuse posits a framework in which

⁵⁵Howard Bahr, *Skid Row: An Introduction to Dissalifiliation* 1973; Besser (1975); Ellen Bassuk, "Homeless Families" in *Scientific American*, Dec. 1991; Michael Fabricant, "The Political Economy of Homelessness," *Catalyst*, November No. 21, 1987; Friedrichs (1988); Kim Hopper and Jill Hamberg, "The Making of America's Homeless: From Skid Row to New Poor, 1945-1984," *Critical Issues on Housing*, Temple University Press. 1986 ; Lamb (1986); Peter Marcuse, "Neutralizing Homelessness," *Socialist Review*, 1988; Chester Hartman, "Housing Policies Under the Reagan Administration," *Critical Perspectives on Housing*, Philidelphia, PA. 1987; Robertson and Rossi, *Down and Out in America: The Origins of Homelessness*, Philidelphia, PA. 1989; Jonathan Kozal, *Rachel and Her Children*, Crown Publishers, New York, New York. 1988; James Wright, *Address Unknown: The Homeless in America*, New York, NY. 1989; Joel Blau, *The Visible Poor: Homelessness in America*. Oxford Press. 1992. There are innumerable "explanations" for homelessness today. The ones mentioned here are the most frequently cited today.

⁵⁶ Aside from the breakdown of the family, the other major contributing factors to the homeless problem can be broken down into categories which are not mutually exclusive and overlap. For example, Fabricant (1989) and Marcuse (1988) refer to the causes of homelessness as structural.

homelessness can best be understood as a structural phenomenon: "*First and foremost, homelessness must be seen as a component, an extreme reflection, of general social, economic, and political patterns, not as an isolated problem, separate and apart.*"⁵⁷ Given this perspective, the structural causes of homelessness can be seen as a manifestation of the social, political, and economic forces at work in America's system.

Researchers disagree on the extent to which each of several factors contributes to homelessness itself. For example, Hopper and Hamberg place the lack of affordable housing at the forefront, but enumerate the ill-distribution of income, deinstitutionalization, deindustrialization, cutbacks in social spending, and the breakdown of the family as secondary causes.⁵⁸ Peter Marcuse offers an alternative view of homelessness today as having three related causes with approximately equal impact: the distribution of wealth and income, government policies, and the profit structure of housing.⁵⁹

The three most cited structural factors to which the homeless explosion has been linked are explored in this thesis: 1) the distribution of wealth and income in America; 2) the shift from an industrial-based economy to a service economy (deindustrialization) and 3) the profit structure of the housing market and the elimination of low-income housing through governmental/urban policies.⁶⁰

⁵⁷Peter Marcuse, p.91.

⁵⁸ Kim Hopper and Jill Hamberg, "The Making of America's Homeless," 1986.

⁵⁹ Peter Marcuse, pp. 69-93.

⁶⁰ Contemporary research such as the Stanford Study of Homeless Families (1991), focuses less on the Macro-level causes listed above and instead focus attention on demographic information of today's homeless.

These structural factors, extensively researched by scholars, explain the depth, breadth, and complexity of homelessness today. The interaction of these factors is embedded in America's economic system. Therefore, the exploration of the primary causes of homelessness will illuminate the dynamics of America's free market as a possible root cause of homelessness.⁶¹

Today, the complex interactions between the social, economic, and political factors which generate today's homeless problem have been reduced to simplistic moral formulations that have been carried through generations. As experts like Mark Stern point out, "The manner in which the homeless came to public consciousness in the 1980's has tended to simplify the circumstances of homelessness."⁶² Oversimplified approaches to homelessness are reflected in the long-standing, still growing trend of charity:

The immediate, and for many, long term responses to [homelessness] has been to create shelters and perhaps just as importantly recreate the "gift relationship" of services, which defines the worthy poor and homeless as passive, grateful and spiritually saint like. ⁶³

The multiple causes of homelessness require solutions that take into account and correspond with each contributory cause that renders thousands homeless each year. But, the persuasiveness of the belief that laziness, pathology, and drug addiction causes homelessness⁶⁴ has eclipsed the deeper

⁶¹ Fabricant (1988), Blau (1992) and Marcuse (1988) view the causes of homelessness today as inherent to the capitalist system itself. The flight of jobs overseas, the shift from industrial to service economy and the commodification of housing are "natural" stages of free-market capitalism.

⁶² Michael Fabricant, p. 11.

⁶³ Ibid. p. 11.

causes of homelessness and has incorrectly placed the responsibility of caring for the homeless upon the narrow and limited band-aid approaches of the church and service-oriented agencies. In the next section, the way in which this "individual myth" is used to simplify, and ultimately hide the cause of homelessness, will be analyzed.

For sake of clarity the primary, secondary, and conjectured individual causes of homelessness are enumerated below; primary causes will be explored in some detail.

Secondary causes of homelessness are often attributed to cuts in social spending, deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill, elimination of SRO units and low-income housing, unemployment, medical costs, gentrification, and redevelopment of urban areas. However, primary causes, found in the profit structure of housing, declining wages of workers in a two-tiered economy, and at the apex, the maldistribution of wealth, income and power have greater explanatory value in addressing the complexities of homelessness.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ This has been deemed the "individual myth" by some theorists while others like those researchers who conducted the *Stanford Study of Homeless Families* (1991) call this the "bootstrap theory," implying that according to popular belief, those who are homeless merely need to "pick themselves up by their bootstraps."

⁶⁵ The notion of primary and secondary causes emerged from my own studies of homelessness through the Student Homeless Alliance, and with research I conducted in conjunction with Dr. Talmadge Wright, co-founder of the group. The breakdown of these causes is based upon numerous recent studies of homelessness.

Primary Causes

- Profit structure of housing
- Maldistribution of wealth and income
- Deindustrialization and job layoffs
- Decline in workers' income

Secondary Causes

- Cuts in social spending (health, housing, education) to balance budgets
- Gentrification of urban areas through planning and redevelopment
- Elimination of SRO type housing and low-income housing
- Deinstitutionalization minus community support
- Feminization of poverty

Conjectured Individual Causes of Homelessness

- Lack of education and literacy
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Breakdown of family structure (dysfunctionality)
- Mental illness
- Labeling (as internalized by the homeless)

The Distribution of Wealth and Income and America's Structured Inequality

Since the late 1970's, a shift in the distribution of wealth and income reflects the following pattern: the rich are getting richer, the poor more numerous, and the middle is being squeezed.⁶⁶ This pattern correlates with the increasing numbers of homeless people in America, which began to rise dramatically around 1979, and which became more exaggerated during the 1980's.

Some researchers argue that the pattern of America's distribution of wealth and income throughout the 1980's was due in large part to the favor the rich policies of Ronald Reagan and George Bush. Since 1977, substantial gains in median family income have been made in the upper classes, while the lower classes experienced significant loses in terms of median income.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Thurow, Lester, "A Surge in Inequality" from *Scientific American*. May, 1987, Volume 256, p. 30.

⁶⁷ Donald Bartlett and James Steele, *America: What Went Wrong?* Andrews and McMeel, Kansas City, MO. p. 1.

Table 4: Distribution of Wealth and Income by Family Fifths, 1983

<u>Family Fifths</u>	<u>Percentage of total wealth</u>	<u>Percentage of total income</u>
Highest fifth	78.7	42.7
Second fifth	14.5	24.4
Third fifth	6.2	17.1
Fourth fifth	1.1	11.1
Lowest fifth	<u>-0.4</u>	<u>4.7</u>
	100.0%	100.0%

Sources: US Bureau of Census. 1989. *Current Population Reports*, series P-60, no. 146.

The major indicators used to measure inequality, including industries, occupations, and age groups, reflect the dramatic increase in structured inequality between 1976 and today. During this period the number of middle-income male jobs, (those paying from 75 to 125 percent of median male earnings) declined from 23.4 to 20.3 percent of the male work force.⁶⁸ Further, in a period when total male employment was growing by 7.4 million jobs, 400,000 middle-income male jobs were disappearing; there were small gains in jobs in the upper segments and large gains in the lower segments of the earnings distribution.⁶⁹

⁶⁸Thurow, Lester, "A Surge in Inequality" from *Scientific American*. May, 1987, Volume 256, p. 30.

Since homelessness typically involves extreme poverty, the mobility of the homeless out of poverty is comparable to the mobility (or lack there of) of the lower classes. Due to increased inequality, upward mobility for the poor has become nearly impossible. In a real sense, the poorest Americans are trapped in poverty, and fewer are climbing out. For example, almost half of all Americans who had jobs and who filed income tax returns in 1989 earned less than \$20,000. Of the 95.9 million tax returns filed that year by people reporting income from a job, 47.2 million came from people in that income group.⁷⁰ Additionally, the total amount of dollars in wages that went to those earning between \$200,000 to \$1 million increased 697%, and the amount to those who are considered millionaires increased 2,184%, while the middle class increase the same year was 44%.⁷¹ The poverty rate in the eighties increased significantly under the Reagan administration which made the working poor ineligible for welfare benefits.⁷² By contrast, the rates of poverty were reduced incrementally throughout the sixties and the mid-seventies ⁷³. According to Fabricant, the reduction in welfare benefits and changing employment throughout the late seventies and early eighties corresponds with the growing number of homeless people during this period.⁷⁴ Further, while

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.30.

⁷⁰ Donald Bartlett and James Steele, *America: What Went Wrong?* Andrews and McMeel, Kansas City, MO. 1991. p. 7.

⁷¹ "San Jose Mercury News, The Rich Really are Getting Richer," March 23, 1990.

⁷²Piven and Cloward, *Poor People's Movements*, New York, NY. 1982; Danzinger and Haveman, (1982)

⁷³Dunn, (1984)

contemporary research indicates there is some movement out of poverty today, 43 percent to 60 percent of the poor do not move out,⁷⁵ and when they do move out, they do not stay very far above the poverty level or stay out of it.⁷⁶

Poverty in the United States has been found to be more long-term, widespread and severe than in continental Europe.⁷⁷ In the US., most poor families fall far below half the national median (the poverty line used here). By contrast, in European countries a large percentage of poor households are close to the poverty line. Between 40 and 60 percent of poor families in Canada and Europe have incomes greater than 40 percent of the national median.⁷⁸ Nearly 75 percent of poor families in the United States have incomes less than 40 percent of the median. Thus almost 45 percent of all lone-parent families with children were in "severe poverty" in the United States.⁷⁹ Comparisons with lone-parent families in other countries are presented in table five on the next page.

⁷⁴Michael Fabricant, "The Political Economy of Homelessness" in *The Political Catalyst* 1987, No. 21.

⁷⁵Harold R. Kerbo, *Social Stratification and Inequality*. McGraw-Hill 1991. p. 313.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷Timothy Smeeding and Lee Rainwater, "Cross National Trends in Income Poverty and Dependency" (Paper prepared for Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Conference on Poverty, Inequality and the Crisis of Social Policy, Washington, D.C., September 19-20, 1991. p. 5.

⁷⁸ Katherine McFate, "Poverty, Inequality and the Crisis of Social Policy Summary of Findings.." Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Washington, D.C. September 199. p.1-2.

⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 2.

Table 5: Percentage of Households in More Severe Poverty in the mid-1980's, by Nation and Household Structure

<u>Nation</u>	<u>Households</u>	<u>Families with children</u>	<u>Single-Parents with children</u>
US.	13.6	17.5	44.9
Canada	8.9	9.3	29.4
United kingdom	7.0	8.6	7.7
West Germany	3.2	3.1	12.5
Netherlands	5.7	3.9	5.1
France	6.1	5.3	10.7
Sweden	5.9	2.9	3.6

*More severe poverty is defined here as household income of less than 40 percent of national adjusted median income. This 40 percent cut-off is roughly the equivalent of the federal poverty line used by the United States government.

Source: Timothy Smeeding and Lee Rainwater, "Cross National Trends in Income Poverty and Dependency" (Paper prepared for Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Conference on Poverty, Inequality and the Crisis of Social Policy, Washington, D.C., September 19-20, 1991. p. 5.

Homelessness is the logical extreme on the continuum of poverty. Therefore, the maldistribution of wealth and income, which causes the poor to remain poor, contributes to the homeless problem insofar as the homeless

are not upwardly mobile and remain shackled to extreme poverty. The result of having millions of people on the brink of homelessness is that if any crisis ensues, those people become homeless.

While homelessness was increasing in the mid-eighties, 41.5 percent of all poor people over the age of 14 had a job in 1986. The working poor are the fastest growing segment of the poverty population (8.9 million in 1986, compared to 6.5 million in 1979; the number full-time year round workers who are poor has increased from 1.36 million in 1976 to 2 million in 1986).⁸⁰ Further, while substantial gains are made in the highest economic brackets in terms of family income, the poor's income spiraled downward throughout the Reagan and Bush years, while the costs of housing spiraled upwards.⁸¹

⁸⁰ "Poverty is Winning a Quiet War," San Jose Mercury News, January 8, 1992.

⁸¹ Leonard, Dolbeare, and Lazere, *A Place to Call Home: The Crisis in Housing for the Poor*, p. 28.

Table 6: Average After-Tax Family Income (In 1987 Dollars)

Income group by deciles	1977 avg. income	1988 avg. income	% change	Dollar + or-
Top 1%	\$174,498	\$303,900	+74.2%	+\$129,402
Top 5%	\$90,756	\$124,651	+37.3%	+\$33,895
Tenth	\$70,459	\$89,783	+27.4%	+\$19,324
Ninth	\$39,236	\$42,323	+7.9%	+\$3,087
Eighth	\$31,568	\$33,282	+5.4%	+\$1,714
Seventh	\$26,240	\$27,038	+3.0%	+\$798
Sixth	\$22,009	\$22,259	+1.1%	+\$250
Fifth	\$18,043	\$18,076	+0.2%	+\$33
Fourth	\$14,323	\$14,266	-0.4%	-\$57
Third	\$10,740	\$10,614	-1.2%	-\$126
Second	\$7,084	\$6,990	-1.3%	-\$94
First	\$3,528	\$3,157	-10.5%	-\$3.71
All groups	\$24,184	\$26,494	+9.6%	+\$2,310

Source: Congressional Budget Office

Ideological Roots of America's Income Disparity

America's tradition of capitalism has helped shape the value system that engenders the ideological root of income disparity between the rich and poor. The capitalist ideology comprises not only beliefs about why people are poor and why wealth and income distribution is why it is but also how much government should be involved in solving the problems of homelessness and poverty.

Sociologists generally agree that the notion of individualism underpins the capitalist system today, that is, the belief that the individual is more important than the social group.⁸² The implications of individualism, insofar as government is concerned, are generally that there should be a "free" economic pursuit on behalf of the individual with little government interference. Also implied is the notion of possible upward mobility based upon one's talents and motivation.

The belief that poverty is an individual problem reinforces America's cultural myth of individual responsibility, talent, and opportunity, a myth that is interwoven throughout the very fabric of the American system. Influenced by the "Protestant Ethic," which saw idleness as the "deadliest of all sins," the capitalist system has a rationale for a laissez faire view of government and a strong emphasis on individualism.⁸³ Though individualism may have been the inadvertent product of Calvinist Protestantism, the manifestations of this belief, which Weber asserts has

⁸²Luke, (1973).

⁸³ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, p.157.

influenced the "spirit of Capitalism," are visible in society's attitude toward poverty, income and wealth distribution and homelessness.⁸⁴

Many studies about popular beliefs about poverty reveal that a majority of people feel that poverty results from individual problems: namely, "lack of thrift" (58 percent), "lack of ability" (52 percent), "lack of effort" (55 percent), and "loose morals and drunkenness" (48 percent). Similar responses have been given in recent studies on homelessness.⁸⁵

This phenomenon has come to be known as "blaming the victim" (instead of structural factors, i.e. low wages, discrimination, lack of jobs etc.) in contemporary sociological discourse.⁸⁶ "Blaming the victim" has been the reaction to homelessness among politicians, the public, and the media by treating the *new* homeless problem the same as the *old* homeless problem, a few isolated recalcitrant individuals who choose to remain separate from the greater society. A recent article in *The San Jose Mercury News* captures this portrayal of today's homeless:

Along the banks of the Guadalupe River, two scourges of the 90's--"crack" cocaine and homelessness--are colliding head-on and spilling an urban nightmare on to a once-quiet downtown neighborhood. ⁸⁷

⁸⁴ The 17th century notion that you could tell who was going to be saved by the visible "fruits of the spirit", lead to the idea that those who were conspicuously successful were favored by God and thus were the "elect few."

⁸⁵ Peter Marcuse, "Neutralizing Homelessness," *Socialist Review*, 1988; Jonathan Kozal, *Rachel and Her Children*, Crown Publishers, New York, New York. 1988; Kim Hopper and Jill Hamberg, "The Making of America's Homeless: From Skid Row to New Poor, 1945-1984," *Critical Issues on Housing*, Temple University Press. 1986 ; Michael Fabricant, "The Political Economy of Homelessness," *Catalyst*, November No. 21, 1987.

⁸⁶William Ryan, *Blaming the Victim*, New York, NY. 1976.

⁸⁷ San Jose Mercury News, June 27, 1990. p. 12 A.

The above quotation is one of many that implies that homelessness is correlated with drug addiction and deplorable behavior. The article does not analyze where the people living along the Guadalupe River came from or how 16,000 homeless people in San Jose emerged in less than eight years.⁸⁸

Letters to the editor represent another arena in which the public can express its outrage toward the poor. One letter in the San Jose Mercury News (4/20/92) reflects "blaming the victim" and the distinction between the "good" and "bad" homeless:

I think it is high time that we honestly identify those that are deserving of help and those that choose to be lazy and non-productive and live off of the public's good will. Recent studies have shown that as many as 70 percent of the "homeless population" actually are in that condition because of drugs, alcohol, mental problems and choice. ⁸⁹

This captures a favorite motif of the American public: the deserving vs. the non-deserving poor and the notion of alcohol and drug abuse--or even choice as the main causes of homelessness.

Nationally, the media focuses on issues such as unemployment, arms buildup, the environment, gay rights, and abortion. When homelessness makes news, almost invariably the issue is de-politicized and the homeless are portrayed as nomads who cannot fit into society:

They have always been with us. The same beggar who stretched a supplicant palm toward the passing togas of ancient Rome can be

⁸⁸This figure is amply documented in *the City of San Jose's Draft Housing Element*, as well as various other city and county documents regarding homelessness. Access to these documents are readily available to anyone through the Housing Department. Yet, either consciously or unconsciously the media and the general public highlight the effects--rather than causes--of poverty and homelessness.

⁸⁹ San Jose Mercury News, April 4, 1992. p. 13 A.

found today on Colfax Avenue in Denver, still thirsty for wine; the bruised and broken woman who slept in gutters of medieval Paris now beds down in a cardboard box in a vest-pocket park in New York City.⁹⁰

Quotations like this one printed in Newsweek consciously distort images of homeless people to perpetuate the "blame the victim" mentality. This article would have one believe that homelessness is a natural phenomenon, a product of alcoholism and deviance--a belief also perpetuated by politicians and bureaucrats. In the words of Reagan's Secretary of Health and Human Services Margaret Heckler:

The problem of homelessness is not a new problem It is correlated to the problem of alcohol or drug dependency. And there have been a number of alcoholics who become homeless throughout the years, maybe centuries. They are still there.....I see the mentally handicapped as the latest group of the homeless. But, the problem is as old as time and with new dimension complicating it, it's a serious problem, but it always has been. ⁹¹

The historical inaccuracy of this rhetoric reflects not only superficial, acritical analysis, but a method by which the dominant ideology hides the true causes of homelessness. Here the problem is reduced to one with which the public is all too familiar: drug and alcohol abuse.

The belief that the homeless are isolated and anti-social was created by observations and analyses of winos during relative economic prosperity. Anthropological and sociological exploration of today's homeless challenges this image.⁹² According to Hoch, Slayton, and Rosenthal, the homeless are

⁹⁰ Jon Erikson and Charles Wilhem, *Housing the Homeless*, (New Brunswick: Center for Urban Policy Research, 1986), Jan. 2, 1984, p. 3.

⁹¹ Kim Hopper and Jill Hamberg, p.33.

capable of creating coherent and complex social communities. Furthermore, the "micro-communities" of San Jose, like those researched in Chicago's skid row, have resembled the greater population more than they have alcoholics and the mentally ill.⁹³

The language used to describe the condition of homelessness is also problematic. Logic suggests that what all the homeless lack is a house. Therefore, *houseless* might be a more accurate term to describe this new phenomenon.⁹⁴ But the word *homeless* fits into America's cultural milieu. "Homeless" implies one who does not fit in, one who chooses not to be a member of the community; *houseless* connotes a cruel society, a government which does not acknowledge one's right to be housed.

However, public opinion surveys reveal other countries do not embrace the "blame the victim belief" and attitudes call on government to employ various political economies that place more responsibility on society to alleviate social ills like homelessness. Support for government action to reduce unemployment and income inequality is significantly less in the United States than in other industrial nations. The following table reflects the American attitude and how it compares with these nations:

⁹²The recent trend among anthropologists studying the homeless has been an ethnography of homeless. This kind of research lends itself to greater understanding of the "new" homeless populations which live in encampments along river-beds and under bridges.

⁹³Hoch and Slayton, *New Homeless and Old: Community and the Skid Row Hotel*, 1989, p. 6, 94; Rob Rosenthal, "Worlds within Worlds: The Lives of Homeless People in Context," paper presented at the 1989 *American Sociological Association Conference*, San Francisco, CA. 1988.

⁹⁴Several homeless people refer to their encampment as "home." Some definitions of a home, according to Webster, are: the social unit formed by a family living together, or (2) a congenial environment. Carol Woodruff, who lived under a bridge for eight years, still refers to the bridge as home and has been quoted as saying "this is family down here."

Table 7: Comparative Attitudes Toward Inequality and Government Involvement In the Economy to Reduce Inequality, 1987

Question 1: The government should provide everyone with a guaranteed income.

Hungary	Austria	Italy	W. Germany	Netherland	Gr. Britain	Australia	US
77.8	53.6	66.9	50.1	47.9	59.4	38.1	17.6

Question 2: The government should provide a job for everyone who wants one.

Hungary	Austria	Italy	W. Germany	Netherlands	Gr. Brit.	Australia	US
90.0	76.9	82.0	74.3	73.8	57.9	39.7	44.0

Question 3: The government should provide support for children from poor families to attend college.

Hungary	Austria	Italy	W. Germany	Netherlands	Gr. Brit	Australia	US
71.6	78.3	89.8	84.8	84.1	82.6	74.0	75.2

Question 4: It is the responsibility of government to reduce the differences in income between people with high incomes and those with low incomes.

Hungary	Austria	Italy	W. Germany	Netherlands	Gr. Brit.	Australia	US
76.9	76.7	81.0	55.9	63.9	62.9	43.8	28.3

Source: Simkus and Robert (1989).

Question number four most accurately reflects American's beliefs about the distribution of income. Only 28% of those interviewed believe that the government is responsible for alleviating the disparity in income that it helped create. These attitudes are believed to be linked to the traditional capitalist ideology and the "blame the victim" mentality.⁹⁵

Attitudes regarding government action to reduce income inequalities has translated into policy changes in other industrialized nations. The

⁹⁵ Simkus and Robert, (1989)

American attitudes reflected in table seven correlate with America's policies as well. As a point of fact, the poverty rate among whites in the US is twice that of foreign minorities in West Germany, and the poverty rate among black Americans is 10 times that of foreigners in West Germany.⁹⁶ The housing conditions of poor US blacks are worse than those of the poor in Canada, Sweden, and West Germany, and the living conditions of poor blacks in the US are further from the national norm than those of the poor in other countries.⁹⁷ Predictably, homelessness is significantly less in other industrialized countries, and in some countries housing is right, essentially eliminating homelessness per se.⁹⁸

Overall, the distribution of wealth and income in America is creating a greater disparity between the rich and poor. While the rich are getting richer, the poor are becoming more numerous. Since more people are becoming poor and staying poor longer, they sit the brink of homelessness because any one of myriad factors, from a breakdown of a social network to unemployment, could throw thousands of the poor into homelessness.

⁹⁶Catherine McFate, *Poverty, Inequality and the Crisis of Social Policy*, Summary of Findings. Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Washington, DC September 1991. p. 144.

⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 162.

⁹⁸ Harold R. Kerbo, *Social Stratification and Inequality*. McGraw-Hill 1991. p.123.

The Profit Structure of Housing

The most direct structural cause of today's homeless problem is the lack of affordable housing. Whereas the resources exist in the US to build sufficient housing, the nature of the private market housing system and its political ramifications have created what Peter Marcuse calls a "shortage" of affordable housing. As Marcuse points out,

Briefly, housing is supplied for profit, as a commodity. There is no profit supplying housing for those now homeless. The cost of provision has increased, and alternate uses are more profitable. Changes in the economy have deprived many people of the income with which to pay for housing. The government only acts to provide housing for persons unable to pay the market price when the economy may need such people in the future or when those people threaten the status quo. Neither situation prevails today.⁹⁹

With the stagnating economy of the mid 1970s and the establishment of conservative business and political leadership in the early 1980's, affordable housing became scarce. During the Reagan years, the Federal Housing Program was slashed from \$32 billion (in 1981) to \$7.12 billion in 1987 and funding for the construction of low-income housing units fell 60% between 1978 and 1987.¹⁰⁰ This translated into homelessness for millions of poor people. According to a 1986 study of New York City's homeless, one quarter of those interviewed gave SROs--one of the main targets of Reagan's cuts--as their last place of residence.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹Peter Marcuse, pp. 73.

¹⁰⁰ Chester Hartman, *Report of the President's Commission on Housing*, "Housing Policies Under the Reagan Administration," in Critical Perspectives on Housing, p. 363.

Waiting lists for public housing further reflect the growing housing crisis. Major cities like New York (whose list for public housing contains 200,000 names)¹⁰² face eighteen to twenty year waiting lists for public housing, while at the same time charging \$34 to \$41 nightly to house homeless families in shelters or as much as \$65 nightly to house a family in some SRO dwellings.¹⁰³ In Denver, eviction rates rose as much as 800 percent in 1982,¹⁰⁴ while the federal housing budget was reduced 13.1 billion dollars between 1981 and 1982.¹⁰⁵ Nationally, in the low- income sector, median rent experienced a manifold increase in the late 1970s and early 1980's. ¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Blau, p. 175.

¹⁰² Jonathan Kozal, p. 12.

¹⁰³ Ibid. p.18.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p. 5.

¹⁰⁵ National Coalition for the Homeless 1988.

¹⁰⁶ Housing experts like Kozal (1988) and Hartman (1986) distinguish housing from other basic rights because housing has unique characteristics like the fact that once one has lost his housing, the cost of re-entry is very high, and in turn very costly monetarily, but also psychologically. Therefore, the notion of housing as a human right should be given more consideration, given America's resources.

Table 8: Federal Housing Budget 1981-1987

Year	Fed. Housing Budget
1981	\$32 billion
1982	\$18.9 billion
1983	\$14.2 billion
1984	\$13.4 billion
1985	\$11.7 billion
1986	\$10.3 billion
1987	\$7.20 billion

Source: National Coalition for the Homeless 1988

Some researchers conclude that the housing policies of the Reagan administration were underpinned by a misunderstanding about the relationship between government intervention and the fledgling housing market.¹⁰⁷ Conservatives often blame government intervention for the failure of the market itself. Thus, the assumptions of the Reagan administration, as articulated by the president's commission on housing was

¹⁰⁷Blau (1988); Marcuse (1988); and Hopper and Hamberg (1986)

that "the genius of the market economy, freed of the distortions forced by government housing policies and regulations that swung erratically from loving to hostile, can provide for housing far better than Federal programs."¹⁰⁸ However, previously-cited evidence has suggested that government intervention may be the only way that the poor and homeless in America can obtain housing under present economic circumstances.

While gauges to measure the cutbacks on housing under Reagan vary, the most objective index is the number of new households assisted each year. According to this gauge, the average number of households helped dropped from 316,000 new households in fiscal years 1977-80, to 82,000 new households in fiscal years 1981-88, a decline of nearly three quarters.¹⁰⁹

Also, federally subsidized housing has historically allowed recipients to pay according to ability. However, under Reagan, the "percentage of income" recipients paid increased to 30 percent as opposed to 20-25 percent in the 1960's and 1970s. This change was accomplished incrementally. It began in 1981, with existing tenants to pay 1 percent more each year over a five-year period, until the 30 percent figure was reached, with new tenants to pay 30 percent immediately.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸Chester Hartman, *Report of the President's Commission on Housing, "Housing Policies Under the Reagan Administration,"* in *Critical Perspectives on Housing*, p. 363.

¹⁰⁹ Leonard, Dolbeare, and Lazere, *A Place to Call Home: The Crisis in Housing for the Poor*, p. 29.

¹¹⁰Chester Hartman, p. 368.

Table 9: Cut in the Federal Housing Budget in Terms of Dollars "Saved" by the US Government

<u>Year</u>	<u>Amount "saved" by government</u>
1981	\$232 million
1982	\$538 million
1984	\$1.108 billion
1985	\$1.747 billion
1986	\$2.445 billion
Total	\$6 billion

Source: Chester Hartman, "Housing Policies Under the Reagan Administration" 1986

Governmental agencies regard the housing crisis as a "temporary" crisis, one that will be corrected with economic recovery. But the so-called economic recoveries are having little impact on homelessness because the recoveries are based upon consumer spending, and are not indicators of mobility out of lower socio-economic classes.¹¹¹ The US. Conference of Mayors reported in January 1986, "Central city renewal has accelerated dispossession of the poor,"¹¹² while the economy continued to recover. This

¹¹¹Thurow, Lester, p. 25.

¹¹² Ibid. p.15.

means that homelessness continues unabated throughout the "recovery" periods.

Hartman and Blau agree that the dearth of low income housing available to working class people is due in part to the loss of higher paying manufacturing jobs and the subsequent rise in lower paying service sector jobs.¹¹³ The rise in white collar jobs has meant increased demands for high quality housing near the cities' business district. These areas, formerly inhabited by blue-collar workers, are now targeted for gentrification, which seeks to displace lower income people with higher income groups. Overall, this process can be viewed as the "commodification of the housing market."¹¹⁴ Housing is no longer available on the basis of need--housing is available only to those who can provide profit; those who provide no profit get no housing.¹¹⁵

The private sector dominates the housing industry in America. Public housing, from the Public Housing Act of 1937 to the housing voucher program of the 1990's, has been successfully deflated by the real estate industry and has remained devoid of political and economic support.¹¹⁶ In fact, only 5.6

¹¹³Hartman, (1990); Blau, (1991).

¹¹⁴ This term is a catch-all phrase covering the spectrum of ways in which government and private enterprise have contributed to spiraling rent costs and the elimination of affordable housing. See Marcuse 1988.

¹¹⁵ Researchers on the housing crisis (Hopper and Hamburg 1986; Marcuse 1988; and Rossi 1989) connect the abandonment of low-income housing to deindustrialization: As blue-collar jobs were lost to white collar jobs, and the blue-collar jobs moved out, these industrial centers deteriorated into slums. These areas then were targeted for gentrification which sought to convert these "slum" areas to "higher uses." This meant the former blue collar workers were displaced due to the increased demand to build higher income housing or luxury hotels near the cities center.

¹¹⁶ Joel Blau, p. 61.

million of all households in the United States, slightly more than 6 percent of the total, benefit from direct, public subsidies.¹¹⁷

The opposition to public housing for the poor in America exists because housing subsidized at below market rate threatens the housing market itself.

Joel Blau clarifies this position:

The provisions of housing for the poor and the homeless encounters the same obstacles as the provisions of free beds and services. One of the most basic assumptions of a market economy is that there is a relationship between work and the purchase of commodities such as food, clothing and shelter. Both free benefits and housing at subsidized or purchased at below market rates undermines this relationship--the benefits from the purchase side, housing from the supply. Besides its effect on the work ethic, housing at subsidized or below market rates creates an alternative to the market. For these reasons alone, the opposition to any form of public housing goes back well over a century.¹¹⁸

The housing crisis has engendered increasingly high rent-to-income ratios, which ensures that more American will be forced to the edge of homelessness. Displacement of millions from their homes is inseparable from the system which gives rise to the trend itself. Though the causes of homelessness are multiple, the inability to secure housing is at the root of these causes:

Our argument is not that homelessness is simply a housing problem. Rather, in the absence of housing, living circumstances that had been tenable--if but marginally so--become desperate. The causes of contemporary homelessness, as we have shown, are multiple. But, the determinant factor that gives this form of

¹¹⁷ Ibid. p. 61.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. p.64.

impoverishment its distinctive imprint is the inability to secure housing.¹¹⁹

For example, in 1983, only 30 percent of "typical" home-buying households--a married couple under age thirty five with two children--could afford to purchase a mid-priced house.¹²⁰ Hopper and Hamburg illustrate how evictions exacerbated the ensuing housing crisis:

As affordable vacancies grew scarcer, evictions--one of the most frequent precipitators leading to homelessness--increased in the early 1980's. Evictions include both formal court-ordered removals and informal evictions by primary tenants or the landlord. Often tenants move out before the sheriff comes to put them out, but usually not until a nonpayment action has been brought. In New York City, with a total of nearly 2 million rental units, there were nearly half a million such actions in 1983 (Stegman 1982a). Many of these actions were taken against public assistance recipients, and a good percentage of them involved tenants paying rents above the maximum housing allowance. Welfare rent ceilings had not been increased since 1975, while rents had nearly doubled (New York Times, Sept. 4 1983). Housing allowance increases of 25 percent finally went into effect statewide in early 1984 in New York. Elsewhere in the nation, the amount a public assistance recipient was allotted for rent in 1981--whether as a separate "shelter allowance" or as part of a flat grant--ranged from 20 percent to 60 percent of local "fair market rent," depending on the State (Nenno, 1984).¹²¹

Governmental policies are an abstruse factor in the causation of homelessness because they are indirectly related to the housing market. At the local, state, and federal levels, governmental policies favor gentrification

¹¹⁹Hopper and Hamberg, p.33.

¹²⁰(National Housing Conference 1984)

¹²¹Ibid. p.29.

and allocating resources for improving desired areas, while withdrawing services from deteriorating areas.¹²²

In the last ten years, urban "revitalization" has shaped the face of growing central cities. One type of revitalization that includes the displacement of low-income people in favor of those in higher-income brackets has had a significant impact on the number of homeless people in urban areas. In this revitalization process, speculator-developer upgrading is accomplished when developers buy low-income housing, rebuild or replace it, and then sell it to white, affluent, young professionals.¹²³ This process is generally referred to as "gentrification" and has been documented in various US cities including San Jose.¹²⁴

Local redevelopment agencies, in conjunction with local city governments, set forth policies favoring the proliferation of those urban areas which local government wish to "gentrify."¹²⁵ The emergent pattern in major US cities has been the dispersal and exclusion of low-income residents from these areas.¹²⁶ This is accomplished through the implementation of zoning

¹²² Those who lived in the Single Room Occupancy units are forced out into the streets due to these policies (Marcuse, 1988, p. 75). SRO's in most cities are considered a viable form of low-income housing, but no incentive exists to replenish them, and most local governments (like the San Jose City Council) have implemented policies which limit the building of SROs in the downtown area.

¹²³ Joe R. Feagin, "Urban Real Estate Speculation in the United States: Implications for Social Science and Urban Planning." in *Critical Perspective on Housing*, Temple University Press. 1986. p. 111.

¹²⁴ In Part II, how gentrification, governmental and redevelopment policies interact will be explored in greater depth.

¹²⁵ For an in depth analysis of gentrification's affect on urban landscapes see (Lefebvre, 1976, and Zukin 1988).

laws which seek to push the poor to the periphery of the city by limiting the amount of low- and very low-income housing built in the downtown sector, and executing police sweeps to dismantle homeless encampments or shantytowns.

Thus, private market housing systems create a "shortage" of housing through abandonment which occurs when an owner stops putting money into a building--stops paying maintenance and operating expenses, making mortgage payments, paying real estate taxes--and no longer expects to be able to collect rents or sell the property.¹²⁷ The houses are then purchased through governmental agencies usually and demolished to make way for "higher use" buildings. In addition, millions of affordable units are lost each year through demolition, fire, conversion or abandonment. Furthermore, as Jonathan Kozal asserts, vacancies in the eighties due to conservative urban policies contributed to evictions, and in turn, homelessness:

Hard numbers in this instance, may be of more help than social theory in explaining why so many of our neighbors end up in the streets. By the end of 1983, vacancies averaged 1 to 2 percent in San Francisco, Boston and New York. Vacancies in low-income rental units averaged less than 1 percent in New York City by 1987. In Boston they averaged .5 percent. Landlords saw this seller's market as an invitation to raise rents. Evictions grew. In New York City, with a total of nearly 2 million rental units, there were half a million legal actions for eviction during 1983. Half of these actions were against people on welfare, four fifths of whom were paying rents above the maximum allowed for welfare. Rent ceilings established by welfare in New York City were frozen for a

¹²⁶ Jon Erikson and Charles Wilhem, *Housing the Homeless*, (New Brunswick: Center for Urban Policy Research, 1986), Jan. 2, 1984, p. 3.

¹²⁷ Ann Meyerson, "Housing Abandonment: The Role of Institutional Mortgage Lenders," in *Critical Perspective on Housing*, Temple University Press. 1986. p. 186.

decade at the levels set in 1975. They were increased by 25 percent in 1984; but rents meanwhile had nearly doubled.¹²⁸

Evictions and rent increases accompany redevelopment and urban planning policies which seek to increase the tax base of a city. An increasing tax base, some politicians and developers argue, will up land values in the surrounding areas and, in turn, eliminate low income housing in favor of moderate or high income units. Therefore, redevelopment policies favor luxury projects like sports stadiums and elaborate hotels subsidized by tax payers.

Dramatic transformation of urban landscapes have been the direct result of gentrification and an indirect result has been homelessness. For example, according to Clay and Pattison, most neighborhoods that have been gentrified previously housed the elderly poor, minorities or poor white families.¹²⁹ Afterward, more than 80 percent of the gentrified neighborhoods were composed of professional and other white-collar classes.¹³⁰ Thus, housing for the poor is eliminated, and the poor themselves are forced to seek housing, usually on the periphery of the city or they end up in homeless shelters. ¹³¹ The end result is the separation of a city's "haves" from its' "have-nots" and the replacement of once viable neighborhoods with homeless shelters and shantytowns.¹³²

¹²⁸ Jonathan Kozal, p. 12.

¹²⁹Clay and Pattison, (1979, 1977).

¹³⁰Jonathan Kozal, p.111.

¹³¹ The latter case occurs when no affordable housing exists on the periphery of the city such as the case in New York, Boston, Atlanta, Houston, San Francisco and San Jose.

In sum, homelessness is bound--not only to the economic factors which contribute to the profit structure of housing-- but also to political decisions which merge urban development patterns with governmental policies favoring major business interests. Though the housing crisis which began under the Reagan administration correlates with the homeless explosion of the mid-eighties, the lack of housing is a manifestation of more complex trends within capitalism itself. Complicating the homeless problem, too is the changing face of employment in America. This structural trend and how it contributes to homelessness will be explored next.

Changing Employment and the Intensification of Poverty

The explosion of the working poor homeless can be traced back to several interrelated factors: the reduction of wages, the intensification of poverty overall, the loss of manufacturing jobs and the scarcity of affordable housing.¹³³ Some interviews of homeless people reveal that according to the homeless themselves the twofold solution to homelessness is "jobs and housing."¹³⁴ Current research reveals that a majority of the homeless have at least part-time employment. However, significant losses of jobs overall are a primary culprit in creating greater homelessness.¹³⁵

¹³²In many cities like San Jose, as many as 90% of the homeless report the same city in which they seek shelter as their last place of residence. Of this number, a majority actually owned a home.

¹³³Michael Fabricant, p. 12.

¹³⁴ This finding was buttressed by a 1992 survey of fifty homeless people conducted by the San Jose State University Student Homeless Alliance .

¹³⁵Bassuk, (1991); Blau, (1992); and the County of Santa Clara

During the period from 1969 to 1976, 30 million jobs were lost due to plant shutdowns. By 1976, these plant shutdowns had wiped out 39 percent of the jobs that existed in 1969, or an average of 3.2 million jobs destroyed each year.¹³⁶ Further, the rate of unemployment between 1970 and 1981 increased steadily from five percent to approximately ten percent.¹³⁷ In sense, the seeds for the homeless explosion were sown during this period and the changes and numbers of homeless people in the late seventies indicate that these economic changes when combined with the loss of affordable housing meant no shelter for those who lost these jobs.

The complex interaction of economic forces during the seventies and eighties also created ripe conditions for homelessness. Plant abandonment was further affected by the flight of jobs to the third world. Of equal importance is the replacement of real wage jobs with low-paying service jobs and new private sector jobs which are low paying. Annual average salaries for these fields in 1980 were less than \$12,500.¹³⁸ Thus, America's two-tiered economy has contributed to a trend in which a majority of the jobs created are hardly sufficient to provide a single family with a decent living condition, and sometime even a house. Emma Rothchild points out the rise in service sector jobs by noting that:

Food, health and business services produced more than 3 million jobs between 1973 and 1979. This sector of the economy generated more than 40 percent of the new private jobs created

¹³⁶ Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America* (New York: Basic Books, 1982).

¹³⁷Michael Fabricant, p. 13.

¹³⁸ Ibid. p. 14

between 1973 and the summer of 1980. These three service industries' employment increased three times as fast as total private employment and sixteen times as fast as employment in the goods producing or industrial sectors of the economy.¹³⁹

This shift in the economy coincided with an intensification in poverty which ensued after 1975. Fabricant notes that "between 1930 and 1975, the welfare state experienced an uninterrupted period of expansion."¹⁴⁰ Shortly after 1975, however, benefits to the needy were cut substantially and the number of poor people began to escalate. Also, between 1980 and 1984 this intensification of poverty was exacerbated by across the board cuts in all social welfare programs. Due to these cuts, Aid to Families with Dependant Children (AFDC) and Child Welfare programs fell 13 percent and Food Stamps were cut 14 percent.¹⁴¹ Additionally, 90 percent of the working families on AFDC had their benefits reduced or eliminated.¹⁴²

The rapid increase in specialized manufacturing jobs in places like Silicon Valley has also contributed to homelessness. In cities where both service and specialized manufacturing jobs increase rapidly (in the case of Silicon Valley, 700%-1000%), the emergence of a dual labor market with high paying jobs on one end, and lower paying service jobs on the other end, increases the cost of housing and office space. That is, the housing market

¹³⁹Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America* (New York: Basic Books, 1982).

¹⁴⁰Fabricant, (1987)

¹⁴¹ Mitchell Horowitz, Iris Lay, et al., *The State, the People and the Reagan Cuts: An Analysis of Social Spending Cuts* (Washington, D.C., A.F.S.C.M.E., 1984).

¹⁴² Coalition on Women and the Budget, "Inequality of Sacrifice: The Impact of the Reagan Budget on Women," unpublished paper (Washington, D.C., March, 1984).

caters to the jobs on the high end of the pay scale, while those with low-paying skilled jobs and even lower paying service jobs cannot purchase a medium priced home.¹⁴³

America's changing political economy has pushed thousands to the brink of homelessness. The shift from higher-to lower-paying jobs and the dramatic cutbacks in services to the poor are among two factors that are contributing to the homeless problem. Because of the newness of these factors, they will not be explored in greater detail in this thesis.

Part II of this thesis focuses on homelessness in San Jose California. This city, known as the "Capitol of Silicon Valley," will show how the lack of affordable housing, a rapidly changing economy and urban renewal policies contribute to homelessness in a rapidly growing city.

¹⁴³ Ibid. p.14.

Part II. Homelessness in San Jose, California: A Case in Point

San Jose, California, now the thirteenth largest city in the nation and rapidly growing, reflects how redevelopment and governmental policies, the overall economic downturn, the dearth of low-income housing and rapid urbanization have rendered thousands of formerly working people homeless.

Santa Clara County is the home of Silicon Valley and one of the most diverse economies in the nation. However, Bay Area residents spend a higher percentage of their income on housing than almost any other major metropolitan area.¹⁴⁴ As of 1989, Santa Clara County comprised between 13,000 and 20,000 homeless people; a number that escalated from 4,500 in 1982.¹⁴⁵ Of this number, a 1991 survey revealed that over 90% of those homeless were local (County) residents prior to becoming homeless, with a majority reporting that their most recent resident was in the city of San Jose.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴*New Faces and Hidden Costs*, a study done by the County of Santa Clara in 1988 . p. i.

¹⁴⁵ The 13,000 figure was based upon a study by the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors Inter-Governmental Council (1989). The 20,000 figure is based upon a survey done by the Help House the Homeless Coalition, c/o the Santa Clara County Office of Human Relations, 1988. This survey does not include those families living in overcrowded conditions or migrant camp workers living in squalor; the survey is based upon the number of people who have received general assistance or have been served by local service providers.

¹⁴⁶*The City of San Jose Draft Housing Element*, 1991. Also, *Homelessness in Santa Clara County: New Faces and Hidden Costs*, 1989, p. ii, says the number living in Santa Clara County before becoming homeless was as high as 94%. These findings refute the notion that homeless people are drawn from other cities to take advantage of services.

**Table 10 :Estimates of Homeless Persons
Requesting Assistance in Santa Clara County**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Number of Persons</u>
1982	4,500
1985-86	13,300
1986-87	18,800
1987-88	19,600

Source: Help House the Homeless Coalition
c/o Santa Clara County Office of Human Relations,
January 1988

The demographic information on the Bay Area's homeless and more specifically Santa Clara County's homeless, reflects a diverse homeless population ranging from the chronically homeless to homeless families and working people. The following sections provide an overview of the characteristics of the Bay Area homeless including studies from San Jose, San Francisco and Santa Clara County.

Families: The fastest growing sector of the overall homeless population--in San Jose and throughout the nation--is families with children. The Stanford Study of Homeless Families, Children and Youth (1990) reports that "most of the homeless families they studied were long-time residents of the two local

counties of the Bay Area."¹⁴⁷ Also, the study found that among the various ethnic backgrounds of homeless families in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, Hispanic families had lived an average of 9.1 years in the Bay Area, while families African-American families averaged 15.4 years.¹⁴⁸ This finding corresponds with national data available on homeless families and reveals that homeless families are not recent immigrants to the urban areas in which they become homeless.

Demographically, San Jose reflects the findings of many national studies of homelessness. *New Faces and Hidden Costs*, a study done by the County of Santa Clara in 1988 found the following facts about its homeless population:

Age: Forty three percent of the homeless are 18 years of age or younger. Nine percent (9%) of the County's homeless are between the ages of 45 and 64; only one percent (1%) are over 65.

Employment: Nineteen percent of the homeless was employed "immediately prior" to becoming homeless. This figure includes both full and part time work. As many as 50% of the homeless living in some shelters work full or part time.

Last Place of Residence: In Santa Clara County, 94% of the homeless report *Santa Clara County as the last county of residence.*

¹⁴⁷*The Stanford Study of Homeless Families Children and Youth*. 1991. p. 12

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* pp.12-13.

Family in Area: Sixty two percent of the homeless reported having family in the area.

Mental Illness: In a 1988 San Francisco survey, the mentally ill constituted between 20-30% of the overall homeless population.

Substance Abuse: Surveys indicate that substance abuse ranges from about 25-60% nationally. However, the 1988 Rand Corporation survey found the national number to be 34%.

Another recent study, done from November 1989- June 1990 in Santa Clara County, was conducted by Marilyn Winkleby, a senior research scientist at the Stanford Center for Research in Disease Prevention. The study comprised two populations 1) those homeless who stayed in three National Guard Armories in the county during winter months, and 2) Adults with children living in the two largest county family shelters (Family Living Center and Concern for the Poor).

Results:

Age: Two thirds of respondents were between the ages of 25 and 44. One percent of respondents were over 65. Adults with children were substantially younger than those without children, the mean ages being 30 years versus 35 years, respectively.

Ethnicity: African Americans were over-represented (30%) compared with their presence in the local (3%) and state population (7%). Asians were underrepresented.

Educational Background: Sixty eight percent of adults with children and 57% of adults without children had completed at least a high school education. One third of adults with children had attended at least some college.

Employment: Seventy five percent of the parents with children, and 78% of the parents without children reported that their job (rather than some form of welfare) was the main source of income before their current episode of homelessness.

Length of Residence: Over 70% of respondents had lived in the Bay Area for two or more years. The average number of years respondents had spent in the Bay Area was 13.

Veteran Status: Forty two percent of the men born in the US were veterans (41% had served in combat and approximately 50% had served during the Vietnam War years). Approximately 40% of US adult males are veterans.

Childhood Risk Factors: More than two-thirds of respondents reported growing up in a middle- or upper- income family. Ten percent of men and 17% of women had been removed from their parents and placed in foster care before the age of 18.

Addictive and Psychiatric Problems: Lifetime rates of addictive disorders and psychiatric hospitalization were consistent with past homeless studies, with approximately 33% reporting excessive alcohol intake, and 20% to 25% reporting use of illegal drugs or prior hospitalization for psychiatric problems.

Other Findings: Rates of addictive and psychiatric problems were not more than 12 percentage points higher among the homeless before their initial loss of shelter than among a sample of 3,000 non-homeless (domiciled) Californians.

Following homelessness, rates of addictive disorders and psychiatric hospitalizations were 15% to 33% higher than before homelessness, showing the association between homelessness and onset of individual dysfunction.

These findings are consistent with those of larger national studies.¹⁴⁹ The policy implications of these findings suggest that San Jose's homeless are the products of structural factors, not individual disorders: 1) the relatively small overall difference between the education attained (by the homeless) and the rates of alcohol or drug addiction (only 12 percent higher than the domiciled population) suggests that individual factors play much less of a role in creating homelessness than was earlier believed. 2) These studies reflect that homelessness is the end result of poverty, and that the homeless population in terms of sociodemographic characteristics, is as diverse as the

¹⁴⁹Ellen Bassuk (1991).

domiciled population. Therefore, it makes little sense to talk about "THE" homeless.¹⁵⁰

The growing number of homeless people in San Jose can best be explained as the product of three structural factors: (1) local governmental/housing policies which favor economic redevelopment over housing needs and which, in turn, seek to dispel the poor from the city; (2) the changing face of San Jose's economic composition: a dual labor market engendering corporate development and the need for both moderate-to high-income housing and the exclusion of decent low- and very low-income housing and (3) macro-level changes in the economy.

Since a majority of the documents written about homelessness in San Jose conclude, "The lack of housing for low- and very low income families was viewed as the single greatest factor associated with overall homelessness in this area," a major part of this analysis will focus on the housing policies in San Jose and their contribution to its homeless problem and on the implementation of policies which favor the homeless and low-income populations.¹⁵¹

Housing and Redevelopment Policies

According to many studies done on homelessness in San Jose, "The first step in ameliorating the homeless problem is increasing the availability of

¹⁵⁰ This was one of Dr. Winkelby's findings. She referred to the homeless as a rapidly growing group of impoverished Americans.

¹⁵¹ (*Policy Recommendations Based Upon the Stanford Studies*, prepared by the Public Policy Advisory Board, Jan. 23, 1992)

affordable housing "¹⁵² National studies on homelessness affirm that the unparalleled increase in housing costs, accompanied by the overall economic downturn, has been the greatest factor in creating homelessness.¹⁵³ For example, in San Jose, the median cost of a single family dwelling rose from \$25,400 in 1970 to \$117,600 in 1980, and to \$230,000 in 1990. Average rents rose from \$146 in 1970, to \$307 in 1980, and to \$699 in 1990.¹⁵⁴

According to the City of San Jose, the categories of very low-, low- and moderate- income persons are defined according to their relation to the median income in the area (Santa Clara County). The following categories are defined by the Secretary of HUD using the area's median income:

very low- income: Families whose income does not exceed 50% of the median family income for the area, as determined by the Secretary, with adjustments for smaller and larger families. ¹⁵⁵

low- income: Families or households whose incomes are from 0% to 80% of the median income for the area as determined by the Secretary of HUD with adjustments for smaller and larger families, and for certain areas.

¹⁵²(*Stanford Study of Homeless Families* 1992, p. 34, and the Santa Clara County Task Force study of November 1989, p. 60.).

¹⁵³Researchers on the housing crisis (Hopper and Hamburg 1986; Marcuse 1988; and Rossi 1989) all point to skyrocketing rent costs as the main cause of homelessness .

¹⁵⁴ The City of San Jose, *Horizon 2000, General Plan Housing Appendix*, 1991 (unpublished document) p. 14.

¹⁵⁵*San Jose's Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS)*, 1992, Glossary 5.

moderate- income: Families or households whose incomes are from 81% to 95% of the median income for the area, as determined by the Secretary of HUD.

The city concedes that San Jose's goal is to, "...reaffirm the national commitment to provide decent, safe, affordable housing for everyone." ¹⁵⁶ Yet, San Jose has not met the Association of Bay Area Government's (ABAG) standards for building low- and very low income units. In 1980, ABAG determined that there was a need for 49,556 additional dwellings in San Jose by 1990, including 8673 units of low- and very low-income units. As of 1989, 2,000 (23%) of these units had been built.

Table 11: Projected Housing Needs, 1988-1995

Very Low- Income	Low- Income	Moderate Income	Above Mod. Income	Total Need
7,527 units	5,645 units	7,903 units	16,558 units	37,633 units

Source: ABAG Housing Needs Determinations, 1989

According to the Mayor's Task Force on Housing (1988), 42% of all San Jose households are low- or very low-income, according to Federal guidelines. This means that several thousands of San Jose's residents live just above the threshold that leads into homelessness. Still, no realistic plan to build housing for this population is forthcoming. In January, 1992, the City Council Adopted the proposed *Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy* (CHAS), the city's official housing plan for the next five years. The adopted CHAS will build 5,000 total units by 1995, half of which will be low- and very-

¹⁵⁶From the Introductory paragraph of *San Jose's Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy* (CHAS), 1992, p.iii.

low income. Since the number of homeless in Santa Clara County is growing by approximately 20% per year, the proposed plan falls far short of the actual need. With the dearth of low-income housing and spiraling cost increases in contemporary housing, both middle-class citizens who cannot afford homes and low-income citizens who cannot afford rents are being forced from the city.

The rationale for eliminating low-cost housing is to attract high-and moderate-income professionals to the city.¹⁵⁷ The Downtown Strategy plan states the goal of San Jose to, "...expand the supply of moderate-rate and market-rate housing in the Downtown core and Frame."¹⁵⁸ Thus, low-income housing stock is to be destroyed or converted for "higher uses."

¹⁵⁷ City of San Jose, *Downtown 2010 Strategy Plan* (unpublished document, 1992).

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p.9.

**Table 12: Estimated Percentage of San Jose Households Able to Purchase
A Home Based on Their Income: 1980 and 1987.**

	<u>1980</u>	<u>1987</u>
-Could afford only less than \$50,000 in 1980 and less than \$100,000 in 1987	33%	38%
-Could afford \$50-100,00 in 1980 and \$100-150,000 in 1987	43%	23%
-Could afford more than \$100,000 in 1980 and \$150,000 in 1987	24%	39%

Source: Housing Needs Assessment

Redevelopment Policies and Gentrification

San Jose's General redevelopment plan attempts to solve many of the problems accompanying the city's rapid growth in the last 25 years. The basic premise from which the plan proceeds favors economic development over housing needs. According to the authors of the General Redevelopment Plan:

A basic premise of this plan is that San Jose's fiscal deficiencies can be improved under the current local government revenue structure only through attaining a better balance of jobs and resident workers. This means that in effect, that there needs to be *more new economic development than new housing development.* ¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ The General Redevelopment Plan for the City of San Jose, (unpublished document) 1984.

Redevelopment policies seek to revitalize the downtown "core" through attracting major financial institutions, luxury hotels, sports stadiums and convention centers in order to drive up property values, attract businesses and generate a more productive tax base.¹⁶⁰

The Redevelopment Agency is required by state law to replace the low-very low- and moderate-income housing that it destroys in favor of "economic development." However, the consequence of this policy is the elimination of affordable housing from the "downtown core area." In the last 40 years, San Jose has lost at least 1,200 SRO units, most of which have been replaced by "higher use" buildings; not one SRO has been replaced.

This trend is prevalent among most major US cities; rapid urbanization, accompanied by dramatic changes in economic composition,¹⁶¹ have created a discrepancy between the increasing number of low-paying jobs and the availability of low-income housing.¹⁶²

In San Jose, like other major US cities, the destruction of SROs and the subsequent banning of their construction in the downtown area, has contributed greatly to the growing problem of homelessness. Though the city concedes that SROs posit a "viable housing type and necessary component of

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ In San Jose, the decline in agricultural and mining jobs and the increase of "high tech" manufacturing jobs constitutes the most dramatic shift in San Jose's economic infrastructure. The changing face of San Jose's economy, and its relation to the homeless explosion will be considered in the next section.

¹⁶² According to *Urban & Social Change Review*, 17 (1), 1984, pp.9-14, in New York City, the number of Single Room Occupancy units (SRO), which traditionally housed the cities poorest sector, declined from approximately 127,000 in 1975 to 14,000 in 1983. The primary cause was the replacement of blue collar jobs by white collar one, and centralized corporate control which lead to increasing demands demands for high quality housing adjacent to the central business district.

the housing stock for San Jose,"¹⁶³ city planners and housing policies have determined that SRO units will not be constructed in the downtown (core) area deemed the "Cultural/Entertainment area." Historically, SRO units have provided housing for low-income persons near the city's center where needed services and resources are abundant.

In San Jose, the money set-aside for the building of low- and very low-income housing come from 20% of the tax increment funds created from merged, amended, or newly created redevelopment areas.¹⁶⁴ The funds generated by this tax increment for housing have been substantial since its inception. In 1983, \$63 million in redevelopment funds were used for the construction of 2,000 low-to moderate-income units. But this number falls far short of San Jose's need. Furthermore, a majority of the units built were moderate rather than low-income units, and the few low-income units that were built were built away from the downtown "core"

Insofar as the 20% set-aside money is concerned, there is a discrepancy between the funding and actual construction of low- and very-low income units. According to Mayor Susan Hammer, approximately \$286 million has been set aside for low- and very low-income housing. However, the actual construction for most of the low income projects in San Jose has not yet begun.

¹⁶³ *The City of San Jose Housing Element Draft 1989-1995*, p.47. and the Housing Advisory Commission, 1987.

¹⁶⁴ As stated in the redevelopment law of the State of California, Section 334.2 of the Health and Safety Code.

The level of funding for moderate income units is disproportionate to that of low- and very low-income units.¹⁶⁵ Currently the city allocates 60% of the total fund for very low-income units, while 25% is used for low-income units, and, 15% for moderate income units. Given the shortage of very-low income units and the current homeless problem in San Jose, the city should allocate a much greater percentage (perhaps 80%) of the overall fund for the creation of very low-income housing, and enforce timetables in building these units.

Also, not all of the 20% funds are used for building affordable housing. In June, 1990, the city set forth its Guadalupe relocation program which ostensibly sought to place homeless people living along the Guadalupe River into housing. However, the project employed money from the 20% set-aside funds, which went beyond the bounds of its use.¹⁶⁶ Although the actions of the city appear to be an attempt to help the homeless along the river, the project actually provided a rationale to drive the homeless to the periphery of the city.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, many of the homeless who found housing did so through Section VIII vouchers. The fact that there is a waiting list of over

¹⁶⁵For example, the funding for the rehabilitation of low-income housing units at the Giovanni Center—which came from the Housing Program—was \$1,040,885. The same program committed five times more for the construction of moderate-income units during the same time period.

¹⁶⁶Regarding the use of the 20% funds for the Guadalupe River relocation, the Office of the City Auditor wrote, "The Audit cites the Guadalupe-Auzerais residential displacement activities as a good example of not adequately planning for the housing program. It must be stressed that the relocation program is separate and distinct from and not a part of the 20% Housing program."

¹⁶⁷Many of the homeless I assisted through the Guadalupe River Project received no housing and/or benefits. The ones that did receive housing found themselves on the periphery of the city, far removed from the needed resources and their community.

10,000 people eligible for these vouchers illustrates the selective implementation of housing programs for some. The city is willing to issue Section VIII certificates to displace the homeless for the sake of redevelopment, while bypassing thousands who have been awaiting Section VIII vouchers for years.

In the mid-1980's, San Jose began to make available sites to serve as temporary shelters for homeless individuals. The appearance of homeless people in the downtown area prodded the formation of an eight-person task force on homelessness.¹⁶⁸ The task force was co-chaired by then Mayor Tom McEnery, whose urban policies contributed in large part to the destruction of affordable housing units downtown. During this period, homeless people began to form encampments along the Guadalupe River, which runs through downtown San Jose, because the make shift shelters could not accommodate the rapidly growing homeless population.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸San Jose Mercury News, January 29, 1987.

¹⁶⁹ San Jose Mercury News, Dec. 31 1991.

The Changing Face of Employment and Economic Composition in Silicon Valley

The changing face of employment in Silicon Valley corresponds with broader changes in the labor market nationally. With the transformation of San Jose's urban landscape from an agricultural-based community to a high-tech community, the type of work and the composition of the work force in the city has changed dramatically.

San Jose's history reflects the fact that the city's economic base before the 1950's was composed mostly of rural farming and agricultural communities. After the 1950's, the emergence of the electronic industry and large investment of capital into corporate development in the downtown area engendered changes in the labor market: at one end, high-paying technical jobs and at the other end, low-paying service jobs. The growth rate of these two sectors created a division between those who could afford rents and those who could not.

Table 13: High and Low-Growth Occupations: San Jose**High-Growth**

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Wage Rate</u>	<u>Relative Growth</u>
Hotel Clerk	\$5.25-8.25/hr	faster than avg.
Short order cook	\$5.00-5.75/hr.	fast
Hotel/motel cleaner	\$4.25-5.25	fast
Semiconductor processor	\$5.00-10.00/hr.	fast

Low-Growth

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Wage Rate</u>	<u>Relative Growth</u>
Electronics technician	7.00-15.00/hr.	slower than avg.
Microwave technician	\$7.50-13.00/hr.	slower than avg.
Registered Nurse	\$12.75-17.00/hr.	slower than avg.
Machine tool operator	\$6.00-15.00/hr.	slow
Auto Mechanic	\$5.00-16.00/hr.	slow

Source: Projections of Employment 1988-1993 by Industry and Occupation Report by E.D.D. for San Jose

Table 13 indicates that if San Jose's employment trends are analyzed by income, the fastest growing sector of the economy is composed of low-income

jobs. San Jose's future economic growth is expected to reflect this trend, though the overall growth will probably not match the boom of seventies.

The General redevelopment plan emphasizes economic growth, which will raise property and housing values downtown and at the same time encourage the growth of low-paying service jobs. The consequences of this redevelopment plan will be the removal of retail stores because of higher rents, the elimination of low-income housing in the downtown core, and an increased demand for low- and very low-income housing anywhere in the city.

The Shelter Phenomenon Revisited

Researchers see an emerging trend in major cities like San Jose: increasing availability of emergency shelters. This "warehousing" of homeless people is not new; the overwhelming homeless problem that followed the stock market crash of 1929 forced the government to grapple with housing those rendered homeless in the early 1930's.

History of Shelters:

During the Great Depression, millions of jobs were lost in all sectors; the working poor appeared in soup lines and began to inhabit abandoned buildings, railroad yards, and open spaces because thousands could not afford rent and were forced to leave their houses. A *New York Times* story in early January 1932 captures one such hardship:

After vainly trying to get a stay of dispossession until January 15 from his apartment at 46 Hancock Street in Brooklyn, yesterday, Peter J. Conell, 48 years old, a former roofing contractor out of work and penniless, fell dead in the arms of his wife.

A doctor gave the cause of his death as heart diseases, and the police said it had at least partly been caused by the bitter disappointment of a long day's fruitless attempt to prevent himself and his family being put out on the street....

Conell owed \$5 in rent and \$39 for January which his landlord required in advance. Failure to produce the money resulted in a dispossess order being served on the family yesterday and to take effect at the end of the week.

After vainly seeking assistance elsewhere, he was told during the day by the Home Relief Bureau that it would have no funds with which to help him until January 15.

Under government order, abandoned warehouses became emergency shelters for men who were evicted. These shelters housed an amalgamation of street folk and reportedly became cramped quarters with little more than a blanket--with lice and rancid food.¹⁷⁰ Consequences of this emergency housing situation, however, were overshadowed by the overall state of an economy which left millions on the brink of homelessness. During this time, the shelter trend began to emerge, primarily as a function of the government:¹⁷¹

Local governments and charitable organizations responded to the housing need by opening shelters. An indication of the extent of the housing problem was the number of lodgings provided in Chicago by various agencies between October 1, 1930, and September 30, 1931: more than 1 million, an unprecedented figure. In the next twelve-month period, however, it went to 3.25 million. The peak did not come till 1933-34, when a total of 4,288,356 lodgings were provided in Chicago. This pattern was typical of industrial cities. In New York the number of persons registering with the city's municipal lodging facilities rose from

¹⁷⁰John Galbraith, *The Great Crash*: (1929 Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1972) p. 32.

¹⁷¹"Justice, Not Charity," in *Dollars and Sense*, September 1992, No. 179. p.14.

158, 677 in 1929 to 2,230,086 in 1933, or from a daily average of 434 to 6,110. ¹⁷²

Those setting up programs and policies for these institutions became more influential as the need for shelter grew; this tendency also is popular today. As was the case in the thirties, the sheltering of the homeless has become an industry that has replaced affordable housing with a cot and a meal.

Providing shelter is becoming an alternative to providing a standard of living. We end up maintaining a particular class of people and feel good about it because they have a cot somewhere. We need to fight against the "better than nothing" mentality.¹⁷³

Hoch and Slayton point to the separation of the "good" and "bad" homeless as a product of the shelter phenomenon in the thirties as well as today. That is, the "new" homeless--those rendered homeless by the collapse of the economy--were viewed differently than the "old" homeless who were the proverbial bums, tramps and hobos; a situation that also exists today:

One aspect of the shelter system was its blatant classism. Certain shelters were set aside for homeless white-collar workers. These places were "much higher in service and institutional standard than the regular shelters...[and] were designed to present a residential club atmosphere." In addition, white-collar men were excused from all work requirements when these were mandated by the shelters.¹⁷⁴

The newly homeless displayed different characteristics than the hobo, bum or tramp with which the public was familiar. There was also an influx of

¹⁷² Hoch and Slayton, p.74.

¹⁷³Justice, Not Charity," in *Dollars and Sense*, September 1992, No. 179. p.14.(an interview with Kip Tiernan).

¹⁷⁴ Hoch and Slayton, (1989).

single females and especially homeless families, almost all of which remained intact and with both male and female heads of households. Among the single men, (the federal shelter program alone housed an average of 200,000)¹⁷⁵ the problems of coping with shelter life were new and the lifestyle was degrading. All classes of men were appearing in soup lines and shelters; the notion of chronic homelessness, tramp and hobo style, was now replaced with an employable cross section of the newly poor--much like the homeless today.

Table 14: The Occupational Status of Men in Shelters, 1935

<u>Category</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Bum	5
Home guard casual laborer	15
Migratory worker	20
Steady unskilled laborer	33
Skilled laborer	20
White-collar worker	7
Total	100

Source: Edwin Sutherland and Harvey Locke, *Twenty Thousand Homeless Men* (Chicago, 1936), pp. 50-62

Hoch and Slayton point out that during the homeless explosions in the thirties and eighties--when shelters became the only housing for the millions of homeless--virtually no single room occupancy (SRO) structures were built;

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. p.75.

and although the politics of the New Deal commanded a more rigorous role of government concerning the poor, it also taught the country "that there was a difference between the 'good' and 'bad' homeless, the former a family with children, the latter a single male."¹⁷⁶

When the homeless problem resurfaced in the late 1970s, housing for all people would not be viewed as a viable solution because the misconceptions upon which the thirties shelter system was based and the distinction between the deserving and non-deserving poor still prevailed. That is, once the "deserving" poor were housed, either after the New Deal or the war, the other homeless were forgotten--the single males. Once homelessness re-appeared in the late seventies and early eighties, shelters became popular again and the distinction between the "good" and "bad" homeless reappeared.

Shelter Dynamics

During the mid-30's, the characteristics of the shelter system--as is the case today--fostered an attitude of alienation among the homeless. Researchers report that conditions within the shelters were similar to those in "prisons"¹⁷⁷ according to the homeless themselves. Hoch and Slayton's interview with one shelter staff member during the depression reflects the milieu of the shelter environment:

¹⁷⁶Ibid. p. 85.

¹⁷⁷Based upon interviews of homeless individuals by student researcher in the Student Homeless Alliance, 1991. Also, contemporary researchers on the matter (Kozal 1991) posit similar findings.

Their whole life is regulated for them; they are told when and where to sleep, are awakened at the same time day in and day out, are told how much, or better how little, to eat, and where and when and what should be eaten..... Everything is a matter of routine; and to make certain that the men do not even have to use their minds to remember their prescribed duties, they are bulletined all over the building.¹⁷⁸

According to a study of homeless men conducted by the Student Homeless Alliance (1991) during the relocation of residents of the National Guard Armory, those who frequented shelters used words like "humiliating, degrading, antagonistic and controlling" to describe the shelter environment. In short, a majority of homeless perceived the overall shelter environment to be "detrimental." Many did not blame the staff or the agency, rather they felt case workers were abiding by "bad rules." At a conference on homelessness at Stanford University in September 1991, a Student Homeless Alliance member and homeless man who had been in and out of shelters for several years, told the crowd, "In shelters you are just a number; all shelters and soup kitchens are dehumanizing." Other homeless interviewed made the same assertion:

It can be very lonely sometimes--and alienating [to live in the shelters]. You are more or less on work furlow over there [like in jail]. You have to keep reminding yourself that you're o.k...¹⁷⁹

Some researchers contend that shelters illustrate another way in which the homeless are consciously removed from society and how homelessness is treated as an individual problems issue. Federal, state, and local government

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. p.82

¹⁷⁹ From the Student Homeless Alliance's "Overview of the Armory Relocation Process" 1991. Unpublished document.

are ignoring the poor's right to housing; instead they erect poor houses in the form of shelters. Jonathan Kozal writes:

Shelters are becoming the low-income housing of the 1980's. They represent, in fact, one of the few growth areas in housing for poor people. The other area of growth is prisons. We are building lots of them as well.

Santa Clara County is no different; the past ten years have seen a manifold increase in the aggregate number of shelter beds available. San Jose appears to be assisting the homeless population by building more shelters. However, given the overall housing goals for housing set forth by San Jose's Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS), 5,000 low- and very low-income units in the next five years, the poor have no alternative but to live in the shelters.

Either as a conscious strategy by governmental agencies to remove the homeless from mainstream society or as an inadvertent result of a "band-aid" measure to prevent greater homelessness, the shelter phenomenon today presents a twofold problem: 1) shelters have replaced low-income housing for those who desperately need it; 2) the socialization accompanying shelter life alienates the poor from the greater society.

Distorted images of the homeless (see part I) have created the belief that a majority of the homeless are mentally ill and should be institutionalized. This belief is misleading in that the mentally ill are a sub group of the overall homeless, some of whom do require institutionalization. According to the San Jose Housing Element Draft, 1991, in San Jose there are about 300 of the mentally ill seeking shelter at any one time; during the same time period,

however, twice as many single men who are not in need of psychiatric care are seeking shelter.¹⁸⁰

Dr. Marilyn Winkleby's study of homeless people in Santa Clara county concluded that, "Rates of addictive and psychiatric problems were not more than 12 percentage points higher among the homeless before their initial loss of shelter than among a sample of 3,000 domiciled Californians."¹⁸¹

Also, "following homelessness, rates of addictive disorders and psychiatric hospitalizations were 15% to 33% higher than before homelessness, showing the association between homelessness and onset of morbidity."¹⁸² Since the mentally ill homeless are less than one-quarter of the overall homeless population and an even smaller number within this subgroup require institutions, shelters are not a viable solution.

According to Piven and Cloward, shelters represent the separation and exclusion of the homeless from mainstream society. This separation has created hostility among shelter inhabitants¹⁸³ and has distanced some members of the working poor from available jobs. While shelters remain a necessary first response to the needs of the mentally ill and other segments of

¹⁸⁰Since families are the fastest growing segment of the overall homeless population, even more families than single men were seeking shelter, though no figures were available.

¹⁸¹"The Medical Origins of Homelessness" in the American Journal of Public Health. October 1992. Vol. 82 No. 10. p. 1394.

¹⁸²Ibid. p. 1395.

¹⁸³S.H.A. members who inhabit shelters report damaging effects on their psychological functioning including alienation, depression, shame, and hostility. S.H.A. members who have been living in a San Jose men's shelter for six months say, "you cannot get out of here without losing some of your dignity and self-respect." Many others with whom I've worked reported the same adverse effects.

the chronic homeless population,¹⁸⁴ they create a process that can only engender a much larger population of alienated, angry, and non-productive young men who will grow into a destitute adulthood. Piven and Cloward describe the function of "relief systems" during the Depression and its consequences:

The meaning of these relief practices was not only in their inhumanity but in the functions they performed in legitimating work in the face of the extreme inequalities generated by American capitalism. For many people work was hard and the rewards few, and the constraints of tradition weak in the face of the transformations wrought by industrial capitalism. The discontent these poor might have felt was muffled, in part, by the relief system and the image of the terrible humiliation inflicted on those who became paupers. The wonder of this relief system, however, was that it generated such same shame and fear as to lead the poor to acquiesce in its harsh and restrictive practices.¹⁸⁵

According to Rob Rosenthal, institutions frame the possibilities for action and set the rhythms for the daily lives of homeless people.¹⁸⁶ The situation depicted above is indicative of the shelter situation today because it is shaped by the "relief system" which emerged in the 1930's. Homeless who frequent shelters are susceptible to the socialization process that accompanies shelter life, very much like the prisoner is subjected to the socialization of prison life: thus, Rosenthal's assessment of homeless people's lives being shaped by those who conceive and implement shelter policy. This notion is

¹⁸⁴This term has been used to describe those who were homeless before the economic stagnation of the mid-1970's; one could look at the chronic homeless as the counter-culture of hobos that have always been homeless.

¹⁸⁵Piven and Cloward (1988)

¹⁸⁶Rob Rosenthal (1989)

buttressed by many homeless interviewees who felt impotent when confronting shelter policy which they felt favored staff comfort and privilege more than the needs of the homeless people.

In sum, the shelter setting can be seen as more than merely a roof over one's head; it is a setting that engenders fear, hostility, and humiliation for the poor and homeless who need low-income housing, not psychiatric attention. Today, as was the case during the Depression, emergency shelters have replaced low-income housing and the dynamics of shelters--both homeless and experts agree--contribute to the alienation of the homeless.

The Homeless in San Jose: Encampments vs. Shelters

The significant increase in the number of homeless people in Santa Clara County created an emergency shelter system which began in 1985.¹⁸⁷ Since 1985, the aggregate number of shelter beds has increased from 441 to 1,940 in 1989.¹⁸⁸ Due to policies set forth by the San Jose City Council in 1987, these emergency shelter beds must meet certain criteria for location, emphasizing that there be "no over-concentration of social services in any residential neighborhood."¹⁸⁹ In 1989, the Emergency Shelter Ordinance called for more stringent conditions for locating shelters, confining them to commercial and manufacturing districts.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷*San Jose's Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS)*, 1992, p.iii.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p. 3.

¹⁸⁹ *City of San Jose, Report of the Task Force on the Homeless* (unpublished document) 1987. p.8.

Several city and county documents reflect that instead of building the needed housing, San Jose is either 1) displacing and incarcerating the homeless who live on the streets, or 2) placing them in shelters. The city is allocating more money to build shelters, not housing. According to the Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) Final Draft 1992 for San Jose, "the city should increase shelter bed availability by 10%." (p. 3-17).

The alternative to sleeping in shelters has been living in encampments with other homeless along the Guadalupe river bed or under bridges and overpasses. The research of the Student Homeless Alliance indicates that there are as many as 150 people living along a two mile stretch along the Guadalupe River on any given day during warm weather months.¹⁹¹

According to homeless people who have lived along the Guadalupe river in and its tributaries in San Jose, the most problematic aspect of encampment life is *police harassment*, not the lifestyle itself. The police action along the river began in the mid-eighties, when homeless people began seeking shelter in the foliage along the river which runs through downtown San Jose. By order of the San Jose City Council and the Mayor's Task Force on Homelessness, the police began to execute "sweeps" of homeless encampments, some of which comprised as many as forty squatters.

Reportedly, the homeless who live in encampments have a sense of community and some have resource bases within the larger community.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ All of the major shelters in San Jose are in such areas. Some are currently in the process of being moved even further away from the city's downtown "core."

¹⁹¹This figure was extrapolated after a field team of researchers patrolled a two-mile stretch of the Guadalupe River in June, 1991.

¹⁹²Based upon student field team research compiled through the Student Homeless Alliance and Community Concepts 157 class at San Jose State University.

This living arrangement, according to squatters, is a reaction to the dehumanizing conditions in local homeless shelters.¹⁹³

The first encampment interviewed by the Student Homeless Alliance (SHA) field researchers was composed of nine homeless individuals who lived under a small bridge which spanned a tributary of the Guadalupe river. A Native American couple who functioned as the caretakers of "the bridge," reported their encampment was a place that they could call home and gave them a sense of structure and dignity. But police harassment, even brutality was part of this communal living, which they frequently alluded to in their interviews:

We just do our thing down here. Look at Geno, he don't hurt anybody. Everybody in the community likes him too. The cops always mess with us and call us trolls, but we work and make an honest living. Old Ernie gets up at 4:30 [a.m.] and does his work. He makes an honest living. But the cops think we are all animals--that's how they treat us. After ticketing us, they sometimes throw our stuff in the river or burn it. It makes me sick."

The theme was the same with most homeless encampments interviewed: the police are not interested in protecting the rights of the homeless and poor.¹⁹⁴ One 21 year old male, a former mechanic who served in the US Navy, became homeless after being evicted from his house, lived under an abandoned freeway overpass for six months. He asserted:

¹⁹³ The fact that homeless people can organize themselves in encampments and seek community dispels the myth that homeless people are disaffiliated and individualistic.

¹⁹⁴ Samuel Nejar, community member and brother of Ronnie, said that he had been subject to police brutality in the neighborhood in the past. "This (investigation done by SHA) should have been started years ago, when I was a young man, I had a police man handcuff me and beat me with a nightstick, I was only a block away from my house. He didn't care, he just wanted to turn me in. These cops won't leave you alone."

The police were created by the people for the people. Their job is to watch over all people. Instead they brutalize the homeless and many of the poor. I have seen many of my friends hurt by police brutality. One of them was beaten for being drunk in public, the other was harassed and hit with a club for no obvious reason; I could go on and on.

Other's interviewed referred to a need to be organized in order to combat being "swept away:"

The situation of the homeless and the poor in San Jose is the same as anywhere else: a problem "certain interests" feel must be swept away, out of sight, out of mind. Organized efforts make it not so easy for this to happen. This is precisely why organized efforts are so important, to keep this problem in the forefront so it can't be swept away so easily by certain interests.

On several occasions, members of the greater community got behind the homeless when one of the encampment members was allegedly brutalized by the police. Members of SHA, writing up depositions for legal use on the case, interviewed community members who saw the brutality as "part of living in the streets." SHA researchers found similar instances of police brutality had occurred, not only among the homeless population, but also within the greater community.¹⁹⁵

A recent incidence of police harassment involved a middle-aged homeless man who has worked for volunteer agencies over the last eight years. Two days after driving police chief Lou Cobarruviaz to various local shelters as part of a pre-arranged tour, the homeless man was taking pictures of a crime scene in downtown San Jose. He reported that he was recognized as a homeless activist while at the scene, which spawned suspicion among some of the officers present. The following account was excerpted from the

deposition which was submitted to the San Jose Police Department Internal Affairs unit by SHA field researchers:

Shortly after arriving I got my camera and took a picture of several police cars. Still outside the ribbon, I then took a picture of a pair of shoes that lay in the driveway just beyond the ribbon. As I headed back towards my van, the officer with whom I had spoken earlier (who also recognized me as an activist) called me over to where he was inside the crime area. He said something like "you can't be taking pictures of a crime scene area." I then replied, "If I was Channel 11 you would not object." At this time a S.J.P.D. Lieutenant intervened saying I could either go back the way I came or go to jail. I could not understand this and asked, "why?" I was going that way and pointed my finger toward the East. The Lt. gave me the choice one more time. As I felt my rights were being violated and the intensity of the officers around me, I once again asked "Why?" At this point the lieutenant gave a nod and I was pushed onto the hood of a police car by some officers. My only words were, "you do not have to hurt me to take me to jail," which I repeated several times.

While being handcuffed and still lying on the hood of the car, the original officer intentionally knocked my camera off the hood of the car. I objected saying, "do not break my camera!" As I was being shoved into the car, I asked if someone would pick-up my camera, one female officer did. While en-route, I demanded that my rights and the charges be read aloud. I was then told, 'shut up you asshole.' My response was, 'my Constitutional rights include freedom of speech and if I have to talk loud to be heard I will.' Then I said, 'read me my rights please.' The officer read my rights to me through a glass window and when I asked him to speak louder he did not and what he read was inaudible.

Another field team consisting of three students researchers and a sociology professor at San Jose State, witnessed the aftermath of another incident of alleged police harassment involving a homeless man, one with whom the researchers had worked with throughout the summer. The students included the following account in their report, which was submitted to a local congressman with whom the professor met after the incident:

During a police sweep of another encampment in the spring of 1992, SHA field team members were assisting twelve homeless people in moving their property from one location to another. According to later reports by the students,

When officers arrived on the scene, they drew clubs and were aggressive with orders that contributed to the volatility of the situation. When we explained that the encampment was being assisted by the Student Homeless Alliance, we were told "sit down and shut up!" As more students arrived as well as several television cameras, the officers demeanor changed and they became cooperative. Afterwards, the encampment members said the officers behavior was "mild" compared to other police sweeps they had experienced.

The Criminalization of the Poor

Another complaint set forth by a majority of the homeless interviewed in SHA's study of homeless encampments in 1991 was that being homeless in and of it self constituted a crime. That is, sleeping in parks, abandoned cars, along the river bed, in front of buildings, etc., has been banned in San Jose. Frequently, the homeless who were interviewed complained about citations from mounted patrol officers for merely "sitting in the park."

The criminalization of the homeless is one manifestation of a broader trend of the criminalization of marginalized groups in America and reflects a historical pattern. From the recent rioting in South-Central Los Angeles to the clashes between workers and police during the Great Depression, the

criminalization of the poor in America according to some researchers is "endemic in capitalistic societies like ours."¹⁹⁶

Radical scholars, like Reiman, base their analysis of the criminalization of the poor upon Marxists and neo-Marxist politico-economic theories. According to this doctrine, the reasons underlying the criminalization of the poor have to do with property relations.¹⁹⁷ As David Gordon points out,

Although rights of property are protected, capitalist societies do not guarantee economic security to most of their individual members. Individuals must fend for themselves and their families. Driven by fear of economic insecurity and by a competitive desire to gain some of the goods unequally distributed throughout society, many individuals will eventually become criminals.¹⁹⁸

Since homelessness represents extreme poverty, their criminalization can be illuminated by the "property relations theory" which is manifested through economic, political and urban planning policies (like San Jose's which seek to push the homeless to the periphery of the city because their presence affects consumer spending in downtown).

For the homeless of San Jose, one's mere existence is a crime. Some researchers argue that the crimes committed by the poor are "rational responses to the structure of institutions upon which capitalist societies are based;"¹⁹⁹ Sleeping in a park is a rational response to being homeless, though it has been criminalized in most cities in America.

¹⁹⁶From *Deviant Behavior*, Chapter 13, "Radical Perspective on Crime." Delos Kelley, St. Martins Press, 1989. p. 159.

¹⁹⁷Reiman (1979)

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. p. 160.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

San Jose, now the Bay Area's largest city, vividly reflects today's homeless problem as it escalates even in cities with vast resources. Rapid urbanization, redevelopment policies and a changing job market have squeezed more people out of the middle- and working-classes and into homelessness. San Jose also clearly reflects two by-products of today's homelessness, shelters and encampments, that are reminiscent of the Great Depression, but have become commonplace in other major cities.

Part III shows how the current homeless situation has sparked new kinds of organizations that are fighting to end homelessness and how their recommendations might help in ameliorating it.

Part III: Summary and Recommendations

In sum, the issue of homelessness is complex and embodies several elements that could be studied from a number of perspectives. Nevertheless, the actual causes of the problems have been amply documented in sociological research. Given that this research is accurate, then the issue of homelessness becomes endemic to the American System and thus, politicized. That is to say, the underlying structural trends that have created the homeless explosion within the last two decades are eclipsed by simplistic moral formulations about the homeless themselves.

With the structural causes intact, the homeless population can be seen as a by-product of modern capitalism (rather than the by-product of human volition that malfunctioned because of the individual's dysfunction). This being the case, assumptions about the individual causes of homelessness must be addressed within the framework of broader, structural causes and understood as secondary causes.

First, homelessness must be seen as a consequence of extreme poverty and, thus, not disconnected from the forces in capitalism that produce poverty. These forces are known among researchers as the "primary" causes of homelessness; yet they differ in importance and interact in a complex manner and are necessary pre-conditions for homelessness. That is to say, individual crises such as loss of a job, or breakdown of family support, in and of themselves do not cause homelessness. However, the profit structure of today's housing market, the distribution of wealth and income and the

intensification of poverty in America, cuts in social services engendered by governmental policies, do indeed push more people into poverty and into homelessness.

The complex nature of homelessness today has created such a diverse homeless population that researchers think it unnecessary to refer to the "homeless" at all. Homeless people in America today vary in terms of their personal characteristics as much as any of the other socio-economic classes.

Second, organizations and agencies that work with the homeless must implement political agendas which deal with the political, economic and social ramifications of poverty in America. Agencies must first investigate homelessness in its entirety and provide emergency relief for the needy. Also, they must seek to increase awareness at all levels of both the complexity of homelessness and the possibility of its resolution through substantial political and economic changes, connecting homelessness to a greater political and cultural struggle, rather than looking at it solely as an individual problem. The individual model currently embraced by most service agencies and homeless organizations must either be abandoned or expanded so that the deeper causes are exposed and dealt with. Nonetheless, some organizational structures such as social service agencies are based upon the model of the isolated individual, ignoring structural dynamics, and the homeless explosion in the United States, which has continued unabated by the band-aid efforts thus far employed. Only an approach that treats individual manifestations of the problem as *inseparable* from their *social and political context* can be successful in changing the dynamic which has kept them dependent upon social services.

Despite overwhelming evidence that the American system has directly contributed to this crisis, the homeless themselves have been labeled, misrepresented and blamed. Unequivocally, individual, psychological problems cannot account for the quadrupling of America's homeless over the last two decades. The "individual problems" approach must be replaced with a comprehensive approach which employs methodologies from myriad fields and discriminates between causes and effects of homelessness. Homelessness today comprises diverse subgroups most of whom have become homeless for different reasons. However, the one commonality of today's population is not individual dysfunction, alcoholism, or mental illness; it is *extreme poverty* in the shadow of plenty.

Recommendations for San Jose and Other Major Cities

San Jose's homeless problem illustrates the complex relationship between homelessness and urban development, a changing economy and the skyrocketing cost of housing today. The chain of causation begins with the profit structure of housing in San Jose and is exacerbated by governmental policies which favor economic development over housing. City zoning laws have restricted homeless presence downtown by eliminating shelters, and city and redevelopment policies have made vagrancy a crime.

In many other cities--comparable in size to San Jose--rapid urbanization is common, but other city's (such as San Francisco) have implemented more realistic housing policies in order to keep-up with urban growth.²⁰⁰ San Jose's

overall downtown strategy which favors economic redevelopment for affluent citizens has superseded affordable housing needs.

Although the housing crisis is not the only factor underlying today's homeless problem, cities like San Jose reflect how unrealistic plans for dealing with housing needs for poor people, compounded by the shift from an industrial to a service economy and economic recession may render thousands homeless in less than a decade.

In sum, governmental officials, and city planner's documents regarding San Jose's housing problem, acknowledge the escalation of homelessness and the dire need for low- and very low-income housing for various groups. Still, the city does not appear to recognize the relationship between its redevelopment plan's emphasis on economic growth and homelessness. The following list of recommendations, if adopted, would greatly decrease the number of homeless in San Jose, and posit a model for other cities to follow insofar as housing and homelessness policies are concerned.

²⁰⁰ See San Francisco's Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) 1992. Unpublished document.

Recommendations

1. San Jose must adopt a realistic housing plan to deal with the needs of its low-income and houseless citizens.

The city has not met the Association of Bay Area Government's (ABAG) standards for building low- and very low income units. In 1980, ABAG determined that there was a need for 49,556 additional dwellings in San Jose by 1990, including 8673 units of low- and very low-income units. As of 1989, 2,000 (23%) of these units had been built.

Further, since 42% of all San Jose's citizens are low-or very low-income, and the houseless population for the county stands at 20,000, it is virtually impossible for San Jose to curtail the escalating numbers of homeless people in the city. The discrepancy between the city's adopted plan (5,000 units of low- and very low-income housing units in the next five years) and the city's actual need (as stated above) ensures greater homelessness in the years to come.

2. Change the City of San Jose's homeless goals: Instead of increasing shelter beds, the city should decrease the number of homeless people seeking shelter by expanding Single Room Occupancy (SRO) developments, adjusting the number of low- and very low-income units needed, and by enforcing timetables in constructing them.

San Jose's five year plan includes goals of increasing shelter-bed availability by 10%.(CHAS 3-17). A vigorous plan based upon the realistic

need for decent, safe, housing for low- and very low-income residents would ultimately decrease the need for shelter beds which are sadly becoming the low-income housing option, the "poor houses" of the 1990's.

3. The city should seek more effective ways to tap local, state, federal, and private funds for low-income housing.

The city has proposed higher taxes for all citizens to fund projects like sports stadiums, luxury hotels, and shopping centers. The same principle should hold for building affordable housing.

With a plan to ostensibly assist the financially disenfranchised San Jose, Mayor Tom McEnery and the City Council set goals to enhance the quality of life through maximizing the creation of affordable housing in 1987. Now, in 1993, little of what had been promised has actually been built.

Furthermore, with the gentrification of the downtown area in the summer of 1990, McEnery (who owns several blocks in this area) had strategically pushed to the periphery of the city, particularly toward the suburban Willow Glen district, those homeless people who had been living in encampments along the Guadalupe river-bed that runs through downtown San Jose. This sweep was depicted in the local media as a process which would ultimately *assist* the local homeless, because the people seeking shelter along the river-bed would receive Section-Eight housing.

4. Change the policy on building Single Room Occupancy buildings (SROs) downtown.

The city has a policy against the building of Single Room Occupancy (SROs) buildings in the downtown area. Historically, units of this type have provided housing for low-income persons near the city's center where needed services are abundant. In the last 40 years, San Jose has lost at least 1,200 SRO units which have not been replaced. The demolition of SROs, the scattering of residents, and the destruction of a human community in favor of "higher-use" buildings, contribute to greater homelessness in San Jose.

In 1987, the City's Housing Advisory Commission (CHAS) determined that SRO hotels and residential living facilities were a viable housing type and necessary component of the housing stock for San Jose, yet CHAS does not set forth a plan to build SROs downtown in the next five years. Furthermore, cities such as San Diego have already replaced than 1500 destroyed SRO units downtown; of the 1200+ SRO units lost in San Jose, *not one has been replaced.*²⁰¹

5. Build low- and very low-income housing with mixed-use in the downtown area (including Districts 3, 5, and 6.)

The city should encourage university students and other low-income citizens, in addition to middle income citizens, to inhabit downtown areas by building mixed use housing. This European model combines low- and moderate-income housing with small businesses beneath, increasing both population density and diversity in the downtown area. By doing this, the city will provide a diversity of employment opportunities, increase street level interactions and reduce crime, in essence, providing the foundations for a real

²⁰¹(City of San Jose Housing Element Draft 1989-1995, p. 47)

community, not simply an enclave of the well heeled. Also, building housing-commercial mixes of this type downtown will decrease commuting distance for students, university employees, and others who might otherwise have to commute long distances to work or school.

Currently, the city's policy is to push low- and very low- income residents out of downtown to the peripheral areas of the city, rendering many of them homeless.

6. Enact an inclusionary zoning ordinance.

San Jose should follow the model of cities like San Diego which have enacted inclusionary zoning laws which call for the building of low-income housing with each redevelopment endeavor. By doing so, San Diego has decreased its homeless population and increased population density downtown.

Without inclusionary zoning laws, San Jose, is contributing to the segregation of various social classes and expanded gentrification by excluding low- and very low-income wage earners from reasonable consideration in favor of developments affordable only to the wealthy. Inclusionary zoning laws require the building of at least some low- and very low- income housing in each proposed development.

7. Until adequate solutions to San Jose's homeless problem are found, the city should place a moratorium on all police sweeps of homeless encampments, including those along the Guadalupe River.

Since shelters run at full capacity throughout the year and since San Jose has not developed a realistic housing plan, some homeless people are forced to live in encampments. Instead of executing police sweeps which result in the destruction of property, the ticketing and/or incarceration of homeless people, and further fear and antagonism between the police and homeless communities, the police should be trained to assist those homeless who are not breaking the law and merely trying to subsist.

Furthermore, the establishment of community education programs and programs increasing police sensitivity toward indigent communities in general are greatly needed. This would enable officers to differentiate between outside drug dealers and other members of the community.

8. Give housing priority over other uses of redevelopment funds, or spend more than the required 20% set-aside for low- and very low-income housing.

Given the current housing and homeless situation, San Jose should build the required number of units of greatly needed housing before spending more taxpayer money on sports arenas, shopping malls, and luxury hotels.

9. San Jose should cease giving economic development priority over housing development.

San Jose's emphasis on economic restructuring is detrimental to low- and very low-income sectors of the city's population because economic redevelopment includes gentrification and the displacement of poor people from the city's center. Redevelopment plans which emphasize housing

needs for low-income people would encourage the construction of decent housing in the downtown.

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