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Municipal park usage by the homeless: A policy investigation

Spier, Julie Gilroy, M.S.

San Jose State University, 1994

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MUNICIPAL PARK USAGE BY THE HOMELESS:
A POLICY INVESTIGATION

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

by

Julie Gilroy Spier

May, 1994

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ABSTRACT

MUNICIPAL PARK USAGE BY THE HOMELESS: A POLICY INVESTIGATION

by Julie Gilroy Spier

This thesis addresses how municipal parks and recreation agencies are responding to the use of parks by individuals who are homeless. It was hypothesized that if the homeless do not create a problem at municipal parks, then no policy is designed by city policymakers. It was also hypothesized that if the homeless are present in municipal parks, then policymakers are reactionary in their design of policies and procedures.

A survey was designed and distributed to mayors and parks and recreation administrators of 29 cities within three counties. Results indicated that general policies which regulate loitering, drinking, and appropriate park behavior are applied. What direction park policies and procedures take may be determined by administrative attitudes, resources, and individual sentiment to the homelessness issue. Research results may be used in developing guidelines for the use of parks and the creation of new policies and procedures directly related to homeless park use.

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MUNICIPAL PARK USAGE BY THE HOMELESS:

A POLICY INVESTIGATION

CHAPTER ONE

People who recreate at municipal parks may have homes or may be homeless. How does this affect their perceived use of the park? Picture people who are homeless resting at a local community park. These individuals are entitled to use the public parks provided and maintained by cities. Or are they? Who has a right to the use of community parks and how do cities determine whether these rights have been violated? What responsibilities, if any, do public officials have in defining or regulating how the homeless population uses parks?

A general definition of "homeless" or a "homeless individual" as provided by the United States Code (1988 ed.) stated that a homeless person is:

(1) an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and (2) an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is - (A) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill); (B) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or (C) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings. (p. 1108)

Belcher and DiBlasio (1990) stated that the "homeless are those individuals who are living in streets or in actual homeless shelters. There are also those living with family and friends on a temporary basis" (p. 2). Erickson and Wilhelm (1986) further defined homeless individuals as those who "have no permanent residence and seek security, rest, and protection from the elements. The homeless typically lives in areas that are not designed to be shelters (e.g., parks, bus terminals, under bridges, in cars), occupy structures without permission (e.g.,

or are provided emergency shelter by a public or private agency" (p.xix) Erickson and Wilhelm (1986) also stated that:

the nine primary groups that comprise the homeless population seem to share little in common but the lack of permanent shelter. These groups are: (1) the traditional single, older-male transient; (2) the deinstitutionalized mental patient; (3) youth runaways; (4) foreclosed or evicted families and individuals; (5) mentally and physically disabled persons with low incomes; (6) abused or battered women with or without children; (7) victims of natural and man-made disasters; (8) illegal immigrants; and (9) victims of alcoholism. (p. xxvii)

Kenyon and Blau (1991) stated that the factors contributing to the homelessness crisis include: loss of affordable housing; deinstitutionalization; changes in family structure; cutbacks in federal housing and support programs; and growing poverty. Kenyon and Blau (1991) reported that "most homeless people are only homeless for a short while, but they may move in and out of homelessness periodically" and that "families with children are a fast-growing group among the homeless population" (p. 12).

"Does the recreation and leisure service profession have a role to play in program and policy development to address the needs of the homeless?" Kunstler (1992) asked "if so, how can the profession meet its responsibility to homeless individuals?" (p. 43). Do city officials consider the use of parks by homeless individuals a problem? Is there apathy, concern or the 'not in my backyard' attitude by city officials? Or is the presence of homeless individuals in parks accepted? Are cities proactive or reactionary in establishing policies and procedures in relation with the homeless population use of municipal parks?

It appears that cities may not be in agreement in their approach to the homeless population use of parks as demonstrated in these examples: San Diego City officials removed a tent city on a public parking lot in Balboa Park; the mayor of San Francisco prevented police from

evicting homeless people from tent cities on public park land; in Miami, Florida, there is a lawsuit on behalf of homeless people and their constitutional right to live in public parks.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The homeless population has been associated with parks as a place to congregate. As the problems associated with homelessness escalate and the acceptance or tolerance level of the general public deteriorates, parks and recreation professionals may be engaged in policy issues not previously addressed. This study will examine the actions of public policymakers in relation to the use of municipal parks by the homeless population. This study will also be a policy investigation to determine municipal park usage by the homeless population and the reactions to this use by parks and recreation agencies.

The hypotheses are:

1. Null Hypothesis: If the homeless population does not create a problem at municipal parks, then there is no policy designed by city policymakers.
 2. If individuals who are homeless are present in municipal parks, then public policymakers are reactionary in their design of policies and procedures regarding the use of parks by the homeless.
 3. If individuals who are homeless are present in municipal parks, then public policymakers are reactionary in their design of policies and procedures based on an administrator's direction regarding the use of parks by the homeless.
 4. If individuals who are homeless are present in municipal parks, then public policymakers are reactionary in their design of policies and procedures based on city council direction regarding the use of parks by the homeless.
-

5. If individuals who are homeless are present in municipal parks, then policies and procedures are established to regulate their use of the parks based on citizen input regarding the use of parks by the homeless.

This study will investigate the response of municipal parks and recreation agencies to the presence of individuals who are homeless in the parks. Are these homeless individuals who are using parks ignored, encouraged to leave, banished, paid attention to in any way, or are local laws enforced? Policies or regulations that exist to shape the accepted use of municipal parks will be reported. The terms "policy," "rule" and "regulation" will be defined as follows: policy is a high-level overall plan embracing the general goals and acceptable procedures especially of governmental bodies; rule is a prescribed guide for conduct or action; and regulation is an authoritative rule dealing with details or procedure (Webster Dictionary, 1979).

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine the status of the homeless population who utilize municipal parks and the reactions of parks and recreation administrators to the homeless park use issue. The study will be based on the hypotheses stated previously. This study will investigate any actions taken by municipal parks and recreation agencies in regard to the homeless population use of parks. The study will also be used to investigate how policies and procedures are established to regulate the use of municipal parks by homeless individuals. In question are how these policies are developed, what type of policies are formed, and how these policies are actually implemented.

Basic Assumptions for this Study

1. Municipal parks and recreation agencies have homeless individuals utilizing the parks in some capacity.
2. There are standards for dealing with the homeless population in municipal parks if usage is perceived to be a problem.
3. Cities chosen for the questionnaire are limited to District IV of the California Parks and Recreation Society membership due to availability of subjects.

Scope of Study

The scope of this study consists of determining how municipal parks and recreation agencies are responding to the use of parks by individuals who are homeless. The findings will provide a comparison of parks and recreation agencies and the use by homeless individuals of municipal parks. A questionnaire will be developed and mailed to the mayor and the parks and recreation administrator of every District IV City listed in the California Parks and Recreation Society Membership register for 1992-93. Mayors' addresses will be obtained from the 1991 California Roster of the California League of Cities. Relationships and the perception of the homeless issue in municipal parks and the resultant actions in response to the homeless population use will be investigated.

Importance of the Study

Homelessness is not a new issue. Individuals who are homeless have been present in municipal park systems ever since there have been public parks. Whitaker & Brown (1973) wrote that municipal parks in the United States were established in 1858 when architects

Frederick Olmsted and Calvert de Vaux won a prize of \$2,000 for their design of New York City's Central Park. Central Park was planned to create "rus in urbe" for the poorer New Yorkers as a contrast to their surroundings. The park was completed despite Olmsted and de Vaux twice resigning in protest against political interference and attacks from the squatters who had lost their shanties to make way for the park. The issue of the homeless population is no longer an accident. Individuals who are homeless are appearing in greater numbers at local parks where they may have been unnoticed before. Buss & Vaughan (1990) stated that "analysts usually list the causes of homelessness as eviction, job loss, loss of government benefits, deinstitutionalization, substance abuse, personal crises, and a decline in low-income housing" (p. 56). Public sentiment towards homeless individuals has changed due to the political and financial climate of the state. The tolerance level of homeless people utilizing public parks may also not be high among the public.

In relation to changing public sentiment, parks and recreation administrators are being faced with new questions about the use of municipal parks by homeless individuals. Are policies and procedures in place to assist these administrators? Are policies and procedures reactionary responses to the concern for the homeless population? Or are they put in place because of a reaction from one administrator? This study will provide field information about actions taken in regard to the use of municipal parks by the homeless population. The combined issue of the homeless population and the formal response of the recreation and park administrator is relatively new. Research and information on the subject of the homeless population and leisure services is not extensive in the current literature of leisure studies. Kunstler (1992) argued that "community recreators should provide services to the homeless, who may be inhabiting public parks, forests and other public lands and recreation areas" (p.44).

This study will examine general directions policies and procedures reflect in providing some indication of how parks and recreation administrations have responded to the homelessness issue. It is the intent of this investigation to state the issues involved in developing policy regarding use of municipal parks by the homeless population and the factors that lead to policy formulation.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Homeless individuals can be found at many municipal parks. They may be alone or in a group composed of other homeless individuals. They usually sit and watch the environment around them. The viewpoint that homeless individuals are mainly single males is quickly changing. Two to three million Americans are living without a basic condition most of us take for granted--a home (Kunstler, 1992). Homelessness is a "condition of being without a regular dwelling place whereby a person or family lives outside on the streets, tries to find a public or private shelter at night or sleeps in a makeshift dwelling such as a car or train station" stated the Department of Housing and Urban Development (Kunstler, 1992, p. 42). Kunstler (1992) continued that "to be homeless is to be isolated from friends, relatives and mainstream society" (p. 42).

Kunstler (1992) asked "does the recreation and leisure profession have a role to play in program and policy development to address the needs of the homeless?" (p. 42). It appears that recreation and leisure administrators are being faced with questions previously not thought of in the realm of leisure services--issues such as gang intervention, child care, and homelessness. Administrators are being asked to be leaders in the manner in which they respond to community needs and demands. The issue of the homeless population is not a new one, but parks and recreation administrators are looking at it in a new light. Kunstler (1992) stated the following:

The organized recreation movement has its roots in social reform. During the late 19th century, the educated upper classes took on the responsibility of the welfare of the lower classes to alleviate the problems brought on by rapid urbanization.... The value of healthy recreational experiences as a right of those in need - to alleviate their problems, provide a relief from their everyday life and contribute to their growth and development - was the foundation of the recreation and leisure service philosophy.

Once again, with the Civil rights movement of the 1960s came a resurgence of interest in the concept of recreation for all, including the poor and minorities. The Kerner Commission, which investigated the causes of the Watts Riots in Los Angeles in 1965, cited the lack of recreational programs in cities as a major cause of civil unrest and riots. (p. 43)

Therefore, dealing with social issues is not a new concept for recreation and leisure professionals. The issue of the homeless population may well be the social issue of the 1990's. Kenyon & Blau (1991) stated "what we often forget when we see a homeless person is that not only do their bodies lack care and sustenance, but they miss the comfort of conversation, books, music, and peaceful reflection that we take for granted" (p. 111).

Who are The Homeless?

Generally, persons are thought to be homeless if they have no permanent residence and they seek security, rest, and protection from the elements. Erickson & Wilhelm (1986) stated that "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" (p. xix). Some factors that contribute to the homelessness crisis according to Kenyon & Blau (1991) include: loss of affordable housing; de-institutionalization; changes in family structure; cutbacks in federal housing and support programs; and growing poverty.

The de-institutionalization era is referred to as a swing in mental health policy that began in the late 1960s. Kenyon & Blau (1991) referred that "in the 1950s, state mental hospitals housed more than 550,000 patients. Today that number is fewer than 150,000, leaving a significant number of the mentally ill with no place to live but the streets" (p. 12). Ferrell (1985) stated that "hundreds of thousands of institutionalized patients were released with the hope that the newly discovered tranquilizing drugs would give these people back their

independence" (p.33). Many of the mental health patients were not prepared for living in society and have become part of the homeless population. Ferrell (1985) reported that "sleeping in city shelters, parks, train stations, ventilation grates, and doorways is rarely a choice for those like June. Anywhere from one-half to one-third of street people share her plight: They are mentally ill" (p. 33). In addition, they have no place in which to sleep.

Hopper (1991) stated that "the problem with the homeless poor is their visibility; they are an eyesore" (p.166). It is hard for people to comprehend the misfortunes that befall other people that put them in hopeless situations. Erickson & Wilhelm (1986) stated "an auto has more natural right than a person, and is more protected," asserts Ruth (not her real name), a forty-seven-year old homeless woman. "For \$50 a month, a car can get a heated space (in New York City). The car has a right to sit on the curb, whereas a poor person can't sit on a park bench without a legal address" (pg. 22).

Kunstler (1992) concluded that:

For most of the 20th century, the stereotypical homeless person was the 'skid row bum,' a middle-aged, alcoholic white male. He received little sympathy and was viewed with contempt, fear and hostility.... The 'new' homeless population of the past 20 years is very different from the one described above. The majority are long-term residents of the area they inhabit, reflecting its ethnic composition; there is an over-representation of minorities. They are younger, with the median age low- to mid-30. More are women. Many are children. Almost all single-parent homeless families are headed by a female. (p. 43)

The appearance of homeless individuals at municipal parks can almost be invisible, depending on the attitude of the homeless individual. On the one hand are those who cultivate being unnoticed and quiet "visitors" of the park. On the other hand are those who stand out and make their appearance known. The tolerance level of the public who utilize the park is probably dependent on the attitude and appearance of the homeless person. Hopper (1991) spoke of those homeless individuals who want to be "long-term" visitors of the park tend to be "disciplined survivors, well-versed in the rules of appropriate behavior" (p. 165).

Hopper (1991) stated:

The smaller but far more obvious group tends to fit the stereotypical picture of street-dwellers. At one extreme, though rare, their clothing may be disheveled or filthy, their hair matted and louse-ridden; they may smell badly and sit virtually motionless for hours at a stretch; they may accost strangers with importunings for change or fantastic charges of wrongdoing. (p. 165)

What is Happening In Municipal Parks?

Use of municipal parks by the homeless population is becoming a concern for parks and recreation administrators. At issue is what constitutes proper use of municipal parks and whether use of parks by the homeless population can be deemed public or private. Parks and recreation administrators are being faced with homeless issues in relation to use of municipal parks, whereas these issues were once thought only to be a social concern. Many parks and recreation administrators try to incorporate opinions from administration, the community, and their own personal philosophy regarding park regulation. This approach of second guessing what the acceptable norm and tolerance level are is tried through a process of implementation and reaction. The result of the reaction determines if the parks and recreation administration's stance has been accepted or not by political boards.

City officials and, more specifically, parks and recreation administrators are being challenged in the way they approach homeless issues. For instance, San Diego City officials recently removed a tent city on a public parking lot in Balboa Park. The San Diego City Council initially formed a committee to examine the problem of homelessness. Father Joe Carroll, president of San Diego's St. Vincent de Paul Center, a shelter for 500, remarked about the tent city: "Once you let them believe they have a right to it," he said, "the city in effect loses control of the property" ("San Diego," 1992, p. A8).

There is also widespread sentiment by public officials about the lack of established policies and procedures. As Hopper (1991) wrote from a Port Authority New York police sergeant comment: "We don't have a homeless problem: we don't have a homeless policy either" (p.166).

No general agreement by cities is apparent as to how to address the issue of municipal park use by homeless people. Buss & Vaughan (1990) stated that "in the summer of 1989, the mayor of San Francisco prevented police from evicting hundreds of homeless people from 'tent cities' in public parks" (p.56). Farrington (1991) wrote about a different action taken at MacArthur Park, which includes 32 acres of park land in the core of downtown Los Angeles. Park officials there began an intensive effort to reclaim the park for the people by clearing the park of all the homeless shelters set up around the corner of 7th and Alvarado. There were approximately one thousand homeless persons who gathered in this area.

Farrington (1991) reported on changes at MacArthur Park. "George Stigile, maintenance supervisor for the Metro region who oversees MacArthur Park, explained that MacArthur Park has been a victim of its surroundings--a reflection of life that goes on around it" (p. 18). Farrington (1991) wrote "those who work at the park say it was hard to reconcile the natural wonder and human squalor that coexists, and sometimes clashes, each day at MacArthur Park" (p. 18).

According to George Stigile, (Farrington, 1991) department officials spent three months with council members, police officers and the mayor discussing the "strategic plans" for the clean-up. It then took three weeks to clear the park of the homeless shelters (p. 17).

Another example can be found in the Miami, Florida legal system. That city is seeking to determine if it is a crime to be homeless. A federal court is reviewing a class action suit that was brought forward in 1988 by the American Civil Liberties Union against the City of Miami on behalf of thousands of homeless people. The American Civil Liberties Union asserted that

when faced with no alternative, people have a constitutional right to live in public parks and on city streets. This suit is one of the first to challenge a city's power to enforce local laws that effectively ban public "sleeping, eating, sitting." The judge is being requested to bar the city from enforcing laws against public living. The city maintains that they enforced the law based on conduct, not homelessness (Clary, 1992, p. A14).

A different approach has been taken by the Forest Service in Umpqua National Forest, Oregon. The Forest Service has adopted a temporary policy of setting aside a campground exclusively for the homeless to use. There was friction between the recreational camper and the forest squatter so they decided to set up an area exclusively for the homeless as a pilot project. "All we're doing is acknowledging something that already goes on in the national forests" said Kent Smith, an Umpqua Forest Ranger. Ann Metejko, spokeswoman for the Forest Service says, "We've tried not to be callous about it (the issue of homeless use). This is a creative new approach, largely supported and funded by the local community. If it works, we may try it elsewhere" (Egan, 1992, p. A1).

Public Sentiment About Homeless Populations

Can public perception of the homeless population influence the response that is applied to park use by an administrator? If there is public concern over the use of municipal parks by the homeless then the response of park administrators may be targeted to limiting or discouraging use by the homeless. Public voice over this issue can result in policies and procedures that are more accepting or more discouraging in the types of use applied to parks.

Guzewicz & Takooshian (1992) reported that:

Recent surveys by pollsters and social scientists seem to document a "backlash" during the 1980s, with public sentiment shifting from sympathy to resentment. The United States Supreme Court, for example, recently upheld a controversial 1990 New York City law forbidding poor people from panhandling in the city's subways. (p. 67)

Godbey (1992) in an New York Times article stated:

There used to be public sentiment that public parks were for the community and especially for the poor who were not fortunate to have expansive yards. It was meant to be a place to congregate, hold special events, be spontaneous, and inexpensive for the user. (Hall, 1992, p. C1)

Hopper (1991) pointed out that "parks (or, tellingly, "the commons") are the oldest and most obvious example of a public area being put to private use, but bus terminals, subway and train stations, and ferry depots have also long been used" (p. 157).

Homeless individuals can "redefine" a park by their unauthorized use for a purpose it was not intended. The homeless population also does not fit into the norms and values of an affluent society. Guzewicz & Takooshian (1992) stated that "only recently have they appeared in large enough numbers to enter the public consciousness as a group apart-- part pity and part fear" (p.68). Growing numbers of homeless individuals strike a cord with the public. It may be feelings of pity, fear, disgust, or a growing sense of shame that in a country seemingly as affluent as ours, many people should go homeless.

Homeless Effect on Community Users

There can be a "cause and effect" relationship with crime/homelessness use of the parks that can deter use by the community. According to Michael J. Perry (1983) in his article, "Strategies for Combating Crime in the Parks," conditions that can deter public use include:

1. Fear syndrome. Park users will become discouraged and apprehensive; avoid the park and allow smaller segments to dominate. Outdoor areas will then cease to provide service to the general community.
2. Decreasing attendance.

3. Impact on budget. Major expenditures may be required in order to get the park back to order.
4. Harassment, intimidation of employees while performing job duties.
5. Waning public support.
6. Politics: political leadership may begin to scrutinize the situation. (p. 52)

Hartman (1989) expressed that people are "getting used to it (the idea)" of homelessness and that people are:

beginning to consider the existence of a homeless population as an inevitable part of our society.... And so people distance themselves and think of homelessness as a personal characteristic rather than a tragic situation. We reframe a public issue, everyone's issue, as primarily a private trouble. (p. 483)

Bell (1990) stated that city residents still feel compassion for the homeless but the financial burden to support them is too great (p. D.C.1). There is also a growing "not in my backyard (nimby) attitude" that may also have been reflected of the attitude of some parks and recreation professionals. The homeless situation was always a big city problem, or so it appeared, and was not really mentioned in the local community papers. Then Senator Albert Gore, Jr. (1990) authored and sponsored the "White House Conference on Homelessness Act," a bill that authorized a national conference of individuals concerned with programs and issues, both public and private, relating to homelessness. Results from this conference are still to be determined but it does appear that, at least on a national level, homelessness is an issue for public officials to address seriously.

Decision-Making Theory

The choice of actions or response to the use of municipal parks by the homeless requires decisions made by parks and recreation administrators. Understanding how parks and recreation administrators address, determine and apply decisions made are part of the decision making process. Farnham (1990) reported that "the compelling theoretical challenge is to identify the variables, both personal and situational, which influence a decision-maker to adopt one, rather than another, approach from a repertory of decision-making behaviors" (p. 108).

How Decisions are Made

To explain how parks and recreation administrators make their choices regarding the use of municipal parks by the homeless population it becomes necessary to examine the decision-making process. Yu (1990) observed that:

Decision problems can be very simple or very complex, static or dynamic. Each involves, implicitly and explicitly, the following five decision elements: alternatives, criteria, outcomes, preference and information inputs. Each problem is also accompanied, visibly or invisibly, by the following four environmental facets: decision dynamics as a part of the behavior mechanism, stages of the decision process, players involved in the processes and unknowns in decision making. (p. 168)

Alternative selection is dependent on personal beliefs, norms, and communication. Only from alternatives known to the decision-maker can a choice be made. As Silver and Mitchell (1990) stated:

Most traditional decision-making theories apply only to decisions which involve selecting the "best" alternative from among a set of alternatives. These theories do not address the question of how this set of alternatives came to be in the first place. Clearly, the mechanism that screens alternatives plays a major role in the eventual decision. (p. 36)

The decision-maker in the municipal arena does not come to decisions without barriers. Judson and Duran-Aydintug (1991) talked about constraints:

Individual choice, which is believed to be partially a function of individual psychology, never takes place apart from situational constraints. But what is situational constraint? That which to the individual is a situational constraint is in the aggregate a social fact. That is, we believe that social structure sets the context for individual decision making. Individual decisions reflect this context and create further contexts. The goal of rational choice models in sociology is to explicate the process by which individuals integrate information about their situations. (p. 476)

Status Quo

Status quo is the decision made most often. It conforms to the "if it works, don't fix it" philosophy. Change may only come about if there is a "squeaky wheel" regarding a particular concern. Homeless, in many instances, do not have a prominent "squeaky wheel" on their behalf. "Evidence indicates that when individuals face decisions, they are reluctant to change and will continue to pursue existing goals and plans" (Silver & Mitchell, 1990, p. 34). This may be the course of action taken by parks and recreation administrators in their response to the homeless population who utilize municipal parks.

Silver and Mitchell (1990) discussed that:

The status quo tendency refers to the inclination of decision makers to continue with existing goals and plans beyond the point at which a neutral observer or a statistical model would recommend a change in course....The status quo was chosen over alternatives that may have yielded greater utility. This suggests that some process other than utility maximization characterizes much of individual decision making. (p.35)

Because the homeless situation has been present at some municipal parks for a period of time, the continuing status quo treatment of the homeless population in municipal parks may be the easiest scenario for the decision-maker. Yu (1990) pointed out:

That not all decision problems yield a final decision. The loops we describe (...) may continue for a long time. The decision maker may use avoidance justification to avoid the problem. This is certainly a way to cope with difficult problems. If this approach is taken, all the decision elements may be changed and the time optimal solution (as perceived) may be, at least temporarily, obtained. (p. 181)

Status quo can be self-serving. As Silver & Mitchell (1990) depicted:

When feedback about the status quo is positive, the status quo is likely to be abandoned in only two situations. First, if the goal has changed, it is possible that the strategic image for the status quo will not be compatible with the new goal image.... Second, if available information suggests that the status quo plan will not be successful in the future, it may be abandoned.... However, in most cases a decision maker is unlikely to search actively for such information if feedback about the current status quo is positive. (p. 40)

If current actions with the homeless in municipal parks appears to be providing the desired outcomes, the decision maker may not pursue any alternative plans. Although a need for a change in actions may be present, the response may still be the accepted common practice as it has been in place for years and receives a positive, if not effective, response. There very well may be need for a change in strategy and actions in regards to the homeless population use of municipal parks brought about by a change in amount and types of use and public pressures.

Silver and Mitchell (1990) stated that "decision makers also need to be aware that sometimes the seeming success of the status quo actually may be masking negative information. This occurs when decision makers attend to salient short-term benefits and ignore hidden long-term costs" (p.43). Silver and Mitchell continued:

Continuous negative feedback about a current plan should eventually be incorporated into the strategic image, thus decreasing the plan's compatibility with the goal image. However, people often resist incorporating negative information into their forecasts of the future....Decision makers discount negative feedback as a temporary aberration, which results in the strategic and goal images remaining compatible....Negative feedback also may result in retaining the status quo in a progress decision if the goal changes in response to new information. The decision maker changes the goal to fit the outcome of the current plan instead of sticking with the original goal and changing the status quo plan. (p. 40)

A final way in which negative information about a current plan still produces a decision to continue it occurs when a decision maker remains hopeful that the future will bring better outcomes than the present.... If alternative plans are compatible with the goal and therefore make it through the first stage of adoption decisions, the status quo plan is still favored in subsequent assessments.... Even if transition costs are negligible for alternative plans, the status quo plan gains a decision advantage by virtue of the amount of information about it which is already available. (p. 41)

What else causes decision makers to discount information, alter goals, and retain hope? Psychological motivation to appear competent may be part of the answer. Believing themselves to be capable and effective decision makers, most people may suppress negative information that indicates a past decision error. (p. 43)

The norms of the organization and the community must also be taken into consideration.

As Silver & Mitchell (1990) stated:

Norms for consistency and change vary from organization to organization, and factors unique to a particular organization may reduce the influence of the status quo bias on that organization's decision makers. Organizational norms become part of a decision maker's principle images and thus influence which goals and plans are deemed appropriate. (p.45)

As noted earlier, the issue of homeless individuals at municipal parks is not a new one. As Yu (1990) related:

If the problem is repetitive and/or becoming routine, we may need a periodic revision or renewal of our way of solving the problem. As we become more efficient in solving the problem, clearly specified methods to release the charge created by the problem are readily

available. We may not spend enough time and effort to seek a better way to do the job. (p. 208)

Utility Theory

When a decision is being made, the utility theory is another model of explaining the process of decision making. Silver & Mitchell (1990) reported:

The dominant model of decision making for the past 40 years has been expected utility theory. This model assumes that decision makers engage in a thorough evaluation of each available alternative and then select the alternative with the greatest expected utility. The decision-maker is viewed as a utility maximizer.... This involves some very stringent assumptions that decision-makers know all possible alternative actions, understand each action's potential ramifications, desire to select the action with the most attractive potential, and possess the time and capacity to thoroughly think through the decision before making it? (p.36)

This study would be appropriate to a utility theory thinker who needs information on all alternatives before a choice is made. The decision-maker would use information provided in this study to analyze alternative ways that the homeless population are being treated in their use of municipal parks and then decide on the most effective action for their particular situation. This is to assume that a decision maker would have the time, energy and motivation to analyze all data before making a decision in regard to the use of municipal parks by the homeless.

Image Theory

Another theory of decision making is the image theory model. Image theory according to Beach & Mitchell (1987) is "a descriptive theory of decision making (is proposed) in which decision makers represent information as images" (p. 201). Silver & Mitchell (1990) continued that "images are visual and mental representations of information that is pertinent for a particular decision problem" (p. 37). Beach & Mitchell (1987) stated:

Image theory provides a description of decision makers as persons who have the ability to act in light of their principles (self image), and who are able to consider the acceptability of candidate goals, plans and tactics in terms of their compatibility with those principles and with each other, and sometimes, in terms of the potential profitability of their contingent consequences (adoption decisions). These decision makers also have the ability to imagine both an aspired-to future (trajectory image) and an anticipated future (projected image). Comparison of the two permits evaluation of progress toward goal achievement (progress decisions) and retention or replacement of the plans that are being implemented to achieve those goals. (p. 218)

Beach & Mitchell (1987) reported that "decisions consist of (1) adopting or rejecting potential candidates to be new principles, goals, or plans, and (2) determining whether progress toward goals is being made, i.e., whether the aspired-to future and the anticipated results of plan implementation correspond" (p. 205).

Making decisions is a process involving comparisons and evaluating desired outcomes. As Silver & Mitchell (1990) discussed:

Individuals make decisions about changes in plans and goals through constructing and comparing principle images, goal images, and strategic images. Two general types of decisions, "How are we doing?" and "What should we do?" decisions, result from this process. "How are we doing?" decisions reflect whether the current plan is producing satisfactory progress toward the desired goal and we will refer to these as progress decisions. A progress decision is made through a comparison of the strategic image and the goal image. The decision question is, "Does our present course of action look like it's going to lead us to where we want to go?" The criterion for whether new action is needed in progress decisions is the compatibility or fit between the images. (p. 38)

The Political Context

The parks and recreation administrator has to base his/her decision within the realm of the political context. The decision regarding the homeless population use of municipal parks has to be supported by the political realm and this factor has to be taken into account when

alternatives are compared. Farnham (1990) continued that "by failing to take into account the essential features of the political context, all three major competing approaches to decision-making, analytical, cognitive, and motivated, exhibit serious deficiencies in explaining decision-making behavior in the political arena" (p.83). The decision-maker does not act alone if he/she is going to succeed in the public sector. Understanding and acknowledging the political arena is part of the success of a public official.

It is an important criteria to have a decision deemed "politically correct" if it is to succeed. The parks and recreation administrator has to understand the political implications of his/her choices on the subject. Failure to take into account the political forces on resultant actions could doom a decision to failure. Acceptability of a decision made can be dependent on the proper "politicking" done prior to announcement of the decision choice, especially in an area that might be of public concern. As Farnham (1990) stated "for one thing, in evaluating alternatives, acceptability will be treated by the decision-maker as a *prior concern* because truly effective action in the political context depends on developing prospective policies which attain some minimal level of acceptability" (p. 99).

Farnham (1990) discussed that:

Political support is dependent on political savvy for the municipal decision maker. There are individuals, groups, media and staff support to be taken into consideration in order to make a decision effective. Those whose acceptance is necessary if effective action is to be achieved in a political context tend to fall into three broad categories: those involved in making and carrying out the decision, those at whom the decision is directed, and those whose continued support is required in order for the decision-maker to be effective in the political context generally. (p.102)

There are at least five classical political strategies for improving acceptability: transcendent solutions, compromise, delay, incremental solutions, and minimal decisions. Which of these strategies is adopted will depend on the situation the decision-maker faces. However, all of them aim at enhancing the acceptability of a decision by sacrificing the least possible number of the values implicated in it. (p. 103)

The decision maker in the political realm must be a good evaluator with alternatives set to political implications if the choices made are to withstand political pressures.

Dominance Search Theory

Another decision model is the dominance search theory. Montgomery (1987) said that "dominance search theory asserts that if a decision maker finds that a promising alternative violates dominance he or she will attempt to restructure his or her representation of the alternatives in such a way that the promising alternatives may be seen as dominant" (p.223). Montgomery (1987) explained:

In both theories (dominance search theory and image theory), it is possible to identify four phases of a decision process, viz. (1) rejection of non-acceptable or uninteresting alternatives, (2) identification of a candidate for the final choice, (3) tests whether such a candidate could be chosen definitely, and (4) restructuring operations when these tests give a negative result. However, in image theory the process basically is controlled by the compatibility of plans with adopted principles or goals, while in dominance search theory the process is controlled by violations of dominance and of possibilities of constructing dominance structures (which, however, involve principles and goals). (p. 223-224)

The decision-maker in the public sector has an unusual set of criteria to deal with in determining actions. The alternative choices as well as the status quo has to be evaluated on a problem area. An extra criteria is the political reality and making sure that the alternative chosen is politically correct or supported, especially if the topic is one that the public may have interest in. The use of municipal parks by the homeless can be a sensitive issue depending on political and public interest and any information that would aid the decision-making process with this concern should be of assistance to the parks and recreation administrator.

Policy Issues Related to Homelessness

The realm of policies and procedures in regard to the homeless population has begun to appear in the public park systems. Public space supervisors are being challenged to make hard decisions and regulations in regard to the homeless "private" use of public domains. These actions regarding the use of parks by homeless individuals are being tested in the legal system. Douglas (1990) stated that "in May, 1990, a federal court of appeals in New York ruled that constitutional free speech guarantees do not cover requests for spare change" (p. A44). Greenhouse (1990) also reported that "recently, the United States Supreme Court upheld this local law forbidding poor people from panhandling in the city's subways" (p. A1).

A decision made by an administrator must withstand judicial scrutiny. Questions regarding public rights to public properties may require further definition. It appears that even though the homeless person may not "live" in that community or even contribute to the tax base that he/she still has a right to its use. Guzewicz & Takooshian (1992) asserted:

This analysis seems highly applicable to the particular problem of homelessness. Consider, for instance, the legislative assaults against the homeless population in 1990 alone. Besides New York's making it a crime to beg in subways, and attempting to evict the 4,000 who call the subways home, Richmond, Virginia, requires payment of a \$25 fee for a city license that permits public begging. Cities like San Francisco and Santa Barbara have made it a crime to sleep overnight in public parks. At the same time, these areas have failed to provide affordable housing or employment, leaving even non-indigent citizens caught in the middle of clashing values--people unable to find work or housing are then labeled law-breakers. (p.76)

The public's perception and acceptance of the homeless population is many times based only on observations. As Beacock (1979) stated:

The struggle to secure for the single homeless poor the right to share the opportunities and services open to the majority of their fellow citizens in Britain in the last quarter of the twentieth century, is of course hampered by the effects of images and attitudes, policies and provisions inherited from long ago and perpetuated today. (p. 119)

Michael Rushford (1991), President of the Criminal Justice Legal Foundation and Non-Profit, Public-Interest Law stated in a newspaper column:

Though unwillingness to enforce public-order laws are a problem in some communities, uncertainty about whether the courts will permit enforcement is a national problem. In two recent cases, federal judges in San Francisco and New York struck down panhandling laws with rulings announcing that public begging is a form of constitutionally protected speech akin to solicitations by charities. While people should fund programs offering food, shelter, and assistance, it's time for our courts to recognize the right of working people and their families to the use of parks, sidewalks, and public places free from confrontations with drunks, derelicts and beggars and the accompanying threats to their safety and decency. (p. B7)

Then there are the clashes between the public's perception of how they want individuals who are homeless treated and the actions taken by public supervisors to handle the situation. In New York City, the Transit Authority removed subway benches as an experiment to see if the homeless could be discouraged from living in subway stations. The test, in part, was of a larger effort called "Operation Enforcement." The plan called for strict enforcement of a new code of conduct, which prohibited panhandling, littering and lying down on subway seats and benches, among other things. The effort was hampered by lawsuits that challenged the constitutionality of some measures and a reluctance by police to enforce the rules. Transit officials focused on physical changes that might discourage the homeless from living in the subway. Transit officials claimed that the homeless made benches unavailable to subway riders. Rider groups said that "many homeless people will simply sleep in other parts of the stations" (Finder, 1990, p. B1).

As a follow-up news report in the New York Times (Associated Press, 1990, p. B4) officials had pledged the return of the subway benches. It was reported that "perhaps the Transit Authority had moved too quickly" as stated by the authority's president, Alan F.

Kiepper. Due to rider complaints and advocates for the homeless, the Transit Authority has rescinded their decision.

Thomas Johnson wrote an article for redevelopment of two of Los Angeles' parks into public open spaces for skid row residents (Johnson, 1982). Redevelopment of Los Angeles' 5th Street and 6th Street parks for skid row residents became an issue of derelicts' needs versus business interests. Both of these parks were located in skid row communities of downtown Los Angeles and pitted homeless derelicts, poverty stricken families, and elderly people against downtown business persons, public officials, and design professionals. The Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles proposed public open space for skid row residents (estimated population ten to fifteen thousand) which had begun in 1976 and resulted in disagreements over the entire downtown planning policy. A site was found. The committee's stance was that the existence of these people is a fact and if skid rows are to be revitalized, then some area must be found for them. Social, political and economic issues arose which resulted in a "needs vs. issues" conflict. Design of the park allowed some open space and a facsimile of nature. The article reported high use rate and client satisfaction. One of the justifications for the parks was to be part of a solution to the area's social problems. It was to act as a magnet and attract participants by offering rest room facilities, shelter, security and freedom from police harassment.

In Reno, Nevada, a lawsuit was filed in Federal District Court asserting that city ordinances against loitering and sleeping in public places discriminates against the homeless. Deputy City Attorney, Stephen Volek, disputed the plaintiff's lawyer's reading of the law. "Her theory," he said, "is that there is some legal or constitutional obligation to provide shelter to the homeless and that unless the city finds a way to make them available, it is obligated to make the parks available as a place to sleep. That just isn't the law" ("Suit," 1992, p. 17).

That case is still being determined, and once again the court system will decide on social issues.

Kunstler (1992) stated that the constitutional right of the pursuit of happiness and "to have fun and enjoy life is one of the least recognized rights denied to oppressed people" (p. 45). Kunstler (1992) remarked that the "use of public parks, recreational areas and other open spaces by homeless people for their dwelling places has been alternately forbidden, tolerated or ignored. How should this be handled?" (p. 45). Kunstler (1992) suggested that the following actions should be part of policy development on the issue of homelessness for recreation and park agencies:

1. Develop and participate in task forces at all levels to determine responsibilities of the recreation and leisure profession in a comprehensive human service delivery system addressing homelessness.
2. Develop links covering the continuum of service settings for homeless people (the streets, shelters, drop-in centers, day treatment programs and institutions) to maintain continuity of services.
3. Integrate homeless people into community recreation as equal participants, not in mass segregated programming.
4. Collaborate with other professions in addressing addiction, illiteracy, stress, family problems, lack of independent living skills and social isolation.
5. Become part of a local referral network to identify homeless individuals and refer them to appropriate services. (p. 45)

The culture of recreation and parks agencies may regulate response to the issue of the homeless population and use of public parks. A traditionally-based leisure services delivery system is one in which recreation is segmented into products or programs such as softball, soccer, etc. Foley & Pirk (1990) explained:

Segmentalists address each phase of life separately: the problem of crime and gangs is separate from recreation; work is separate from leisure and family; income and health are separate from the concerns of community recreation centers. Segmentalism sees leisure only as free time to be filled by activities. Urban recreation agencies who have succumbed to segmentalism take care of parks and facilitate play. Such agencies are "mono" service oriented, unable to integrate recreation with concerns for self-esteem, family survival, gangs, drugs and racism. (p. 33-35)

However, the issue of the homeless responds to a human service-oriented philosophy where recreation responds to community empowerment and social issues. Foley & Pirk (1990) stated that "human service-oriented recreation seeks to build coalitions and partnerships by organizing around community concerns. These agencies often utilize strategic planning to develop a revised mission in what has become a rapidly changing urban environment" (p. 35). Murphy (1988) reflected:

Recreation and leisure service agencies that merely develop a host of disparate activities, which are advertised in seasonal brochures as the recreation program and are developed to serve a wide range of individual and small-group interests, but are devoid of social services, will not receive community support. Such programs may possibly be suspect to disruption and challenge by community members who intuitively believe that recreation and leisure agencies should provide a conduit for fulfillment of both basic and growth needs. We cannot afford to serve the more glamorous and profitable middle and upper-income groups at the expense of new immigrants, poor, homeless, working parents, disabled and elderly in our communities. (p. 29)

SUMMARY

It appears that the public has taken an interest in the private use of public space by individuals who are homeless. What is deemed as appropriate, acceptable and accessible is not within the realm of the homeless person. The parks and recreation administrator and the community are trying to cope with homelessness issues in the social, private and public context and to make determinations as to where homelessness fit in. The use of municipal

parks by the homeless is and will be a growing concern as the numbers of individuals who are homeless grow and make their presence known. What direction park policies and procedures take may be determined by community attitudes, resources, and sentiment in regard to the homelessness issue. A question brought before city officials, advocates, communities and the legal system is just what are the rights of homeless individuals in regards to their use of public land? What determines private use of public property?

These questions and issues are being asked, formulated, and tested in the public and legal systems. Research regarding issues of homelessness, and more specifically, the issue of homeless population use of municipal parks, is in its infancy. There are no clear policy directions for treatment of private use of public lands regarding the homeless population. Parks and recreation agencies, it is hypothesized, are reactionary in their design of policies and procedures in regard to the homeless population use as there are no clearly formulated and accepted role models for this issue. It seems apparent that parks and recreation management are examining policies that relate to socially responsible positions in regards to the homeless population use of public parks. It is not clear, however, how public policies are being chosen in regards to the issue of the homeless population use of municipal parks. It is timely to expand the literature on the issue of the homeless population use of municipal parks. There is a need for policy analysis in providing a basis for parks and recreation management to make decisions in establishing policy and procedures within their communities.

Research in this thesis will provide an assessment of cities' responses to the homeless population in municipal parks. As depicted from court cases and the variety of reactions by parks and recreation agencies in response to the handling of the homelessness situation in municipal parks, there is a need for contribution to both literature and research in this area.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

This is a study and a policy investigation as it relates to the issue of the homeless population's use of municipal parks. This study will assess parks and recreation agencies' reaction to the use of municipal parks by individuals who are homeless. The hypotheses of this study state that if the homeless population does not create a problem at municipal parks, then there is no policy designed by city policymakers. A secondary hypothesis state that if individuals who are homeless are present in municipal parks, then parks and recreation agencies, in response to community, city council, and administrative input, are reactionary in their design of policies and procedures regarding park usage.

Municipal parks and recreation agencies within the California Parks and Recreation Society District IV were selected as the study sample because of ease of data collection. Fifty-eight surveys were mailed to selected parks and recreation administrators and city mayors. A descriptive analysis was conducted from the completed surveys on reactions towards homeless individuals who use municipal parks.

Research Design

Subjects and Sample Selection

Using a purposive study population, all District IV member municipalities of the California Parks and recreation Society were included. District IV consists of the municipalities within Santa Clara, San Francisco and San Mateo Counties. There are 36 incorporated cities within those counties with 81% (twenty-nine) of the cities listed as members of the California Parks and Recreation Society District IV. These 29 cities became the study population.

Experimental Design

Two initial surveys were mailed to each city, one to the mayor and one to the parks and recreation administrator. The surveys included an introductory letter (see Appendix A) and a stamped self-addressed return envelope. There was also a request for copies of existing policies and procedures regarding the use of municipal parks by the homeless population. Fifty-eight surveys were mailed. A second mailing to the same population approximately one month later resulted in a total of 31 surveys returned for data analysis purposes. This was approximately a 50% return rate. Only two existing copies of policies and procedures were received. Comprising returned surveys were: mayors 16%, parks and recreation directors 42%, and other 42%.

The returned questionnaires were compared and analyzed to determine trends in policies, procedures or attitudes toward the homeless population's use of municipal parks. These results were provided through the use of descriptive statistics as well as by categorizing and listing all open-ended answers. Tentative conclusions were made regarding the homeless population use of municipal parks and reactions to this use by cities within District IV of the State of California.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study (see Appendix B) was a survey designed with Likert scales, multiple choice, and open-ended questions. The survey was divided into four sections. Section one was a Likert scale format of 13 questions numbered 1 through 13. Section two was the open-ended responses of questions numbered 14, 20, 21, and 29. The open-ended questions were intended to provide an opportunity for individualized comments. The open-ended questions were categorized and listed for research purposes. Section three was questions 15 through 28 where respondents marked all statements that applied. These

close-ended questions focused on occurrences within parks today. Section four consisted of demographic questions 30 through 37. At the end of the survey, administrators and mayors were reminded to submit a copy of policies and procedures if available.

Preliminary Testing of the Instrument

A pilot test was conducted to establish easy comprehension, format and length of time to complete the survey. A test group of eight parks and recreation staff at a small municipality agreed to complete the study. The completion of the survey and comments on the instrument were completely voluntary. Their comments regarding the survey format, comprehension and length of time to complete were incorporated in the final draft. The test group was encouraged to write comments on the instrument and to return them in the researcher's mailbox for confidentiality. Eight pre-tests were distributed with five pre-tests completed and returned.

Procedure

Fifty-eight sample subjects were mailed a survey and a cover letter which provided an explanation and a description of the study intent and purpose. Also included was a self-addressed stamped return envelope and a fax number. The cover letter stated that a designated proxy could complete the survey. Estimated return time for the surveys was two weeks. The survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete. Instructions on how to complete the survey were included with the researcher's phone number for further clarification if required. A second dispersal of the survey with a follow-up letter was mailed two weeks after the original. A fifty percent response rate was anticipated and achieved.

Reliability and Validity.

The survey was written using questions formed from a variety of sources dealing with research about the homeless population. Questions were evaluated by expert opinion prior to mailing. In addition to a preliminary review by the thesis committee, the survey was reviewed by a scholar who conducts and publishes research about the homeless. This scholar examined wording, how the survey compares to previous research, and for content validity. This was done to determine if the results, intent, and meaning of the questions were clear. Content validity was determined to be clear in it's meaning of the homeless use of municipal parks in the instrument by the pretest results and expert opinion. A pretest of the instrument was conducted at a parks and recreation agency to determine time of completion, wording and reaction to the survey. Adjustments in the instrument were made following these validity checks.

Reliability of the survey was accomplished by mailing it to the mayor and the parks and recreation administrator within each municipality. The same survey was mailed to each group providing the opportunity for replication in responses. The pre-test allowed for a measurement in clarity, and specificity of the questions. The mayors and parks and recreation administrators were given the option to pass the survey on to a designated proxy. This was to assist in a higher return rate if the targeted respondent could not complete the survey in the allotted time frame. Summary of answers were analyzed. Reliability of the survey may be subject to bias due to how the respondents felt while completing it, how powerful and political the issue of the homeless use in the parks is at the time of the survey, and their interpretation of the homeless issue in relation to their social beliefs. It should be noted that the open-ended questions are subject to bias through the researcher's interpretation but have been listed for clarity (Appendix C). Close-ended questions may be biased in the listing structure which was determined by the researcher.

Data Analysis

Data was coded and analyzed for descriptive statistics. All responses to open-ended questions were categorized and listed for extended information. Descriptive statistics were summarized using the Minitab statistical software program. A descriptive analysis summary will tentatively establish concerns and responses by public policymakers regarding the homeless population use of municipal parks. Minitab correlation command was the Pearson Product Correlation between the variables in columns specified. This was to indicate strength of relationships between variables.

SUMMARY

It is the goal of the researcher to point out trends, directions, or policies that are shaping how the homeless population use of public parks is addressed by municipalities. Research study results may be used in developing guidelines for the use of municipal parks by the homeless. Results will be made available to all participants in the study as well as to anyone requesting this information.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

A total of 31 surveys were analyzed for data purposes resulting in a 50% return rate. Sixteen percent of the surveys sent to mayors were returned, and forty-two percent of the surveys sent to parks and recreation administrators were returned. Forty-two percent listed as proxies returned surveys which were passed on to them to complete by the original recipients. Two policies regarding homeless population issues were received. The survey has been divided into four sections for analysis.

Descriptive Analysis

Demographics of Subjects

Demographic information was collected in the final and fourth section of the survey. Respondents included 12 parks and recreation administrators, 5 mayors, and 13 listed "others" (e.g., police sergeant, human resources staff, park staff, homeless coordinator) with one respondent not answering. Figure 1 presents a representation of the subjects (see Appendix D for complete profile). The city population mean fell in the 30,000 to 49,999 range. The mean number of parks located within each city which responded was 16 or more. Respondents were composed of 71% male, 26% female, and 3% no response. Of all respondents, the largest percentage was Caucasian (87%).

The typical respondent profile within the three county survey was that of a parks and recreation administrator, male, Caucasian, between the ages of 40 through 49. The respondent works for a city with a population of 30,000 to 49,999 and is responsible for at

Figure 1. Demographic representation of respondents by title, population, length worked, parks responsible, gender, education, ethnicity, age.

TITLE	MAYOR	PARKS & RECREATION DIRECTOR	PROXY	TOTAL RESPONSE
RESPONDENTS	16%	42%	42%	100%
POPULATION				
30 - 49,999	6%	10%	16%	32%
LENGTH WORKED				
5 1/2-10 YEARS	6%	6%	13%	25%
PARKS RESPONSIBLE				
16-OVER		26%	13%	39%
GENDER				
NO RESPONSE			3%	3%
MALE	10%	32%	29%	71%
FEMALE	6%	10%	10%	26%
EDUCATION				
BA/BS	10%	23%	23%	56%
ETHNICITY				
CAUCASIAN	16%	39%	32%	87%
AGE				
40-49 YEARS	3%	23%	19%	45%

least 16 parks. His level of education is at least an AA degree. One respondent was responsible for 235 parks. An inference from this demographic make-up is that the Caucasian, educated male is setting direction for the tolerance levels and treatment of the homeless population using municipal parks.

Section One

Section one of the survey consists of questions 1 through 13. These were designed using a Likert scale with 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree. The means of questions 1 through 13 are presented in Figure 2 (see Appendix E for complete results).

According to these results there is agreement that there is a concern with the growing population of homeless individuals using municipal parks as a place to congregate. Responses indicated that there is a consensus that cities should enact laws, policies and procedures regarding use of municipal parks by the homeless population. City administration and communities are concerned with the homeless use of parks and are becoming discouraged with the parks. But it was also reported that attendance at parks has not decreased so it is inferred that park users may be using the park at specific time periods of the day and or week. Increased expenditures to maintain park desirability were also reported as not necessary.

Section Two

Section two of the survey consisted of the open-ended questions numbered 14, 20, 21 and 29. Appendix C lists raw data for questions numbered 14, 20, 21 and 29 in open-ended responses. Respondents listed a lack of a permanent place of residence as the most common way to define a homeless person. Results indicated that general policies regarding use of

Figure 2. Results by mean of Likert scaled responses to questions 1 through 13.

<u>Question</u>	<u>Mean</u>
1. There is a problem today with the use of parks by homeless people.	3.097
2. The size of the homeless situation has increased in the city parks over the last two years.	3.129
3. The size of the homeless situation has decreased in the city parks over the last two years.	1.900
4. Cities should enact laws making it a crime for homeless people to loiter in public parks.	3.033
5. Cities should enact policies and procedures regarding the use of public parks by homeless people.	3.400
6. The use of city parks by homeless people is a concern of the community.	3.800
7. Public parks users are becoming discouraged and apprehensive to visit parks due to their use by homeless people.	3.167
8. Attendance at public parks has decreased due to the use of parks by homeless people.	2.600
9. More expenditures are required to get the public parks in shape due to use by the homeless.	2.867
10. The use of city parks by homeless people is a concern of city administration.	3.367
11. While performing their duties, park employees are harassed and intimidated by people they think are homeless.	2.367
12. Political leadership is beginning to scrutinize the situation at public parks due to use by homeless people.	2.833
13. The use of parks by homeless people presents no problems.	2.300

parks by homeless individuals focused on loitering and regular citizen actions. Law enforcement was used to regulate policies of park use by homeless people. Incidents that triggered the development of policies and procedures were reported to be loitering, drinking and vandalism often committed by homeless individuals at parks.

Section Three

Section three includes questions 15 through 28, not inclusive. Appendix F presents the percentage of each listed response. The homeless were reported to be recognized by actions and sight with 42% of the respondents reporting that knowing someone is homeless by what they are doing and 39% reporting someone is homeless by seeing them on a daily basis. There were a wide variety of behaviors reported for homeless in parks for question 16 but the following were the most frequently listed: 61% sleeping, 58% loitering, and 48% sitting.

Question 17 had 42% respond that the reason homeless individuals were not using their parks was because it was out of the way by walking or public transportation. Question 18 asked how these responses were formed which was reported from first-hand experiences 74% of the time. Respondents reported on their own experiences which may be restrictive. Question 19 directly asked if city policies and procedures were in effect regarding the use of parks by homeless people with sixty-seven percent reporting that there are no city policies and procedures in effect. Twenty-three percent reported they did have policies and procedures in place. Ten percent did not know. The application of general public park policies and procedures appears to apply in most of the responding municipalities. Of the 23% who reported that they do have policies and procedures in effect, only 43% had these in place prior to facing problems associated with the homeless population park use.

It was discovered that the parks and recreation director (55%) is most instrumental in the development of policies/procedures regarding the use of city parks by the homeless in

analyzing responses to question 23. The level of enforcement for these policies and procedures are applied loosely 44% of the time. Homeless were treated as any other citizen using municipal parks reported respondents 59% of the time if there are no direct policies and procedures in effect regarding homeless use.

Correlations

Correlations are shown plotted in Figures 3 through 7. No significant correlation was found between the increase of the homeless population and city policies and procedures in effect regarding the use of parks by homeless people for questions 2 and 22 as shown on Figure 3.

The two statements for questions 1 and 2 are: "there is a problem today with the use of parks by homeless people" (and) "the size of the homeless situation has increased in the city parks over the last two years." A very significant correlation of 0.846 was found between these two statements as shown on Figure 4.

There was a moderate correlation of 0.611 between questions 3 and 13: "the size of the homeless situation has decreased in the city parks over the last two years" and "the use of parks by homeless people presents no problems." Figure 5 presents this correlation. As might be expected, if the size of the homeless situation has decreased in the city parks over the last two years then the use of parks by homeless people presented no problems. Less homeless in the parks resulted in less problems associated with them.

What was not expected of questions 2 and 5 were if the size of the homeless situation has increased in the city parks over the last two years then there was reported a very low correlation of 0.168 for cities to enact policies and procedures regarding the use of public parks by homeless people. This is displayed in Figure 6. Respondents of cities that experienced an increase in the homeless population had a low correlation with the question

Figure 3. Correlation between "increase in homeless at city parks" and "policies in effect"
= 0.244.

Figure 4. Correlation between "there is a problem today with homeless use" and
"homeless size has increased in city parks" = 0.846.

Figure 5. Correlation between "size of homeless has decreased" and "use presents no problems" = 0.611.

Figure 6. Correlation between "size of homeless has increased" and "cities should enact policies" = 0.168.

that the city should enact laws making it a crime for homeless people to loiter in public parks. Figure 7 presents the correlational data for questions 2 and 4. This correlation was 0.452. There was a stronger correlation for enacting laws than to enact policies by respondents. Even though respondents expressed concern with the homeless use of municipal parks, they are reluctant to develop policies or procedures to address this concern.

Content validity of the questions appeared to be consistent according to these findings as items had an expected correlation. The range of meanings within the questions remained constant for the findings. If the respondents reported that the homeless situation has increased in the parks over the last two years then they did not agree with the statement that the homeless situation had decreased in the parks within the same time period.

Of all respondents, 81% reported having homeless present in the parks. Of those reporting to have homeless present in the parks, 67% have no policies directed to the homeless use of municipal parks. There were 23% who reported they do have policies regarding homeless use of public parks. These are shown in Figure 8. Of the 19% who reported not having homeless present in the parks, 17% have policies in effect. They were 50% who do not currently have policies in effect regarding homeless use of public parks. Figure 9 presents the total response regarding policies and procedures. Of the 23% who do have policies in effect regarding homeless use of municipal parks, only 43% had these policies in effect prior to any homeless use issues. This led to a reactionary response by over half of those cities who now have policies in place.

Hypothesis Results

The null hypothesis stated that if the homeless population does not create a problem at municipal parks, then there is no policy designed by city policymakers. This hypothesis

Figure 7. Correlation between "size of homeless has increased" and "cities should enact laws" = -0.452.

Figure 8. Are homeless present in your parks?

Figure 9. Total respondents regarding policies and procedures.

was not rejected. No correlation was found between homeless people presenting no problems in park use and city policies and procedures in effect. If there is not perceived a homeless population problem with the use of public parks, then policies and procedures were not designed. Policies and procedures were also not designed when the homeless population use of public parks was perceived as a problem. The development of policies and procedures was a result of endorsing status quo regulations not targeted to the homeless individuals. The regulation of homeless use was then pursued through formal establishment of policies generated for the general public enforcement.

Hypothesis two stated that if individuals who are homeless are present in municipal parks, then public policymakers are reactionary in their design of policies and procedures regarding the homeless use of the parks. This hypothesis was supported. In this investigation, only 23% of the respondents said that city policies and procedures are in effect regarding the use of parks by homeless people with 67% replying that policies and procedures are not in effect. There was no need to develop policies or procedures with the issue of use of city parks by homeless people as perceived by 50% of the respondents. Of those with no policies, 59% interact with homeless people the same as any other citizen. If use of city parks by homeless people are a problem, 61% are not establishing any policies or procedures on this issue. Findings indicated that public policymakers are reactionary in their design of policies and procedures regarding the homeless use of the parks but are not pursuing establishment of policies and procedures in this regard.

Hypothesis three stated that if individuals who are homeless are present in municipal parks, then public policymakers are reactionary in their design of policies and procedures based on an administrator's direction was supported. Responses indicated that the parks and recreation administrator was the most instrumental in formulating policies and procedures regarding municipal park usage.

Hypothesis four stated if individuals who are homeless are present in municipal parks, then public policymakers are reactionary in their design of policies and procedures based on city council direction. This hypothesis was not supported. There was no indication that policies and procedures resulted primarily from council direction, but rather resulted more from city staff recommendations.

Hypothesis five stated if individuals who are homeless are present in municipal parks, then policies and procedures are established to regulate their use of the parks based on citizen input. This hypothesis was not supported by findings in this study. It appears that citizen input did not have a clear, direct influence on the establishment of policies and procedures. It was reported that there is community concern regarding homeless use of municipal parks, but no direct effect was found about the influence of this concern on the establishment or implementation of public policy.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The public continues to associate public parks as one of the places where the homeless congregate. The findings support the suggestion that the homeless population use of public parks has increased over the past two years and that reactions to this increased use have not resulted in formal actions. Formal responses to the issue have yet to lead to the development of policies and procedures. It is indicative that status quo decisions are the reactions that have proven effective or perhaps the least disruptive path in handling this issue. There is a general consensus to treat the homeless population as any other citizen, even though there appears to be growing discomfort with the homeless use of public parks as reported here. Parks and recreation professionals are increasingly becoming engaged in issues regarding the homeless use of parks on an informal basis.

Discussion of Findings

This study investigated the response of municipal parks and recreation agencies to the presence of individuals who are homeless in the parks.

Results can be summarized as follows:

1. The null hypothesis was supported. Findings indicated that if the homeless population does not create a problem at municipal parks, then there is no policy designed by city policymakers. Response to the homeless population use of municipal parks was to treat them as any other citizen and apply general park policies and procedures to this use. It was not determined what type or amount of problem that homeless use creates that leads to policy formation. It was not determined if the reporting municipality preferred not to develop new
-

policies, rather apply current ones to the public in general. The potential for the homeless creating problems at municipal parks was not addressed. Do these cities who have no homeless park use policy prepared for the potential problems that may occur in the future?

2. If individuals who are homeless are present in municipal parks, then public policymakers are reactionary in their design of policies and procedures regarding the homeless use of the parks. This statement was supported. Only 43% of the respondents had policies and procedures regarding homeless use of public parks in effect prior to the homeless population causing problems. It was not clear if the policies and procedures are written directly to regulate the homeless population's use of public parks or if these regulations are applied from the general park policies and procedures. It would be interesting to note the differences between the general public park use policies and those targeted to homeless use. Further study might include a measure of the effectiveness of these homeless park use policies compared to what was taking place prior to their formation. What effect have these policies and procedures had on the homeless using the park? The municipal administrator's role in program and policy development to address the homeless needs has not been clarified or challenged.

3. If individuals who are homeless are present in municipal parks, then public policymakers are reactionary in their design of policies and procedures based on an administrator's direction. This hypothesis was supported. The parks and recreation administrator was the most instrumental in establishing policies and procedures regarding homeless use of municipal parks. City administration was also reported as concerned with the use of public parks by the homeless population. The impact of park staff reactions on the development of park policies would be interesting to measure. How does the administrator decide on what needs are not being met at the parks? How influenced is the parks and

recreation administrator by park staff input? How does the establishment of policies regarding homeless park use become a priority to the parks and recreation administrator?

4. If individuals who are homeless are present in municipal parks, then public policymakers are reactionary in their design of policies and procedures based on city council direction. This hypothesis was not supported. The issue of homeless present in municipal parks has not been a major concern of the respective city councils according to respondents. It appears that judgments regarding homeless park use have been issues for park staff and administration. The lack of input from city councils may indicate that the homeless use of municipal parks is not a concern of the constituency. This could mean that current policies and procedures are effective and that incidents involving the homeless use of municipal parks have been minor in nature. The city councils may also not be lobbying for the homeless right to use the parks as homeless are not taxpayers or voters and so do not have the council's attention except in the negative sense.

5. If individuals who are homeless are present in municipal parks, then policies and procedures are established to regulate their use of the parks based on citizen input. This was not supported even though the concern of public park use by homeless individuals was reported as high for the community participants. The redefining of use of municipal parks by the homeless population is a community concern and public park users are affected by their presence but not to the point of avoiding park use. This was pointed out when it was discovered that attendance at public parks has not decreased but does indicate that people are apprehensive about their park use, according to respondents. To determine if community park users are being adversely affected by the homeless in the parks, a survey presenting these type of questions would need to be asked of them. The park as a whole may be experiencing use but there may be specific areas that are now considered off limits due to park use by the homeless.

There are, according to the findings of this study, few formal processes in place that directly relate to the homeless population use of public parks. Policies regulating the general public's use of municipal parks are also being applied to the homeless population use. It appears that the homeless individual is treated as any citizen would be in the park setting. Sixty-one percent of the respondents had no plans for implementing new policies and procedures targeted to homeless use even though this use has created problems.

Findings lacked consensus on the treatment of homeless by municipalities. The results of this study did not indicate how policies are administered in communities where they exist. It is inferred that policies directed at the homeless population are not being developed by municipalities. Behavior that is accepted by the community is being applied to the standards of homeless park use. Informally, policies for enforcement of park use by citizens regulating loitering, drinking and appropriate park behavior are applied to the homeless population. A need may be developing to create new policies and procedures directly related to the homeless use of public park land for shelter, sleeping and living purposes.

An underlying question may ask if the parks and recreation profession should be involved in providing services to the homeless, especially in the tight budgetary climate facing municipalities now. Is it anyone's responsibility to provide recreation and leisure services to the homeless population? Regarding this argument, Kunstler (1992) stated:

Others may argue that community recreators should provide services to the homeless, who may be inhabiting public parks, forests and other public lands and recreation areas. In reality, a social problem faces all of society and cannot be neatly compartmentalized by setting or diagnosis. (p. 44)

It appears among this sample that providing for the homeless population directly is non-existent. Ironically, the homeless may be provided for by the lack of policy development and the application of general public park use rules where they are concerned. The lack of

directed action to the homeless and their treatment as any other citizen is an indication that they are accepted generally at parks, and possibly expected users of these services. There were no direct questions related to this issue and perhaps it could be the source of a research investigation in the future.

Demographic findings indicated a mean of longevity for the respondents in keeping their city service positions. Sixty-four percent of the total group had been with the department/city for 5 1/2 or more years. Thirty-nine percent were responsible for 16 or more public parks, 32% had an average population of 30,000 to 49,999. A total of 70% served at cities with a population of 30,000 or larger. This indicated that the policies and procedures in effect for public park use have been in place or put in place by the same population who is now regulating and monitoring the results.

Status Quo Decision-Making

Status quo decision-making appears to be the informal response to the use of public parks by the homeless. Respondents reported that homeless were entitled to the use of parks and improper use was determined by expected normative behavior of the typical citizen at a public location. Whether public officials have responsibilities in defining or regulating homeless use of parks as a particular segment of population has not been defined in this investigation.

The process of status quo decision-making is determined to be the most prevalent method identified among this sample. Administrators were reluctant to pursue change in this situation and status quo decisions continue over alternatives that may yield greater utility. This suggests that some process other than greater utility maximization characterizes much of the decision-making. Whether this action has been analyzed as the best possible solution is not evident. If current actions with the homeless use of municipal parks appear to be providing

the desired outcomes, the decision maker may not pursue alternative plans. However, current actions may not be effective as the homeless population increases.

It is evident that there is concern by administration over the use of parks by homeless people. It can only be surmised that the lack of follow through with the development of policies and procedures in response to problems of park use by the homeless is that the status quo treatment of the problem appears to be effective. This study indicated that formal policies and directions to pursue in relation to the use of public parks will have to be addressed at some future point.

Policies and Procedures

It was the intention of this researcher to examine the general directions policies and procedures have taken to reflect parks and recreation administration responses to the homelessness park use issue. Results of this study indicated that a problem with the use of public parks by homeless people is perceived, but the formal formation of policies and procedures is not a priority. General policies and procedures for park use are applied. The intent of this study was to state the issues involved in the development of public park policy regarding use by the homeless population. This has not been determined with these findings. Parks and recreation agencies, findings indicate, are reactionary in their design of policies and procedures in regard to the homeless population use of municipal parks when they do pursue this action. It is indicated that general public policies and procedures are applied to the homeless population and these appear to be interpreted loosely. A defensive response is indicated in the instances that policies and procedures are not established to regulate homeless park use. But as national, state, and local budgetary constraints tighten the funding for public park lands and maintenance, the ability to respond in reaction to misuse of public property

may not be the most effective way to maintain and salvage public lands. Unfortunately, there appears no clear and accepted role models in this issue.

Study Procedures

This study has examined the reactions of public policymakers in relation to the use of municipal parks by the homeless population. This field study has provided the opportunity to further validate the survey format. There are recommendations to revise some questions and format for further research purposes. Questions for demographic purposes would provide precise comparisons of the participants if written closed-ended. Questions 15 through 18 and 22 through 27 should ask for one choice or to rate the answers in order of agreement instead of listing all answers that apply. It was difficult to assess all answers listed for each particular question.

It was discovered that formal policies and procedures are not prevalent so questions indicating types of responses occurring with the use of parks by the homeless population would have been informative. The use of parks by homeless people was listed as a concern of administration, but it was not clear why.

There should be fewer questions on responsibility for the direction of policies and procedures based on direction of administrators, city council, or citizen input as it is difficult to assess who is responsible for the interpretation of the respondents. Questions about how policies are used and needed and how effective they are in actual implementation need further exploring. A focus on how effective current policies, regulations or operating procedures are on the homeless use of public parks would further identify the types of policies taking place. There is a need for further investigation regarding the enforcement of formal and informal policies. An assessment to determine what types of behavior exceed that which is considered "proper" for the use of municipal parks would be beneficial in the development of policies.

The survey was written with the assumption that all cities had homeless individuals utilizing their parks. Several respondents reported that to their knowledge they did not have homeless individuals using their parks. Based on these responses, the survey should include questions for cities who do not experience the use of their parks by homeless individuals.

A follow-up survey should be sent to parks and recreation administrators and park superintendents on a broader scale, possibly state-wide, with a stratified random sample for further study. Park superintendents' responses may be more directly focused to the situation at parks, and as such, be a rich source for the assessment of how homeless are treated in parks. A qualitative study using interviewing methods with park superintendents and homeless people may bring new insights.

Collecting policies and procedures in response to the homeless use issue of public parks across the state of California would be informative. It is also recommended that questions be included which determine how effective existing policies are. What is the tolerance level of homeless use of public parks? Has this tolerance level increased as budgetary constraints hinder reactions to misuse? Is the tolerance level of the public/community at the point where policies and procedures should be developed? And how is this level determined? Is high public use a way to combat homeless use problems at municipal parks? It is recommend that questions be included which address park amenities to determine if there are particular amenities that attract homeless use of the park.

Implications for Further Study

It would be important to collect an accounting of actual occurrences of homeless use of public parks and review the policies and procedures applicable in each account. The effectiveness of policies and procedures in use, and their effectiveness should be analyzed.

The emergence of policy role models would be an important tool for municipalities to analyze in their search for a "fit" for the homeless use of public parks.

At issue also is the lack of funding in the public sector for programs that address social concerns regarding homeless use of public parks. The role of municipal recreation and park departments may become an important consideration. Another area of further study might be in park planning and design where changes are occurring to alleviate the potential of escalating homeless population use and crime. The survey should be divided into a section for parks, within each city, that are listed as non-use by the homeless population to determine why this is occurring. This would then determine if the homeless use of public parks was park-intensified or if the trend was city-wide.

It would be interesting to note if the recreation and leisure services profession has a role to play in program and policy development to address the particular needs of the homeless. Does the profession continue to treat them as any ordinary citizen utilizing public properties? (Kunstler, 1992). How can the profession meet its responsibility to homeless individuals if they, as a segmented society, present a problem with their use of public parks?

The issue of planning and designing of parks and the affect on homeless use has not been pursued. Physical factors of the parks themselves may lead or dissuade homeless people's use. Factors such as: a) how easily observed are people throughout the park; b) proper flow patterns; c) how quickly are damages repaired; d) public participation and involvement in this issue; e) and the encouragement of public use to alter the homeless population use of public parks can have an effect on homeless population use of the park (Perry, 1983).

CONCLUSIONS

This study was intended to provide field information about actions taken in response to the use of municipal parks by the homeless population. The combined issue of the homeless population use of municipal parks and the formal and informal responses of the recreation and park administration is relatively new. Research and information on the subject of the homeless population use of leisure services is not extensive even though the use of public parks by homeless people is well established.

Social issues are not a new concept for recreation and leisure professionals and may well be the future focus of the profession as budgetary conditions tighten in the public context. Issues in response to the homeless population may possibly be the social factor of the 1990's with the establishment of role models, effective programs, and policies and procedures directed toward the homeless population. Parks have long been associated as a place for the homeless to congregate and as the homeless issue escalates and tolerance level of the public lessens, parks and recreation administrators may find themselves engaged in new policy issues. As Kunstler (1992) stated:

Recreation and leisure service professionals can benefit the homeless and are challenged to seek ways to serve this population and, in turn, enhance society. By creating opportunities to experience control, choice and self-expression and to feel inner joy and a sense of freedom, homeless individuals can reshape their environment and challenge society and professionals to address the problems of homelessness. (p. 45)

The social, political, and public realm of servicing the homeless population and their use of public properties is a potential area of future research. The findings of this study suggested that the use of public parks by the homeless has increased over the past two years and reactions to this use have not resulted in formal actions. It was not clear why more cities were not actively pursuing the development of such regulations. Subjects indicated that there

appeared to be no need perceived to establish policies and procedures. It is interpreted that informal actions and status quo procedures are perceived adequate for the situation at the time of occurrence. Only 16% of the mayors responded indicating that those who did not respond may not believe that the homeless use of municipal parks is a concern. There were 42% listed as proxies and it is unclear whether the survey was passed on by the mayor or by the parks and recreation administrator. There were also predominately parks and recreation directors who responded. It may be concluded that status quo procedures have resulted in adequately maintaining the use of parks by the homeless at an acceptable rate for those who did not respond. Many of the cities surveyed treated the homeless population as any other citizen.

Homeless people are perceived, according to policy, in accordance to their actions and not as a segment of population they represent. This would be indicative that administrators perceive the rights of the homeless population as any other citizen and treat them accordingly. Issues yet to be addressed include: park planning specifically for homeless needs; the financial support of taxes and the lack of homeless financial support; and the use of parks in emergency situations as a place of shelter such as with the earthquake survivors in Los Angeles (January, 1994).

The questions of the 90's may well be how to address the recreation and leisure needs of the homeless population. This would include their use of public park land. Further definition of the concept of public park use will need to be explored. As the homeless have no address and so are not legal members of the community and pay no taxes, are they considered eligible to use the park land for personal needs such as sleeping, and loitering? Are the administrators of public park lands turning a blind eye to this growing problem in hopes that it will just go away? Are we ignoring a whole segment of population who may be entitled and more in need of our services than the general population? There may be hard answers to these difficult questions facing the public park administrator of the coming new century.

Appendix A
Introductory Letters

March 19, 1993

Dear Mayor (Parks & Recreation Administrator):

Your assistance is requested for a study of homeless in city parks. This study is my thesis project for the Recreation and Leisure Studies graduate program at San Jose State University. It is hoped that the results of this study will increase understanding of the effectiveness of park and recreation departments in regard to the use of public parks by homeless people.

A survey is enclosed for you or your designated proxy to complete. I am also sending a survey to the Park and Recreation Administrator in your city. Your participation is entirely voluntary but your assistance would be greatly appreciated. The results of this study may be published, but any information that could result in your identification will remain confidential. The survey should not take more than 15 minutes of your time. Please return the survey in the enclosed stamped envelope by Tuesday, March 30, 1993 or fax it to me at (408)842-2409. I would also appreciate copies, if available, of policies and procedures in effect in your city regarding public park use by homeless people.

Once completed, copies of the results of this study will be available by request. Please indicate to me that you would like a copy by phoning (408)848-0460, by fax (408)842-2409, or by sending a letter to: Gilroy Parks and Recreation Department, Attention: Julie Spier, 7351 Rosanna Street, Gilroy, CA 95020. Results will be available in summer, 1993.

If you have any questions about this study please call me at (408)848-0460 or by fax at (408)842-2409. My San Jose State University thesis advisor is Dr. Kate Sullivan and she can be reached at (408)924-3007, should you have any further questions or concerns. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Julie G. Spier
Recreation Supervisor
& SJSU Graduate Student

April 7, 1993

Dear Mayor (Parks & Recreation Administrator):

I mailed a letter requesting your assistance with a study I am conducting regarding the use by homeless of city parks. This study is my thesis project for the Recreation and Leisure Studies graduate program at San Jose State University. It is hoped that the results of this study will increase understanding of the effectiveness of park and recreation departments in regard to the use of public parks by homeless people.

Unfortunately, I had a medical emergency and was unable to send out a reminder survey. I am enclosing a survey for you or your designated proxy to complete if you were unable to meet the previous deadline. If you did return a survey then please accept my appreciation for your cooperation. Your participation is entirely voluntary but your assistance would be greatly appreciated. The results of this study may be published, but any information that could result in your identification will remain confidential. The survey should not take more than 15 minutes of your time. Please return the survey in the enclosed stamped envelope by Tuesday, April 20, 1993 or fax it to me at (408)842-2409. I would also appreciate copies, if available, of policies and procedures in effect in your city regarding public park use by homeless people.

Once completed, copies of the results of this study will be available by request. Please indicate to me that you would like a copy by phoning (408)848-0460, by fax (408)842-2409, or by sending a letter to: Gilroy Parks and Recreation Department, Attention: Julie Spier, 7351 Rosanna Street, Gilroy, CA 95020. Results will be available in summer, 1993.

If you have any questions about this study please call me at (408)848-0460 or by fax at (408)842-2409. My San Jose State University thesis advisor is Dr. Kate Sullivan and she can be reached at (408)924-3007, should you have any further questions or concerns. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Julie G. Spier
Recreation Supervisor
& SJSU Graduate Student

Appendix B

Survey

INSTRUCTIONS: Thank you for participating in this survey. The questions listed below are intended to find out what direction your city is taking regarding use of your public parks by homeless people. Please respond to each item as it relates to your city's position.

Please respond to each of these items by circling the number that is closest to your degree of agreeing or disagreeing. For example, by circling 5, you are showing that you strongly agree with the statement as it applies to your city's homeless population. Please use the scale below to respond to each statement.

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

1. There is a problem today with the use of parks by homeless people. 1 2 3 4 5
2. The size of the homeless situation has increased in the city parks over 1 2 3 4 5
the last two years.
3. The size of the homeless situation has decreased in the city parks over 1 2 3 4 5
the last two years.
4. Cities should enact laws making it a crime for homeless people to loiter 1 2 3 4 5
in public parks.
5. Cities should enact policies and procedures regarding the use of public 1 2 3 4 5
parks by homeless people.
6. The use of city parks by homeless people is a concern of the 1 2 3 4 5
community.
7. Public park users are becoming discouraged and apprehensive to visit 1 2 3 4 5
parks due to their use by homeless people.
8. Attendance at public parks has decreased due to the use of parks 1 2 3 4 5
by homeless people.
9. More expenditures are required to get the public parks in shape 1 2 3 4 5
due to use by the homeless.
10. The use of city parks by homeless people is a concern of 1 2 3 4 5
administration.
11. While performing their duties, Park employees are harassed and 1 2 3 4 5
intimidated by people they think are homeless.
12. Political leadership is beginning to scrutinize the situation at public 1 2 3 4 5
parks due to use by homeless people.
13. The use of parks by homeless people presents no problems. 1 2 3 4 5

Please answer the following questions by indicating an appropriate answer or filling in with a short answer.

14. How would you define a homeless person?

15. How do you know someone who is using your park is homeless?
 ___ What they are wearing ___ How they act ___ Who they are with
 ___ See on a daily basis ___ By what they are doing
 ___ Other (please specify): _____
16. If homeless people are present in your city parks, in which of the following behaviors do they engage?
 ___ Loitering ___ Enjoying the scenery ___ Don't notice what they are doing
 ___ Eating ___ Sitting ___ Panhandling ___ Sleeping
 ___ Drinking/Drugs ___ Congregating with others ___ Cleaning themselves
 ___ Walking ___ Other:(please specify) _____
17. If homeless people are not using your parks, why do you think that is?
 ___ Out of their way by walking or public transportation ___ High public use
 ___ Homeless are chased out ___ Homeless don't know about it
 ___ Other(please specify): _____
18. How did you form your responses regarding the use by homeless people of your city parks?
 ___ First-hand experience ___ Reports by city staff ___ Word from the community
 ___ Read in the paper ___ Other (please specify): _____
19. Are city policies and procedures in effect regarding the use of parks by homeless people?
 ___ Yes ___ No ___ I don't know **(If you answered no please skip to question # 26)**
20. If there are city policies in effect regarding the use of parks by homeless people, in general what are they?
21. How do you implement policies regarding park use by homeless people?
22. Were policies and procedures in effect prior to homeless people becoming a problem in the parks?
 ___ Yes ___ No ___ I don't know

23. If a policy exists, who was most instrumental in the development of policies/procedures regarding the use of city parks by the homeless?
☐ City Administrator ☐ Community ☐ Mayor ☐ City Council
☐ Director of Parks & Recreation ☐ Other (please specify) _____
24. What level of enforcement is in effect for policies/procedures regarding use of public parks by homeless people?
☐ Strictly ☐ Ignored ☐ As each person interprets it ☐ Loosely
☐ Other (please specify) _____
25. If policies and procedures are in effect, what led to the particular policies/procedures chosen? **(After answering, please skip to #30)**
☐ Other cities are implementing it ☐ Affordable ☐ Consitutients wanted it ☐ Staff endorsed it ☐ Response to a specific incident
☐ Other(please specify): _____
26. Why, in your opinion, are there no policies or procedures dealing with the use of city parks by homeless people?
☐ No need perceived ☐ Informal actions only taken ☐ Issue is ignored ☐ Don't know ☐ Other (please specify): _____
27. If there are no policies and procedures in effect regarding homeless use, how do you interact with the homeless people who are using your parks?
☐ Ignore them ☐ Same as any citizen ☐ Have them removed
☐ Don't know ☐ Don't bother them ☐ Other (please specify): _____
28. If use of city parks by the homeless is a problem, are policies and procedures currently being developed to address the issue?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know
29. If you replied yes to question #28, what incident triggered this reaction?
30. What is your title? _____
31. What is the city's population? _____
32. How long have you worked for the city? _____
33. How many parks are you responsible for? _____

34. What is your gender? Male _____ Female _____

35. Highest year of school completed? _____

36. Which category best describes your ethnic group?

____ American Indian or Alaskan Native ____ Asian or Pacific Islander
____ Afro-American ____ Hispanic ____ Caucasian

37. What is your age range? 20-29 years _____ 30-39 years _____ 40-49 years _____
50-59 years _____ 60-69 years _____ 70 years or over _____

Thank you for completing this survey. Reminder: Please include copies of your policies and procedures dealing with the use of city parks by homeless people if available.

Appendix C

List Of Recorded Responses To Questions

14, 20, 21 And 29 Of Homeless Park Use Survey

Question #14: How would you define a homeless person?

1. Someone without a permanent address. Someone who is without income to provide a shelter for themselves for an extended amount of time.
2. A person with no regular place to sleep and leave their possessions that is inside and theirs by right.
3. Individuals without permanent shelter, who subsequently are displaced in the community.
4. Person without a home.
5. One who has no place to "live" and /or avenues to provide shelter to his/her self.
6. An individual who, by choice or by circumstance, does not have enough income for a place to live, or elects a lifestyle without a regular address.
7. Anyone who does not have a permanent address.
8. A person who has no place to live (sleep/eat) or a person who is unemployed and frequents public areas.
9. Those without permanent homes, or official places of residence.

Question #20: If there are city policies in effect regarding the use of parks by homeless people, in general what are they?

1. No overnight camping
 2. Police action re: loitering, etc.
-

Question #21: How do you implement policies regarding park use by homeless people?

1. Park rangers
2. Police
3. Residents are very watchful of their neighborhoods and businesses, and rely upon the police department to respond to calls about "suspicious" individuals, or those they perceive to be. South San Francisco is not very hospitable...pan handling not allowed, few open areas, heavily "built up". San Francisco is very close, and is more tolerant.
4. Park rules and regulations

Question #29: If you replied yes to question #28, what incident triggered this reaction?

1. Loitering, drinking, vandalism
 2. If they are potentially dangerous, are near minors, or engaging in illegal activities, the police are called and they are removed. If they are non-aggressive, they are left alone.
-

Appendix D

Demographic Representation of Respondents

TITLE	MAYOR	PARKS & RECREATION DIRECTOR	PROXY	TOTAL RESPONSE
RESPONDENTS	16%	42%	42%	100%
POPULATION				
NO RESPONSE			3%	3%
9,999 OR LESS			3%	3%
10 - 29,999	6%	10%	6%	22%
30 - 49,999	6%	10%	16%	32%
50 - 69,999		10%	3%	13%
70 - 89,999	3%		3%	6%
90 - ABOVE		13%	6%	19%
LENGTH WORKED				
NO RESPONSE		3%	3%	6%
1-3 YEARS	3%		10%	13%
3 1/2-5 YEARS	3%	10%	3%	16%
5 1/2-10 YEARS	6%	6%	13%	25%
10 1/2-15 YEARS	3%	10%	6%	19%
15 1/2-OVER		13%	6%	19%
PARKS RESPONSIBLE				
NO RESPONSE	3%		3%	6%
NONE			6%	6%
ALL?	3%			3%
1-3			3%	3%
4-10	10%	10%	10%	30%
11-15		6%	6%	12%
16-OVER		26%	13%	39%
GENDER				
NO RESPONSE			3%	3%
MALE	10%	32%	29%	71%
FEMALE	6%	10%	10%	26%

TITLE	MAYOR	PARKS & RECREATION DIRECTOR	PROXY	TOTAL RESPONSE
EDUCATION				
NO RESPONSE			3%	3%
AA	3%			3%
BA/BS	10%	23%	23%	56%
MS	3%	13%	16%	32%
Ph.D		6%		6%
ETHNICITY				
NO RESPONSE			3%	3%
AMERICAN INDIAN/ ALASKAN NATIVE	3%			3%
AFRO-AMERICAN			3%	3%
HISPANIC			3%	3%
CAUCASIAN	16%	39%	32%	87%
AGE				
NO RESPONSE			3%	3%
20-29 YEARS		6%		6%
30-39 YEARS		10%	16%	26%
40-49 YEARS	3%	23%	19%	45%
50-59 YEARS	10%	3%	3%	16%
60-69 YEARS	3%			3%

Appendix E

Results by Percentage of Likert Scaled Responses to Questions 1 through 13

Question 1. There is a problem today with the use of parks by homeless people.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	MEAN
10%	29%	13%	39%	10%	3.097

Question 2. The size of the homeless situation has increased in the city parks over the last two years.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	MEAN
16%	23%	13%	29%	19%	3.129

Question 3. The size of the homeless situation has decreased in the city parks over the last two years.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	MEAN
39%	29%	29%	-	-	1.900

Question 4. Cities should enact laws making it a crime for homeless people to loiter in public parks.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	MEAN
3%	36%	29%	13%	16%	3.033

Question 5. Cities should enact policies and procedures regarding the use of public parks by homeless people.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	MEAN
3%	26%	10%	45%	13%	3.400

Question 6. The use of city parks by homeless people is a concern of the community.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	MEAN
-	13%	16%	45%	23%	3.800

Question 7. Public parks users are becoming discouraged and apprehensive to visit parks due to their use by homeless people.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	MEAN
3%	26%	29%	29%	10%	3.167

Question 8. Attendance at public parks has decreased due to the use of parks by homeless people.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	MEAN
10%	36%	36%	16%	-	2.600

Question 9. More expenditures are required to get the public parks in shape due to use by the homeless.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	MEAN
10%	29%	26%	29%	3%	2.867

Question 10. The use of city parks by homeless people is a concern of city administration.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	MEAN
7%	16%	23%	39%	13%	3.367

Question 11. While performing their duties, park employees are harassed and intimidated by people they think are homeless.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	MEAN
13%	45%	32%	3%	3%	2.367

Question 12. Political leadership is beginning to scrutinize the situation at public parks due to use by homeless people.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	MEAN
3%	32%	42%	16%	3%	2.833

Question 13. The use of parks by homeless people presents no problems.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	MEAN
13%	48%	29%	7%	-	2.300

Appendix F

Responses by Percentage for Questions 15 through 28

Question 15. How do you know someone who is using your park is homeless?

A. What they are wearing	26%	B. See on a daily basis	39%
C. How they act	23%	D. By what they are doing	42%
E. Who they are with	10%	F. Other	39%

Question 16. If homeless people are present in your city parks, in which of the following behaviors do they engage?

A. Loitering	58%	B. Sitting	48%	C. Cleaning themselves	32%
D. Enjoying the scenery	16%	E. Panhandling	36%	F. Don't notice	10%
G. Sleeping	61%	H. Walking	23%	I. Drinking/Drugs	39%
J. Eating	26%	K. Congregating with others	23%		
L. Other	23%				

Question 17. If homeless people are not using your parks, why do you think that is?

A. Out of their way by walking or public transportation	42%
B. Homeless are chased out	10%
C. High public use	39%
D. Homeless don't know about it	23%
E. Other	3%

Question 18. How did you form your responses regarding the use by homeless people of your city parks?

A. First-hand experience	74%	B. Read in the paper	7%
C. Reports by city staff	32%	D. Word from the community	32%
E. Other	7%		

Question 19. Are city policies and procedures in effect regarding the use of parks by homeless people?

A. Yes	23%	B. No	67%	C. I don't know	10%
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Question 22. Were policies and procedures in effect prior to homeless people becoming a problem in the parks?

A. Yes	43%	B. No	57%
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Question 23. If a policy exists, who was most instrumental in the development of policies/procedures regarding the use of city parks by the homeless?

A. City Administrator	9%	B. Director of Parks & Recreation	55%
F. Other	36%		

Question 24. What level of enforcement is in effect for policies/procedures regarding use of public parks by homeless people?

A. Strictly	13%	B. Loosely	44%	D. As each person interprets it	13%
E. Other	31%				

Question 25. If policies and procedures are in effect, what led to the particular policies/procedures chosen?

B. Staff endorsed it	33%	F. Other	66%

Question 26. Why, in your opinion, are there no policies or procedures dealing with the use of city parks by homeless people?

A. No need perceived	50%	B. Don't know	5%
C. Informal actions only taken	29%	E. Other	17%

Question 27. If there are no policies and procedures in effect regarding homeless use, how do you interact with the homeless people who are using your parks?

B. Don't bother them	5%	C. Same as any other citizen	59%
D. Have them removed	9%	E. Don't know	5%
F. Other	23%		

Question 28. If use of city parks by the homeless is a problem, are policies and procedures currently being developed to address the issue?

A. Yes	17%	B. No	61%	C. Don't know	22%

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