

## ***Creating Family Forms***

*The exclusion of men and teenage boys from families in the New York City shelter system, 1987–91*

**Ida Susser**

Hunter College and Graduate Center CUNY

### ***Introduction<sup>1</sup>***

As discussed in the introduction to this issue, the term 'underclass' (Wilson, 1987; Ricketts and Sawhill, 1988) and its relationship to the 1960s concept of 'culture of poverty' has been a source of controversy (Jones, Maxwell, this issue). William Julius Wilson, a widely recognized sociologist, at first used the term, but has since abandoned 'underclass' and now refers to the 'urban poor'. However, we still need to reconceptualize the urban poor, in order to avoid implying an illusory separation between poor and not poor. An emphasis on separateness obscures rather than illuminates analysis of the dynamic processes of capitalism (Vincent, this issue). Whereas terms such as 'underclass' emphasize the social isolation of poor people, they neglect the institutional connections that bind members of different income groups together: through work in the formal and informal economies, and through social service institutions (Mollenkopf and Castells, 1991). Our research suggests that it is precisely the interaction with and active intervention of government institutions, schools, health care, police and shelters for the homeless, which limit and reshape the lives of the poor, whether we label them unemployed working class, urban poor or 'underclass'. For homeless people in New York City, the experience of poverty reflects the constant interplay between institutional regulations and poor people's strategies of adaptation and resistance to such constraints.

Much of the discussion of the underclass and poverty centers around the family or household structure: questions of female-headed households, teenage mothers, absent fathers, abandoned and neglected children (Zinn, 1989). The research presented here suggests that such family strategies

must be analyzed within the context of the historically specific constraints of institutions serving the poor.

The presence of these constraints is not a new observation. They have been noted for some time in the literature concerning poor and minority families in the US (Piven and Cloward, 1971; Stack, 1974; Susser and Kreniske, 1987; Abramovitz, 1988; Block et al., 1988). However, in examining the shelter system in New York City, we see the re-emergence of old patterns in new institutions.

### *Family form and institutional dynamics*

The data from the shelters suggest that US society has at least *two* models of family which are fostered by social and government institutions.

One model of the US family is the generally noted nuclear family model, which has been the target of much discussion and criticism by feminists and other social researchers. Clearly, this model has never allowed for the range of households found in the United States (Cole, 1986; Rapp, 1987; Mullings, 1989; Susser, 1989). Nevertheless, much research has documented the ways in which government institutions, such as schools, social security and other entitlements have assumed the natural existence of the nuclear family and treated household units as if they were constructed in this way (Abramovitz, 1988). Indeed, government guaranteed housing loans, for working people who could afford a mortgage, were also predicated on the nuclear family (Edel et al., 1984). Cultural explanations have drawn on this model of the nuclear family to describe 'American kinship' (Schneider, 1968). Households which do not conform to this cultural expectation have been classified as 'broken' if not pathological.

The second model of the US family is the model for poor households. This model separates the father from the mother and their young children. It treats the mother and children as a family unit. Research on the shelter system suggests that, far from imposing a nuclear family model on the poor household, some institutions are in fact imposing a female-headed household as the model for poor people when they receive government subsidies. This tendency was first documented in analysis of public assistance programs such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), which provided funds preferentially for women and children. The original version of this program, Aid to Dependent Children (ADC), was instituted by the 1934 Social Security Act. One might attribute the current bias in public assistance to its emergence during that time. However, the imposition of the model becomes dramatically apparent in

an examination of the new institutions which have been created in the 1980s to shelter homeless 'families'.

It is not suggested here that regulations *directly* construct family patterns. Variations in household structure have not been found to directly parallel variations in public assistance (Ellwood and Summers, 1986; Wilson and Neckerman, 1986). Nevertheless, the historical consistency in models of family life which accompany government assistance for poor people contrast strikingly with programs designed to provide financial assistance to higher income households.

### ***The structuring of households***

Based on a study of household structure and gender as observed in the New York City shelter system between 1987 and 1991, the research presented here documents the institutional processes which divide poor families. We also document the on-going struggle among the families themselves to provide for children and improve their own living conditions under difficult circumstances.<sup>2</sup>

Much research has demonstrated the economic factors which have structured poor households and left young women largely responsible for childrearing (Stack, 1974; Wilson, 1987; Dehavenon, 1990; Susser, 1986; Zinn, 1989). The shift of industrial work out of the metropolitan northeast has decreased the availability of well-paid, stable, unionized manufacturing work for men and women (Bluestone and Harrison, 1982). At the same time, the growing service economy of the advanced capitalist city, supplemented by an informal economy of sweatshops and non-unionized work, has provided low-paid insecure employment for women, immigrants and members of US minority groups (Sassen, 1991). Homicide rates, military service and incarceration have reduced the number of men available for marriage among low-income populations (Dehavenon, 1993). In addition, studies from the 1960s to the 1990s have documented the difficulties which confront men in their attempt to maintain nuclear households in the face of poverty, unemployment and racial discrimination (Liebow, 1967; Sullivan, 1990). It is within the context of the persistent assaults on employment and household income which have confronted families in New York City in the last two decades that the impact of homeless shelters on family life and the construction of social supports must be analyzed.

### ***Homelessness***

Conceptually, the experience of homelessness must be seen as one aspect of the life of the poor of New York City in the 1980s and 1990s. Data

indicate that many working people became homeless in the 1980s and that some, despite being homeless, worked in both the formal and informal economy (Susser and Gonzalez, 1992). By 1988, there were 200,000 names on the waiting list for apartments in New York City housing projects (Barbanel, 1988). Many poor New Yorkers shared their apartments with people who later became homeless (known in New York City as 'doubling up'). In 1992, one study found four-fifths of the families asking for shelter had spent the previous night 'doubling up' (Dehavenon, 1992). Similarly, many poor New Yorkers experienced intermittent homelessness (Dehavenon, 1992).

Thus, it is analytically misleading to view 'the homeless' as a category separate from other poor people in New York City. To categorize a person as 'homeless' carries the implication that this is a permanent characteristic rather than an experience through which s/he is passing temporarily. Like the use of the concept 'underclass', such an approach leads to static analyses of 'the homeless' as a reified group. It fails to further our understanding of the processes which lead to loss of a home and the on-going problems of poverty which are faced by both 'homed' and 'homeless'.

### *History of homelessness in New York City*

Homelessness in New York City followed the fiscal crisis of 1975 and the ensuing changes in social services and public policy. In 1969, there were only thirty homeless families to be found in New York City; by 1985 there were 5000 (New York State Department of Social Services, 1988). The category 'homeless' was not used in New York City until the late 1970s. At that time, the increasing number of people living in the streets combined with the disastrous living circumstances of homeless families became a major political issue (Baxter and Hopper, 1981; Hopper and Cox, 1982; Hopper, 1987).

By 1988, 15,600 people, including 10,000 children lived in eighty-two hotels for homeless families city-wide (New York State Department of Social Services, 1988). In addition, estimates have suggested that approximately 23,000 'single' adults slept in shelters run by the City each night (*New York Times*, 1987). Since the populations were transient and many people never entered publicly regulated shelters but slept in subways, railway stations, parks and a wide variety of claimed spaces, estimates of the total numbers of people homeless in the city each night ranged between 35,000 and 100,000. The range in these figures indicates the extent to which people moved in and out of homelessness over the course of a year. Thus, a

very conservative estimate would be that 100,000 to 200,000 New York City residents experienced at least one night of homelessness in one year. In 1987, 1.7 million people lived below the poverty line in New York City (Community Service Society, 1989: 3). Thus, one can calculate that homelessness was experienced by about 5 percent of poor people in the city in that year.<sup>3</sup>

While we can trace the appearance of 'homelessness' to the years of the 1975 fiscal crisis, during New York City's period of recovery from 1979 to 1989, we see a continued increase in homelessness and poverty. In the 1980s, the number of poor people in New York City rose from 1.4 million to 1.7 million (Community Service Society, 1989: 3–8). In line with these shifts, the numbers of homeless people also rose dramatically.

Thus, homelessness as we now recognize it is a recent product of the *shifting* economy of New York City reflecting basic changes in the national economy. Homelessness was the underside of the economic resurgence which accompanied the development of New York City as an international corporate center in the 1980s (Hopper, Susser and Conover, 1987; Mollenkopf and Castells, 1991; Sassen, 1991; Susser, 1991). Almost 500,000 service and clerical jobs were created in New York City in the 1980s. However, the continuing loss of well-paying manufacturing work, rising prices in real estate, reductions in social services, the decrease in the value of public assistance and the cessation of federal construction of housing combined to create a new experience of poverty (Marcuse, 1985; Drennan, 1991; Mollenkopf and Castells, 1991; Susser, 1991). Such changes resulted in the actual loss of shelter for many New Yorkers.<sup>4</sup>

In response to growing national concern, political exposure and legal action by and for homeless people, the New York City administration and a variety of voluntary agencies and churches began to organize temporary shelters (Hopper and Cox, 1982). Armories, schools and hospitals were converted by the New York City Human Resource Administration into mass dormitories for the homeless. Managers of rundown hotels often were paid \$3000 per month to provide single rooms for homeless families, thus creating the miserable settings commonly known as 'homeless hotels' (Kozol, 1988; Christiano and Susser, 1989).

#### *The shelter system and the City's response to homelessness*

As homelessness became more routine and the numbers of men, women and children seeking shelter overwhelmed the existing public assistance offices, new Emergency Assistance Bureaus (EABs) were created. To prevent people sleeping overnight in public assistance offices, the

Emergency Assistance Bureaus operated after hours to assign families to emergency housing (Dehavenon, 1990, 1992).

As hundreds of people continued to congregate and sleep in public locations such as Grand Central Terminal and the Port Authority Bus Terminal, such agencies were forced to confront the issue of homelessness. In an unsuccessful effort to reduce the large population sleeping in and around the bus terminals every night, the New York/New Jersey Port Authority facilitated the establishment of 'drop-in centers' where people could spend time, but not sleep.

Initially, access to shelters varied as some settings accepted people from specific neighborhoods while others only accepted those assigned by centralized bureaus. Eventually regulations about access to shelters were implemented. People were assigned to shelters throughout the city, without regard for the neighborhood in which they had lived or the schools children attended.

While the numbers of homeless families have been increasing, the response of the New York City administration has vacillated over time in line with political realities. Between 1987 and 1990, first Mayor Edward Koch and then Mayor David Dinkins made much-publicized efforts to close down the most infamous 'homeless hotels'. Between 1988 and 1991, in response to political pressure and court orders, homeless families were moved to the top of the waiting list for New York City publicly owned housing (Barbanel, 1988). As one result of this revised policy, approximately 700 families were moved out of a hotel in downtown Manhattan where we were conducting fieldwork. Some were transferred to another hotel in Times Square, while others were moved into transitional housing organized by voluntary agencies. Many were moved into apartments around the city.

However, in 1991, after four years of effort to move people out of 'homeless hotels' the City was once again placing families in hotels. A family was required to prove six to twelve months of homelessness before becoming eligible for assignment to public housing (Dehavenon, 1992). Doubled up families (those sharing apartments with other families) were assigned first option for city apartments. Thus, 'homeless hotels' did not disappear. The process of homelessness or the need to pass through homelessness to find an apartment in New York City continued unabated (Dehavenon, 1992).

### *Gender and shelter in New York City*

As the shelter system materialized, certain patterns emerged concerning gender expectations and the structuring of families. Such patterns, while

apparently varying from site to site, were in fact significant for their consistency with the public assistance regulations of the pre-homeless era with respect to the ways they divided families.

*The shelter system: divisions by age and gender*

Access to shelters in New York City was largely determined by sex, age, mental status and family structure. 'Single' men were usually assigned to large barracks in the city's armories. In such places up to 700 cots were lined up in the main halls (for a more detailed description of such a shelter, see Susser and Gonzalez, 1992). 'Single' women without children were assigned to other armories. Adults defined as single (which was any adult without children accompanying them) had no access to the hotels and voluntary agency settings to which families were sometimes assigned. Men were not allowed in women's barracks and women were not allowed to enter the halls where men slept. Shelters were also provided specifically for mentally ill women, although they were not permitted to live with their children. Other gender-specific shelters served the older population of men and women, and various small church spaces provided nightly beds for a few men and women together.

One of the few 'shelter creations' where men and women without children were allowed to meet indoors were the 'drop-in centers'. In these newly invented forms, no-one was supposed to sleep overnight. A 'drop-in' center usually provided chairs, tables and a television. Sometimes caseworkers and counselors were present. People were allowed to visit the center 24 hours a day. However, no-one was permitted to lie down to sleep and no space was provided for possessions. People were offered gender-specific assignments as buses left the drop-in centers in the early evening. Those found sleeping on floors or tables were awakened during the night by shelter guards.

Women with young children were often assigned, like 'single' men and women, to large congregate sleeping shelters. However, this was supposed to be a temporary measure. If fortunate, women with young children might be sent to stay in 'homeless hotels' or, if even more fortunate, they might be allocated 'transitional' housing run largely by voluntary associations.

*'Homeless hotels'*

Privately owned hotels where the New York City Human Resources Administration placed families seeking shelter were commonly known as 'homeless hotels'. Such hotels had little to recommend them (Kozol, 1988;

Christiano and Susser, 1989). Rooms were arranged along dark, poorly lit corridors with crumbling paint. Many elevators did not work and people were forced to climb dangerous stairwells with loose banisters. Inside the rooms themselves, beds took up most of the space and frequently bathroom facilities were out of order. Security was lax. We were told by public health nurses in several hotels that they made their visits in the mornings (if at all) as they were afraid to walk down the corridors later in the day. Residents reported in interviews that rats were entering some of the rooms and some had entered children's cots. Over the 1980s some services and programs had been implemented. Caseworkers assisted people with public assistance applications and applications for housing. Public health service nurses checked with pregnant women and new mothers to see if medical appointments had been scheduled and kept. In some hotels day-care programs and other services had been provided in response to residents' demands (Mathieu, 1990).

In 'homeless hotels' rooms were usually allocated to women with children. If husbands were listed as recipients of public assistance in the household, they too were allowed to stay in the hotel. Many more men were in evidence here than in transitional housing. However, frequently, due to the complexity and biases of public assistance regulations, men were not authorized to accompany women and children to the hotels.

#### *Transitional housing*

In the transitional housing, which was the most humane offered up to 1991, women and children were allocated rooms with beds and bathroom facilities. No cooking facilities were provided and cooking was not officially permitted in rooms. Women were assigned to caseworkers who assisted in filing applications for public assistance and housing. Frequently, day care for young children, substance abuse counseling and access to medical care was arranged.

Multiple restrictions determined access to transitional housing. In 1992, only 9 percent of families seeking shelter at Emergency Assistance Bureaus were assigned to transitional housing (Dehavenon, 1992). Nevertheless, such placements were much sought after by women in need of shelter. Transitional housing selected for women with less substance abuse and fewer family problems than the general population of homeless families. Women who did not attend, required substance abuse seminars or group meetings or failed to conform to other regulations could be evicted.

Most transitional housing had regulations concerning the age and gender of children permitted to reside there. One such institution housed only



mothers with daughters under 18, sons under 12. Men were allowed to visit at certain hours in the basement. They were never allowed in women's rooms. Another transitional facility only housed women with children under 9 years old. In this facility, there were no visiting hours for men and they were not allowed to enter the institutions at all, unless as employees. Visiting female relatives, such as grandmothers, were not allowed into the shelter unless they had a scheduled appointment. One woman told a fieldworker that her mother had been turned away at the door of the shelter because she had not formally arranged a visit. Women and children stayed in these facilities from six months to over a year.

#### *A comparison of 'homeless hotels' and transitional housing*

One major difference between 'homeless hotels' and transitional housing was the level of security. It was possible for men not officially listed as residents to find their way into hotels whereas this was highly unusual in transitional housing. By 1990, the main institutions created for homeless people where men and women could live together with their children were the notorious 'homeless hotels'. Even in this case, most men had to sneak into the rooms against regulations.

It is significant, in light of descriptions of absent fathers and young boys concerned with sexual prowess rather than responsibility found in discussions of the underclass (for example Anderson, 1989), that the institutional separation and exclusion of males from the household structure started at an early age in the shelter system. In transitional housing, teenage girls were often allowed to stay with their mothers, but teenage boys were never admitted. If a woman accepted such housing she had to give up her older boys to foster care or the supervision of relatives. Private hotels had no such regulations. However, in the course of fieldwork in one hotel, a researcher was informed that the 'manager' who runs the hotel, 'doesn't allow teenagers'. This rule clearly referred to young boys as numerous teenage mothers were permitted to live in this hotel.

#### *Men's participation in family life in a mid-Manhattan hotel*

In order to examine household relations, we document the multiple parenting roles of men observed in a mid-Manhattan hotel. In such hotels, men did come into the building, albeit illegally or after harassment at the entrance. This will be compared in the next section with the experiences of families in transitional housing from which men and boys were categorically excluded.

The impact of hotel regulations on family life is evidenced by the experiences of one household in 1989. Dawn,<sup>5</sup> a 36-year-old African American woman had been assigned a room in the hotel. She had two teenage children, a girl and a boy, and a 3-month-old infant girl. The boy of 15 was officially living with his grandmother, although he visited the hotel daily. The father of the infant took care of all three children while Dawn was away. She attended data entry classes on weekday nights. The father was not officially allowed in the hotel and was frequently stopped by security guards at the front door. The family was awaiting renovation of an assigned apartment where, according to Dawn, they were to be reunited. In the meantime, both the teenage boy and the baby's father were formally excluded from participation and co-operation in family life.

In a conversation with a public health nurse who was checking the immunization record and clinic visits of the baby, Dawn stated: 'I am so angry that sometimes I feel like killing myself.' The nurse invited her to come to the nurses' office and talk to someone when she felt this way. Staff in the hotel, although overworked and not always supportive, were an important source of assistance for residents. However, as this example makes evident, under the debilitating conditions of homelessness, a mother with a newborn baby was unable to mobilize social supports that would otherwise be available to her. In addition, she had been placed in a hotel far from friends and relatives and the concern for security made visits difficult. Regulations excluded the child's father from her household.

In the same hotel in the fall of 1989, fieldworkers observed fathers sharing a variety of tasks. Fathers collected children from the day-care center in the hotel. They stayed with children in their rooms while the mother was out. They met children at school and brought them back to the hotel. They cared for infants and young children when their mothers were ill. In general, men assisted in family life.

Even unrelated men sometimes assisted families as the following incident demonstrates. Anne had lived in the hotel for one and a half years. She shared her room with her twin 5-year-old sons, a 17-year-old daughter and the daughter's baby. When asked by a fieldworker if she felt threatened by the men in the hallways, she said no. She claimed that people knew and respected her. She explained that the men who spent their time 'hanging out' in the hallway did not harass her and sometimes even helped her. She recalled the following incident, to demonstrate her sense of the supportiveness of the men who congregated in the corridor outside her door.

Concerned about a sick child, Anne ran out of her room to telephone for medical assistance. One of the men in the corridor called out to her:

'What's up mama, where are you running to?'  
When she explained, 'Please do me a favor, call an ambulance, one of my boys is sick', he reassured her,  
'Don't worry mama, I'll take care of it.'

In spite of the obvious integration of men in the family lives of hotel residents, negative stereotypes were prevalent. A teenage boy with a baseball bat greeted a public health nurse in the corridor of the hotel. In another setting baseball might have been seen as a predictable activity for a young boy. However, as he went by, the nurse commented to a fieldworker, 'He was probably on his way to beat someone up.'

Robberies occurred frequently in the hotels and rapes and stabbings were not uncommon. Under these conditions, men who congregated in the stairwells, lobbies and corridors were suspect. Some were known to residents as drug dealers. When we talked with residents they speculated that guards allowed drug dealers and criminals through the security checkpoint in the lobby because they feared them or because they received payments. Male family members, on the other hand, were often stopped and harassed at the hotel entrance.

### *The exclusion of men from transitional housing*

In contrast to the ambiguous status of men in privately run hotels, men and teenage boys were categorically excluded from most transitional settings. Since women were frequently battered or victimized by husbands and male companions, one might expect that they sought this separation. However, women in transitional settings spent weekends with men. They sent children to stay with their fathers as well as with relatives on the fathers' side. They also brought their children to meet with men on the steps outside the shelter. Constant discussion in the shelters referred to husbands or male companions.

In at least one situation, the legal marriage of a woman with two children fell apart during the enforced separation of transitional housing. As the separation continued for more than six months, the father began to suspect his wife of infidelity and became alienated from her and their children. Thus, in the transitional housing, women were deprived of the company and assistance with child care which men were sometimes able to provide in the privately run hotels.

### *Men and families*

In spite of their official absence from statistics and measures of households among the poor, men were certainly present among the families of the

homeless. As soon as the women with whom we worked were relocated to apartments, men appeared in their homes. But within the institutions, both hotels and transitional housing, men and young boys were relegated to the status of criminals and reduced to sneaking in illegally (in the hotels) or shut out all together (in the transitional housing).

Research in a shelter for 'single' men indicated that many men spent weekends visiting girlfriends, wives and children (Susser and Gonzalez, 1992). However, the overall impact of the shelter system was to separate households and undermine whatever co-operation or mutual responsibilities might have been developed among men, women and children.

The exclusion of young boys and men from the family has been documented in public assistance programs since AFDC was implemented (Stack, 1974; Abramovitz, 1988). Research among poor residents of New York City between 1975 and 1978 documented the harassment of young men when they applied for relief. Even boys 12 years of age were dropped from public assistance rolls because of bureaucratic hurdles (Susser, 1982; Susser and Kreniske, 1987).

In the extreme case of homelessness, young boys were cast out by regulations which, while confusing and varied, followed regular patterns. Boys were seen as criminals and a danger to society from a young age. They were subject to pressures which separated them from household and family and, unlike their sisters, they could not anticipate assistance for rearing children. As they grew older, boys were portrayed as absent fathers, or seen as unmotivated in terms of marriage and family commitments. However, these portrayals cannot be clearly understood without an analysis of the ways in which boys are excluded from participation in family life and the regulatory hurdles which men had to surmount in order to take on fatherhood.

As this brief outline of the structure of the shelter system illustrates, once people lost their homes, or in fact became financially dependent on the state through public assistance, 'families' were defined as women and young children and men were excluded from participation.

### *Concluding discussion*

Among their many effects, shelters prevented mothers from mothering. Frequently, mothers were encouraged to entrust their children to some form of foster care in order to find a nightly bed in the shelters assigned to single women. As a result, many children were separated from brothers and sisters and placed in foster homes (for discussion of these issues see Dehavenon, 1990; Susser, 1991). In hotels and transitional housing,

although women could keep their children with them, they were not permitted to cook and decisions about schedules and housing were made for them. Factors such as these might be expected to affect the way or the extent to which a woman could perform her role as mother.

Among middle-income residents of the United States, there are tasks expected of fathers as well as mothers. This is not the case among the poor and homeless in New York City. Fathers were defined out of the picture.

If we note the duties carried out by men in a mid-Manhattan hotel, under discouraging circumstances, we can see that men, women and children suffer from the enforced separation.

Children spent hours in staff offices as the staff were forced to substitute a bureaucratic network for family, friends and neighbors. Nevertheless, requests for assistance with child care from shelter staff were frowned upon. Shelter administrators and caseworkers evaluated women poorly as mothers because they arrived late to pick up children or left them unsupervised in their rooms. On three occasions, we observed caseworkers informing women that another infraction of the rules, which involved collecting children late from child care, would result in the removal of the children from the mother's care. Many women in the hotels and transitional settings had already been reported to child welfare agencies and were being observed for future problems. This was known as 'having an open case'. Women with 'open cases' lived under the threat of loss of their children to foster care for infractions of shelter regulations. However, they were deprived of the assistance that many men gave, when permitted. They were also deprived of previous friendships and the support of extended family members, both men and women. Women were then criticized for not being able to rear their children alone.

Thus, the separation of men and women was likely in the long run to contribute also to the loss of children by desperate mothers. Certainly, such enforced separation, in addition to lack of work, housing and financial hardship, contributed to the destruction of nuclear households.

Thus, institutions which served the homeless of New York City redefined family life to exclude men and teenage boys. Data from shelters suggest that consistent barriers militate against the formation of nuclear households among poor people in the United States. Even where direct exclusion does not take place, barriers indicate symbolic separation and criminalization of boys and young men. Clearly poor households and people without homes are in desperate need of government assistance. Still, at the least, we need to understand why services replicate the patterns of the past in consistent, age and gender-specific ways. Clearly, such

patterns reflect the need for control and regulation of the unemployed poor. In addition, they might be seen as contributing to perpetuation of a hegemonic ideology that informs the formulation of models of the ideal family by class, race and gender.

#### NOTES

1. I would like to acknowledge the encouragement and assistance of Dr Anke Ehrhardt, Director, and Dr Zena Stein, Co-Director, of the HIV Center for Clinical and Behavioral Studies, Columbia University, New York, NY, Grant No. MH 43520 NIMH/NIDA and of Eliecer Valencia and Ezra Susser from the Columbia-Presbyterian Psychiatric Shelter Program. I would also like to thank John Kreniske and two reviewers for editorial comments on the paper.
2. Alfredo Gonzalez, Yvonne LaSalle, Anne Christiano, Sheryl Heron and Gwendolyn Martinez assisted in this research and spent time in various settings. During the course of the research, Yvonne LaSalle, Gwendolyn Martinez and myself visited transitional housing over the period of a year, talked with administrators, caseworkers, women and children and observed many activities. Fieldworkers spent many hours, several days a week talking with women in their rooms and observing and talking with women and children in the various public areas of the shelters. Alfredo Gonzalez spent three months observing a drop-in center and interviewing homeless men and women who spent time there. He and another researcher spent four months visiting and interviewing families, caseworkers and public health nurses in a hotel where homeless people had been placed by the New York City administration. Researchers also spent over a year conducting fieldwork in a men's shelter. In general, fieldworkers visited the same people many times over and developed informal relationships with both staff and residents in the various settings. The data presented here are based on analysis of field notes, and discussions with fieldworkers as well as my own observations and fieldwork.
3. The poverty level is a Federal index developed to classify families or related individuals as poor or non-poor.
4. For a detailed analysis of the impact of these changes in one New York City neighborhood, see Mullings and Susser (1992).
5. All names of shelter residents have been changed to protect their confidentiality.

#### REFERENCES

- Abramovitz, M. (1988)  
*Regulating the Lives of Women*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- Anderson, E. (1989)  
 'Sex Codes and Family Life among Poor Inner-City Youths', *Annals of the American Academy of Political Science* 501.

- Bailey, T. and R. Waldinger (1991)  
 'The Changing Ethnic/Racial Division of Labor', in J. Mollenkopf and M. Castells (eds) *The Dual City*. New York: Russell Sage.
- Barbanel, J. (1988)  
 'Hotel Shelters to End by '90 Koch says: Families Move to Top of Housing Projects List', *New York Times*, 2 Aug.: B1
- Baxter, E. and K. Hopper (1981)  
*Private Lives/Public Spaces*. New York: Community Service Society of New York.
- Block, F., R. Cloward, B. Ehrenreich and F. Piven (1988)  
*The Mean Season*. New York: Pantheon.
- Bluestone, D. and B. Harrison (1982)  
*The Deindustrialization of America*. New York: Basic Books.
- Christiano, A. and I. Susser (1989)  
 'Knowledge and Perceptions of HIV Infection among Homeless Pregnant Women', *Journal of Nurse-Midwifery* 34: 318–22.
- Cole, J. (ed.) (1986)  
*All American Women*. New York: Free Press.
- Community Service Society (1989)  
*Poverty in New York City, 1985–1988*. New York: CSS.
- Dehavenon, A. (1990)  
*The Tyranny of Indifference*. New York: The Action Research Project on Hunger, Homelessness and Family Health.
- Dehavenon, A. (1992)  
*Promises! Promises! Promises! The Failed Hopes of New York City's Homeless Families in 1992*. The Action Research Project on Hunger, Homelessness and Family Health, New York.
- Dehavenon, A. (1993)  
 'Where Did All the Men Go? An Etic Model for the Cross-cultural Study of the Causes of Matrifocality', in J. Mencher and A. Okongwu (eds) *Where Did All the Men Go? Female-headed Households Cross-culturally*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Drennan, M. (1991)  
 'The Decline and Rise of the New York Economy', in J. Mollenkopf and M. Castells (eds) *The Dual City*. New York: Russell Sage.
- Edel, M., E. D. Sclar and D. Luria (1984)  
*Shaky Palaces*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Ellwood, D. and L. Summers (1986)  
 'Poverty in America: Is Welfare the Answer or the Problem?', in S. Danziger and D. Weinberg (eds) *Fighting Poverty*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hopper, K. (1987)  
 'The Public Response to Homelessness in New York City: The Last Hundred Years', in Rick Beard (ed.) *On Being Homeless: Historical Perspectives*. New York: Museum of the City of New York.
- Hopper, K. and L. Cox (1982)  
 'Litigation in Advocacy for the Homeless: The Case of New York City', *Development: Seeds of Change* 2: 57–62.

- Hopper, K., E. Susser and S. Conover (1987)  
'Economics of Makeshift: Deindustrialization and Homelessness in New York City',  
*Urban Anthropology* 14: 183–236.
- Kozol, J. (1988)  
*Rachel and Her Children*. New York: Crown Publishers.
- Liebow, E. (1967)  
*Tally's Corner*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown.
- Marcuse, P. (1985)  
'Gentrification, Abandonment and Displacement: Connections, Causes and Policy Responses in New York City', *Journal of Urban and Contemporary Law* 28: 193–240.
- Mathieu, A. (1990)  
'Parents on the Move', unpublished PhD dissertation, New School for Social Research, New York.
- Mollenkopf, J. and M. Castells (1991)  
*The Dual City*. New York: Russell Sage.
- Mullings, L. (1989)  
'Gender and the Application of Anthropological Knowledge to Public Policy in the United States', in *Gender and Anthropology*. American Anthropological Association Press.
- Mullings, L. and I. Susser (1992)  
*Harlem Research and Development Report*. Manhattan Borough President's Office.
- New York State Department of Social Services (1988)  
*Annual Report to the Government and Legislature: Homeless, Housing and Assistance Program*.
- New York Times* (1987)  
'New York City Lacks Space for Increase of the Homeless', 28 May.
- Piven, F. and R. Cloward (1971)  
*Regulating the Poor*. New York: Pantheon.
- Rapp, R. (1987)  
'Urban Kinship in Contemporary America: Families, Classes and Ideology', pp. 219–43 in L. Mullings (ed.) *Cities of the United States*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Ricketts, E. and I. Sawhill (1988)  
'Defining and Measuring the Underclass', *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 7(2): 316–25.
- Sassen, S. (1991)  
'The Informal Economy', pp. 79–103 in J. Mollenkopf and M. Castells (eds) *The Dual City*. New York: Russell Sage.
- Schneider, D. (1968)  
*American Kinship*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Sharff, J. (1981)  
'Free Enterprise and the Ghetto Family', *Psychology Today*, March.



- Stack, C. (1974)  
*All Our Kin*. New York: Harper Torchbooks.
- Sullivan, M. (1990)  
*Getting Paid*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Susser, I. (1982)  
*Norman Street: Poverty and Politics in an Urban Neighborhood*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Susser, I. (1986)  
'Political Activity among Working-class Women in a US City: 1975-1980', *American Ethnologist* 13(1).
- Susser, I. (1989)  
'Gender in the Anthropology of the United States', *Gender and Anthropology*. American Anthropological Association Press.
- Susser, I. (1991)  
'The Separation of Mothers and Children', in J. Mollenkopf and M. Castells (eds) *The Dual City*. New York: Russell Sage.
- Susser, I. and M. Gonzalez (1992)  
'Sex, Drugs and Videotape: The Prevention of AIDS in a New York City Shelter for Homeless Men', *Medical Anthropology* 14: 307-22.
- Susser, I. and J. Kreniske (1987)  
'The Welfare Trap: A Public Policy for Deprivation', in L. Mullings (ed.) *Cities of the United States*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Wilson, W. (1987)  
*The Truly Disadvantaged*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Wilson, W. and K. Neckerman (1986)  
'Poverty and Family Structure: The Widening Gap between Evidence and Public Policy Issues', in S. Danziger and D. Weinberg (eds) *Fighting Poverty*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Zinn, M. (1989)  
'Family, Race and Poverty in the Eighties', *Signs* 14 (4).