Accounts of the homeless

Linda Darlene Foreman

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Accounts of the homeless

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University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 1990
ACCOUNTS OF THE HOMELESS

by
Linda D. Foreman

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Sociology

The Department of Sociology
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
August 1990
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This thesis traces the dominant themes found in the literature explaining homelessness. A discussion of differing types of homeless found in America historically and the categories of homeless living in America today follows. Another aspect of this research is an examination of the accounts given by numerous homeless individuals currently residing in Las Vegas. These accounts are divided into several categories that emerged from the data which reflect some of the experiences and perspectives of those who live without the benefit of shelter. The final part of this research outlines a basic program of action designed to fill the existing gaps which have allowed people to become shelterless.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

It is the purpose of this research to trace the causes of homelessness as seen in the literature and to outline these factors as they apply to our current milieu. Another aspect of this research is an examination of the accounts given by selected homeless individuals for themes that depict their experiences and perceptions of these experiences. Several themes exist as explanations of homelessness. This has lead many social researchers to develop typologies of homeless people. These typologies are useful organizing tools for the researcher attempting to understand the homeless phenomena. Thus, the first part of this research is devoted to outlining the factors that have led some to being homeless as seen in the literature. The second aspect of this research is devoted to the reconstruction of the lines of action of selected homeless people via case studies, in order to see how the homeless themselves explain their existence in an unfavorable milieu. It should be noted that the accounts may indeed reflect the actual causes of homelessness or they may reflect what the social actor sees as an acceptable vocabulary of motive, to explain the untoward act (Mills 1940). Reality varies considerably among humans, as illustrated in Wiseman's work when she discusses multiple realities and insight phenomena (Wiseman 1970). It is assumed that the social actors will react to their plight on the basis of what they believe to be the cause, just as the social service worker will react to the homeless, on the basis
of what they believe the causes to be. The final part of this thesis is a proposed program of action to remedy some of the problems for the people of the streets.

This study will attempt to bring faces to the often invisible and powerless group of homeless. It is self evident that how a society views the homeless will determine for a large part how that society will treat the homeless. This research has the advantage of being timely since the topic is receiving attention through the popular media and since it is a pressing social problem, as illustrated by the collective action being taken on the behalf of the homeless, such as the "Hands Across America" project designed in the same spirit of "We are the World." Both were a form of collective action designed to aid the hungry. "Hands Across America" took place on Sunday, May 25, 1986. It was a humanitarian event in which people pledged ten dollars or more to the cause and on the specified date, an estimated 6 to 10 million people were to line up and hold hands across 4,000 miles of the continent, within the boundaries of the U.S.A. Although the chain was broken in most of the 4,000 miles, residents of some cities, such as Las Vegas, met at various locations to support the event. Las Vegas residents supporting the event met at Paradise Park for a hands across the park celebration.

Homelessness is one of the most studied social phenomena of the past quarter century according to Howard Bahr. "They have been studied, followed, tested, interviewed, photographed, and human interest-storied, more than any population of comparative size
almost anywhere" (Holden 1986:569). In spite of this attention given to the phenomena of homelessness, the homeless are still a pervasive element in American society.

It is evident that an understanding of the homeless perspective is needed before successful solutions can be implemented. Two facts make this point: programs designed with little or no awareness of the homeless perspective may only serve to compound the problem at best or perpetuate the problem at worst; any program, to be effective must at least partially be designed by those it is going to serve. This assumes that the homeless understand their plight. This study may aid in the determination of how to remedy, resolve, or eliminate the homeless problem by aiding in the understanding of the homeless perspective, since one must ascertain the problems before effective solutions can be implemented. Perceptions of who the homeless are and how they got that way have an important influence on what strategies are adopted to ameliorate the situation according to Leona Bachrach of the Maryland Psychiatric Institute (Holden 1986:569). If the homeless are viewed as an economic problem, the answers or solutions may then come from low cost housing and increased employment opportunities. If the problem is viewed as a psychological one, the solutions are harder to come by since mentally ill people need services of comprehensive health and social services and a large percentage can never be expected to become fully independent (Holden 1986:569).
This study contributes to the Mills tradition by translating the individual's trouble into a structural issue. To be sure, the people of the streets have their personal problems. However, these problems can best be understood by looking at the structural arrangements that have forced many into this status and serve to keep them there. For this is not only a problem that needs addressing on the personal level, but it is a problem that requires structural changes in order for it to be resolved. The researcher, while working as a social worker for a program designed to outreach the chronically mentally ill homeless and aid them in their transition back to sheltered lives, was granted numerous opportunities to see how psychological factors coupled with structural arrangements hinder the ability of many to return to sheltered lives. For example, many of the chronically mentally ill homeless are eligible for Supplemental Security Income which amounts to three hundred and sixty eight dollars a month in Nevada as of December 1989. This same group is also eligible to receive foodstamps in the state of Nevada. If an individual is able to secure their social security check, they are still faced with the problem of finding an affordable space to rent. Generally, the weekly rentals that offer utilities are out of reach financially for the homeless since the social security payment is meager. Thus, many are forced to rent motel rooms without kitchen facilities at an average cost of seventy-five dollars a week. Occasionally kitchenettes can be located in this price range. It is possible to locate an apartment that rents for under two hundred
and eighty-five dollars a month, however, deposits are often required and utilities are rarely included. In addition, a recipient of social security payments who has also been homeless rarely has transportation in which to search for an affordable place. Transportation is also an obstacle for the individual attempting to apply for food stamps and medical benefits. Even after the shelter is secured, the individual has little income left to secure other essential items such as clothing, dishes, and personal hygiene items. The problem of obtaining housing goes beyond the affordability issue. In a group at the Haven (a program for chronically mentally ill homeless) dealing with how to rent an apartment, seven clients were asked to make a list of things to consider. Upon returning to the group several minutes later, this researcher saw written on the board, "Take your worker with you." The individual whose suffering is primarily psychological in origin is further hindered by the holes existing in the social service safety net and problems associated with accessing the needed services.

In summation, this thesis attempts to understand what causes people to become homeless in America. This task is accomplished by looking with a "sociological imagination" which C. W. Mills describes as a grasp of the interplay between biography and history (Mills 1959). The study attempts to shed light on the homeless situation in Las Vegas so that a pragmatic plan of action may be developed to alleviate the current crisis.
CHAPTER TWO: FACTORS TO CONSIDER

REAL AND EVOLVING: Society is an entity. This is a common assumption in sociology, for there is no need for a discipline that examines society if society is not assumed to be real. This view is one of realism, which is the antithesis of the nominalist view of society. The nominalists believe that the "group is not a real entity, but is merely a term used to refer to an assemblage of individuals" (Warriner 1967:120). The pure nominalist view was deserted more or less, with the growth of the Interactionist paradigm. Wirth (1939:966) makes this clear in the following quote, "Rather than settling the issue as to whether the individual or the group is the ultimate unit in terms of which social life must be analyzed, the main stream of sociological-psychological thought has forgotten this issue and proceeded to analyze social phenomena as complexes of the meaningfully oriented actions of persons reciprocally related to one another. This doctrine sees that neither the group nor the individual are real except in terms of the others" (Warriner 1967).

The realist view or what is known as modern realism holds that the group is just as real as the person, yet both are abstract analytical units, not concrete entities and the group can only be understood in terms of social processes, not by reference to the individual. Warriner concludes his work with the following statement, "I propose that if we treat groups as real units or systems, if we cease to identify group phenomena with a particular
personnel and with personality, if we cease to look for group phenomena in persons, and if we study groups for the sake of learning more about groups, only then will we begin to make real strides in a uniquely sociological problem" (Warriner 1967:127).

Not only is society an entity, at least from this definition it is as real as the individuals that comprise it, it is also evolving, not in the unilinear model, but in the sense that a society is not a static thing. Societies change through collective group action. Thus, the homeless phenomena must be assessed in terms of the evolution of a social problem as public attention sways and wanes, as efforts to resolve this complex phenomena of homelessness appear to fluctuate. Efforts to bring the homeless into the decision making process on how to resolve their dilemma can be seen locally by such action at the Homeless Advocacy Project. Among numerous endeavors, the project sponsored a local march on October 7, 1989 in conjunction with the Housing Now march on Washington, D.C.

In order for a social problem to be identified as such, there is an objective element and a subjective one. The subjective belief that homelessness is a social problem arose in a complex fashion, involving both individual and historical forces affecting society's values. The process is that a condition becomes a social problem when either a significant number of people see it as such or a group of significant people define it as such. The people must agree that the condition violates an accepted value of society and therefore should be resolved, eliminated, or remedied through collective action (Julian and Kornblum 1986:1).
An example of how a condition comes to be seen as a social problem can be found by looking at the historical development of views on poverty. Until the 18th century, most people worked at arduous tasks under poor working conditions. They suffered extreme deprivation most of their lives, and they died young, often of terrible diseases. Yet, extreme deprivation, poor working conditions, and early death were not viewed as social problems until the Enlightenment (Julian and Kornblum 1986:2). It was during the Enlightenment that the philosophies of John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau gained popularity with their emphasis on the equality of people. This viewpoint combined with advanced scientific knowledge enabled people to improve their environment and caused people to reassess their living conditions. In France and England, philosophers began to argue that poverty could be eliminated by means of a democratic reorganization of society. According to this line of thought, wealth determined on the basis of individual merit, not on inherited social position would eliminate poverty. As Julian and Kornblum point out, this awareness began in the late 18th century, yet similar reassessments are still being made today. Before the 19th century, poverty was viewed as a misfortune since people were helpless to do anything about it. Julian and Kornblum state this very well, "It could be deplored, written about, even alleviated in particular cases, but not prevented. Poverty was 'God's' will, a result of humanities original sin, a stroke of bad fate, or bad fortune. Only when people began to believe that they could improve society and provide
better living conditions were they able to reevaluate poverty not as a misfortune, but as an injustice" (Julian and Kornblum 1986:2).

Changes in judgement occur when a traditional misfortune is recognized as an injustice, when a significant number of people realize that certain conditions have social or institutional causes. Many have focused attention on the institutional or social factors of poverty. Mitch Snyder, Dorothy Wickenden and Michael Harrington, among others, have brought attention to the fact that poverty persists because of factors beyond the immediate control of those directly affected. Others maintain the view that the homeless are the result of individual failings or a matter of personal choice. President Reagan is quoted as saying "What we have found in this country, and we're more aware of it now, is one problem that we have had, even in the best of times, and that is the people who are sleeping on the grates, the homeless who are homeless, you might say by choice" (January 31, 1984) (Hope 1986:248). Are the homeless of the 1980's there by choice? Is this a matter of lifestyle? Plenty of experts think not (Piven and Cloward, Harrington, Wickenden, Hope, Holden, et al.). This is a myth that the homeless are homeless by choice. The data collected by HUD indicated that this group is less than 2 percent of the homeless population (HUD 1984). There is an element in society that prefers to blame the victims of poverty rather than the social conditions that produce it (Ryan 1971). Why does this tendency to blame the victim persist? For an answer one can turn to sociologist Robin Williams' summary of American values. Williams
categorized American values as activity and work, achievement and success, and equality (Williams 1970 as cited in Lewis Coser, Patricia Steffan, Buford Rhea and Steven Nock 1983:69). In keeping with this, the success of an individual is seen as being dependent upon the individual's effort, thus, failure is often seen as being the individual's fault. In America, wealth is assumed to be largely determined by individual merit, thus, the poor are often seen as at fault. The poor will generally blame themselves for their condition, not socio-economic factors. This is partially because the homeless subculture is created by the same society that values achievement and success. The tendency to blame the victim is one problem with the psychological explanations of homelessness. This author sees a complex interaction between the troubles of the individual and the social forms in which they live and construct their lives, "for example, people who are poor or out of work will often blame themselves, not the social and economic conditions that lead to poverty and unemployment, for their troubles" (Lewis Coser, Patricia Steffan, Buford Rhea and Steven Nock 1983:69). To look inward for an explanation for one's existence allows for hope of improving these conditions with hard work, assistance, or good luck. The accounts collected for this research revealed that many of the homeless see themselves as at fault, and this has a devastating effect on their self-esteem, although it also allows for hope of changing oneself to gain access to shelter. Stanley Eitzen states that "Blame for being poor is placed on the individual, not on the maldistribution of wealth and other socially
perpetuated disadvantages that blight many families generation after generation" (Eitzen 1986:412). In his 1923 work, Anderson sheds light on the fact that the homeless did not agree on the causes of their homelessness, "The younger men put the blame upon circumstance and external conditions. The older men, who know life better, are humbler. They are disposed to go to the other extreme and put all the blame on themselves" (Anderson 1923:61). Again an interplay between the psychological and structural arrangements is most fitting if one is to understand the homeless phenomena. For example, all of the shelters in Las Vegas have certain criteria for admission into the facility. This criteria has left many of the more unfortunates without shelter as they are not eligible for the services due to chronic alcoholism, shelter time limits, or other factors. One example of this is an eight-year-old woman who makes her home outside and consequently is housed by the city jail. When told of her needs, a respondent from one of the two shelters that house women stated that he knows of her case and that she is noncompliant. Another worker at this shelter mentioned that the woman had been housed at their facility several years earlier but that she broke the rules and was noncompliant. The primary rule she broke was the she gambled her resources from social security.

Howard Bahr sees skid row residents as the most stigmatized subculture, which in turn affects the self-esteem of the residents (Bahr 1973). To look at the structural arrangements that have pushed some to this status could be beneficial to the self-esteem of the homeless person. However, the forces are strong in our
society to make them look inward. One social service respondent explained that most of the people he had dealt with were extremely patriotic and believed in the American dream, in spite of the fact that the dream has not included them. This tendency to blame oneself is found in many of the case studies. Paula explained that they left Philadelphia because they could not find work, a structural explanation. She went on to explain that this is because the women have taken the men's jobs. They had tried to make a go of it in Montana, only to fail. Thus, they went on the road again heading for Arizona where they heard it was possible to make a new start. The end result was that they found themselves in Las Vegas and broke. Paula blames her husband and herself for their predicament, because they gambled what little money they had left in hopes of acquiring enough to get an apartment. The fact that she did not have enough money in the first place was irrelevant to her, due to the fact that what little she did have was thrown to the casinos in hopes of a turn in fortune. Paula states, "We have no one to blame but ourselves. We had enough money to get to Arizona, but we gambled it and now we need to find work so that we can enough money to get out of here." Paula never did offer an explanation for why she was unemployed if women were getting the jobs.

If one looks at the dominant social institutions of the western world such as the political structure, the economic structure, the religious structure, or the family structure, it is apparent that society is not static. Each of these structure have
undergone transformations throughout history. The transformations that took place bringing the world from the traditional era to the modern era and into the contemporary milieu are complex involving a two to three hundred year period and are illustrative of the evolving nature of society. With this in mind one can easily understand that an evolution of attitudes toward the causes of poverty and homelessness exists, as they are tied to the historical forces of society. The dominant themes as to the causes of poverty will be outlined to illustrate how the poor have been viewed. "There is no such thing as poverty; there are poverties" (Harrington 1984:8). Thus, the purpose of the next section is to identify some of the "poverties" of our historical heritage. "The difference between the social misery of the eighties and that of the sixties is not a new contrast, but only the last in a long series" (Harrington 1984:8).

TROUBLE OR ISSUE?: C. W. Mills made the statement that "perhaps the most fruitful distinction with which the sociological imagination works is between 'the personal troubles of milieu' and 'the public issues of social structure.' This distinction is an essential tool of the sociological imagination and a feature of all classic work in social science" (Mills 1959). The problem of the homeless is an excellent example of this statement. The point is that the individual suffering from a lack of shelter undoubtedly has his or her troubles, which can be understood only by looking at the structural issues that have lead him or her to this social status and that serve to keep him or her there. This is especially
true when one looks at the increasing numbers of homeless in America. The composition of the homeless in America has changed in recent years. The persons who are alcoholic still exist, but they are joined by large numbers of deinstitutionalized mental patients, the new unemployed who are capable of working but cannot find work that will meet their basic requirements of shelter, the displaced people that result from urban renewal, and those who have felt the drastic cuts in social spending upon which they relied heavily for their subsistence (HUD 1984). One must no longer look towards the individual for an explanation of their homelessness, but one must look towards the structural arrangements such as the political economy in order to gain an understanding of the root causes. Since many of the homeless today are the result of new factors in our society, a grasp of personal and structural factors is imperative for understanding the current problem. For example, the alcoholic could find affordable shelter on skid row at one time in our history. Today a dwindling supply of these homes exists, leaving many to turn to the emergency shelters, tent cities, or the streets. These are people who otherwise would not be homeless, that is if shelter were available. To assume that the problems the homeless have center simply around a lack of money is simplistic since money mismanagement also exists. Yet many of the homeless today, in spite of their personal troubles, would simply not be shelterless if housing were more affordable. If we look at the structural aspects that result in the individual being disenfranchised, it will be in keeping with Mills' discussion of
the political task of sociology. Mills states that it is the duty of the social scientist to translate individual troubles into the structural meanings they have for the individual (Mills 1962). Mills also stated that the sociological imagination enables one to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and external career of a variety of individuals. "It enables him to take into account how individuals, in the welter of their daily experience, often become falsely conscious of their social positions" (Mills 1959). There seems to be a tendency for the individuals to blame themselves for their condition and for social service workers to blame individual characteristics. Because of this tendency, the focus is on changing the individual with such methods as 12-step programs which help the individual to adapt to the structure rather than empower the individual to change the social forms that lead them to the streets. "The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. That is its task and its promise" (Mills 1959). One must understand the interaction between biography and history in order to understand one's place in one's milieu. It is one intent of this research to trace the historical factors that have lead some to being homeless as well as to look at the individual biographies of the homeless as they present them in their accounts.

When Charles Dickens visited New York City in 1842, he remarked on the dilapidated state of the tenements that housed most of the city's working population. The establishment blamed the
conditions on the European immigrants, with these newcomers being viewed as "dregs of the old world." The immigrants were viewed as slothful, poor, and emotionally reckless. Attitudes were ethnocentrically biased and ethnicism played a major part in the perpetuation of these attitudes. This is a position that ignored the roots of poverty in Europe such as industrialization, a laissez faire economy, and a self-regulating marketplace (Hamalian 1976:113). Further, this position illustrates the tendency to blame the victim by looking at individual weakness. Several conflicting ideas emerged during this era; a policy that permitted immigration in order to provide a cheap labor force for the expanding economy; the Puritan work ethic shared by both the Americans and Europeans; and the Horatio Alger myth, that anyone can make it in America with a little hard work. At the same time, beginning in the 1880's, social writers began to describe poverty as a product of the social syndrome, a product of economic instability rather than of moral slough. This theme is found in the works of Henry George, Jane Addams, and Dorothea Dix, to name a few (Julian and Kornblum 1986). Today, attitudes are present that blame the homeless for their condition. These positions indicate that we too are often guilty of ignoring the roots of poverty. American attitudes toward the poor have attached to them the Protestant view that material success is virtually a religious obligation. Many people believe that the homeless are there because of individual failings. This is the posture that supports a large underclass, an attitude criticized by Dorothy Wickenden in
"Abandoned Americans: What Ronald Reagan could learn from Charles Dickens." Her subtitle is illustrative of the failure of contemporary society to look at the roots of poverty, rather than individual failings. Some of those roots are the deinstitutionalization of mental patients, the decline in low income housing brought on by urban renewal, and neighborhood gentrification, the reduction of the social spending under Ronald Reagan's administration and continuing unemployment with low compensation for the unemployed (Wickenden 1985). If the individuals have failed, so has society in its adaptation to meeting their needs. Tracy Chapman's lyrics in "Subcity" best summarize this point:

"They say we've fallen through the cracks
They say the system works
But we won't let it
Help
I guess they never stop and think
We might not just want handouts
But a way to make an honest living
Living this ain't living"

TYPOLOGIES OF THE HOMELESS: Attempts to classify the homeless are an art at least half a millennium old. Martin Luther edited "Liber Vagatorium" in 1528 in which a classification of beggars was given as well as advice to the reader on how to deal with each type (Bahr 1970:110).

Homelessness is not a new phenomenon in America. In fact, many of America's first European settlers were homeless. Homelessness in England was not a new phenomenon either. As early as the fourth century A.D., homeless people existed on the European continent. The colonialization of America and other English territories allowed England to develop an effective method for
dealing with the homeless, ship them to the colonies. In Dublin, the homeless were "Ordered to prison to remain until 'they shall be sent on board His majesty's (George II) fleet, or to some of the plantations in America for a term not exceeding seven years'" (Erickson 1986:XX). The colonies, acting with little compassion, enacted a series of vagrancy laws. By 1650, vagrancy was against the law in all of the colonies. With the exception of New York, assistance for the homeless was nonexistent. New York was the only colony to offer assistance by opening the first almshouse on the North American Continent (Erickson 1986:XX). In spite of the influx of homeless individuals from Europe, the major contributing factor was the Industrial Revolution during the second half of the nineteenth century (Erickson 1986:XX). The Industrial Revolution is an obvious transitional period in society. Even if one is not an economic determinist, the power of the economy to influence a society cannot be ignored. Max Weber's "The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism" (Weber 1904) illustrates the interplay between the economy and cultural ideas, and this interplay seems more fitting than economic determinism for understanding the homeless phenomena today.

According to Erickson, the earliest hoboes were jobless Civil War veterans, railroad workers, and factory workers unemployed by the depression that followed the panic of 1873. He states that, although there is no precise estimate of the numbers of homeless during this period, the evidence suggests that the problem was significant (Erickson 1986:XXI). The homeless of the industrial
period were the men who lived in the labor camps and helped to build the railroads and the economic infrastructure needed for the industrializing of the United States (Erickson 1986:XX).

Howard Bahr discusses how at least three dominant historical processes came together to produce the conditions that allowed skid rows to develop in the United States. The Civil War is the first factor outlined by Bahr. He states "like all wars, it created homelessness on a vast scale, and many of those uprooted buy the war - the orphaned, the impoverished, the widowed, the discharged soldiers - were drawn to the nation's cities" (Bahr 1973:35). Another factor that lead to the establishment of skid row was the continuing European immigration, with the poor migrants increasing the pool of those looking for cheap lodging. Bahr also includes the dimension mentioned by Erickson, that is the panic of 1873 and the depression that followed. It was during this period of economic depression that the idea of cheap housing caught on. When prosperity returned, the facilities created continued to be a fixed feature of urban life (Bahr 1973:35). Another important factor was the closing of the American frontier. This resulted in a gradual decline in the need for unskilled labor. Around the turn of the century, skid row reached its maturity. The urban centers for the homeless had "served as employment centers, recreational areas, supply and outfitting places, homes for seasonal and casual workers, and refuges for the deviant" (Bahr 1973:36).

When Nels Anderson conducted his study of the homeless man, he examined the life of the hobo during the years 1921 and 1922. He
attempted to understand the life of the homeless man by utilizing the Chicago tradition of field research. Anderson found that the typical homeless hobo was the result of industrial inadequacy. The homeless man of this era was dependent upon seasonal occupations, which were plentiful in America. The homeless were also characterized as having defects in their personality, crises in their personal lives or wanderlust (Anderson 1923). The hobo of this study was usually a foreign born American who found a labor market on the American frontier. He was seldom illiterate and was characterized as resourceful. Some were characterized by a type of pathology known as wanderlust or dromomania. The true hobo was, however, an in between worker who followed the railroad lines and willing to go anywhere for a job. This pioneer frontier man became a vagrant in the city. Anderson noted that the primary economic reasons that men leave home ranged from seasonal occupations, local changes in industry, seasonal fluctuations in the demand for labor, and periods of unemployment (Anderson 1923:61). The economic reasons are not much different from today as the economy is undergoing a series of transformations. According to Bahr, Anderson's work had the most influence on classification attempts that came later (Bahr 1973). Anderson began with three types of homeless: the hobo, the tramp, and the bum. The hobo works and wanders, the tramp dreams and wanders, and the bum drinks. Anderson then expanded these categories into five groups: the seasonal workers, the occasional worker or hobo, the wandering tramp, and the homeguard (who comprised half of his study) who
neither works nor wanders. The homeguard was considered either capable of employment or unemployable. Anderson's typology can be broken down into two types: the migratory type and the stationary type. The bum and the homeguard are, of course, the stationary groups. The bum is described as the "most pitiful and repulsive type of the down and out" (Bahr 1973). Underlying this typology are two things, the nature of employment and the propensity to travel. Thus, the early 1900's had two dominant dimensions which were reflected in the professional and public attitude toward the homeless as well as the solutions to the problem which focused on employment and stifling wanderlust and laziness (Bahr 1973). The observations made for this study revealed that the homeless mentally ill fit both the migratory pattern and the homeguard presented by Bahr. Many of those served by the St. Vincent's Haven of Hope program were individuals who traveled from one city to the next. The majority of those served were stationary individuals who could be categorized as the homeguard.

The 1930's and 1940's saw solutions offered by the "New Deal" being aimed at employment. Many of the programs that have come under attack in recent years, under the conservative climate that blames the victims for their condition, were born in the "New Deal" period. According to Kornblum, many liberal critics of the current administration's reductions on the social spending for the needy "believe that these conservatives are attempting to return American society to a condition that existed before the Great Depression, when the poor were thought to be simply shirking their
responsibilities, or in the case of the elderly and other dependent populations, to be the responsibility of nongovernmental institutions like the family or the church" (Kornblum 1987:285).

It is in the 1940's and 1950's that we see the view of the homeless as people suffering from wanderlust replaced by the stereotypic view of the uncontrollable alcoholic (Bahr 1973:112). Therefore Donald Bogue, writing 40 years after Anderson included this dimension of the alcoholic. Bogue saw the ultimate cause of skid row residence as the exhaustion of economic resources on the part of the resident. Bogue saw three dominant characteristics that distinguish the skid row resident from others, homelessness, poverty, and acute personal problems. Skid row had a high concentration of people with these problems (Bogue 1963). Bogue accepts the social psychological theories of explanation for one's skid row existence (Wiseman 1970:11). Furthermore, Bogue added the aged and physically handicapped, resident working men, migratory workers, bums and beggars who could work but choose not to, and criminals and illegal workers. Bogue had other categories of the homeless which includes those already mentioned, runaways, adventurers, vacationers, young veterans, unstable young men, sex perverts, the mentally unsound, and normal residents. Bogue's primary focus, however, was on the economic and social causes that lead to one's entrance to the row. Four general reasons exist according to Bogue. First, economic hardship which is related to low income or irregular employment serves to push people to the row. Secondly, people with poor mental health often end up on the
row. Thirdly, people who have poor social adjustment end up in this area. Lastly, those individuals who are disabled or in poor physical health or those of limited intelligence are likely candidates for the row. Bogue discovered that most of the men on skid row were not alcoholic, but rather were men who suffered from serious handicaps. Some 80 percent of the men in this study fit this category (Bahr 1973:113). Bogue's categories assume both macro arrangements of the structure and micro arrangements of individual failure to adjust as being instrumental in one's entrance to the row, thus illustrating the interplay of biography and historical factors.

Structural arrangements play a major part in the down andouters, yet so do the psychological aspects. In 1963, Levinson stated that "the homeless man is a symbol of what's wrong with society, an indication of man's brutality to man. He is the beacon light warning us of reefs ahead. It may be noted that when social conditions become worse the number of homeless men increases. Finally, he is the Rosetta Stone of social psychology and psychopathology. When the homeless man passes from the scene, it will be one of the major indices pointing out that a key to our major sociopsychopathological disorders has been found" (Levinson 1963:599). Thus, homeless people are often the result of structural factors beyond the immediate control of the individual such as a lack of resources either brought on by low income or the high price of commodities such as food and shelter. Others, if free from alcohol, drug addiction or poor mental health, would not
be on skid row.

In his work *You Owe Yourself A Drunk*, James Spradley offers the most extensive taxonomic classification of the homeless, utilizing the anthropological approach. His overview of previous classification attempts leads him to isolate four identify models reflected in the dominant culture: the bum, who is viewed as immoral, irresponsible and unpredictable; the medical identity of the alcoholic; the legal identity of common drunkard and the sociological view of the homeless man (Spradley 1970). Spradley aimed to discover the conceptual framework by which the inhabitants of skid row organized reality.

The importance of understanding homelessness from the perspective and perceptions of the homeless themselves is illustrated in Wiseman (1970). In her discussion of multiple realities and insight phenomena, she addresses the question; Whose reality prevails? Is it the professionals or the skid row residents? In this work she draws attention to the perspectives of both of these groups. She discusses the etiological puzzle and illustrates two theoretical propositions to explain the etiology. Residence on skid row is seen as being the result of a conscious decision on his or her part, affected by economic need for cheap housing and food and the availability of charities if work or money runs out, and secondly, the entrance to skid row is seen as the result of social and psychological failure on the part of the resident (Wiseman 1970:11). This work is an ethnographic study utilizing naturalistic field techniques. Wiseman attempts to see
the skid row residents from their point of view, to examine how they organize their lives in an unfavorable milieu, and how they manage to meet the basic needs of food, shelter, protection, conviviality and friendship as well as how they cope with the conditions. According to this work all sectors of human group behavior must be seen as a diversified process. It is interesting to note that in 1970 the rescue missions of the Wiseman study were looking for persons to rescue whereas today the missions are in a position of turning away more people than they are accepting. Furthermore, the cheap housing found historically in areas known as skid row are becoming nonexistent as urban renewal and neighborhood gentrification take their toll.

SUMMARY: Chapter Two outlined some factors to consider when examining homelessness. A discussion of the evolving nature of society and societal attitudes shed light on the interplay of psychological and structural factors as they contribute to homelessness. How a "condition" comes to be viewed as a "social problem" was discussed. Chapter Two was written in the spirit of C. W. Mills who suggested that the most useful tool for developing a sociological imagination is to draw the distinction between "troubles" of an individual and "issues" of the structure. Several typologies of the homeless were presented along with current modal causes of homelessness.
CHAPTER THREE: OUR CURRENT MILIEU

A WAR ON THE WAR ON POVERTY?: In 1964, Lyndon B. Johnson declared an unconditional war on poverty in his State of the Union Message (Harrington 1984:14). The decision to call the effort against poverty a war was made at the Johnson ranch during the 1963 Christmas holidays (Zarefsky 1986:21). Two decades after the war was declared poverty still exists. Harrington addresses the question, "What happened in the seventeen years between Johnson's generosity and Reagan's meanness?" (Harrington 1984:15). To be certain, the war on poverty was stifled by the war in Vietnam. Harrington states that even if all the other problems had been solved, "the wrong war in Southeast Asia would have destroyed the right war at home" (Harrington 1984:21). This scholar also reminds us that the war on poverty never was a gigantic program of handouts to the poor (Harrington 1984:15).

A partial answer to explain what happened to the war on poverty can be found by looking at events that took place in the nineteen-seventies. Corporation set out to complete three goals through government: "to reduce taxation and regulation of business, to restore American military dominance throughout the world, and to contract and partially dismantle the welfare state" (Piven and Cloward 1986:152). The business community formed the Business Roundtable in 1972, a political vehicle for large corporations. During the same period, a number of think tanks were formed, such as the American Enterprise Institute and The Heritage Foundation.
The goal of these organizations was to formulate, legitimate, and publicize a political program aimed at achieving these goals of reducing taxes for the corporate world, while building up the military and cutting back tremendously on social programs (Piven and Cloward 1986:152). Numerous studies were produced by these institutes that indicated that social spending retards capital formation and investment, and that social programs shelter those beneficiaries from the "discipline of the market, eventually disabling them from participation in it" (Piven and Cloward, 1986:152). When one considers that work has always been an intrinsic part of our values (i.e. the Protestant work ethic), it is easy to see how the ideology of our culture supported the cut backs.

According to Harrington, "the optimistic sixties often overlooked the systematic nature of its own poverty" (Harrington 1984:2). The political economy contributes to poverty in several ways. The basic tenet of capitalism is that who gets what is determined by private profit rather than collective need. This leads to the creation and persistence of poverty. Employers are constrained to pay their employees the least possible wages and benefits. Thus, only a portion of the wealth generated by the employees is distributed by them. The rest of the wealth goes to the employers for investment and profit. This means that it is important to keep the wages as low as possible. Capitalism also contributes to poverty because it is essential to have a surplus of laborers who are desperate and will work for low wages as
illustrated in the literature on the dual labor market (Harrington 1964, 1984: Auletta 1982). Employers have the right to make investment decisions without regard to what these decisions will mean to their employees and this, in turn, contributes to the perpetuation of poverty (Eitzen 1986). The decision to utilize new technologies that can replace workers and the relocation of a plant to another state or foreign market are just two examples of how these investment decisions may hurt the individual. In sum, the capitalist system should not be accepted as a neutral framework within which goods are produced and distributed, but rather as an economic system that perpetuates poverty since the fundamental assumption is the right to profit without regard for what the results may mean for others (Eitzen 1986).

Political decisions also complement the economic factors in the perpetuation of poverty. It is in this realm that we find a major cause of homelessness in our current decade. The politics of the Reagan administration provide an excellent example of how political decisions can adversely affect the poor. The new poverty cannot totally be blamed on Reagan; however, as Harrington points out: "This reality was not, and is not, I must emphasize, the creation of Ronald Reagan. He made the worst of a bad thing to be sure, scapegoating the poor for imaginary wrongs. But the structures of misery today are not simply the work of the ideological rigidity of a president who can be charming even as he is cruel. They are the results of massive economic and social
transformations, and they cannot be understood apart from an analysis of them (Harrington 1984: 7-8).

Even though the Reagan administration is not totally to blame for the structures of poverty, it does provide plentiful examples of how the decisions of the government can and do adversely affect the poor. Recent political decisions have increased the gulf between the rich and the poor. Beginning with his inaugural address in 1981, Reagan, along with a conservative congress, instituted a series of changes known as Reaganomics. Reaganomics was designed to curtail government spending for social programs, to reduce the national debt, and to stimulate the economy. The first part of the program was a tight monetary policy designed to raise interest rates and, thereby, curb inflation. This goal was achieved, although it was aided by a worldwide oil glut that reduced energy prices significantly. The cost of this was heavy. The resulting recession affected many industries such as home building, the automobile industry, and steel manufacturing. These, in turn, had a negative impact on other related industries that relied heavily on credit. The end result was bankruptcies, plant relocations, and massive layoffs. So while inflation was reduced, unemployment soared to the point that one out of ten workers wanting work could not find it. Many people became poor for the first time. Combine this with industrial changes, such as new forms of automation, that displaced many workers permanently, and homelessness results. Part two of Reaganomics was a change in the tax policies designed to increase incentives for investments. This
is known as the trickle down theory. Taxes were reduced and new tax subsidies were created. It is too early to tell if accelerated economic growth will result and allow benefits to trickle down to the less fortunate, but the logic of such a premise is highly questionable. What is clear is that the gulf that separates the affluent and the poor has widened.

Reaganomics drastically reduced social service spending on programs such as food stamps, legal services for the poor, school lunches, subsidized housing, public work programs, and meals on wheels for the homebound. These cuts had tremendous impact on the individuals who relied upon them for their survival.

The final part of this Reagan package was to reduce the scope of the federal government by granting money to the individual states to use at their discretion. This is called decentralization. This home rule strategy has several negative consequences. It allows local patters of discrimination against women, Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, the elderly, and other powerless groups. This permits local legislatures dominated by certain interests to withhold monies from other interests. States vary in their ability or willingness to provide welfare to the needy (Eitzen 1986).

According to John Naisbett in the national bestseller, "Megatrends," centralization is crumbling and decentralization has transformed American society in business, politics, and culture (Naisbett 1984:103). Accordingly, this author points out that it really is not important who is president since most of the
important things are being done on the local level. "It is the smaller political units, cities, counties, and individual communities -- that are claiming local authority over and taking responsibility for, social issues that hit hard at the local level. What is surprising is their success rate. Local communities are tackling difficult problems and achieving solutions where the federal government with its vast but clumsy resources has failed: in energy, transportation, waste disposal, even in the controversial area of genetic research" (Naisbett 1984:108). If one assumes that local governments are gaining more control over the solutions offered to correct some of the problems facing their communities, it is a frightening prospect for those concerned about the homeless in our nation's cities. Many local governments have adopted the attitude that to offer services to the homeless will cause people to be attracted to these communities. This attitude is known as the "magnet theory," it's basic assumption being that people in other areas will be drawn to those cities that provide shelter services. The reply often voiced by advocates of shelter is that if people were drawn to Las Vegas because of services, then Las Vegas would have no homeless. If Las Vegas were to have an emergency shelter that accepts any who call, it will be among the last of the cities to do so. According to a study conducted on the Santa Barbara homeless, evidence of the magnet theory has not yet been supported by any data. "On the contrary, numerous studies of the homeless have found that they, like other people, move generally to areas where there are job possibilities, better
climates, or family and friends. A recent extensive study conducted over sixteen months on the homeless in Phoenix, for instance, found 91 percent of those interviewed looking for jobs, while not a single respondent reported coming to Phoenix because of knowledge or expectation of social services or shelters" (Santa Barbara Study 1984:6).

In observing the homeless in Las Vegas, this researcher noted that those who received Supplemental Security Income and were also new to the area stated that they came to Las Vegas because they heard it was cheaper to rent. Generally, the individuals are told of the reduction that they will receive in their benefit payments and thus become discouraged and return to their prior city or move on looking for affordable living. One respondent referred to the practice of searching for a home as "riding the rails on his SSI." The Vista project indicates that the majority of the homeless do not come to Las Vegas to take advantage of Social Welfare programs. The main reason people come to Las Vegas is to find a job. The data in this study indicated that most of the homeless were, in fact, ignorant of the availability of social programs in Las Vegas (Vista 1984:4).

Another problem with decentralization in regards to the homeless is that many cities may find the solution to the problem to be greyhound therapy. In other words, they may find it expedient to provide individuals with one-way bus tickets to other areas of the country in order to reduce the local budget. This is a practice observed by this researcher that occurs primarily if the
person is diagnosed as chronically mentally ill. The criteria for who will receive a bus ticket among the mentally ill has not been ascertained; however, veterans who have been put in the state mental facility are likely candidates to be put on a bus to a city that houses a veteran's hospital. One such story involves a man who had a breakdown while living at the shelter. He reportedly took off his clothes and ran through the shelter hollering at fictitious demons. He was hospitalized for less than one week and then given 75 cents and put on a bus to L.A. This respondent was told to check into Brentwood Veteran's Hospital upon arrival in California. The respondent got off the bus and hitch-hiked back to Las Vegas, arriving within 24 hours of his departure. Another story involves a man who had spent much of his life in a V.A. hospital in Maryland. In 1984, he came to Las Vegas because he said his father had told him that this was a good place for him if he got ill like his mother. This man was diagnosed as alcoholic and schizophrenic. In 1984, the man was returned to Maryland. In April of 1988, he emerged in Las Vegas and was living in the fenced-off area, then known as John 3:16 or Pride Village. The man managed to secure his monthly disability check and rented a room with the assistance of this researcher. He was then hospitalized twice and relocated apartments four times over the course of a year. In May of 1989, this respondent was again deemed gravely disabled and hospitalized at the state facility. Within two days of this hospitalization, a caseworker from the hospital stated, "he can be homeless on some other city street." It was not an option
for this man to live in group care because of his dual problems. His identification which consisted of a medicare card, Nevada I.D., and a V.A. Outpatient card was misplaced. He was put on a Greyhound headed east. The point of this story is that the individual in question was a Las Vegas resident by criteria, was not homeless as his worker suggested, and yet was viewed as being the responsibility of another state rather than Southern Nevada Adult Mental Health. It so happens that a happy ending came to this story. About one month after this respondent was placed on the bus, the researcher received a call in which the voice said, "Are you still out there trying to help the street people?" It turned out that the respondent was in group care back in the state of Maryland. Another case when greyhound therapy was used occurred with a woman who, because of her incontinence, was deemed ineligible for group care. This woman had a diagnosis of "delusional disorder." She was fundless and because of her delusional state, she was incapable of applying for Supplemental Security Income without assistance. It was determined by the psychiatrist at Southern Nevada Adult Mental Health that medications would not assist this woman. Paperwork was processed to obtain her SSI benefits and she lived outside while awaiting the results. This woman was very resourceful; she canned most nights and slept in isolated areas away from the other street people. She would come in the Haven and sit. She rarely made sense when attempting to communicate. She was somewhat compliant in signing the needed papers to secure her an income. She then took a turn
for the worse, and for one month the staff discussed how best to assist her. She remained filthy, rarely taking advantage of women's showering hours at St. Vincent's. In the winter of 1988, it was determined by the staff that the woman was "gravely disabled." The basis for the decision rested on the fact that the woman would not come in from the cold but, instead, sat urine-soaked in the doorway. Attempts to befriend her were seen as persecutory. The staff could not convince her to obtain medical attention for obvious physical maladies. The woman was "form 5'd," the term for hospitalization against ones will. This occurred on a Friday. On Monday, the Haven worker called the hospital to see when the treatment team was covering the case. The worker was informed that the patient did not want treatment but wanted to go to California. Therefore, she was placed on a bus on Sunday night. When asked the address of the referral, the worker was told "skid row L.A." The woman reappeared in Las Vegas two days later. She would not come in the Haven again until she was told her money came through from Social Security, which had taken a full six months. There are still complications involving this case, but these are beyond the scope of illustrating greyhound therapy.

One fine example of greyhound therapy was more like Delta therapy. In this case, a young woman who was diagnosed as both manic-depressive and schizophrenic also had a crack addiction. She spent more time in jail than out on soliciting charges to support this addiction. She was in Las Vegas in 1984 and spent one of four psychiatric hospitalizations here. Upon release in 1984, she was
sent back to New Jersey. In August of 1988, she hitch-hiked back to Las Vegas where she existed living on "Sallies Alley," which is the street directly behind the Salvation Army. Contact was made with the woman in December of 1988. She was pregnant and psychotic. Attempts were made to find an appropriate placement for the woman, but to no avail. She was deemed non-cooperative by mental health officials and the drug rehabilitation officials could not risk having her in treatment because they were not medical facilities. She spent her time between the streets and jail. Interestingly, she was eligible to receive SSI but had not received any money because her drug dealer in New Jersey was her payee. He was not available for assistance. A local payee was arranged and private housing was secured. Her funds were only $330.21 a month because her payee in New Jersey received the overpayment which she had to repay. This woman was not capable of living independently, however, and landlords requested she be moved. She birthed the child, who was born "crack addicted," placed in protective custody, and later adopted. Upon release from the maternity ward, she again was arrested and spent a couple of days in jail. She was hospitalized upon release from jail. She stayed in this facility for three weeks and was released to the streets, although the hospital report stated that she was released to a drug program. One day later, she was picked up for soliciting and sentenced to 90 days. During her stay in jail, numerous attempts were made to locate a structured setting that could serve to treat the young woman. One drug treatment program declined to aid her because of
her poor personal hygiene. Another declined to accept her because of her fragile mental health stating, "Our therapy techniques are too confrontive, she is too fragile for our program." In August of 1989, the young woman was released from jail and a motel room was secured for her. She expressed sincere desire to stay clean. She was on medications to control her medical disorders, but she appeared as helpless as a five year old child. An airline ticket was purchased using her funds and the respondent was placed on a plane to a small town in New Jersey where a woman's shelter was located and acceptance into their program was made. The respondent made it to the shelter, but disappeared within one day. One month later, a phone call came through indicating that the woman was in a state hospital in Pennsylvania. To date, she is still in this facility. The point is that this woman was in need of long-term care, and it was simply not available to her in this community. Instead, she was treated as a criminal for what, in fact, were her illnesses.

Not all mental health clients stranded in Las Vegas are assisted with transportation. If they came on their own accord, fleeing group care in another state, which is a common phenomenon, they usually are on the streets until their next SSI check can be forwarded. For those who get their checks where someone they know can forward it, their stay is not as long as those who must put in a change of address. The change of address at Social Security can delay their money for one to two months. Thus, an address is one of many obstacles the homeless must overcome, as they have no
address. Oft times, the change in address will result in a substantial reduction in benefits since Nevada does not supplement the federal benefits.

For those who have found themselves stranded in Las Vegas on more conventional grounds such as having gambled their resources, the advice they are given is that they must work their way out of the city. Lists of casual labor opportunities are kept at the various social service agencies. It is possible to obtain a twenty-five percent discount on the greyhound ticket through two agencies. The only time these agencies will pay for a ticket in full is if there is a verifiable job at the stated destination.

Reagan's specific policies were not vague. He cut the national budget for numerous social programs at the same time that he tremendously increased the budget for defense. Reagan claimed that the cuts in social spending would not hurt the poor because they were receiving comparable income tax cuts, but this is simply not true (Zinn 1986). It appears obvious that the social spending cuts fell heavily on the already marginal poor, pushing many into the status of homeless. This is especially true when one looks at some of the other factors of homelessness such as neighborhood gentrification and deinstitutionalization of mental patients. Clearly, many of the new homeless are the result of the political economy. Although this was true for Anderson's hobo, other factors are at play in the 1980's, factors that differ significantly from the transitional industrial period of Anderson's day. Wickenden points out that the causes of homelessness in the 1980's are well
known. The drastic reduction in social spending cut many people off the welfare rolls and tightened the restrictions to qualify for aid which, in turn, pushed many marginal folks to live unsheltered lives. It is not this simple, however. Many people had been living sheltered lives but the reduction in social spending greatly affected them because they were often living a marginal existence. Then urban renewal and neighborhood gentrification caused a lack of affordable housing. This meant that many could no longer find shelter they could afford, whether they were ever receiving aid from the state or were working at jobs that did not produce enough income to pay for existing shelter (Wickenden 1985).

THE NUMBERS: Exactly how many people live without shelter in the United States is unknown, in spite of the fact that numerous attempts have been made to discover them. Little consensus exists about the actual numbers. An obvious problem in the determination of how many people are homeless comes from the tendency to define homelessness in a variety of ways. The number dispute can be explained by the variety of operational definitions of homelessness. The lowest estimate of the homeless in America came from the report issued by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 1984. This report estimated the numbers to be between 250,000 and 350,000 (HUD 1984). This estimate caused much discussion among others whose estimates ranged between 2 and 3 million (National Institute of Mental Health and The Peoples Project). The low HUD estimate was one of the reasons behind the Hunger strike of Mitch Snyder (Wickenden 1985). An attempt was
made to legally challenge the HUD figures in 1984. The Center for Creative Nonviolence sued for retraction of the exceptionally low estimate on the basis that most national estimates ranged between 2 and 3 million. The low estimate given by HUD, it was claimed, would impact policy decisions. The district court dismissed the suit on the ground that the report was an internal matter and thus not judicially reviewable (Homeless Peoples Project 1985). Wickenden points out that the administration was called to task upon the release of this report and it was found that methodology used for the report was indeed slipshod (Wickenden 1985). "HUD's methods for arriving at this estimate revealed several shortcomings, many of these were reviewed in Congressional testimony June 24, 1983, in the course of a joint hearing called by the House Subcommittee on Housing and Community Development and the House Subcommittee on Manpower and Housing, to examine the report. Of particular concern is the speciousness of the claim that, by multiplying the number of methods used to derive estimates, HUD has achieved a significant advance over previous studies. Literature reviews, interviews with local experts and shelter providers, street counts, and site visits to selected cities were all used. By combining their yields, HUD came up with its 'most reliable estimate" (Salerno, Hopper, and Baxter 1984:175-176). Further, "HUD's report is unaccountably weak; apparently missing from its reported figure of 69,000 sheltered in January 1984 are all those individuals and families who were 'vouchered' in hotels and motels that night, all homeless youth, quite possibly many of those in
small shelters and refuges, and all homeless people temporarily residing in such institutions as jails and hospitals. People who are 'doubling up' with friends and relatives are simply not counted as homeless" (Salerno, Hopper, and Baxter 1984:176). In spite of the criticism of this low estimate, it continues to be quoted in many governmental capacities. A review of editorials in the Review Journal, a Las Vegas newspaper, reveals that the low estimate is accepted by many citizens as well. The consensus seems to be that the "liberals" are quoting higher numbers of homeless for political ends, primarily to deflect from the success of the Republican platform. Often it is argued that those who are in support of programs designed to assist the homeless are crying wolf.

The most thorough and widely respected report on the subject of homelessness in the 1980's, according to Wickenden, was completed by the American Psychiatric Association and titled "The Homeless Mentally Ill." They estimated that there are approximately 2 million homeless in America today and perhaps "as many as half suffer from alcohol, drug abuse, or mental health problems (Wickenden 1985). This is an estimate based on data collected in 1984.

Another problem in the determination of the numbers is that many of the homeless tend to be hidden. Thus, no practical method has been devised for counting them. Even though the numbers cannot be known precisely, this quantification is not truly necessary for the realization that the homeless are amongst us. Yet, in spite of this fact, attempts have been made to estimate how many are without
shelter and attempts have been made to differentiate categories of homeless.

In spite of the fact that the exact numbers of homeless cannot be accurately estimated, one thing is certain and that is that the population of shelterless has increased and that their composition has changed. The homeless found in America today are not the stereotypic alcoholic of the decades prior, although the alcoholic can be found among the homeless. According to Howard Bahr, in the late 1960's most of the homeless fit the skid row stereotype (Bahr 1973:10). Today's homeless are often the result of other factors such as the reduction of social spending under the Reagan administration, the deinstitutionalization that has taken place since 1963, the removal of many single occupancy hotels resulting from urban renewal and neighborhood gentrification, and continuing unemployment (Wickenden 1985). The social spending reductions resulted in denials and lengthy delays in benefits for numerous case studies. These individuals were men and women who were obviously too disabled to work. The reduction in "cheap rent" as one respondent calls it complicated the problems of those who relied on plasma sales and canning for their income. No longer could they pay for an occasional room. While a decision on their SSI applications was pending, the individuals in this study were eligible to receive a grant in the amount of $249.00 a month if they could find a landlord to accept this amount. Some were able to secure apartments, but the majority of those observed were in need of more support services in order to maintain housing. Not
only was the grant rarely enough to cover housing expenses, but the individual was left with no income to meet his or her other needs such as personal hygiene. Toilet paper is a valued commodity in this world.

Even though the methods used in the Department of Housing and Urban Developments report are suspect, the report revealed that the composition of homeless in the 1980's includes categories of people who were previously not homeless. What is clear is that the composition is changing and the numbers are growing. "The traditional characterization of homeless persons is that of single, middle-aged, white, alcoholic men. While that may have been true some years ago, today the homeless are a much more heterogenous group consisting of women (including "battered" women) as well as men, people of all age groups (including runaway youths), Blacks and Hispanics as well as Whites, those with alcohol, drug abuse, and mental health-related problems, families as well as single persons, those who have never been employed (or have been unemployed for a very long period of time), and those recently unemployed" (HUD 1984:22). This report also indicated that the majority of those who sought emergency shelter were newcomers to the shelterless life (HUD 1984). It appears from the national and local studies that the average homeless person is in the mid-thirties. This is explained by the demographic distribution of the baby boomers born between the years of 1946 and 1961 who are entering the homeless ranks. The fastest growing group of homeless are families, especially young women and their children, who are
said to comprise 20 percent of the homeless population (Holden 1986). This group was hit especially hard by the social spending budget cuts that have taken place in recent years.

The HUD report places the homeless in three general categories based on information received from "hundreds of people with specialized knowledge of the situation of the homeless across America" (HUD 1984:22). It is interesting to note that few studies go directly to the homeless for an explanation of their status, but instead ask social service workers for their assessment or politicians for their opinion. Wiseman made special note of this phenomena in her work *Stations of The Lost*, when she asked the question, Whose reality prevails? Perhaps the attempts to ascertain the numbers have deflected from the essence of what it means to be homeless. Even studies designed to survey the homeless fail to illuminate the daily reality of living as an urban nomad. Wiseman's point is best illustrated by her examination of the skid row residents' view of the therapeutic process versus the goals of the helper. The residents of the row saw life in terms of the immediate needs of survival, whereas the social service workers attempted to treat behavioral characteristics (Wiseman 1970). An illustration of this phenomenon was found during a class on money management offered to Haven clients as part of the rehabilitation program. The counselor was attempting to have the clients develop a budget to meet their monthly needs of shelter, food, and personal hygiene. The discussion quickly turned to ways of acquiring money such as canning and plasma sales. The current monetary exchange
for scrap and plasma were discussed. Places to sleep, that is various encampments and restrictions of the shelters were briefly mentioned. One man spoke of the showers offered between 7:00 and 9:00 a.m. at St. Vincent's shelter. The conversation moved entirely away from money management to ways of getting needs met when one has no money.

The three categories of homeless given by the HUD report include: people with chronic disabilities, people who have severe personal crises, and people who suffer from adverse economic conditions (HUD 1984:22). The first type listed by the HUD includes alcoholics, drug abusers, and the mentally ill. Much of the confusion over the causes, conditions, and solutions to problems of the homeless stems from the tendency of many to see them as a homogeneous group (Santa Barbara Study). Six modal categories were given in a study of the homeless in Santa Barbara. Some overlapping is present since this cannot be avoided. The first group are the tramps, transients, and wanderers. This group is mostly comprised of older men and women of all ages. Women, as previously indicated, are the fastest growing group of homeless. However, within this group there are differences. Some are seeking employment, while others are trying to get by without working. The second group discovered in Santa Barbara are the deinstitutionalized mental patients. Immigrants from other parts of the country comprise a third group. The fourth major group found in this study are the separated, single parents. This group constitutes a sizable component of the Santa Barbara Study. This group is mostly
comprised of women and their children. They have separated from their husbands and cannot afford rents on their own. Evictees comprise a fifth group, a group consisting of those men and women who live on fixed incomes, single parents, and the recently unemployed who could simply not afford to pay their rent. The last group found in this study are the youth, children as young as 12 who are living on their own. Many appear to have been pushed out of their homes, rather than running away (Santa Barbara Study 1984:2). Similar groups of homeless can be found in any city of any size in America.

Local estimates on the homeless population vary considerably. Attempts have been made to determine the numbers by counting the number of people who sought services at the emergency shelters on a given night. In 1984, Vista conducted a study entitled "Outreach to the Homeless" which indicated that 1,200 people were without the benefit of shelter on a particular night (Vista 1984). A study presented to the Nevada legislature in 1988 which attempted to provide a count of homeless individuals included the following figures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Numbers in Shelters</td>
<td>909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health group care</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health transitional housing</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cars, rivers, parks, streets</td>
<td>2,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motels and Hotels</td>
<td>3,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends and relatives</td>
<td>3,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The main problem with this technique of counting the homeless is the fact that many do not use the emergency shelters. In the winter of 1988, for example, among the homeless who were visible to the researcher, at least 20 did not take advantage of the winter emergency arrangements. When one considers the homeless who occupied the jails and rehabilitation facilities as well as those who do not take advantage of services, it is easy to conclude that for every person that is serviced by an emergency shelter, there is one person who is not. The winter shelter averaged 400 people a night during its 120-day operation, and on some nights, 600 people sought refuge there. These are people who would be outside had the emergency arrangements not been made. These same people live outside during the non-emergency shelter arrangements as well. The conditions of the emergency shelter deserve brief discussion and will be addressed later in this report.

The Interviews conducted in the Las Vegas community reflect that estimates of the homeless range between 1,000 and 10,000 (Social Service respondents). Most of these estimates ranged
between 2,000 and 4,000.

The Las Vegas homeless are in a unique position when compared to the homeless population of other cities. Las Vegas can be viewed as a city that can turn a person's fortune. As a gambling town, it may attract many people who are seeking a new start. Related to this attraction theory is the belief that the homeless in Las Vegas are transients, not residents. The Vista Study revealed 12 percent were indeed residents, in that they had been in Las Vegas at least six months (Vista 1984). The study conducted by the Veterans Administration indicates that about 41.7 percent are residents of Las Vegas (Veterans Study 1987). Residency is important in the determination of policy. If the homeless are transients, then long-term solutions such as affordable housing are not at issue, since the emergency shelters are equipped to handle this population, at least in the winter with the development of winter emergency relief. If, on the other hand, the population of homeless are residents of Las Vegas, with intentions of staying in Las Vegas, longer term solutions must be implemented for that particular group. These solutions would include employment opportunities, affordable housing, and adequate transportation, coupled with a network of available social services. The study completed by the Veterans Administration indicated that 67.6 percent of those interviewed intended to stay in Las Vegas and 17.6 percent were undecided about staying (Veteran Study 1987). Among the clients of the Haven, 56.1 percent had been in Las Vegas less than 6 months. The others had lived in Las Vegas for longer than
6 months and 15.8 percent had been in the city for more than 5 years. The study revealed that 59.2 percent had desires to stay in Las Vegas. With this in mind, one can easily see that the current services were not meeting the basic requirements of adequate shelter. The coders of the Haven Study estimated that 65.0 percent of the clients were not in appropriate housing at the time of the study. Thus, it seems that emergency arrangements are the first step in any solution to this complex problem.

Although the current literature points to structural causes as the major explanations of homelessness in our current milieu such as deinstitutionalization, a decline in low income housing, social spending cuts and unemployment, homelessness is not a new social problem. It represents the culmination of many social problems which have not been dealt with adequately over the years by federal, state, local housing, and social welfare policies (Erickson 1986:336).

To date most of the shelter workers in Las Vegas appear to view homelessness as the result of pathology on the part of the residents. They do not seem to realize that. "Things at the bottom have changed and they have changed markedly. Not long ago, it was possible to dismiss skid rows in this country as little more than by-ways of human wreckage, seedy enclaves of the damaged, drunk, or decrepit" (Salerno, Hopper, and Baxter:1984:3). Few of the social service respondents in this study see the structural factors that lead to homelessness, and therefore, their solutions tend to be aimed at changing the individual, rather than increasing
the opportunities in the form of affordable housing and increased employment at wage levels that enable a person to afford housing. The shelters are not in a position to make the needed structural changes, but they are in the business of day to day survival. To illustrate the prevalent view of pathology, one need only look at the restrictions placed on services in the "Big Three" referring to St. Vincent's, the Salvation Army, and the Las Vegas Rescue Mission. The Salvation Army will not feed a person who appears to be intoxicated. Several social service respondents were angered over the distribution of alcohol to those living at John:3:16's lot. It seems that our society must come to recognize that the alcoholic, the drug abuser, the mentally unsound, and the physically disabled are the responsibility of our society. In the same vein, so are the men and women of the streets who are pushed to that status by a social system that has left them out of the American Dream.

A PROBLEM OF MENTAL HEALTH?: In 1963 Act (P.L. 88-164) was put into legislation. This is known as the Community Mental Health Centers Act (HUD 1984:22). Since 1963, large numbers of previously institutionalized mental patients have been released or have ceased being admitted to mental institutions. The policy was intended to create a more humane mental health system. The betrayal of that vision is apparent as large numbers of homeless fit this category. According to some sources the mentally ill homeless comprise somewhere between 30-90 percent of the homeless population. Dr. Charles Krauthammer has argued that nearly 90 percent of the
homeless fit this category. Problems with this estimate center around the fact that his conclusion was based on a study done in Boston that specifically focused on those in the shelter population, thus excluding those living in cars, bus stations homes of relatives, and other makeshift arrangements (Hope and Young 1986:20). The National Coalition for the Homeless estimates that between 30-60 percent of the homeless fall in the category of mentally ill, a figure that included the alcohol and narcotic abusers. In 1983, the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) estimated the population of mentally ill among the shelterless to be 50 percent, and in 1988, they estimated one-third of the homeless were mentally ill (NIMH 1988). The American Psychiatric Association estimates 20-50 percent of the homeless population are mentally ill. Excluded from this report are those who suffer from alcoholism and drug abuse. The HUD report estimated that half of those serviced in the emergency shelters suffer from mental illness and/or alcoholism and drug abuse (Hope and Young 1986:21).

There is a large problem created by defining the vast majority of the homeless as mentally ill. If the description is valid then the answer is simple, institutionalize them. Krauthammer did recommend this solution when he appeared on "Night Line" with Michael Harrington and George Will. Krauthammer stated that the homeless mentally ill are not in a position to enjoy the civil liberties offered to the rest of America's citizens. By defining the homeless as mentally ill, one ignores the structural factors that have allowed many to drop through the safety net. Yet, on the
other hand, if the definition is accurate, the homeless mentally ill should not be blamed for their predicament and solutions should be designed to aid them in their transition to mainstream society.

Defining the homeless as mentally ill and/or alcoholic drug users sets them apart from us and thus can deflect attention away from the problem of the failure of contemporary society to meet the needs of all its people. "They can be seen as an aberration from the normal processes of mainstream American society, not as symptoms of its failures" (Hope and Young 1986:21).

The deinstitutionalization movement was a grand social experiment that eliminated some of the worst conditions of state mental hospitals. An article in Newsweek states, "It seemed like a good idea at the time. Many state hospitals were unspeakably inhumane, and new miracle drugs could control the psychotic without straightjackets. So starting in the mid-1950's, the nation's mental hospitals began releasing inmates in unprecedented numbers. Liberals applauded the new civil rights granted to the non-dangerous mentally ill; conservatives were happy to find a seemingly compassionate way to cut state budgets. Between 1955 and 1982, state mental institutions shrank by more than three-quarters --from 558,922 patients to 125,200" (Newsweek, January 2, 1984, as seen in Erickson 1986). Furthermore, new cases have not been diagnosed and have not been institutionalized. "While some do fine, tens of thousands end up homeless--if not right away, then after years of bouncing among families, institutions and the street. At the same time, it has become nearly impossible to get
the non-dangerous mentally ill admitted to state asylums, or to keep them there long enough to get a grip on themselves" (Newsweek, January 2, 1984, as seen in Erickson 1986:7).

It is probable that a large proportion of the homeless are mentally disturbed. The deinstitutionalization that took place over the last couple of decades make this apparent. Many of the homeless are alcoholics and drug abusers as well and this is not a new phenomenon in American society as evidenced by the work of Anderson, Bahr, Wiseman, et al. Other groups or types of homeless do exist however. The battered wives, evictees, runaway or throwaway children, the new poor who have recently lost their jobs, newly discharged offenders and elderly people who cannot afford to live on their Social Security or Supplemental Security payments are also important constituents of the homeless population. Dr. Richard Roper conducted a study in 1984 in Los Angeles at the Union Rescue Mission and the Catholic Worker Soup Kitchen which revealed that over 50 percent were homeless as the result of economic factors, not mental illness (Hope and Young 1986:21).

The debate about the homeless mentally ill centers on two issues: who created the problem and what can be done about it. In keeping with the first issue of who created the problem is the proportion issue, i.e., how many of the homeless are mentally ill?

A PROBLEM OF HOUSING?: Is the problem of the homeless a mental health problem or a housing problem? According to Holden the answer is both. Holden states that it is a truism that many come from deinstitutionalization as well as restrictive commitment
statutes and shrinking hospital budgets that result in many never being institutionalized in the first place (Holden 1986:569). Holden further states that besides the perennial scourges of drug addiction and alcoholism, there is the breakdown of the family, including the surge in teenage pregnancy, the disappearance of low income housing rentals, and the shrinkage of federal social programs. Clearly, many of the homeless are the result of a mental health system's failure to meet the needs of its charges. Although deinstitutionalization is listed as one of the primary reasons people are homeless, this is only partially accurate. Many of the discharged patients had been living sheltered lives since deinstitutionalization took place. Social service cuts made it more and more difficult to afford shelter. The social service spending cuts combined with neighborhood gentrification, referring to the old single room occupancy hotels being renovated, meant that many could no longer afford housing. So as rents go up and income goes down, the once marginally sheltered become homeless. Wickenden states that some 500,000 dwellings are lost every year nationally (Wickenden 1985). In Las Vegas, the waiting list for section eight type housing is often closed. With names no longer being added to the list, no one knows how many years the waiting list would be if names were continually taken. In Miami, the waiting list for public housing is more than 20 years, and in New York, the list is at least 12 years (Erickson 1986:7). Furthermore, a source at the county Department of Housing and Urban Development in Las Vegas says that their funds have been reduced by 80 percent over the last
8 years and that the only new housing projects built since the 1970's were those already in the planning stages prior to the Reagan administration's reductions in social spending. Limitations on who is eligible for section eight type housing leaves most of today's homeless ineligible even if there was no waiting period.

Estimates by the National Housing Law Project place the number of people who are involuntarily displaced from their homes each year at 2.5 million (Salerno, Hopper, and Baxter 1984:7). The reasons for this displacement range from revitalization projects, eviction, economic development schemes, and rent inflation (Salerno, Hopper, and Baxter 1984:7). This group is comprised primarily of female-headed, single parent household (29 percent) and single mostly elderly individuals (49 percent), precisely those groups found in large measure among the homeless (Salerno, Hopper, and Baxter 1984:8).

The composition of the homeless in America has changed. The persons who are alcoholic still exist, but they are joined by large numbers of deinstitutionalized mental patients, the new unemployed who are capable of working but cannot find work that will meet their basic requirements of shelter, the displaced people that come with urban renewal, and the victims of the drastic cuts in social spending (HUD 1984). It seems apparent that the homeless are often, as Howard Becker puts it "more sinned against than sinning" (Becker 1948), when one looks at the factors that have reduced many to this status in our current decade.

Demographic trends are aggravating the problem in direct and
indirect ways according to Holden (1986:569). Multitudes of affluent baby boomers are choosing to live in the cities rather than the suburbs which results in a dramatic reduction in low cost housing as large sections of cities are being converted into condominiums. These developments have had a devastating effect on those who previously occupied the inner cities. This trend is intensified by the fact that HUD under the Reagan administration has virtually bowed out of low income housing. The NIMH has labeled homelessness the "Social ill of the eighties." The administration is not overly concerned. The stance is that the problem is a local responsibility, and robust economic growth is the key to turning the situation around (Holden 1986:569).

A social service respondent who worked at the Catholic Community Services Shelter at the time of this study spoke with each person who came through the shelter at least once during their stay. He was very much aware of the structural causes of homelessness. He stated that he believes the causes of homelessness to be three faceted. According to his analysis, the capitalist system keeps many on the streets, secondly, this respondent saw the individual who suffered from social or psychological failure as a prime candidate for homeless status, this category included the alcoholics, drug abusers, and those with mental disorders. Thirdly, some were homeless as the result of a major event such as divorce, widowhood, or loss of motivation.
SUMMARY: Chapter Three began with the question "What happened to the war on poverty?" In order to answer this question, a discussion of political and economic factors followed. This chapter outlines how cuts in social spending and the decline of affordable housing propelled many people into homelessness. Deinstitutionalization of mental patients to communities ill equipped and unwilling to care for these patients increased the numbers of homeless today. The continued reluctance of the federal government to address homelessness has left the problem for local communities to manage. Local communities appear to be failing in their handling of the crisis. Failure to provide basic services is often justified by the magnet theory, in spite of no quantification of data to support this theory. Attitudes that blame the victim contribute to the failure of providing services for the homeless. Greyhound therapy was discussed in the chapter. Further, Chapter Three examined the problem of accurately counting the homeless and the changing composition of the homeless population.
DEFINING THE HOMELESS: The concept of homelessness is difficult to define and therefore measure. As Watson points out, "homeless-ness is an historically and culturally specific concept. Like poverty, it is a relative concept: people make judgements about their own level of deprivation on the basis of what they see around them. Thus, in a society where mud huts are the most prevalent forms of housing and hence the norm, it is probable that their inhabitants would not, in isolation, consider themselves homeless. If, however, the mud hut dwellers were to compare themselves with those living in wealthier societies, or were themselves to live in a mud hut in one of those societies, the situation would be quite different. Subjectively, they might suddenly begin to see themselves as homeless" (Watson 1986:10). According to a six-month project conducted by Vista entitled "Outreach to the Homeless," "Homelessness refers to people in the streets who, in seeking shelter, have no alternative but to obtain it from a private or public agency. Homeless people are distinguished from those who have permanent shelter even though that shelter may be physically inadequate. They are also distinguished from those living in overcrowded conditions, often described as 'doubling up' (referring to people who have lost their homes or apartments and are forced to live with friends and relatives). While the over-crowding is generally unsatisfactory, people in this situation are not homeless" (HUD 1984). The HUD report states that "A person is
counted as homeless if his/her nighttime residence is: (a) in a public or private emergency shelter which takes a variety of forms -- armories, schools, church basements, government buildings, former firehouses, and where temporary vouchers are provided by private or public agencies, even hotels, apartments or boarding homes; or (b) in the streets, parks, subways, bus terminals, railroad stations, airports, under bridges, or aqueducts, abandoned buildings without utilities, cars trucks, or any other public or private space that is not designed for shelter. Residents of halfway houses, congregate living facilities, and long-term detoxification centers are not classified as homeless because of the longer term nature of such facilities. Furthermore, upon discharge, many residents of such facilities will probably not end up on the streets. However, persons who are temporarily in jails or hospitals, but whose usual nighttime residence is (a) or (b) above, are considered homeless" (HUD 1984). This definition and similar definitions are really inadequate. As Watson points out, there is little consensus among policy makers, researchers and others as to the definition of homeless. Further, Watson explains that a problem with the concept of homelessness is the notion of a 'home.' A house is generally thought of as a structure, whereas a 'home' is not. A 'home' implies social relations, or activities within the structure. The concept of family is associated with a home not a house. The word home conjures up images of personal warmth, comfort, stability and security" (Watson 1986:8). Interestingly, few researchers have taken notice of the difference between these
two concepts (Watson 1986:9). Jon Erickson and Charles Wilhelm state that "generally, persons are thought to be homeless if they have no permanent residence and seek security, rest, and protection from the elements. The homeless typically live in areas that are not designed to be shelters (e.g., parks, bus terminals, under bridges, in cars), occupy structures without permission (e.g., squatters), or are provided emergency shelter by a public or private agency" (Erickson 1986:xix). Criticism has been brought to bear on the emphasis placed on shelter, or housing conditions, rather than the lack of social relationships that are associated with a 'home' (Watson 1986:9). The homeless are those suffering from much more complicated problems than being houseless. To assume that shelter alone will alleviate the problem is simplistic, although it is a start. Harrington states "I don't think 'homeless' is the proper word for these new poor, since the word implies that their problem is a lack of physical shelter. It is much more profound than that. Some have roofs over their heads: adult homes, single-room-occupancy hotels (SROs), city shelters, or psychiatric emergency rooms and wards. And there are distinct, quite different groups of the uprooted: the famous 'bag ladies' who huddle in the entranceways to stores at night or ride the subways; young workers, particularly from the minorities, who cannot find a place in the economy of the eighties; and ex-mental patients who have been, in theory, 'deinstitutionalized,' but in fact have simply been dumped onto the streets of the city or else
'reinstitutionalized in profit-making warehouses for discarded human beings (Harrington 1984:100).

Nancy Kaufman defined homelessness as "a condition wherein an individual on a given night has no place to sleep and is forced to be on the street or seek shelter in a temporary facility" (Kaufman 1984:22). Although this definition does not begin to assess those living without the benefit of a home, it does include those who live without shelter, or with temporary shelter. Kaufman's definition was used in this study as well. The homeless in this study included those who have not had a permanent place of residence other than temporary shelters for a period of one week or more.

THE RESEARCH SETTING: In order to portray the research setting, let's turn to Kurt Vonnegut's description of Skid Row in "Breakfast of Champions." "The nickname for Bunny's neighborhood was Skid Row. Every American town of any size had a neighborhood with the same nickname: Skid Row. It was a place where people who did not have any friends or relatives or property or usefulness or ambition were suppose to go.

People like that would be treated with disgust in other neighborhoods and policemen would keep them moving. They were easy to move, usually, as toy balloons.

And they would drift hither and yon, like balloons filled with some gas slightly heavier than air, until they came to rest in Skid Row, against the foundations of the old Fairchild Hotel.
They could snooze and mumble to each other all day long. They could beg. They could get drunk. The basic theme was this one: They were to stay there and not bother anybody anywhere else—until they were murdered for thrills, or until they were frozen to death by the wintertime" (Vonnegut 1973).

Las Vegas does not have an area known as Skid Row per se. But several areas have been identified as places where the homeless tend to congregate. These areas comprise what Wiseman called the "Loop" (Wiseman 1970). The basic loop of services consists of the "Big Three" for shelter, St. Vincent's Shelter, the Salvation Army and the Las Vegas Rescue Mission. Also included on the loop are the jail, Western Counseling for nonmedical detoxification, the "Yard" at St. Vincent's plaza, Southern Nevada Adult Mental Health, and various programs within the scope of the Salvation Army such as the drug and alcohol treatment program. Other stations occasionally are used by some of the homeless, such as "Godinme ministry," which offers group housing at a marginal fee, often supported by a grant from Clark County Social Services. Weekly rentals and motels should also be considered as stations on the loop.

For meals, several options are available for those who have no resources. Some receive foodstamps, yet have no place to prepare food bought with these stamps. The foodstamps are often used as money for drugs or simply exchanged by the recipients for money in order to buy needed items such as soap. Even for those who live on the streets who do get foodstamps, rarely are they enough to meet
their food requirements, and thus, most will use the other food sources on the loop to supplement their daily nutritional requirements. For those who are not in a sheltered program offered by the "big three," there is no breakfast available. One exception to this is the Catholic Worker coffee line. The line begins at 6:30 in the morning with coffee and some suitable breakfast served to any that come to the line. The Catholic Worker sets this up directly behind the existing Salvation Army near the railroad tracks where numerous individuals have encampments (plans are being made to relocate the Salvation Army). Lunch is served at St. Vincent's Dining Room every day at noon. For dinner, two basic options are available: the Salvation Army and the Rescue Mission serve at 5:00 p.m. One evening a week the Catholic Worker serves dinner at a local church which is well attended. Still others forage through dumpsters for their food requirements. Maslov's hierarchy of needs makes it clear that, at base, shelter and food are required before other needs can be met.

Those who are not served by the "big three" in one of their longer term shelter programs tend to be longer term residents of Las Vegas who have made the loop of services, failing at many of its stations. Basic requirements limit who can be served. For example, a noncompliant client of the mental health system is an unlikely candidate to be sheltered on the loop because of his or her odd behaviors. Other limitations include the seven day rule at the Salvation Army and the Las Vegas Rescue Mission for emergency shelter. As this is being written, the Las Vegas Rescue Mission
emergency lodging is only accepting men over 65 years old or those physically disabled and women and children who have not stayed more than seven nights. The Salvation Army emergency lodge has a requirements of identification which prevents many from using their services, and they also have the seven night limit in a six-month period. Many only stay two or three nights because "first nighters" have priority.

Regularly, the police are out with the paddy wagon, making their morning quota. One morning in the winter of 1988, three of the workers were arrested along with two homeless individuals, as the workers tried to intervene. This led a local columnist in the Review Journal to write, "Three social workers arrested, I feel safer already." The city fathers have made it painfully clear that the homeless are not welcome downtown. Las Vegas is a unique city because of legalized gaming, and in keeping with this, an image must be presented to middle America that will attract them to Las Vegas. Homeless individuals do not fit this image. Thus, city crews have been given the task of removing the human debris. The crews bulldozed an area known as tent city in the winter of 1986. The tent city was located less than a mile from the world famous Fremont Street. The homeless were encouraged to relocate to the area referred to as the "Yard," which is a fenced, blacktopped area adjacent to the Catholic Community Services Shelter and the St. Vincent's Dining Room. The Yard is a very important station on the loop for individuals on the street. This researcher has observed the same 50 individuals use the Yard for survival over the duration
of the data collection. For them it was a matter of lifestyle. The Yard is open during the day but must close its doors at night because of city fire and safety codes. The researcher observed that the population of the Yard averages between 250 and 300 on any given day. The people corralled in the Yard have no shelter at night. However, they sit, sleep, and visit with each other during the day without fear of official sanction. Lunch is available through the services of the St. Vincent's Dining Room. Most often this lunch consists of a hot bowl of soup. At 6:30 each evening, the dining room serves coffee and donuts to those remaining near the area. By this hour many of the Yard persons make their way toward the Salvation Army or the Las Vegas Rescue Mission for an evening meal before seeking a place to "camp out." "Camping Out" is a term used by many of the homeless to describe where they go to sleep. One area frequented by the campers is located directly across the street from the St. Vincent's shelter. Others make their way to a park located near the shelter and still others slept in the graveyard nearby. It should be noted that, in the winter of 1987, the location of campers had changed slightly due to the fact that the vacant lot across from the Yard was regularly bulldozed.

In 1987, several homeless individuals were sleeping in an area right outside of the fence of the Yard. A couple who lived in a tent and utilized the dining room expressed concern that the area had been bought by the Catholic Community Services and that they would not longer be allowed to stay there. They escorted the researcher to their tent, in which they had a small kitten, and for
several hours they told their story and introduced the researcher to others who were soon to be removed. Within one week of this contact, the area was cleared out. The researcher wonders where those men and women have gone.

In the winter of 1987, a man named John 3:16 brought attention through the popular media to the plight of the homeless. John 3:16 opened a place between the Salvation Army and the Las Vegas Rescue Mission called "Soup, Soap and Hope," "John 3:16's" or "Pride Village." Upon visiting this area, the researcher observed that over 300 men and women were present. On the same day, the researcher observed 200 to 300 men and women in the Yard. At this time, the armory was also taking in 200 to 300 men a night.

In the winter of 1988, many respondents tended to use the emergency shelter at night and the Yard during the day, thus rarely venturing away from the Plaza area. One night, 680 persons sought refuge in the winter emergency shelter (Shelter records). These people consisted of those not serviced by other programs and those who were left outside during non-emergency conditions. Claiming that the homeless could find accommodations elsewhere, city crews uprooted an encampment that slept about two hundred near the railroad tracks by the Salvation Army. Trespassing charges were handed out by park rangers in the nearby park and several activists were arrested for attempting to stop the tractor from bulldozing lean-tos and other makeshift dwellings (Review Journal, November 16, 1988).

Initially the researcher identified herself as a student
writing a paper on the homeless. Prior to going to the field, the interview guide was reviewed in order to make the best use of the field experience. After each field experience, the researcher recorded the data as best remembered. This enabled the researcher to collect the data in an unobtrusive manner in keeping with naturalistic field techniques. The researcher had found that the respondents tended to be reluctant to have tape-recorded interviews for a number of reasons. Many were suspicious of the researcher's intentions, and others were concerned that they might be identified and services might be denied because of their criticism of the agencies that were currently offering services such as the bathroom facilities in the Yard or the noon meal at the dining facility. A common criticism was of the media's use of cameras. Some stated that once they were seen on television, they would not be able to find employment in the community because of the stigma of being down and out.

It should be noted that homeless individuals can be located in many areas of the city as well as the locations previously mentioned. Two such men live in a fallen sign several miles away from the Yard. These men have occupied this location for a period of four years. They make no use of the current services, and they spend their days in search of tin cans to provide them with income to buy food and other items. During the summer, the two men sleep between the sign and the building, and during the winter, they move inside the sign.

While many interviews were conducted in the Yard, others were
conducted at various locations around Las Vegas, and the majority of impressions came from working as an agent of social services.

**SAMPLING:** A snowball sample was conducted. This technique was selected because of the nature of the population, since the homeless tend to be hidden on our streets. Initially those approached by the researcher tended to be those that appeared approachable. Several of the men were simply not capable of responding to the interviewer in a coherent manner. One such respondent introduced himself as the Dr. of Invention and stated that he would talk in abstraction. The Dr. of Invention did indeed talk in abstraction and informed the researcher that he walked several feet above the pavement in order to avoid the snakes. Only those that seemed capable of understanding and responding to the researcher were included initially. The men and women of the streets who suffer from the problems related to coherent thinking are least likely to be included in any survey research on the homeless since interviewers can interview only those capable of responding to the questionnaires. A study conducted for United Way in the winter of 1987 and 1988 illustrated this point quite well. As an interviewer on this project, it was necessary to complete a structured questionnaire on thirty respondents in areas other than the regular shelters. Thirty respondents were interviewed in the area known as the Yard and at the National Guard Armory, which Governor Richard Bryan ordered to be opened as a temporary facility to shelter those not served by the existing shelters during the freezing weeks in December 1987 and January 1988. In conducting
these interviews, the researcher found that five of the men approached fell in the category of unable to respond to the researcher. These five men were not included in the final report simply because they could not answer the structured questions. Thus, while the survey provided useful information on the needs of many homeless in the Las Vegas area, those whose needs surpassed the needs of many simply were not included. It is the researcher's concern that most reports done in a prestructured manner will fall into the same trap of overlooking the most needy amidst the homeless population. The research conducted for this thesis fell into a similar trap, since those who were sleeping or those who were frightening to the researcher were not interviewed. This situational drawback changed when the researcher began her duties as a social worker, since the population served was limited to those who had a formal diagnosis of chronic mentally ill. The role of social worker enabled the researcher to speak with several new respondents on a daily basis regardless of mental status and to know 100's of respondents over a course of twenty months as a result of seeing them daily.

Any statements made as a result of these contacts can only be inferential since the exact parameters of the population are unknown. One can try to be representative, but without knowing the parameters, this is virtually impossible.

This research is exploratory since the goal was to see what themes emerged from it. Exploratory research is ideal when a new topic is being studied, since it can aid in the determination of
where future research should be focused. At least three purposes exist for exploratory research according to Babbie (1979). It satisfies the curiosity and the desire for better understanding. It tests the feasibility of undertaking future study. It aids in the development of methods for future study. Exploratory research is essential when breaking new ground, but it suffers from a major shortcoming which is that it seldom provides satisfactory answers (Babbie 1979).

**RESEARCH TOOLS:** The entire project was conducted over a period of several years, between 1984 and 1989. The researcher examined newspaper accounts, available literature, talked with numerous homeless individuals, and social service workers in various settings. In May of 1988, the researcher accepted a position as a social worker in an agency that assisted the chronically mentally ill homeless. The program is referred to as "St. Vincent's Haven of Hope," and it is funded by the Stewart McKinney Act. This position allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the survival techniques of the homeless. The agency also housed the city's largest shelter for homeless men and the dining room that feeds an average of 400 people each day. In her work, Wiseman stated that she was encouraged by Anslem Strauss to make the rounds repeatedly during her study rather than to complete one institution at a time (Wiseman 1970). Although the research collected for this thesis was not designed to "complete" an institution, this advice was useful, in that it allowed for a more total picture to emerge as the researcher explored the problem. For example, the Las Vegas
street person lives in a much different ecological environment when the summer heat reaches 115 degrees than in the winter months. The summer poses serious health threats, as the shelterless seek reprieve from the elements. The winter emergency shelters do relieve some of the hazards of the cold.

Many of the structured interviews were obtained during the summer of the 1986 and the winter of 1987, although countless respondents were observed and talked with at other times during the study. Wallace stated that "When the sociologist arrives in skid row with pre-coded, pre-tested, survey questionnaire in hand, every one of his questions implicitly assumes the person is a failure and asks why. Even though this question remains unstated, both questioner and questioned perceives its fundamental reality" (Spradley 1970:68). Spradley goes on to state that "studies that have attempted to discover the culture and identity of this population without defining in advance what is significant are rare, and even these do no more than superficially discuss what the men themselves consider extremely significant--their encounter with law enforcement officials" (Spradley 1970:68). Some are critical of approaching the field with theoretical preconceptions (Douglas 1976). Yet, qualitative research must necessarily be an alternation between induction and deduction according to Glaser and Strauss (1967). Thus, the researcher did not approach the field with a pre-coded questionnaire in hand but preconceived notions as to the causes of homelessness were present due to the fact that information had already been accumulated by the researcher. The
data collected in the personal interview stage of this research generated themes of its own, many of which were not found in the available literature to date.

One goal of this research was to collect amounts from the homeless living in the Las Vegas area. This study is ethnographic in nature and naturalistic field methods were utilized encompassing a variety of techniques. Naturalistic inquiry utilizing case studies is best suited for the symbolic interactionist (Douglas 1976). At least seven assumptions underlie this method that apply to symbolic interactionism. This method allows for combining a native's symbolic meaning with an ongoing pattern of interaction. It aids the researcher in the adoption of the attitude of the other while distinguishing between everyday and scientific reality. This method allows for the linking of symbols and definitions with the social relationships and groups that provide those conceptions. This method allows for recording the behaviors and settings of interaction. The researcher may be able to reflect the changes that occur within the process. The researcher can view the research as an instance of interaction. Finally, naturalistic methods enable one to use sensitizing concepts which point to the construction of interactive, causal explanations of social processes (Denzin 1978).

An investigative paradigm which is useful in overcoming misinformation, lies, fronts, and evasions is offered by Douglas (1976). He proposed a strategy of direct experience, establishing friendly relations, checking out information with other
information, and possible interviews. The researcher was able to meet more than 1,000 men and women during the course of her duties as a social worker. In March of 1989, 200 case files from the Haven of Hope were surveyed and coded to ascertain who was being served by the program. This provided a quantitative base to serve as a frame of reference. However, it is the strategy offered by Douglas that allowed for a clearer understanding of the homeless phenomena.

SUMMARY: Various methods of defining the homeless have been discussed. Important in this discussion is the concept of a home versus the concept of a shelter. It is difficult to reach consensus on an operational definition of homelessness, thus impossible to have an accurate count. This fact has not resulted in a lack of estimates. However, the various estimates have been the source of much discussion among homeless advocates and policy makers.

The operational definition of homeless used in this research is inclusive of those who are temporarily housed on the loop, because evidence suggests that many homeless move among the stations on the loop. The period of one week without permanent shelter was included in operational criteria, because those people who managed on a loop station for one week or less were only homeless, not shelterless. In contrast, after one week, most of the homeless found themselves shelterless, seeking another station.
Chapter Four included a discussion of the research setting in Las Vegas. Also, tools used in the collection of the data and who was sampled were discussed.
CHAPTER FIVE: WHO ARE THE LAS VEGAS HOMELESS?

LOCAL STUDIES: Who are the Las Vegas homeless? This question can best be addressed by looking at several studies completed on this population in recent years. The first attempt to answer this question using survey research was entitled, "Outreach to the Homeless" (Vista Project 1984). The study consisted of one hundred and seventy-seven interviews conducted between November 1, 1983 through March 19, 1984. Another attempt to ascertain who the homeless are in Las Vegas was funded by United Way and conducted through the Departments of Social Work and Sociology at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The research for this study was gathered in the winter months of 1987 and 1988. One hundred and twenty responses were collected in several locations that service the homeless (United Way 1987). Earlier in 1987, a study was conducted by the Veterans Administration in which three hundred and eighteen respondents were interviewed at several locations that service the homeless in Las Vegas (Veterans 1987).

In March 1989, 200 cases from the Haven of Hope program were coded by the Haven staff. The program had serviced 340 cases at that time. Thus, the Haven study represents the men and women formally diagnosed as chronically mentally ill and homeless. Further, the study is only representative of those served by this program. Although the data are not indicative of how many homeless are mentally ill, it may provide an understanding of the problems unique to this population of homeless. A few findings seem significant and worth mentioning. Because the Haven is located near the St. Vincent's Shelter, Dining Room and the Yard, the
sources of most referrals came from other clients, walk-ins, and the shelter. Fifty-five and four-tenths percent of the Haven cases came from these sources. Thirteen percent of the clients were direct referrals from Southern Nevada Adult Mental Health Services. Twenty-two other referral sources were noted. Slightly over half of the cases were diagnosed with one of the types of schizophrenic disorder. A bi-polar diagnosis was given to slightly over 15 percent of the cases. A significant percentage of the cases also had another diagnosis, thus they were dually diagnosed. Slightly over 30 percent of the cases had an identifiable problem with alcohol. Surprisingly, only 6.7 percent of the cases had a noticeable problem with drugs. Less than 4 percent had a gambling problem. The coders suspected an additional 5.5 percent of the cases had a problem with alcohol, drugs, or gambling, even though the respondents denied any problem.

The problems for the dually diagnosed are numerous, and the existing facilities are simply inadequate to meet the needs of this population. The dually diagnosed are the most likely to be left out of the shelters, mental hospitals, and drug rehabilitation facilities. On the other hand, they appear to be more likely to make the loop between jail and the streets. It is beyond the scope of this work to fully address these problems, but, in this author's opinion, a medical detoxification center, combined with long-term inpatient mental health treatment would be the first step in assisting this group of homeless.
Perhaps, the most striking statistic found in the Haven study is that only twenty percent of the cases had never been arrested. Of the eighty percent who had been to jail, the vast majority had been arrested more than once. The typical charges were vagrancy, trespassing, and public nuisance. The data did not indicate where they had been arrested. An eyeball survey of current Haven clients, completed in December 1989, indicated that about one-third had been arrested in 1989. The researcher met numerous individuals who had served time for jaywalking. One respondent served seven days on this charge, and yet another respondent served 14 days on a jaywalking charge. Thus, the jail serves as an important station on the loop, often complicating issues of survival since once incarcerated, medical appointments, social security appointments, and other appointments must be rescheduled, thereby setting back the application process. On occasion, the respondents are relieved to go to jail. Often needed medication can be obtained through the jail crisis worker, and the alcoholic can undergo detoxification. Perhaps the most pervasive complaint heard among respondents about the jail is that it is a nonsmoking jail. Cigarettes are a very popular item on the streets. According to a study funded by NIMH, the homeless mentally ill are often victims of crime and thus have involvement with the criminal justice system (Morrissey and Dennis 1986).

The four studies will be juxtaposed in order to provide a clearer understanding of the demographics of the homeless in Las Vegas.
Demographics of the Las Vegas Homeless

TABLE I: Median Age

VISTA 1984 61% less than 40 years old
UNITED WAY 1987 37
VETERANS 1987 37
HAVEN 1989 36

The average homeless person in Las Vegas is in their thirties. National studies replicate these findings (HUD 1984). This age bracket stands true for those diagnosed as chronically mentally ill as well.

TABLE II: Ethnicity in percent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Caucasian</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VISTA 1984</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNITED WAY 1987</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VETERANS 1987</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAVEN 1989</td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The vast majority of the homeless in Las Vegas are Caucasian. Consistent with national findings, however, is the over-representation of Blacks in proportion to the population (HUD 1984).

TABLE III: Shelterless in percent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Under 1 month</th>
<th>Less than a year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VISTA 1984</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNITED WAY 1987</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VETERANS 1987</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAVEN 1989</td>
<td>84.2 were shelterless at the time of intake</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table III indicates that three-quarters of the homeless surveyed were new to homelessness. Again the report issued by HUD had similar findings. What is interesting to note is that eighty-four point two percent of the chronically mentally ill persons were shelterless. This supports the observation made previously of the chronically mentally ill being the least likely to be in shelters.

**TABLE IV: Length of time in Las Vegas in percent**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Less than a month</th>
<th>One year or less</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VISTA 1984</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNITED WAY 1987</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VETERANS 1987</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAVEN 1989</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table IV shows that the vast majority of homeless are new to Las Vegas. Yet, clearly, many are residents of the city.

**TABLE V: Plans to stay in Las Vegas in percent**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VISTA 1984</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNITED WAY 1987</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VETERANS 1987</td>
<td>67.2</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAVEN 1989</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table V simply illustrates that a sizable proportion of those surveyed have intentions of staying in Las Vegas.
TABLE VI: Mental health problems in percent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Do not know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNITED WAY 1987</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VETERANS 1987</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HAVEN 1989: 92.5 had a previous diagnosis of chronically mentally ill and 7.5 had never been diagnosed before, yet the staff felt they were appropriate as chronically mentally ill.

Table VI indicates that many of the homeless admit to a mental health problem. Because of the nature of self-reporting, these estimates may not be valid. National studies show that one-third of the homeless have mental problems (HUD 1984).

TABLE VII: Alcohol problems admitted to in percent

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VISTA 1984</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNITED WAY 1987</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VETERANS 1987</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAVEN 1989</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table VII is consistent with findings that demonstrate one-third of the homeless are alcoholic (Stark 1987). Note that thirty-one point three percent of the chronically mentally ill are alcoholic, thus, they are dually diagnosed.

TABLE VIII: Drug problem admitted to in percent and willingness to be treated

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNITED WAY 1987</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAVEN 1989</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table VIII shows that three-quarters of those who admit to a drug problem desire treatment for their problem.
TABLE IX: Gender by frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VISTA 1984</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNITED WAY 1987</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VETERANS 1987</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAVEN 1989</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table IX has been included to give an idea of the gender represented in these studies.

PROFILES: The faces of the homeless cannot be seen merely by looking at survey research alone. The people of the streets exist by making the loop of services. They fit many different groups of homeless. This next section is devoted to the men and women of the streets whom the researcher encountered. The names have been changed to protect the confidentiality of the respondents.

Perhaps the most memorable person met by this researcher was Juanita. Juanita lived on a bench near a local drug store for a little under three years. She is black and about 69 years old. This respondent served to motivate the researcher towards an understanding of the homeless phenomena. As a student, the researcher saw her on the way to campus. One day the researcher was moved to speak with Juanita. The smell of alcohol and urine was nauseating. Juanita explained that she moved to Las Vegas in 1969 and that she came from Arkansas. When asked why she stayed outside, her answer was quite simply, "God told me to sit here and let everyone know they can live forever through Jesus Christ our Lord." After an extremely cold day, the researcher stopped to see...
how the respondent was surviving and was told, "Thanks to Sister Linda, I made it through the hurricane last night." The researcher had given her a coat a few days prior. The researcher began to seek possible shelter alternatives for the respondent and was told by one social service respondent who knew her, "She has other problems as you know, she is too much for us." The researcher soon discovered that none of the existing programs could offer assistance to this woman. Her use of alcohol and her lack of desire to be treated served to bar her from existing facilities. At this time, the winter emergency shelter program had not been implemented. Juanita was an unlikely candidate to take advantage of the emergency shelter even if it were available as she had avoided other services such as meals offered at the facilities. Instead, she used the bathroom facilities at a nearby McDonald's, and she foraged in the dumpsters for food. Juanita did manage to receive money from passersby. One day the researcher was visiting with her and a young man came by, handed her a twenty dollar bill and said, "I'll see you next payday." Juanita disappeared from sight in 1988 and this researcher wonders where she may have gone.

Don is 53 years old and lives most of the year outside. Don was contacted early in this research and talked with almost daily from December 1988 until the present. Don has lived in Las Vegas since 1985. His story reveals a man with a long history of hospitalizations for mental illness. The description he gives of his treatment at Patton State Mental Hospital is horrifying. He displays a great mistrust of mental health officials and only
sporadically takes the stelazine prescribed for him. He tells how he and his wife bore three children. He was a laborer, and he drank quite a bit of alcohol, often running into problems with the law because of his drinking. The story is that one day his wife went to the store and was killed in an auto accident. He then finished raising his children. After the last child left home, three years after the death of his spouse, Don hit the road. He found himself in Las Vegas and homeless. When the researcher first met Don, he was living in an encampment near the St. Vincent's Plaza. His face glowed in the December twilight. He was wrapped in blankets and propped by a tree. The next encounter came when the researcher served as a social worker with the Haven program. At this time, the respondent was having a hard time with the symptoms of his schizophrenia. He would not let anyone near him and he repeatedly poked a stick at anyone who tried. After several weeks of attempting to befriend Don, he finally consented to come in the Haven for coffee. Several attempts were made to secure the proper medication, but Don often fled from the clinic, walking the five miles back to the Plaza from Southern Nevada Adult Mental Health and refusing to take the medications regularly once they were finally obtained. One occasion stands out in the researcher's mind which illustrates the problems of the mentally ill in negotiating the practical means of survival. Don's social security check did not arrive one month, and he insisted that it had been stolen by the staff at the Haven even though his check went to another address. He became highly agitated and put his fist
through the glass door of the Haven. He stood bleeding at the wrists not allowing anyone to help. He was sent to University Medical Center and was bandaged and released back to the streets. Don would like to pay rent, but the rents are too high for his liking or his means. Once every six months or so, he enters the St. Vincent shelter for a month or so.

A man named Cliff came to Las Vegas by car from California. He had marketable skills as an air conditioning man. He was 45 years old. He was waiting for a check from his last job in California to be forwarded to the shelter. He was not a resident of the shelter, yet mail pickup was one service the shelter offered in order to aid the person in his transition to employed since an address is crucial. Cliff came to Las Vegas one week before the interview in search of his wife and son who live here. He said that he wants to be near his sixteen-year-old son. He was intending to find employment and get an apartment as soon as possible so that his son would not be ashamed of him.

Sam came from Texas. He was sitting next to Cliff in the Yard and the interview was conducted with both men at the same time. Sam was a retired Navy veteran who receives a retirement check every month. His check was to be forwarded to the shelter, at which time Sam had hopes of getting a place to live. Sam was sixty years old and had been out of the service since 1970. Sam also had a car and an employable skill as a drywall man. He stated that the reason he had come to Las Vegas was to get away from his two nephews who were always borrowing money from him to buy pot. Sam
slept in his car at night at the rest area on the outskirts of town. He said, "A lot of street people are sleeping at the rest stop because this is not against city ordinances."

Joe sat alone at a table in the Yard. Joe was sixty years old and had been living on the streets in Las Vegas for six years. Joe states that many of the street people have left Las Vegas since the city began its crackdown policy. He said that life is much harder here now because of police harassment. He came from New York with a friend after his wife divorced him. He claimed that he looked for employment but that Las Vegas was a youth-oriented town and that people over forty could not find work here. In New York, Joe had been a computer programmer and he and his wife owned a beautiful house on Long Island. When they divorced, he gave her everything and headed west with his friend. Shortly after arriving in Las Vegas, Joe's friend left for California. Joe stated that at first he liked the freedom of the streets, which satisfied his wanderlust, but that got old quickly. However, he found that he could not find work because he had no money for an address or a room to clean himself. Now he suffers from severe health problems stemming from his life on the streets. He was hospitalized recently for tuberculosis, and upon his release, the government gave him thirty days shelter to aid him in his recovery. He claims not to drink because of his medication. Joe eats lunch at the St. Vincent's Dining facility, stays in the Yard until it is time to walk to the Las Vegas Rescue Mission for dinner, and then he camps out at night. He believes that the primary problem of the homeless
is a lack of jobs and ageism. He believes that only a small percentage of the homeless are there by choice. Joe also believes that one of the main problems here in Las Vegas is that the wages are so low that even if one could find a job, one would not make enough to live on.

SUMMARY: A discussion of several studies conducted on the homeless in Las Vegas is included in Chapter Four. These studies replicate each other in findings, thus they can be considered reliable. Further, studies conducted elsewhere in the U.S. are similar to the Las Vegas research indicating that the Las Vegas homeless are not atypical of the homeless in general. Chapter Four attempted to present the people behind the statistics, in the section titled "Profiles."
CHAPTER SIX: DATA GENERATED THEMES

FACTORS TO CONSIDER: The data collected was analyzed and placed into themes that reflected the respondents social reality. Several general themes emerged related to the causes of homelessness, proposed solutions, and life experiences of the street. In naturalistic research, significance is sometimes not indicated by either frequency or distribution of phenomena. "A single act, by a person in power, may be far more significant than multiple acts by the powerless," (Wiseman 1970:278). Thus, this phase of the research required that the categories met frequency requirements enough to include them in the research as well as the requirement of significance. Wiseman explains that the "problem is: what data is so idiosyncratic that it should be omitted as of little consequence to the analysis of perspectives on the social worlds?" (Wiseman 1970:278). She further stated that "The search for frequency and distribution in this study was one of watching for a repeat of certain total patterns rather than isolated portions" (Wiseman 1970:278). The themes selected were chosen by the criteria presented in the Wiseman work. Significant themes emerged from the data with enough frequency to merit inclusion in this study.

Marvin Scott and Stanford Lyman describe accounts as "a linguistic device employed whenever an action is subjected to valutative inquiry" (Scott and Lyman 1968). Certain linguistic devices are used by the homeless with enough frequency to merit
attention. An account is similar to what Max Weber termed as motive, which is defined as "a complex of subjective meaning which seems to the actor himself or to the observer as an adequate ground for the conduct in question" (Max Weber, Theory of Social and Economic Organization, translated by Talcott Parsons and A.M. Henderson, Glencoe: The Free Press, 1947, pp. 98-99). C. Wright Mills was among the first to employ the notion of accounts in his essay "Situated Actions and Vocabularies of Motives" (American Sociological Review, 5 December, 194:904-913). Accounts are situated according to the social statuses of the interactants and are standardized within cultures (Scott 1968). This aspect is important to keep in mind because the accounts collected came from various sources, and the researcher held differing statuses while collecting the accounts. While many observations occurred with men and women who were not diagnosed as mentally ill, in the majority of the interactions, the researcher was in the role of social worker, working primarily with the mentally ill population. One example of how information is concealed from the social service worker is demonstrated in the following dyad. Two daily clients of the Haven, a woman and a man, had problems with "Crack" and spent whatever resources they could find on the drug. This resulted in a patterned lifestyle with their day beginning at the Catholic Worker coffee line around 6:30, after a night of crack and prostitution. They would come for lunch at the dining room or at the Haven if they felt remorseful, needed services, or if they were not in jail. Each client remained distant from the other during
their making the loop of services, but whenever one secured money for crack, they would join together at the crack house until their money was gone. During their treatment at the Haven, workers tried to teach recovery principles offered by the program of Alcoholics Anonymous and to secure housing by using their social security payment for rent. The clients spoke of supporting each other in sobriety while hiding the evenings of crack use from their therapists, social workers, and other gatekeepers of services. While each admitted a problem, they would not admit they shared the problem. When it was drawn to their attention that the workers were aware of their joint crack activities, one client candidly pointed out how the workers had enabled this by giving them their food stamps and not placing better controls on their money. According to J.L. Austin, there are two general types of accounts: justifications and excuses. "Justifications are accounts in which one accepts responsibility for the act in question, but denies the pejorative quality associated with it" (Scott and Lyman 1968:344). Excuses are defined as "socially approved vocabularies for mitigating or relieving responsibility when conduct is questioned" (Scott and Lyman 1968:344). The four modal types of excuses are: appeal to accidents, appeal to defeasibility, appeal to biological drives, and scapegoating. In the above example, the respondent was scapegoating the social service worker in order to excuse the behavior. Both excuses and justifications are "socially approved vocabularies that neutralize an act or its consequences when one or both are called into question. Justifications are similar to
excuses but are called for when one wishes to assert a positive value to the act in the face of contrary evidence" (Scott and Lyman 1968:348). In this case, the respondent was not asserting positive qualities to the conduct in question.

A SCENARIO: In the shadows of Las Vegas, beneath the brightness of the neon lights. Some people are eking out an existence. Women and their children exist beside single adult men. When an individual first enters the loop in Las Vegas, he or she is quick to learn the ropes. Generally, a veteran of the streets will help direct newcomers to the possible options of services. If shelter is not deemed appropriate by the gatekeepers, the newcomer who is confronted with the reality of staying outside awhile generally finds a buddy. The buddy is an experienced camper who shows him the ropes of survival, explains the areas to avoid if one intends to stay out of jail, and often finds him a blanket. Several street people met by this researcher served as advocates for the newcomers. The source of contact for 19 percent of the Haven intakes were other street people who felt the referral was mentally ill and in need of services. For the men and women living outside near the St. Vincent's Plaza, Salvation Army, Las Vegas Rescue Mission and surrounding areas, the day generally begins at dawn. Most campers must be up and moving before the paddy wagon makes its rounds. One respondent, in discussing his recent arrest, explained that he simply overslept. On occasion, the police will arrive much earlier to make their sweep, and these days usually coincide with a holiday weekend. Upon awakening, many find their way to the
Catholic Worker coffee line and then to the parking lot at the St. Vincent's Plaza to await the opening of the Yard at 7:00 a.m. Others seek employment for the day at casual labor and others simply walk around town.

One respondent stated that when she was camping out on the streets, she teamed up with a man for protection. "I have heard so many stories of women who wind up in the back of some desert." Another interjected, "I watched it on the TV not too long ago about a woman who was found dead in her sleeping bag." The conversation turned to the vulnerability of being without shelter and to the groups of people who find it entertaining to beat up on street people. "Well, the cops in this town have always been a little rough, but a bunch of blacks over there and whites too, used to come up to St. Vincent's until the guys started piling rocks up, and they nearly killed a couple guys that were here by the railway tracks. These were young kids who were throwing rocks, and they did kill a couple guys." A woman who lived in an encampment at the cemetery told how she was knifed by a gang member.

In the evening the crowd moves out. Many arrive at the Salvation Army for dinner. Others go to the Las Vegas Rescue Mission. On one evening a week, the Catholic Worker feeds dinner to all who arrive. Still, many stay around the Plaza for the coffee and donuts before camping out for the night.

**IDENTIFICATION:** The most recurrent problem observed is the lack of proper identification by numerous individuals encountered on the street. This leads to many complications for those seeking
services. It is like a catch 22 in that one needs identification in order to work, and one cannot pay for the identification unless one works. The requirement of a picture identification from a State Department of Motor Vehicles and a social security card are prerequisites for all spot jobs offered through the shelter job offices. In order to obtain the social security card, one must have a birth record or baptismal certificate and one other acceptable form of identification. In order to receive a state identification, one must have a valid identification from another state or a birth record and social security card. Thus, obtaining the certified copy of a birth certificate is one of the most crucial steps for regaining one's social status. The clients of the Haven rarely had acceptable forms of identification. Further, they often were not forthcoming with the needed information to secure them the birth record. They seldom had resources to pay for the record and often did not know facts required by the various states before releasing the record, such as their mother's maiden name. Further, facilities are not available to assist this particular population with funds to send for their birth certificates. Thus, this researcher often "fronted" the money, although at times the clients were able to pay for it. Once the problems of obtaining the needed information to send for a record and the problem of paying for the record are overcome, the wait begins. The average length of time it takes is six weeks, but some cases took as long as four months.
Identification is a requirement for many of the available services. The Salvation Army allows for seven nights stay in their emergency shelter. This program offers beds to men, women, and children. There is the identification requirement for their services. A person can only stay for seven nights in a six month period. When staying there, the individual is given what is called a "green card." If this card is lost or stolen, the individual cannot return again for the six month period. For many of the homeless, then, the Salvation Army is not an option for shelter. The Las Vegas Rescue Mission allows emergency beds to men, women, and children on a seven night basis as well. This is within a thirty day period. In this case, the individual is not required to possess identification. The Las Vegas Rescue Mission is very strict on acceptable behaviors of those being housed. For example, the researcher has met numerous women who were forbidden to stay there because they had fraternized with the men. Also, one woman who had stayed there the year prior had been caught smoking in the bathroom, thus she could never return. Both the Rescue Mission and Salvation Army have other programs besides the emergency arrangements which have allowed individuals a chance at making it back to work and to the status of housed. However, the acquisition of proper identification is needed to access these programs. Identification is not needed to enter the men's program at St. Vincent's shelter. However, it is needed in order to work a spot job or to obtain other employment. This program allows thirty days stay and then another thirty can be secured after it has been
determined that one is doing their best to get a job and they are following the rules of the shelter. Some of the rules are really quite simple, such as the rule that one must work at an assigned task for four hours a day as a volunteer while actively seeking full-time employment. The resident also must pay 15 percent of any wages earned back to the shelter or five dollars on any spot labor provided by the shelter job office. A problem with identification must be overcome quickly if they are to use their time in the shelter to their full advantage. For the men in this program, various methods are available for them to earn the money for the birth certificate. One method could be classified as job therapy. Men worked putting pens together and were given the funds to send for their record. Sometimes funds are available through another agency program. Still, once funds are secured and the mail has been sent, the waiting game begins.

If funds can be secured, the individual can get one of two forms of identification with ease. The health department offers a health card to those who present $5.00, pass the TB test, and watch the movie. This identification is acceptable when coupled with a birth record for the application of a social security card. Another form of identification that can be secured if one is handicapped is provided by the Las Vegas Transit Authority. One floating day a month, the individual with the proper form and $1.00 can receive a picture bus card. Another method for getting a picture identification is by securing employment that requires one to have a sheriff's card. With the proper proof of employment,
various agencies will fund this. Upon receiving the birth certificate and one other form of identification, one can apply for one's social security card and, generally within 14 days, he or she will be prepared to get the Department of Motor Vehicle identification. One respondent explained that he had a job in Laughlin, Nevada, if he could get his sheriff's card. The problem he was facing was twofold. He had been arrested for vagrancy, and he had to find transportation to Laughlin to get the referral form needed to get a sheriff's card in Las Vegas.

Most banks require two picture identifications and a social security card in order to open an account. Individuals must obtain proper documentation in order to cash any check. Las Vegas does have facilities to assist with check cashing, and their fees range from 5 to 15 percent of the check. Often times, people will use these facilities without ever sending for their birth record as the urgency seems to be gone and the funds are normally meager.

Besides the problem of obtaining identification, there is the problem of many losing it once it has been obtained. Numerous respondents have claimed that their identification was not returned to them upon release from jail. Nevada Legal Services responded to the claim by sending a letter to the jail officials requesting that this practice be eliminated. Others are victims of "midnight" theft, as they sleep unprotected. Still others are victims of their own delusions. For example, one man tells how his voices made him destroy his identification.
MEDICAL CARE: Perhaps the most difficult problems seen during the course of this research are the medical needs of the respondents. Most of the respondents have few complaints when asked if they need to see a doctor. However, almost everyone encountered on the street had at least one major medical concern that had not been attended. Recipients of Supplemental Security Income are eligible to receive Medicaid (called SAMI) through the State of Nevada Welfare Department. Those who have cases pending at Social Security are eligible for a Medicaid pending slip. Those who receive social security payments based on retirement or disability are eligible for Medicare through the federally run program. All indigents can receive a card from Clark County Social Services for services at University Medical Center. Pending SAMI cases must also use University Medical Center. For those who need dental care, which meant almost all of the people this researcher encountered, Clark County Social Services will pay for one tooth extraction. For the most part, however, dental care was nonexistent.

It appears that basic medical care is available, but this is somewhat misleading. In order to get SAMI, an individual must first be eligible for Supplemental Security Income. The pending slip can be obtained with an application processed for Social Security benefits. The complications related to getting the proper papers to the right office are overwhelming at times, and again, lack of identification can prevent the process from commencing. Clark County Social Services did make an attempt to address the
difficulties for indigent street people. At least one day a week, a representative from this agency assists street people with a county medical card. Prior to this arrangement, an appointment had to be made, and this researcher has experienced hours on the phone trying to make this appointment. Homeless people do not have phones, so they would go to the County office at 7:00 a.m. and wait for a walk-in appointment. Now that the County comes to them, more are receiving medical attention.

The researcher had the opportunity to sort the mail for those who use the St. Vincent's Plaza as a mailing address. This address is used for the men's shelter and the Haven, while the dining room holds mail for those who use the Yard. Daily, the mail contained ambulance bills, and bills from University Medical Center. More often than not, the person to whom the bill was addressed was no longer around, or they simply tossed the bill because they had no funds to pay them. An ambulance comes to the area at least three times a week taking men and women to UMC for medical treatment that with basic medical care could be prevented.

**PROBLEM, WHAT PROBLEM?:** This theme represents the understanding on the part of the homeless that those with power to aid the situation do not understand the situation. One respondent explains that people like to ignore the fact that there are street people, "President Reagan made the statement that there is no hunger in America, people just don't know where to go. Alright, now just try to get on food stamps, no address, you can fill out the papers but you don't have any people, no address, no job. See legally you can
get food stamps out there, that is the law, but listen to them tell it." Another respondent stated, "As far as Levy (the Mayor at the time) is concerned we don't exist, he made the statement not too long ago, he says that we don't exist." And yet another respondent stated with an edge of cynicism to her voice, "Las Vegas is like Reagan, they don't want to see that there are any poor people. People don't come here and lose all their money and get stranded, not in Las Vegas."

UNIDENTIFIABLE PROBLEM?: This recurrent theme represents the belief among many of the homeless, that many of the homeless are the result of structural factors rather than the commonly held stereotype of personal failure. It is believed by many of the homeless that the people who are homeless as the result of factors other than alcoholism, drug use, gambling or mental illness are in the worst shape. The reason for this is that, if people can identify alcoholism as the cause of their personal disenfranchise­ment, they can then enter a treatment program and not be considered homeless. More important than not being considered as homeless, since some do count the treatment residents in the homeless category (Harrington 1984), is the fact that they are sheltered, however temporarily, at one of the loop stations. The following quotes support this theme. "I notice a lot of programs are aimed, to which I agree, if you have a drinking problem or a drug problem or whatever problem, if you can identify it as such, but if your are not addicted to any of these things, there is nothing. It just seems to be that way." This respondent believed that most of the
people on the streets are not drug and alcohol abusers since those who had drug or alcohol programs would most likely choose a treatment facility over the streets. Another respondent explained, "If you want to stop drugs they have a program, you go to the halfway houses, you name it." What this belief ignores is that Las Vegas has no medical detoxification center. Further, the drug and alcohol programs cost money, something the street people are short on. With the exception of a few alcohol halfway houses, such as the Equal Opportunity Board's "Reality House," there are two inpatient programs that are BADA (Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Abuse) funded that will take indigents. One is through Western Counseling and the other is through the Salvation Army. Reluctance to take the dually diagnosed is present, although the Salvation Army does have two beds set aside for Southern Nevada Adult Mental Health clients. Only one program discovered by this researcher, Solutions at North Las Vegas Community Hospital, accepts SAMI as payment. Most programs will accept Medicare. Programs like Charter Hospital, Monte Vista Center, New Beginnings, and Care Unit can accept Medicare payments. However, the majority of the homeless do not receive Medicare. Thus, even though some programs are available, many are left out either because they have no desire to be helped, or they simply have no access to the help. One respondent stated that she left California where she had a room because, "I didn't like L.A., because it was getting to the point that I could not stick my head out the door without getting mugged." Another respondent explained, "People ignore the fact
that street people are basically good. How come we are here? I don't know, it's just something that happens, we can't explain it, it just comes down to the boiling point that none of us can explain it. It just happens. We all had good jobs, we all had not homes but apartments." This respondent went on to explain that she became homeless when she became sober, because she was no longer willing to do the things that she had been doing for shelter. She would not go into detail about what she had been doing, only that she could not bring herself to do them while sober. She stated, "I gave up drinking and now I have nothing. I got mugged my first night without an address." Another respondent stated that she did not have a problem with alcohol or drugs, but that her homelessness was the result of physical illness, so there was no place for her to go. "I was working at a little market over on 8th Street. I was not making enough to really put aside anything. Everything went for rent and to feed myself. It's a hard way to live and to eat. Then I had an operation and was out of work, then I had another major operation when I was out on the street and they gave me one month rent paid and food stamps. They expected you to get out there right out of the hospital and get those food stamps. The first day I couldn't make it and I turned around and went home."

Another example of an unidentifiable problem is found in the following quote, "My problem is not alcohol, I have no family and I can't blame my husband, I mean, I can't say that my husband beat me up. So you see, an awful lot of the problems they have, I don't have." When asked what happened to her, this woman replied, "Me,
oh, good Lord, I really don't know. I was at the Mission for a while and I stayed there for almost a year, and one morning I just decided to leave and stay on the street for awhile. I met a lot of nice people on the street that I never knew before that was on the street that was nice and I found out an awful lot about the people, that was two years ago. I work, I've worked for this past year, since August or September I worked here." She was referring to the volunteer work she did in the dining room. It should be noted that one way some get off the streets is to become a staff member at one of the facilities. Wiseman found this in her work as well.

**WORK AND RELATED CONCEPTS:** The work-related concepts presented here fall into several groupings. One group has to do with a lack of finances to obtain shelter. Many of the respondents expressed a problem of a lack of finances to obtain employment. This was most often mentioned in relation to health cards and sheriff cards that are needed for many of the jobs in Las Vegas, as previously discussed. Related to this lack of funds to obtain employment is the fact that a person without a permanent address is spending most of his or her daily routine in securing the basics of survival, such as food at the emergency dining facilities as well as showers. This theme of needing money before shelter came up repeatedly and it illustrates the need for jobs, decent wages, and affordable housing. The shelter at St. Vincent's does assist with the minimum of thirty days and a lose ended maximum stay, but not all of the homeless can be served by this program for various reasons.

It should be remembered that one out of every ten workers who
wants a job is unable to find one (Eitzen 1986). A prevalent attitude in our society is that anyone can find work if they want it, and in support of this belief, people often cite the number of job listings in the newspapers. What this belief ignores is the low wage nature of this employment. The Convention Center often hires men who are staying at the shelters to do temporary work. This work simply is not enough to break the cycle of homelessness. Related to this theme is the fact that a person would have to work at a minimum wage job for at least one month before acquiring enough to secure an apartment. For those on the streets, one month of living on the streets and working is simply an impossibility.

Transportation is also frequently cited as a major problem to overcome in finding employment. Most of the street people relied upon walking or on the pathetically poor transit system in Las Vegas which is also expensive.

An interesting facet of the 1980's economy is that job training programs are present and vocational training schools are a thriving industry, yet little attention is paid to employment itself. The researcher has observed many who registered for casino dealers schools or business schools but never completed the course. One school offers housing in a motel to those who complete one week. This shelter option often serves to draw students. The lure of a grant must not be discounted.

One woman explained that many of the homeless had been living in apartments and something happened. When asked what happened, another replied, "I ran out of money." When asked what kind of
work she did, the response was, "I won't prostitute or sell drugs." The interviewer asked, "Have you had an opportunity to prostitute or sell drugs?" The reply, "Sure, but I won't do it." Another respondent stated, "One of my dreams is for them to put the WPA back in circulation, that would be my biggest dream. It would solve the whole god damned problem. Everybody would be working. I'm sure the $5.00 an hour people would not like it because some will work for $3.35 an hour, but they'd be working for $3.35, and they would want to be working for $3.35. I don't know, it's civil service they can clean up the streets. A lot of people don't have the schooling, I don't, I couldn't pass the civil service job to get a $5.00 an hour job or an $8.00 an hour job. OK, you put the WPA back and find out how many people would be off the street and go around and say hey you want to work?"

Interviewer: "Would you say that most of the people do want to work?" Respondent: "There again, you would have to give them time, like in a place like the shelter, where they can get three meals a day and rest. Bring them up to some normal standards before they could even try it. Cause you can't ask one of these guys out here in the back, who is not getting the proper sleep, not getting the proper diet, to work." Respondent: "Would you hire them? You ask the question backwards, go out there and see who you are going to hire." You would be amazed at how many times people come down for men to haul things out, paint, and if it's a job where they are disattached from a place where you know where they live they won't pay them." Another respondent interjects, "You
would be amazed at how often this happens after they have done the work. You know, it's like the Convention Center. They come down here and hire you for a big thing, but they may only work you a couple hours. You are getting $3.50 an hour and it is never quite enough in a week or two weeks to really get you going, to get a room, and to get enough to set aside for the next month's rent. And to be able to then go to the unemployment office and start in real good." Another injects, "This seems to be a big problem that no one seems to want to do anything with it, people get sick of saying we need help, we need help. It's just like you said, most everybody thinks that people are in this situation from their own doing. Well, maybe that is fifty percent right, but as she said, would you go out in the Yard and say I need one or two men to clean up the back yard and I am willing to pay twenty dollars and give you lunch and I will bring you back home at five, would you be willing to do that? How many of your neighbors would be willing to do that?"

One respondent mentioned, "Movies sometimes come around. About two years ago a lot of us was in line over here cause they needed some stand-ins, we got in line over at the old Saint Vincent's, the movie was 'In the Fever' or something like that, they may have changed it, or they may have left us on the cutting room floor." Her friend interjects, "See, there again, that's how they do it, to get a Hollywood actor to do it they would have to pay them something more. They gave us ten dollars to stand around."
A NEED FOR HOUSING: Related to the need for permanent housing is the low wages drawn by many who do have jobs. According to a respondent at the County Housing Authority, there have been no new housing developments, except those already in the planning stages, since the late 1970's. Their budget has been reduced by eighty percent. Periodically, the list for Section 8 Housing is closed and the waiting list is full. Again, difficulties in processing the needed paperwork hinder eligible applicants. Of course, there are barriers to service beyond the lack of available assistance. Even if the monies were allocated, many need support services to maintain this housing. One respondent stated, "The cheapest you can get an apartment here is about two eighty and then it has no kitchen. See then even if you can get food stamps you have no ice box or pans." Another interjected, "So, you have to get what is already edible, if you are going to get anything, you have to get it in cans or what you can eat right out of the package."

MENTAL AND PHYSICAL PROBLEMS: Many of the men and women on the streets suffer from mental and physical health problems. Numerous individuals encountered by the researcher fit into the category of mentally ill. Some of these problems are aggravated by the conditions of the streets. One respondent explained that when he was seven years old, a dentist implanted a device in his teeth. This device served as a transmitter to a Soviet satellite. Upon reaching adulthood, he went on to explain, he entered the service as a telecommunications specialist. After training in this field, he was sent to permanent duty in a top secret facility. It was
quickly discovered that the implanted device was transmitting top secret information to the Soviets. The military then cut his teeth in half in order to remove the device, and he was discharged from the service as a result. This respondent is one of many who wanders the streets of Las Vegas. He was interviewed at the Armory when it was opened as an emergency facility. Other than this arrangement, he stated that he stayed away from the emergency shelters and that he had come to the Armory because it was so cold outside. One respondent informed the researcher, "Basically you can figure about half of them are mental, they either are eligible to be out, but being taken care of financially, defined mentally, or some of them, quite a few somes, need to be put in a mental institution, they need to be taken care of. See that's the problem, they closed the mental institutions and now there are so many on the streets, so very many and they need help badly." Another respondent interjected, "I'll tell you about Rose, she is someone who is not there, she'll start yelling her head off at someone who's not there, and someone who thinks she's talking to them will haul off and smack her one, and then she gets beat up. Do you think that she's really alright over there?" "And then you got this crazy thing you know, you have 25 different forms to fill out, and seven places to go, and what happens if you don't even know that you are crazy to begin with?" The researcher did have occasion to meet Rose. She was pushing a shopping cart with all of her belongings. She stopped to ask a respondent familiar to her if she had a place picked out for the night. The respondent stated
that she did and Rose responded, "You are lucky, I had a space picked out but someone took it." At which time she headed out toward the vacant desert lot frequented by many of the Las Vegas homeless. Another respondent stated, "Our psychological department is completely off, and our legal department is completely off. If it says this is the law, this person should be put in a mental institution, because they cannot take care of themselves, then it should be enforced. And you would lose over half of the street people." One respondent stated, "They have done national studies and found that some of them are homicidal, they are dangerous to themselves and dangerous to others, and they are killing a lot of people. We heard that on national television not too long ago." Another stated, "These are the mental cases on the streets, that have been turned lose from the insane asylum. They are homicidal a lot of them, not all of them, and they are committing a lot of these awful murders." Another respondent mentions, "You would have to separate the ones who have mental problems, but nobody is going to do it, so they are going to be here and there are going to be more here. An awful lot of them just one day quit, the stress just becomes too much for them." When discussing work-related concepts, one respondent mentioned, "On the other side of the coin, a woman came to have some men in the Yard do some work for her and they beat her up, took her money, and left. I'd be very careful who I would hire. You don't know if that person is psychotic or what." Interviewer: "Is it more stressful to be on the street?" Respondent: "No, it is more stressful dealing with people, you
don't get stress without people."

Respondent: "You know, when I was over at the Mission, one guy tried to kill his wife. It was a delayed reaction to angel dust. Guess how you, the taxpayers, solved it, they said it was a pimp murder and gave him a one-way bus ticket to Los Angeles. Now, this is a homicidal maniac. Well, he didn't go." In keeping with this theme of mental problems, one respondent warned about the other people in the Yard stating, "Most of them are crazy, they talk to themselves. Most could work if they wanted, they just want to sit in the hot sun because it is safe in the Yard." It is interesting to note that, although this respondent describes most of them as crazy, he believes that they could work.

Related to mental health problems is the problem of physical health. One respondent explained, "Some had families, some had good homes, they got sick and lost their job." Directly related to this theme is a story of a 69 year old man who is homeless as the result of his wife's long illness. She was terminally ill for about one year, and her medical bills and funeral expenses resulted in his financial ruin. He had been on the streets for a period of one year at the time of the interview. He saw himself as unique in that he realized that he had lost his initiative as the result of losing his wife, and he planned to leave for New Orleans to begin a new start.
BAD HOMES?: There is a group of homeless with whom the researcher did not have much contact. This group is comprised of the runaway or lockout children. According to one respondent they come from "bad homes, some shouldn't have kids." Terry fits this description. She is 19 years old and came from Hawaii. She ran away from home when she was 16 years old and has been on the streets off and on since that time. She states quite simply, "I can't go back home."

Another respondent tells us, "If you talk to the younger girls out there you will find that a lot of them had very bad homes, they get old very early. They have alcoholics for parents, they have been beaten and all that sort of stuff." Another respondent stated, "You wait until you're too late and let certain people have children that shouldn't have them, because most of them get it from their parents." In referring to the parents of the street children, one respondent interjected, "Basically, they should be in a mental hospital themselves."

A MATTER OF LUCK?: This recurring theme reflects the mystification of residuals. When a person cannot fully explain the event they often fall into the trap of explaining away the event by luck or God's will (Babbie 1979). An example of this was found when one respondent stated that "a lot of street people are basically good, they don't do drugs, it's just that they had a turn of bad luck." Another respondent, staying temporarily at an emergency shelter, described himself as an "Ex-unfortunate." The term carries the
message that he sees this homeless condition as a matter of fortune.

Related to this theme are the numerous respondents who have found themselves homeless as the result of gambling. Three percent of the Haven study was categorized as compulsive gamblers in that they cashed their SSI check at a casino each month, only to be broke the next day.

HOMELESS VIEW OF THE MEDIA: Many of the respondents were concerned about the role of the media in presenting their plight. One respondent expressed concern that the media tended to talk to the shelter personnel and not to the homeless directly.

Interviewer: "Have you talked to any newspaper reporters that you know of?"

Respondent: "You know, mostly it's television that comes down here, and they don't talk much."

Another respondent: "No way do I want to talk to them."

A third quote which supports this theme is that, "They come in here with their cameras and they have no respect for us that don't want to be on television. Taking pictures, people see them and they won't hire us after seeing we was on the street."

HARASSMENT AS A FACT OF LIFE: Two respondents explained that they were temporarily "camping out" in the lot adjacent to the Yard. A tour of their campsite revealed that they were joined by perhaps twenty others. The respondents, a man and a woman, went on to explain that this was a temporary arrangement since the lot had been bought by Catholic Community Services and that they would no
longer be allowed to camp there. They further explained that this is what was happening to the vacant lots surrounding the Yard, that they were constantly being cleared out, and that the campers were being screened for warrants by the police sent to do the clearing. Within one week of the interview, the twenty campers were indeed no longer on the lot.

One respondent stated, "You know what gets me Linda is that the Police Department says that they are going to harass us, they are not on the streets like we are. We're not bothering anybody, it's not us that's bothering them, it's the people that comes into Las Vegas that causes trouble. I don't think there was very much problem except when people came from out of the state. I don't think there was that much trouble when we had the tent city here."

Another respondent stated, "Seeing as how you are from the university, why don't you ask the law department why they don't come down and enforce the laws, because harassment is illegal. If you are here and you are a reality, you got to be somewhere."

Interviewer: "Don't they have a law that says you have to have a certain amount of money in your pocket?"  
Respondent: "No."

Another responded, "Yea, but suppose they do have this law, you don't have the jails and prisons, so if you cannot enforce the law, why don't you change the law? I mean, if it is illegal at this time and they arrest you for being over in that field, then it is illegal every time. It hasn't changed, and yet, just because you don't have any money, they were picking them up fast and furiously, then if they are going to enforce the law and obey the law..."
themselves, they are going to have to do something about it. It's not fair that they can say today it's the law and put you in jail and tomorrow they say well we can't have it, we don't have any place to put you and we don't have the money to put you in jail." Interviewer: "OK, let's assume that the police have stopped their harassment and that the tent city is still in existence, that is not a solution either..."

Respondent: "No, it isn't. It would help the people to know where they can be together and it would help the police, in the fact that if there were any problems they could control it a whole lot better. We're sleeping over here and they are sleeping over there and there, wherever they can find a spot."

SOLUTIONS OFFERED BY THOSE THAT NEED THEM:

Interviewer: "What do you think the solution is?"

Respondent: "Push the mental patients off the streets and then work."

Another respondent stated: "I guess you'd have to have more jobs. A lot of these could work, and if you got the mental ones taken care of, the ones that are so bad that you know they can't work, then the others could work for once." In talking about the emergency shelter arrangements, one respondent stated quite simply, "Well, this is really not the solution."

One proposed solution to the homeless situation is called "greyhound therapy." The television show "Sixty Minutes" had an episode dealing with this way of handling the homeless or other undesirable people. It was obvious that methods such as this do
nothing to aid the person, but only serve to relocate people to a location that is unfamiliar to them and thus reduces their opportunity to achieve a stable balance in their lives. The show referred to the practice as a one-way ticket to nowhere. One respondent said, "That is a favorite way of police of Hollywood, I saw this with my own eyes. They would gather the streetwalkers in one spot and told them straight out, we'll buy a bus ticket to Las Vegas, to San Diego, Salt Lake, will you go. That was their way of handling the problem." Another stated, "In Las Vegas, they take you out in the desert and let you walk back to town. Their answer to that was, "We don't do that, we don't have insurance for our cars to go out of the county." Another respondent draws attention to the wasted tax dollars that do little if anything to resolve this problem when she states, "Basically, what you don't get is all the money that the taxpayers in this town and all the other towns have spent on this and not done anything. I mean, they throw a person in jail, it will cost them $80.00 a day and what have you accomplished? And when it's raining, people will go to jail gladly, they will break a window just in order to get to jail. Around the holidays, it was in the paper that someone broke a window just so that he could get out of the cold."

ADVICE TO THE RESEARCHER: Many of the respondents had advice to offer the researcher. One respondent stated, "Don't tell them who you are, I still think that is the best strategy, you can get more information if they don't know who you are." Another recommended, "Take your tape player, but hide it they will never know." The
interviewer stated, "I believe that if I am going to record someone they have the right to know it, so they can choose to participate or not." One respondent was highly critical of this when she stated, "See you are doing the same thing there as these mental patients, if you go out there and ask an insane person what is wrong with you, you are not being rational. You have all your school, what for? You got to use that. That is basically what is wrong here, we have plenty of ideas of what to do, but since it's not being used, it's of no value." Several respondents suggested that the researcher live on the streets if true insight was to be achieved.

SUMMARY: Chapter Six begins with factors to consider while conducting naturalistic research. The requirements of frequency and significance were important in the selection of themes presented. Also, the concept of accounts as linguistic devices must be noted since most research conducted on the homeless assumes the person has failed and asks why. Also, the role of the researcher may have affected what information was revealed and what was concealed.

The setting of the Las Vegas homeless was portrayed in the section titled "A Scenario," which includes a discussion of the loop of services, camping out, harassment, and the vulnerability of being without shelter.

Several themes were presented in this chapter. The most recurrent theme was the problem of identification. Other themes presented in this chapter include the need for medical attention,
mental health care, and adequate housing. Varying views on the causes of homelessness and perceptions are presented. The solutions offered by the respondents focus on shelter, employment, reinstitutionalization of mental patients, and a tent city.

This chapter sets the framework for the plan of action presented in the following chapter.
CHAPTER SEVEN: SOLUTIONS

Whenever intervention is considered in a social problem that involves human groups, it must be assumed that the individuals involved want intervention (Wiseman 1970). Data collected in this study, as well as other studies, indicate that this is probably the case in the majority of the homeless situations. Thus far, however, the help appears to be inadequate as the numbers of homeless increase in Las Vegas. Any solution will require a commitment by our society that the people of the streets deserve better than to be thrown out when their usefulness appears to have expired. The structure of society (that is, the political and economic forces of our society) has failed many of its citizens. The problem must then be addressed at several levels if a meaningful attempt is to be made to alleviate the problem. This will involve a series of actions on the part of the federal, state, and local government and social service industries, as well as the private sector. In a report issued in June 1984, "Hardship in the Heartland: Homelessness in Eight U.S. Cities," several recommendations are offered to aid in solving this complex problem. The authors of this report state "deeper, structural changes in the present configuration of the economy and society at large are, by implication at least, a necessary counterpart to such efforts if the tide of homelessness is to abate" (Salerno, Hopper, and Baxter 1984:iii). Some of the recommendations offered in this report are: "1) The recognition at a national level of a right to shelter and
establishment of an appropriate federal funding mechanism to share costs incurred by communities seeking to provide shelter, 2) Massive commitment at every level of government to provide additional, affordable low-income housing, without which emergency shelter arrangements are bound to become permanent quarters by default, and 3) Preventive measures designed both to preserve (and even expand) the affordable housing stock that still exists. These should include: Anti-displacement legislation, inclusionary zoning provisions, a moratorium on conversions of low-cost housing, and job training and placement programs that offer those who are able to work the wherewithal to avoid the dole or the streets" (Salerno, Hopper, and Baxter 1984:iv). In this same work, the authors call for several emergency measures. First is the development of the concept of the right to shelter. The authors state that "recent attempts to portray the homeless as unprincipled freeloaders, exploiting a 'good housing deal' (Main 1983 as seen in Salerno, Hopper, and Baxter 1984:180), like recent attempts on those who patronize the soup kitchens (New York Times, 12/15/83, as seen in Salerno, Hopper, and Baxter 1984:180), must be recognized for the cynical dodges they are. People use shelters and soup kitchens out of desperation; to suppose otherwise, and to penalize them on the grounds of that supposition, is to inflict gratuitous harm" (Salerno, Hopper, and Baxter 1984:180).

Thus, at the base of any program to assist the homeless lies emergency shelter arrangements. Las Vegas does not provide year round shelter to all in need. This gap must be filled, although
shelter is simply a starting point. The fact is that much more must be done if the problems of the homeless are to be addressed. During the final draft of this report, the rumors are flying among the social service workers as to the plans for year round shelter. This researcher gathers that, through Clark County, the City of Las Vegas, United Way, some church groups and the "Big Three," plans are being made not only for the winter emergency logistics but also for longer term shelter solutions.

ASSUMPTIONS: Stanley Eitzen lists seven assumptions that one must make if poverty is to be resolved. The first assumption is that poverty can be eliminated in the United States. Eitzen cites Michael Harrington when he states, "The elimination of economic misery would require a reordering of the Nation's priorities. And the commitment need not be great; less than two percent of our gross national product, or less than one-fifth what we spend annually on defense would raise all impoverished persons and families above poverty line" (Eitzen 1986:178). The second assumption is that poverty is caused by a lack of resources, not a deviant value system. Related to this assumption is the belief that "the attack must be directed at structural changes that will enable lower-class persons to earn a living to support their families adequately" (Eitzen 1986:178). The third assumption listed by Eitzen is that "poverty is not simply a matter of deficient income; it results from other inequities in society as well" (Eitzen 1986:179). Fourth, Eitzen tells us that poverty cannot be eliminated by the efforts of the poor themselves.
Pointedly, he emphasizes that the fact that the poor have neither the power or the resources needed to bring about the structural changes (Eitzen 1986:179). Eitzen believes that the private sector will not be the source for the elimination of poverty. "Private profit will tend to subvert the human needs that are of public concern; businesses will not provide jobs that they consider unnecessary or not immediately profitable, nor will they voluntarily stop activities that are profitable (for example, renting deteriorated housing because the unimproved land may increase in value, or lobbying to keep certain occupational categories outside of the minimum-wage restrictions)" (Eitzen 1986:180). Another assumption to be made if the elimination or poverty is to be accepted as a possibility is that poverty will not be eliminated by efforts of state and local governments alone (Eitzen 1986:181). Which brings us to the last assumption made by Eitzen, "Poverty is a national problem and must be attacked with massive, nationwide programs financed largely by the federal government" (Eitzen 1986:182).

One should keep in mind that "social problems are indeed complex, frequently what appears to be a small part of an intricate network of problems. Further, 'the problem' may be the more obvious and apparent part of a deeper, more fundamental, underlying problem. That is the manifest problem hides a less visible one—a latent problem—that needs attention if administrative action is to be more than a bandaid" (Finsterbusch and Motz 1980:50). In the case of homelessness, these people are the symptom of a deeper
structural problem, that is an economic system that places shelter out of the financial reach of many of its citizens. This is accomplished by low wages, lack of jobs, and overpriced commodities such as food and shelter in relation to the wages. With reference to the issue of shelter, one must consider two fundamental groups of Americans. One group is comprised of the not yet homeless. This group is sheltered in housing that is rapidly becoming obsolete as a result of urban renewal and neighborhood gentrification. As the dwellings are being lost, the people that reside within them are often permanently displaced. Often they are elderly people who rely upon meager incomes. Others are families who simply cannot find affordable rents. The second group that is in need of housing is the homeless themselves. Evidence suggests that many would not be homeless if rent were more affordable and alternative housing arrangements were further developed. Yet, once a person has become shelterless, the steps to gain a shelter again have many cracks. Even the person who has entered an emergency shelter on a first or second paycheck basis is hard pressed to find permanent shelter. This is because our society has yet to make a commitment to the belief in the right to shelter.

Long-term measures are needed if the homeless are to be sheltered on a permanent basis. A study produced in Phoenix suggests that the approach toward alleviating the homeless would be three tiered. The first tier is the emergency shelter, secondly, a transitional program is suggested, and thirdly, permanent placement is crucial to the solving of this problem (Tier II and
The problem of the homeless is not going to be solved by emergency measures. To be sure, until housing is created that is affordable, the homeless will continue to grow in number. Salerno, Hopper, and Baxter state that "without decent affordable housing, emergency shelter is a dead-end proposition, becoming permanent lodging by default. A resuscitated construction and rehabilitation program funded at the federal level is essential to any long term effort. No other government can mobilize the necessary resources. In the interim, states must take the initiative. New York's recently instituted Homeless Housing and Assistance Program— which provides capital funds for acquisition, renovation, and start-up costs to nonprofit groups and municipalities seeking to house the homelessness—is an example worthy of emulation elsewhere" (Salerno, Hopper, and Baxter 1984:182). This work further states that preventative measures are needed. Included in these measures are anti-displacement legislation and effective enforcement in order to insure the preservation of the dwindling stock of affordable housing. They further state that a "moratorium on conversion of such housing to luxury dwellings should be instituted" (Salerno, Hopper, and Baxter 1984:183). Furthermore, "'tandem development' requirements or 'Inclusionary zoning' provisions must be instituted as a 'social tax' on developers, to avert direct and indirect displacement" (Salerno, Hopper, and Baxter 1984:183). Job training and placement are also a prerequisite for the permanent placement of the homeless as
sheltered. This work points to the fact the federal government could play a key role in leadership and funding, although this seems unlikely. The authors of this work argue that the immediate passage of the $60 million emergency shelter appropriation is imperative. This has been initiated as of this date and is administered through the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Further, the authors call for the "Full application of the moratorium of SSI disability cut-offs to all those potentially up for review" (Salerno, Hopper, and Baxter 1984:184). The steps outlined in this work are as they put it, "puny proposals in the face of the problem. Perhaps their richest legacy if enacted would be the mobilization of an aroused and informed citizenry unwilling to countenance the shedding of the poor as the price of a salvaged future" (Salerno, Hopper, and Baxter 1984:184).

Following is an outline of a suggested program of action based upon the researcher's evaluation. "It should be remembered that during the period of President Johnson's War on Poverty, people had tremendous faith that through public efforts, educational, occupational inequalities could be mitigated. Since the Great Society (as it was called) had to be achieved without alienating large segments of the public, the President's antagonists in Congress or powerful interest groups, however, it was essential to concentrate on programs that would be inoffensive or innocuous to the majority of the people" (Finsterbusch and Motz 1980:45). This holds true today as well. Those concerned about the plight of the homeless must be careful not to offend large segments of the
public. In a stratified society, sociologists who study social problems assume that people of different strata will view the problem differently, and therefore propose different solutions. In some cases a group may prefer to see the problem remain unsolved, because they may actually benefit from it (Julian 1986). For example, many landlords actually benefit from housing shortages which allows them to charge higher rents without completing needed repairs.

According to a report completed by the Center for Business Research at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, the third quarter of 1987 saw a Las Vegas vacancy rate of 3.60%. This report divides the community into zip code areas and provides an average rent figure along with the vacancy rate. The lowest average rent falls in an area known as the west side. The average rent was $223.00, with a vacancy rate of 2.78 percent. When these figures are compared to the average Las Vegas rent of $400.00 and the low vacancy rate of 3.60 percent, it is easy to see how many cannot find affordable shelter. Move in costs can be out of reach for those trying to make it back to sheltered lives. Those who can negotiate housing arrangements on their own are in better positions than those who are mentally ill and lack any viable support system. The $368.00 Social Security income payment to the chronically mentally ill rarely stretches long enough to get someone in housing for any length of time. Other problems exist once this population is housed. Because of the respondent's disorders, maintaining an apartment in which one is isolated from others becomes impossible.
Thus, this group of homeless require alternative living arrangements if the cycle of homelessness is to be broken. Many opt for the weekly rentals which are more costly than monthly rentals and seldom provide cooking facilities. Numerous respondents lived in weekly rentals two weeks out of the month and lived outside two weeks out of the month.

Some of the solutions will not be popular, yet with collective efforts, any problems can be readdressed. Any program designed to eliminate a social problem of this magnitude will require continuing reassessments and commitment to this goal. It is important in social policy research to outline the goals of the policy and to see if the goals are being met. Social policy must begin in the determination of what is wrong, where it is wrong, who is affected, why the problem exists, and how it can be resolved. Research to date gives a good indication of the what, why, where, and who of this problem. It is now time to suggest how to resolve, remedy, alleviate, or eliminate the problem. In the case of the homeless, the "what" is their presence amidst affluence. They are a reminder to the rest of society that society has failed to care for her "ribauz (Holmes 1966), the lumpenproletariat (Marx and Engles 1967) or the untouchables (Srinvas and Beteille 1965), the underclass (Myrdal 1962), or the superfluous people (Harrington 1984)" (Snow and Anderson 1987:1336). "The homeless tend to be viewed and discussed primarily in terms of the characterological problems they are thought to have (e.g., cultural deprivation, genetic inferiority, and mental depravity), the problems they are
thought to pose for the larger community (e.g., crime, contamination, demoralization, and welfare), or the problems associated with their material survival (e.g., food, shelter, and clothing)” (Snow and Anderson 1987:1337). The where of the problem has been determined for the most part. The homeless tend to congregate in the area referred to as the Las Vegas loop. Research to date has a pretty clear picture as to who the homeless are as well. They consist of employable single women and men, families, alcoholics, and the mentally ill. In order to address the why, one must look at the target groups. There is seldom a single factor that has led one to this homeless status. We know that the modal causes are lack of affordable housing coupled with low wages or continuing unemployment and low compensation for this unemployment, deinstitutionalization, personal failure brought about by alcohol and drug abuse, and social spending cuts.

Five target groups have been identified. The first group are families, which include husband, wife, and children or single parents and their children. It should be noted that on occasion one may find a man and his children on the streets. However, this is not often the case in the Las Vegas homeless population. The second target group is the employable person whose problem is primarily economically based. This group needs shelter and jobs. The mentally ill comprise the next group. The drug and alcohol abusers comprise a fourth group. The people who suffer from physical disability or are simply too old to enter the labor market, and therefore, whose income is too low for them to easily find
affordable housing comprise the last group.

PROPOSAL: The first step to be taken in solving the problem of the homeless is the prioritizing of needs. The first need for the shelterless is obviously shelter. The development of shelter could of course prevent more from becoming homeless. Secondly, health care and mental health care programs must be accessed, followed by employment or income acquisition from Social Security.

There appears to be good cooperation between a majority of the agencies. Respondents interviewed at the "Big Three," that is the Salvation Army, Las Vegas Rescue Mission, and Catholic Community Services, all indicated a renewed commitment to cooperation in their efforts. One respondent stated that the goal was to reduce the duplication of services so as to make the best use of the current facilities. The proposed plan of action aims at providing long-term solutions utilizing the current facilities as a starting point, or a clearing house, or a spring board toward the elimination of the shelterless. The existing services can serve the function of a triage so to speak. Triage is an approach borrowed from military medicine, and this method will make the social scientist aware of difficult choices. "Whether it should be accepted for determining who should be helped greatly depends on the social and political contexts of the problem, on dominant values, and on the question of equity" (Finsterbusch and Motz 1980:69). According to Finsterbusch and Motz, "When selecting target groups, the policy maker has to consider the question of equity, which deals with the justice of providing services and
facilities to some people in a way that adversely affects others in the community. Providing services to one group automatically redistributes community resources, thereby affecting other groups. The policy maker has to determine whether 1) the benefits to be accrued by mitigating the given problem outweigh the costs and 2) the proposed policy will be for the common good of a few individuals or both. One difficulty with such decisions is the absence of any way to assess the psychological and social costs of the suffering endured by the target population" (Finsterbusch and Motz 1980:70). The programs outlined can be cost effective and most certainly meet the requirements of what is right and decent. Housing is inseparable from employment and education as well as counseling and drug and alcohol rehabilitation, thus, housing is the first step in aiding the shelterless. The process would begin at the existing agencies.

Agencies currently providing shelter to the homeless are the Salvation Army, the Las Vegas Rescue Mission, and Catholic Community Services. Housing is perhaps the biggest obstacle to overcome. Data indicates that about 700 people in Las Vegas are not housed at all when the Winter Emergency Shelter (WESP) is not in operation. WESP saw 680 people on the peak night in Winter 88/89. On the peak night of Winter 89/90 thus far, the total hit 600.

A report from the director at the Womens Shelter stated that this facility averages 40 to 50 a night. Of these, she states, "more than half qualify as mentally ill." The estimate includes
those visible homeless who remain outside during the winter conditions. One cannot truly know the exact number, yet this researcher believes that the 700 estimate of unsheltered is an adequate gauge when constructing plans to serve those in need of basic phase one emergency placement.

This author proposes several suggestions for alleviating the current crisis in Las Vegas. As mentioned throughout this work, year round emergency shelter is a prerequisite for any program of action. Thus, the first gap to be filled lies with shelter and food.

Through the Federal Emergency Assistance Act funds are available in the form of grants. Several agency directors recently attended a meeting that focused on grant writing. Existing agencies seem best suited to serve the Las Vegas homeless and could access funds if the proper personnel were put to the task. A grant writer hired by the state, city, county or a combination of these entities is essential for the resolution of this problem. The joint efforts of program developers and a skilled, experienced, committed grantsperson will allow funds to be secured through the Federal Emergency Assistance Act.

Expansion must come in several areas for successful remediying of the shelter shortage. Again, year-round emergency shelter is a requirement, followed by transitional programs.

A community day room needs to be included in a year round shelter program. This day room could be quite basic, providing a few minimal services. Again, the funding mechanism could be a
triangulation of resources. Most FEMA grants require matching funds.

The day room should include laundry facilities, a mailroom, storage lockers (perhaps donated military footlockers), rows of chairs facing a television set, and space for several social service personnel. Currently, Friendship Corner attempts to meet some of these needs, but the building is small and overcrowded.

An outreach coordinator could use the day room as a clearing­house for candidates in need of other essential services. This researcher suggests that the following personnel serve two hours a week at the day room:

. A medical doctor funded by the county.
. A psychiatrist funded by Adult Mental Health.
. A social security representative.
. A food stamp representative.
. A welfare representative.

Currently, a nurse from the Clark County Health District spends two afternoons a month at St. Vincent's. Also, a representative from Clark County Social Services is available to serve this population. Nevada Legal Services sends a representative one morning a week.

In addition to outside agencies sending their representatives, social service workers need to be on staff to help assess and encourage those in need of various services. A funding mechanism must be accessed for comparable salaries for personnel. These personnel could be used to screen individuals for the phase two program to be further developed.
It seems that some have problems so severe that they are excluded from the existing programs. For example, in searching for an overnight placement at one of these existing programs for a new Haven client this researcher received the following response from a shelter provider: "We don't take your kind." To further illustrate the problems which some have in finding shelter, the following quotes regarding the provision of the Womens Shelter were offered by service providers:

"We don't want a Womens Shelter, they cause too many problems."

"We find that there is always one woman who wants to sleep with all the guys and we can't have that."

When justifying refusal of shelter, these quotes were heard from social service respondents:

"She won't comply."

"She stayed here last night, and she caused too many problems."

These quotes support the need for an adequate staff at any phase one project.

Phase two includes the development of several programs aimed at the identified target groups.

For the homeless single men and women whose problems are mostly economically based, this researcher sees two major areas of focus. First is the expansion of affordable transitional housing, which could take several avenues. Secondly, the labor market must create jobs aimed for the target population. Affordable housing in
the form of group homes could provide the needed transition from the existing shelters to independent living. An apartment complex with 300 studio units, monitored by a funded agency, is a needed adjunct to the existing shelter space. These could serve as a dormitory for those with low-income employment and for those functional men and women on SSI or social security benefits. The complex could also accept referrals from various agencies such as those involving recovering substance abusers active in a monitored program.

Another method for dealing with the economically-based homeless could come from the private sector. Although the assumption remains that the private sector would be hard pressed to provide programs that are not profitable, the creation of incentives by the legislative branches to the local businesses for employment of phase two clients would remedy numerous missing links in the road toward a home. Perhaps local businesses could hire phase two men and women in training programs.

Incentives could be offered to the private sector for the establishment of affordable housing units for those not yet homeless and for those making the climb back.

For those men and women who suffer from alcoholism and drug addiction, numerous avenues must be opened as demonstrated by the current "Drug War," and no simple solution can be offered. Yet, emergency measures can be expanded to meet shelter, food, and medical requirements of even the most chronic. Phase one emergency shelter and day room at the base, followed by the development of
new programs and the expansion of existing programs, will alleviate the problems of this target group substantially.

Space for a medical detoxification center is crucial. Following detoxification several short-term programs are available, but more space for group homes needs development. Group homes could be designed cost effectively and funds then could be diverted from unpaid emergency room costs and jail funds. In other words, the group care homes at phase two could be much more cost effective for the county and city. Residents of family group homes could be referred to phase two housing options and monitored for treatment progress.

For the less functional, chronically mentally ill much needs to be done including the first phase shelter day room requirements followed by the expansion of housing options. This researcher sees a great need for a long-term care facility and the development of residential group care homes. Each resident could have a room and a portion of their income from social security and/or employment could go towards rent, thereby making the facilities self-supporting through their own contributions.

Sheltered workshops need to be established specifically for the mentally ill. Employment not only will aid in the self-esteem of these individuals but could enable them to reduce their dependence on phase one programs.

Families are also in need of new alternatives in housing. A program expansion of Project Home is recommended. In addition, private sector incentives for development of affordable housing
units could assist this population. In addition to expanded shelter options, day care for children is essential. Rather than digress into the child-care discussion as a national crisis, let it suffice to say that day care can enable parents to become employed. Perhaps the parents themselves could serve on staff, rotating shifts for rent deductions. Alternative housing for family needs to be seriously considered as the family structure is rapidly changing form. Developers from the private sector should be encouraged to examine current housing strategies. Expansion in this area will serve the not yet homeless as well as assist those attempting to regain social margin.

The philosophy of treatment providers in Wiseman's work regarding social margin deserves discussion. Social margin is defined as "the amount of leeway an individual has in making errors" (Wiseman 1970:222). The homeless have lost their social margin and criterion seems to exist on how they can regain it. First get a job and keep it, get a room and some decent clothes, abstain from liquor and other drugs, work on the "problem," and patiently work towards the goal (Wiseman 1970:222). The suggestions outlined herein offer a chance for regaining respect as well as the needed social margin.

According to an article titled "After 15 years of 'Great Society' Spending, The 'Great Society' placed heavy emphasis on job training, which Johnson believed would eventually cut welfare costs. Government experts say the results have in fact been negligible, despite the outpouring of 10 billion dollars a year for
this purpose" (U.S. News and World Report, June 30, 1980). The primary reason for the negligible results stems from the Johnson successors shift toward training hard-core unemployables for temporary jobs instead of permanent careers. Another change comes from the federal government's weakened role in running the programs. Instead, state and local governments are given blocks of federal money. The results have been less than encouraging. The question still remains why does job training not meet the intended goal, and the answer quite clearly can be found in the fact that "as always, there is a scarcity of permanent jobs" (U.S. News and World Report, June 30, 1980). This point leads one to conclude that, in order for any program to be effective, the private sector must relinquish some of its profits and provide employment at wages that allow for the shelter and basic requirements of the citizens in this society to be met. Thus, jobs must be created within the private sector as well as civil service employment and sheltered workshops. Jobs, combined with affordable shelter, will alleviate the problem significantly. The programs must be cost effective, and further research can demonstrate the current costs in human and financial terms as well as how the monies could be saved. In order for any program of action to work, the homeless must be reached and made aware of the program as well as serve as part of the solution. The profit motive has served to create much of this current condition. Thus, the private sector would have to make a commitment to aid in the solution by providing jobs and affordable housing. The public sector must also create jobs. These
developments are needed in addition to the emergency facilities already provided that do little to break the cycle of dependency. The program outlined above provides the clients with privacy and dignity, both crucial elements in their return to society. For those men and women on the streets who do not wish to avail themselves of a program, the status quo will suffice. However, evidence has demonstrated that this group will be a minute portion of the shelterless, and therefore will be invisible for the most part from the middle class sensibilities that are currently being offended by the vast presence of street people. There is a group of homeless men and women who serve a similar function as those found in the Anderson study and that is the wandering tramps. However, the economic world in which they operate is quite different from the world of Anderson's day. This is one reason that the solutions must involve a triangulation of federal, state, and local resources that provide affordable housing and employment across the country since this problem is a national disgrace. Another reason for the need to design programs at three levels stems from the belief of many that a program developed in one area will cause people to relocate in this area. The evidence in support of this belief is flimsy, but if programs were developed across the nation, the local fear would not materialize. The homeless are not located in isolated areas. They can be found in every city of any size from "sea to shining sea." If the programs outlined in this chapter were to be implemented, the problem of the homeless would be reduced significantly in a humane and cost
effective manner. Furthermore, the shelterless might again find a home.

**SUMMARY:** Chapter Seven outlines the basic assumptions to consider when proposing solutions to a social problem, particularly homelessness. The underlying assumption is that the homeless need an array of options if the problem is to be reduced. The problem must be addressed on several levels in order for an impact to be made on the lives of the individuals involved. Further, an educated citizenry is essential in the remedying of homelessness.

The proposal offered in this work places emergency shelter for all who seek it as the basis of any attempt at resolving the crisis. Yet, much more would have to be done to insure that emergency arrangements do not become self-perpetuating institutions. The cornerstone of this proposal would be the hiring of a grantsperson to work with agency directors in assisting with the acquisition of FEMA funds.

Much needs to be done on the local level if homelessness is to abate. The year-round shelter and dayroom proposed must have an adequately trained staff to serve this population. Local agencies will need to send representatives to the centralized location. Further, the development and expansion of transitional programs for the mentally ill, alcoholic, and substance abusers must coincide with the emergency arrangements.

Cost effective measures can be taken and further research may demonstrate that the benefits outweigh the costs in terms of human suffering, particularly by enabling men and women to regain their
social margin.

Beyond the measures taken locally, the State must take an active role if the problem is to be reduced. Legislative action could offer incentives to the private sector for the establishment of jobs and affordable housing.
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