

Homelessness: A Byproduct of Capitalism and Politics

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Abstract

The focus of this paper will look at homelessness in the United States and how it is treated. I plan to delve into the policies that have created housing segregation in the United States and how that has shaped, the homelessness crisis today with segregation based on class and lack of democratic access. In order to accomplish this, it would be necessary to provide background through a few different lenses: United Declaration of Human Rights, Democratic Theory and the Civil Rights Act of 1968 or the Fair Housing Act. The primary hypothesis is that homelessness rises and falls with the different political parties in power. Homeless rates decrease with Democratic policymakers in power and rise with Republican policymakers parties in power. However, regardless of the political party in power, democratic principle dictates that citizens have an obligation to help these people that call the United States home.

Introduction

Every night across the United States hundreds of thousands of people sleep in tents, cars, under bridges, on the streets or in emergency housing shelters. In any given year, millions of people experience this fate. They are here rarely by choice but rather through circumstances that are beyond their control. Many suffer from mental or psychiatric disorders, addictions or socioeconomic factors that have pushed people out of stable housing and onto the street. The homeless have become the subject of laws and police harassment in order to shuffle them out of the eye of the public. An important detail to not forget is these are people. They are someone's child, someone's brother, someone's

grandparent. They are someone. They are a human beings that should be given resources to feel human. They should have access to basic needs such as shelter, food and clothing.

Homelessness has been a problem every since people started living in communities together and no longer living nomadically. It can be traced as far back as the 1700s. While in the United States it started attracting the attention of media and politicians alike as far back as the 1960s(Cronley, 2010, 319). Various presidential administrations, have attempted to legislatively articulate the problem of homelessness starting with the Johnson administration and ending with the current Trump administration. President Johnson, a Democrat, attempted a war on poverty with the belief was that homelessness was an issue created as a result of poverty and economic injustice. It was also at this time that Civil Rights movement was in full effect(Cronley, 2010, 322).

Throughout history homeless and homelessness conjures up negative connotations of the worst kind. Although some stereotypes may be true, homeless is a broad term not every person living without shelter “counts,” quite literally, as homeless. Some cultures take pride in there lack of permanent shelter and nomadic lifestyle. Homelessness in Western society is widely criticized but yet not understood. Those in the United States are often guilty of these broad, sweeping definitions that lump those that are homeless as the worst of society. “However, homelessness is not just a material state it is a cultural artifact, a political- economic effect of racial capital’s urban disorganizations”(Willse 2015, 12).

Homelessness affects many people, and the balance between being homeless and having a home is very small. The homeless community is composed of single families, children, students, immigrants and others. It is easy to assume this demographic of the population chooses

to live this way. However, people can be poor and not be on government assistance. It is easy to view this an economic problem, but it risks overlooking the human element. These people are not just numbers or dollars. How they may live may translate into convenient accounting terms but we must not forget that they are people, not numbers.

Literature Review

The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights Article 25 (1) everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. (2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

“It is the policy of the United States to provide, within constitutional limitations, for fair housing throughout the United States.” This is the direct quote from the Civil Rights Act of 1968 or better known as the Fair Housing Act. The goal of this act was to remove the previously held segregation that was predominantly used to exclude African Americans from being able to purchase home in certain areas of the country. It was also when legislation finally acknowledged the role of housing discrimination in keeping African Americans in subordinate social positions. Thus, we have seen examples of how government policy has created segregation in housing by race.

The United Declaration of Human Rights came into the global community on December 10, 1948, while the Civil Rights Act came along in 1968. Both of these acts have attempted to

change or alter the future course of history respectively in the area which they are set for. Fast forward to present day, 2018, there are still problems with racial and economic segregation, homelessness and affordable housing in the United States. A hegemonic power that sets the bar for the rest of the world to follow struggles with the basic principle of affordable housing and providing access to social services to those who desperately need it.

In order to understand the full details that led us to the current crisis, one must go back to 1934. It was at this point the Federal Housing Administration Act (FHA) was established. This act authorized the government to get involved with housing by underwriting mortgages, which then allowed citizens to become homeowners during the time of the Great Depression. This was quite difficult as a result of increased foreclosures across the nation(Wilson, 2008, 557). The first federal housing program was passed by Congress in 1937 and a second in 1949. “Every American would have a decent home and suitable living environment.” This was the goal at the time(Cronley, 2010, 322).

Residential hotels or single room occupancy hotels (SRO) were the subject of various attacks of public policy starting in the 1920s through the 1980s. Under the label of urban renewal or redevelopment many of these buildings were torn down. By using zoning regulations, policy decisions and government subsidies housing officials began to eliminate hotels out of the housing debate. The intended goal was to remove the skid row building a replace it with a single family dwelling that could provide space and privacy for families(Feldman, 2004, 117).

There is also pressure applied to the housing market through interest groups that do not want affordable or subsidized housing to be available. “The U.S. Building and Loan League and the National Association of Real Estate Boards managed to influence Congress to require, by

law, that for each new unit of public housing erected, one “unsafe or unsanitary” unit of public housing must be destroyed.” (Wilson, 2008, 560) Further in the 1930s, the same group argued that by the government building low-income housing it would create an unfair competition and was socialistic (Johnson, 2016, 65). This is an example where influence is outside of government power. There is also evidence of exclusion in housing based upon economic status. Those previous renters or tenants would be removed from public housing and would be forced to find new housing that would probably be more expensive.

Because the Federal Government was involved with the mortgage industry, one begins to see the trends over time that led to the homeless crisis that is prevalent today. Race was used as an excluding factor on mortgage applications and would allow white families or families of European descent to purchase a home while a black family was denied the purchase. This was known as ‘redlining’, which worked to separate who could purchase a house and who could not based upon race. This resulted in an increased concentration of African Americans in inner city ghettos through no fault of their own. It was not until 1960 that racial discrimination in neighborhoods was discontinued by lifting mortgage restrictions on those previously redlined areas (Wilson, 2008, 557).

Segregation based on race or economic status will have a net negative impact on a society generally. Local funds come from local property taxes. As a result, the poor areas become worse due to decreased tax revenue for schools and social services. Those in the affluent communities will choose to lower their own tax rates through voting. As a result, those taxes are then levied to be placed on the poor further perpetrating socio-economic segregation. Schools will become

segregated by as a result leading to some students not having an equal playing field from the start(Hackworth 2005, 190).

Children are the most vulnerable demographic with over 6 million living in extreme poverty(Bullough, *et al*, 2015, 634). Low income children have fewer cognitive enrichment opportunities both at home and in their neighborhoods(Bullough, *et al*, 2015, 634). They are thrust into the system through no fault of their own or aging out of the foster system. In a given year, between 1.2 and 1.35 million children experience homelessness. Over the past decade, the population of homeless families has nearly doubled and those with children are increasing the fastest(Varney, *et al*, 2008, 716)((United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2015, 17)(Rabiner, 2012, 587).

Because they have experienced homelessness children are at greater risk for a lifetime of health and social problems that their counterparts will likely not experience. Children are more prone to experience anxiety, depression, withdrawal, and aggressive behavior. They will earn less, grow up poor, be less productive, commit more crimes and have higher health care costs. They will also experience greater family turmoil, violence and separation from their parents.

There is less structure, chaotic households, nonresponsive parents, and children will have fewer and less socially supportive networks. It is likely that the family will be broken up as well. The plight is even worse for children of African American or Hispanic families. Children experience poverty at between 40 and 50 percent in these racial/ethnic groups. This can be worse depending if a child is growing up in an area that has a hyperconcentration of poverty(Varney, *et al*, 2008, 716)(United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2015, 17)(Bullough, *et al*, 2015, 634)(Patriquin, 2011, 82)(Shinn, *et al*, 2015, 106).

Another theory that can be introduced to portray this group of people and how they are treated is through the lens of Democratic theory. This theory is the belief that those that have the ability to vote either through direct or representative democracy will be able to vote. It is the belief that in a representative democracy the government will be based upon those citizens that vote. In essence, the ability to influence policy preferences, beliefs and ideologies of those that are the elected representatives(Ruth, *et al*, 2017, 57).

Members of society that are homeless citizens spread out across the United States do not have the opportunities that the rest of ordinary citizens do to engage in democracy because of a lack of housing. Approximately 60% of the homeless are of voting age yet only about one in every three is registered to vote. Policies that the wealthy come up with further exclude this group and create an inferior class of citizens. These groups then have limited political participation resulting in a one sided voice that pits the voters against the homeless(Ruth, *et al*, 2017, 62).

Since voting is associated with an address or residency many do not have the ability to exercise their political voice. Thus, some states are able to restrict the voting rights of those disenfranchised individuals and limit political participation. This works to help exclude those that wish to voice or participate in democracy. By limiting participation, individuals are then not able to voice how policies or laws will effect them. Communities work to implement policies that eliminate the homeless themselves by denying them rights to sleeping outside, camping and panhandling. Police are used to perform homeless encampment sweeps, and remove individuals sleeping on sidewalks, ticket those panhandling or even for public urination(Feldman, 2004, 102).

Even though the homeless are citizens by nationality they are marked as societal outcasts as a result of their non-conforming lifestyle. States do allow them to register to vote by listing a homeless shelter or public space however the policies put in place by communities work to exclude them from having a political voice. They are subject to police confiscation of property, petty policies that work to place them in jail rather than to lift them out of homelessness. In one sense they are considered a member of society but in another sense, they are the subject of laws that can be cruel and unusual. The laws they are subject to do not eliminate them or the cause of homelessness but rather work to exclude them and their political participation thus creating a society whose policies are marked by opposing forces(Feldman, 2004, 102).

This is how many problems are framed across the nation through the lens of social dislocation. The framing of the problem is changed in order to shift the blame to individuals rather than what caused them to be in that situation in the first place(Williams, 2005, 507). There is a tendency in the United States by the public and politicians to frame those suffering in homelessness as a failure on the part of the individual rather than the system. Public opinion polls across the United States, support the belief that people are poor and jobless because of their own failings and not because of some other reason(Wilson, 2008, 556). The dominant belief of those with resources such as men, older adults and Protestants is to blame homelessness on the the homeless. This ideology is strongest among Republicans and conservatives(Lee, *et al*, 1992, 542).

However, this is not the case. Homelessness does not happen in vacuum and these people are apart of the fabric of society. Very rarely do people become homeless through their own fault. There are a multitude of contributing factors such as economic, social and health

circumstances as well as the interplay between these factors and the housing system in any country(Anderson, *et al*, 2012, 565). Individuals and families become homeless and society views this as failure on the part of the person. The real failure is society and the inadequacies of social institutions(Williams, 2005, 507).

It is worth noting that people prefer to live in affluent neighborhoods and not see the drunk or mentally ill individual. They want to be insulated from the problems of society that are real and present. They may also prefer not to live next to a family of a different ethnic origin or skin color or not near people who present a different lifestyle. Low income housing or section 8 is widely contested as well because people are under the assumption that residents of these units are messy and will bring crime to the area. This is referred to as the “not in my backyard” phenomenon or NIMBY.

However, these “second - class citizens” provide an economic balance that many people are not aware. If poor people or those who were challenged economically, were given subsidized housing and it was spread out across a city there would be no “bad” areas. However, as a result of hyper-concentration of poor areas these areas proceed to get worse, which then causes communities to work to exclude those areas through voting, law enforcement, or other means to differentiate the class.

If we are to look at the history of the United States and the various administrations many have tried unsuccessfully to reduce poverty across the country and yet continually it is a pressing issue that is not going away. It will only start to go away once it is treated as a bipartisan effort and politics are placed aside. Homelessness is a byproduct of society rather than a byproduct of individual failures. “War on the Poor” was launched in the last few decades, initiated by the

Reagan administration and accelerated by Clinton, the Bushes, and their allies in Congress. The inability of successive American governments to address the “poverty question” is longstanding; it has been almost half a century since President Lyndon Johnson declared his “War on Poverty.” Clearly, something has gone terribly wrong(Patriquin, 2011, 79).

Rapid homelessness can be attributed back in the 1970s and 1980s when during the Carter and Reagan administrations, where budget cuts reduced the available number of subsidized housing(Varney, *et al*, 2008, 715). The number of low income renters increased from 6.2 million to 8.9 million. While simultaneously, the number of low cost housing units decreased from 6.5 million to 5.6 million. The belief by Republicans that the government does not belong in the business of housing the poor, those with low income, the mentally ill or even the homeless. In order to be fiscally conservative, HUD (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development), funding was cut in order to reduce the federal budget between 1980 and 1989. It was at this time that HUD stated it was “backing out of the business of housing”(Cronley, 2010, 323).

According to HUD, a chronic homeless person is defined as a single adult, alone and no children. They must be homeless for a year or more with a condition that disables them or have experienced four or more episodes of homelessness over the last three years. The conditions must be signed off by a letter from a medical professional. The disabling conditions are: diagnosable substance abuse disorder, serious mental illness, developmental disability or chronic physical illness or disability, including the co-occurrence of two or more of these conditions. Further, in order to be considered chronically homeless, they must be sleeping in a place not

meant for human habitation such as living in a park, under a bridge, in a car or emergency homeless shelter.

The government has a definitional problem of homelessness and this plays into how we fix or work on it at a local level. Federally, homelessness that is long term and intermittent is lumped together thus it is difficult to differentiate the real numbers of who is homeless or how to fix it. This can be further broken down into those individuals who struggle with health problems, substance abuse, or mental health problems(Gleason, *et al*, 2017).

Alternatively, one of the problems with homelessness is that this population is constantly changing and does not necessarily want to be counted or found. The number of homeless varied widely among the authors suggesting that between 600,000 and 800,000 people are homeless on any given day(Varney, *et al*, 2008, 716). Families can even be homeless with the average homeless family composed of a single mother and two children(Bullough, *et al*, 2015, 635). Having a computerized database to track individuals entering emergency shelters has helped to improve the data collection but it will require continuous improvement to understand and capture the real number of people experiencing homelessness.

When a count or census is done, say for example, and the family or individual has a bed for the night they may not be counted or if they are not present in a shelter but rather out on the street. When a point-in-time count (PIT) is done, in order to actually be counted the subset of individuals and families must meet HUD's definition of homeless. On a large scale it is a significant problem. In the United States, over 13.5 million adults have been homeless in their lifetime(Varney, *et al*, 2008, 716)(Byrne, *et al*, 2014)(U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2016, 19).

It was also in the late 1970s and 1980s that the United States saw the deinstitutionalization of those that were mentally ill (Mansur, *et al*, 2002, 319). Many that were in mental institutions were just reshuffled into the prison system. Additionally, the crack epidemic was occurring at the same time. While there is not necessarily a direct correlation in the rise of the homeless population to those events it is another example of poor government policy related to housing.

The election of President William Jefferson Clinton in 1993 was the result of party realignment more towards the center and away from the often stereotypical belief in a welfare state and excessive social programs. His election, combined with the 1994 election of Republican majorities in both chambers of Congress for the first time since 1954, combined with conservative voices in the Republican party has led directly to the homeless and poverty crisis that the United States is in today (Caraley, 2001, 528).

Historically speaking the Democratic party has long been associated with supporting federal government programs to aid the poor such as Social Security Act of 1935, Public Housing Act of 1937, Public Works Jobs of 1976 and other social programs that help those of lower socioeconomic status. The Republican party has been historically reluctant to support these programs, voting against the Social Security Act of 1935 while the Depression was occurring. "Between 1935 to 1976 the Republican majority in the House of Representatives opposed programs to help the poor in every single case" (Caraley, 2001, 551).

The party realignment experienced by the Democratic party with the election of President Bill Clinton also greatly affected the Republican party. With the election of the 104th Congress (1995 - 1996) with Speaker Newt Gingrich there arose a belief that Republicans must move

further away from any form of safety net programs for the poor. In turn, Bill Clinton was forced to deliver on some of his political campaign promises. In 1996, Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA)(HR 3734) into law.

This law ended the entitlement status of cash assistance to poor families with children, called Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), which began in 1935 with the passage of the original Social Security Act. “As a direct result of this law, between 1996 and 1999 over 5 million or 40 percent from 12.5 million of the average monthly number of cash assistance recipients. The total fell by 5,441,000 from 12,664,000 to 7,203,000 thus resulting in agreement by both parties that welfare reform was in progress”(Carley, 2001, 525).

Additionally as a result of the law the money that traditionally was distributed by the federal government in payments to the states was instead distributed in the form of block grants. The states could now spend the money how they pleased rather than being told to how to do so by the federal government. The new Republicans forged ahead with the bill which led to ending cash assistance to poor families as federal entitlement, forcing poor women to work, decreasing individual food stamp allotments, and cutting benefits to legal immigrants(Carley, 2001, 529). The poorest 20 percent of families were worse off after the law was passed having been kicked off welfare and not even earning a living wage(Carley, 2001, 532).

The rise in block grants dually led to the increase in power of the governors of states and the power the states had in direct correspondence with homelessness and poverty. In a way, the federal government was no longer responsible for homelessness and those on welfare but could now attribute these to the states. The states in turned made it harder for people to apply for help and qualify for various social programs. The administrative policies deliberately were to impede

needy people from receiving support to which they were actually entitled. Further programs such as food stamp applications became long, confusing and difficult process which led people to deter people from applying(Carley, 2001, 541).

The election of President Bush in 2001 caused the politics of welfare to be reinvigorated by the election of a Republican President. With his election, Bush attempted to further push the new party lines of Conservative Republicans and move away from the policies of former Democratic President Clinton. President Bush was apart of the same political development that had been what elected President Clinton under the banner of “New Democrat.” The political realignment that was occurring meant that power was rising to the top and voters would no longer central to the cog. “The evidence of declining political influence of voters in large cities shows that Bush does not have to do anything positive for the urban poor or their allies in order to stay in”(Carley, 2001, 553).

In 1995 Republicans were attempting to get rid of HUD but yet were unable to. The Republican party had gone from promoting housing vouchers while the Democrats promoted housing certificates there was no bipartisan agreement. Thus housing policy had become the dividing line in many ways for these parties. Rather than join the Democrats in legislation towards housing, even though housing vouchers was originally a Republican idea once the Democrats decided to join in, Republicans then decided not to promote housing vouchers. Instead Republicans instead chose low-income mortgages in order to reduce funding for housing vouchers. This was pushed by the Bush administration and further cemented the divide(Johnson, 2016, 86).

In the time leading up to his reelection, George W. Bush pushed the Republican agenda even further in his attempt to create an “ownership society”. The belief was the the market economy and small government would help to solve social problems. The President and Republicans further worked to reduce government regulation, taxes, and social welfare provisions in the name of freeing up individuals and families to participate in markets, acquire their own private property, grow assets, and create wealth all on their own. The administration's' main housing policy was to promote home ownership(Schram, 2006, 132).

The real-estate industry greatly benefited from from the crash that happened. In spite of the fact that the Federal Housing Act had been in place since 1968, African Americans were still subject to poor lending practices and predatory loans. By 2014, over 240,000 African Americans had lost their homes as a result the wealth gap that had long been established between whites and blacks increased even further. African Americans were 50 percent more likely to receive a subprime loan. The real-estate industry had created the myth that black homeowners posed a risk to the housing market and then profited from financial tools promoted as mitigating that risk(Keegnga, 2018, 23,24). This in a way exemplifies the failure by the government to protect vulnerable groups of people and prevent them from losing their homes. While the Fair Housing Act may have outlawed institutionalized racism it is is still in practice today in some ways against poor families of ethnic minorities across the United States who do not have the same opportunities as there white counterparts.

The financial crisis of 2008 brought to the forefront the crisis of poverty and that population segment of the United States that had been living paycheck to paycheck. According to Republican's, the bailout by Barack Obama put forth in 2012 would create a culture of

dependency. However, this is not true. The relief was given in the form of temporary food stamps, unemployment benefits, tuition grants for low income students and tax credits for low income workers(Grunwald, 2012, 46).

This area is often the subject of partisan or Republican pressure to assure fiscal responsibility, to let the the “market” provide housing for people rather than government get into the business of housing people. The Recovery Act passed by the Obama Administration helped to provide housing to 1.2 million Americans. Had this not happened it is possible that the population of homeless across the United States would have doubled or tripled(Grunwald, 2012, 46).

During this crisis the effect of increased poverty, stock market insecurity and the housing crisis were seen across the United States. Some places were more affected than others. Depending at what point a person was in life or what resources they had available determined their success. Poverty increased so that 1 in 7 Americans or 44 million lived at or below the poverty line(Berberoglu, 2011, 174).

Many Americans are a missed paycheck away from being homeless. The belief that people are homeless through a fault of their own is wrong. People are homeless because home prices or rent is the single largest expense a person has and then when they lose their job they lose their house. The primary cause of homelessness is a lack of affordable housing. Housing is the largest expense a person will pay. The difference between income and cost of housing is what leads to a person becoming homeless(United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2015, 17).

In areas of greater economic prosperity and favorable climates coastal states such as California, Florida and New York have higher associated cost of living and higher rates of homelessness. These areas often have a warmer climate and less precipitation resulting in increased rates of homelessness. Thus the problem, is hard to fix or alleviate between states that have variable temperatures or rates of precipitation. Further, the federal government is stuck attempting to fix the problem and states have a hard time as well. States with more liberal resources and milder overall climates will often have higher rates of homelessness and require more financial aid from the federal government. Then it pits conservatives in one state vs liberals in another state resulting in a stalemate and those that are homeless still requiring resources(Byrne, *et al*, 243).

Republicans feel that the choices individuals make are what lead to a lifestyle of chronic homelessness while Democrats disagree, arguing that those that do not have a place to live should be provided for by the government(N.Y. Times, 2002). Politicians will sacrifice short term gains to be elected. Housing policy is rarely the major policy of concern in elections yet both parties often focus greatly on this area and attempt to make it a policy to drive a point. The goal to work together is rarely accomplished due to polarized views about low income housing. Political parties have literally flipped positions rather than achieve a consensus(Johnson, 2016, 87).

The most popular explanation of homelessness by society at large, proposes that mental illness, alcohol abuse, drug use, and changes in their treatment by society are the principal determinants of homelessness. However, this is not always the case. It is also possible that a person could lose their housing through no fault of their own. Alternatively, economic

explanation argues that increases in housing costs relative to personal income drive low-income households out of the housing market and into the streets and shelters(Mansur, *et al*, 2002, 317).

At a cost of about \$1 trillion per year the health care system of the United States is the most expensive in the world(Krieger, 2013, 43-45). American's do not get anything extra for paying for this either. Our life expectancy is below most developed nations, even below Cuba. Instead, people can be forced into poverty and even bankruptcy through deductibles, co-payments, denied claims or other health care costs(Patriquin, 2011, 83). Further, health insurance is harder to obtain for those that have income at or around the poverty line or those of color. The requirement to purchase insurance can reduce the amount of money leftover after paying the mortgage or rent and food and many are then faced with living without insurance or having the cheapest insurance possible due to its high expense. Thus with one emergency visit or hospital stay a person could be forced into bankruptcy or lose their job.

These individuals are forced to use emergency rooms where they are deemed second class citizens across the nation. Regardless of their ability to pay, they must be treated according to federal law(Hsia, *et al*, 2011, 1978). However, a patient that is chronically homeless does not necessarily receive follow up care needed that a traditional citizen would. A study done in Seattle followed a group of 75 chronically homeless residents. These residents spent 1,200 days in jail and 1,100 days in the local medical center at a cost of more than \$3.5 million to Medicaid(Donovan, 2011, 25).

Additionally, homelessness is associated with frequent and severe substance use such as opioid. Here emergency rooms have opportunities to address patient's homelessness which then is a significant cause leading to substance abuse. This opportunity to address the cause is not

taken and homeless individuals are then returned back to the street once they have recovered to just repeat the process all over again(Doran, *et al*, 2018, 332). Sadly these same individuals face discrimination in health care that can lead to decreased treatment options due to a lack of insurance. The care they receive is limited by hospital choice, insurance, availability of services and location. Funding is also susceptible to budgetary constraints during times of fiscal crisis or reduced staffing(White, *et al*, 1583).

Research has shown that a Housing First program saves money and reduces recidivism rates¹. This allows a homeless person to avoid the revolving doors of jails, psychiatric hospitals, community courts, shelters and living on the streets. From an economic perspective it makes more sense to give people housing than it does to allow a person to rackup a metaphorical tab being pushed through the doors of society(Willse, 2015). When compared to the general population, homeless individuals with a serious mental illness are far more likely to get arrested between 63% and 90% while the general population is 15.0%(Hirschtritt, *et al*, 2017, 695).

The difference between becoming homeless or not can be related to jail. When an offender is released back to society they now can face challenges obtaining employment, securing a place to live and obtaining behavioral health services. In any given year approximately 20% of the adult population suffers a diagnosable mental disorder. This is according to the U.S. Surgeon General's Report on Mental Health(Westad, *et al*, 2012, 29). These factors combined may result in an offender becoming homeless(Fox, *et al*, 2016, 593).

¹ Recidivism is defined as: the tendency of a convicted criminal to reoffend. In a criminal justice context, it can be defined as the reversion of an individual to criminal behavior after he or she has been convicted of a prior offense, sentenced, and (presumably) corrected. It results from the concatenation of failures.

Homelessness is not a phenomenon unique to one specific area, the greater the size of the city, the greater chance of a portion of the population being homeless. Large urban cities offer the resources necessary to help those in need that smaller rural cities do not have. The states experiencing the most problems with homelessness are California, Florida, Massachusetts, New York and Texas. These states make up 35 percent of the population of America and they account for 50 percent of all people experiencing homelessness(United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2015, 17).

In 2013, California and New York contained 33 percent of the population encountering homelessness and that can be further broken down to Los Angeles and New York City. One in five people that experienced homelessness lived in these areas(United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2015, 17). In California, a study was done that demonstrated homeless populations are price sensitive to changes in income distribution and parallel changes in housing costs. A universal Section 8 rental subsidy program would reduce the homeless population by one quarter to one third. Cost is the single largest factor in reducing the population of those that are homeless(Mansur, *et al*, 2002, 333). Those individuals who had ever received welfare payments were eight times as likely to have experienced homelessness. The odds a person experiences homelessness decrease by 12% for every \$10,000 increase in income(Greenberg, *et al*, 2010, 1241).

It is one thing if a nation does not have the resources to care for the homeless, mentally ill or other disenfranchised population. It is a completely different idea when a nation elects officials who work to effectively create a group of citizens or individuals that are homeless and are pushed out of society through laws and police enforcement. “Research has shown that

attributing disease causation is directly related to political orientation. Democrats tend to attribute poor health to complex social, economic, cultural and biological conditions while Republicans view these as a result of individuals' poor lifestyle choices”(Ortiz, *et al*, 2018, 69).

To avoid homelessness on a large scale there should be broad federal government policies that work to provide requirements to the states in achieving this goal. Public housing initiatives must also be a state and local initiative and there must be federal requirements to legislate protections for groups that do not have a voice. As a result of funding being shifted to the states there has been increased resistance by states to facilitate rescuing these individuals out of their plight. The federal government should work to change the way block grants are given to states in order to guide states away from making homelessness worse.

As the population of those that are homeless continues to age, the country will be faced with another crisis in how to treat these individuals. There will be an increasing number of individuals who will be diagnosed with the chronic hypertension, diabetes, cirrhosis, cardiovascular disease and other socially significant diseases. The crisis will not only be where to house those people but how to give them access to healthcare and treatment(Bernstein, *et al*, 2015, E46). Despite the fact that only 4% of U.S. physicians work in an emergency rooms, they provide more acute care to Medicaid beneficiaries and the uninsured than the rest of U.S. physicians combined(Hsia, *et al*, 2011, 1978)

Models and Data
Years: 2000 - 2017

The political party in power has a larger effect on homelessness. With a Democrat party in power homelessness will be reduced. While a Republican in power will increase homelessness. In order to calculate this, I broke down the time frame on the years from 2000 - 2017. Originally, the plan was to operationalize the data from 1980, 1990, 2000 etc, however, homelessness has only just recently started being tracked by the federal government in the last decade. The effort to develop an Annual Homeless Assessment Report began in 2002(2008 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, US department of Housing and Urban Development).

The variables that I am looking at for my data are the party of the president, the party of the governor, the party of the senators, the population of the state, unemployment rate and the homeless population. I realize that the time frame maybe somewhat complicated since terms of those in office do not coincide with the dates selected. At the year mark, as stated above, the party in power at the time was either counted or not. The policies enacted may have an effect on the homelessness, however due to time constraints it would be difficult to ascertain.

A Democrat counted as 1 and a Republican counted as 0. The goal is to demonstrate that a state that has more Democratic policymakers in power combined with a president that is a Democrat, there will be a reduction in homelessness. While a state that has more Republicans policymakers in power, and a Republican president, the result will be an increase in homelessness. The states for this study will be California, Florida, New York and Texas. These states traditionally have the greatest per capita of homeless individuals across the nation. While Texas does not have the highest levels of homelessness it does provide an example of low variance in democraticness.

Policy related to homelessness is dictated through U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Next states have their own individual obligations and policies to follow and execute. This could be further examined on a city by city basis in which policies could be drastically different. This further helps to concentrate those affected negatively to areas where regulations are relaxed. Homelessness is framed negatively by the public and politicians alike. These perceptions are then placed on the group under scrutiny and seen as a consequence of personal problems and faulty life choices rather than faulty social or economic changes in society(Williams, 2005, 507).

Democrat = 1
Republican = 0

X = independent variable

1. Presidential Party
2. Party of Governor
3. Senators Party (2 votes)
4. Population of state
5. Unemployment rate

Y = dependent variable (homelessness)

- Homeless rate/homeless population

Presidents

Bill Clinton (1993 - 2001) - Democrat
George W. Bush (2001 - 2009) - Republican
Barack Obama (2009 - 2017) - Democrat
Donald Trump (2017 - present) - Republican

California Governors

Gray Davis (1999 - 2003) - Democrat
Arnold Schwarzenegger (2003 - 2011) - Republican
Edmund G. "Jerry" Brown (2011 - 2018) - Democrat
Gavin Newsom (2018 - Present) - Democrat

California Senators

Barbara Boxer (1993 - 2017) - Democrat
Dianne Feinstein (1992 - Present) - Democrat
Kamala Harris (2017 - Present) - Democrat

California	U.S. President	Governor	Senators (2 votes possible)	Total	Possible	Democraticness
2005	0	0	2	2	4	0.5
2006	0	0	2	2	4	0.5
2007	0	0	2	2	4	0.5
2008	0	0	2	2	4	0.5
2009	0	0	2	2	4	0.5
2010	1	0	2	3	4	0.75
2011	1	1	2	4	4	1
2012	1	1	2	4	4	1
2013	1	1	2	4	4	1
2014	1	1	2	4	4	1
2015	1	1	2	4	4	1
2016	1	1	2	4	4	1
2017	0	1	2	3	4	0.75

California	Population (in millions)	Unemployment Rate	Homeless Population	Percent of homeless population of total population
2005	35,278,768	5.4%	188,299	0.53%
2006	36,457,549	4.9%	177,722	0.49%
2007	36,553,215	5.4%	138,986	0.38%
2008	36,756,666	7.3%	136,531	0.37%

2009	36,961,664	11.2%	123,678	0.33%
2010	37,349,363	12.2%	123,480	0.33%
2011	37,691,912	11.7%	125,128	0.33%
2012	38,041,430	10.4%	120,098	0.32%
2013	38,332,521	8.9%	118,552	0.31%
2014	38,802,500	7.5%	113,952	0.29%
2015	39,144,818	6.2%	115,738	0.30%
2016	39,250,017	5.5%	118,142	0.30%
2017	39,536,653	4.8%	134,278	0.34%

Florida Governors

John Ellis Bush (1999 - 2007) - Republican
 Charlie Crist (2007 - 2011) - Republican
 Richard L. Scott (2011 - present) Republican

Florida Senators

Bob Graham (1987 - 2005) - Democrat
 Connie Mack 3 (1989 - 2001) - Republican
 Mel Martinez (2005 - 2009) - Republican
 George LeMieux (2009 - 2011) - Republican
 Bill Nelson (2001 - Present²) - Democrat
 Marco Rubio (2011 - Present) - Republican

Florida	U.S. President	Governor	Senators (2 votes possible)	Total	Possible	Democraticness
2005	0	0	1	1	4	0.25
2006	0	0	1	1	4	0.25
2007	0	0	1	1	4	0.25
2008	0	0	1	1	4	0.25
2009	0	0	1	1	4	0.25

² Richard L. Scott was elected in the midterm elections of 2018 to the Senate defeating Bill Nelson. For the purposes of this paper however I left it as is.

2010	1	0	1	2	4	0.5
2011	1	0	1	2	4	0.5
2012	1	0	1	2	4	0.5
2013	1	0	1	2	4	0.5
2014	1	0	1	2	4	0.5
2015	1	0	1	2	4	0.5
2016	1	0	1	2	4	0.5
2017	0	0	1	2	4	0.5

Florida	Population (in millions)	Unemployment Rate	Homeless Population (in thousands)	Percent of homeless population of total population
2005	17,382,511	3.7%	62,461	0.36%
2006	18,089,889	3.2%	62,229	0.34%
2007	18,251,243	4.0%	48,069	0.26%
2008	18,328,340	6.3%	50,158	0.27%
2009	18,537,969	10.4%	55,599	0.30%
2010	18,843,326	11.1%	57,551	0.31%
2011	19,057,542	10.0%	56,687	0.30%
2012	19,317,568	8.5%	55,170	0.29%
2013	19,552,860	7.2%	47,862	0.24%
2014	19,893,297	6.3%	41,542	0.21%
2015	20,271,272	5.5%	35,900	0.18%
2016	20,612,439	4.8%	33,959	0.16%
2017	20,984,400	4.2%	32,190	0.15%

New York Governors

George Pataki (1995 - 2006) - Republican
 Eliot Spitzer (2007 - 2008) - Democrat
 David Paterson (2008 - 2010) - Democrat
 Andrew Cuomo (2011- Present) Democrat

New York Senators

Hillary Clinton (2001 - 2009) - Democrat
 Kirsten Gillibrand (2009 - Present) - Democrat
 Chuck Schumer (1999 - Present) - Democrat

New York	U.S. President	Governor	Senators (2 votes possible)	Total	Possible	Democraticity
2005	0	0	2	2	4	0.5
2006	0	0	2	2	4	0.5
2007	0	1	2	3	4	0.75
2008	0	1	2	3	4	0.75
2009	0	1	2	3	4	0.75
2010	1	1	2	4	4	1
2011	1	1	2	4	4	1
2012	1	1	2	4	4	1
2013	1	1	2	4	4	1
2014	1	1	2	4	4	1
2015	1	1	2	4	4	1
2016	1	1	2	4	4	1
2017	0	1	2	3	4	0.75

New York	Population (in millions)	Unemployment Rate	Homeless Population	Percent of homeless population of total population
2005	18,655,275	5.0%	61,328	0.33%

2006	19,306,183	4.5%	69,930	0.36%
2007 ³	19,297,729	4.6%	62,601	0.32%
2008	19,490,297	5.4%	61,125	0.31%
2009	19,541,453	8.3%	61,067	0.31%
2010	19,392,283	8.6%	65,606	0.34%
2011	19,465,197	8.3%	63,445	0.33%
2012	19,570,261	8.5%	69,556	0.36%
2013	19,651,127	7.7%	77,430	0.39%
2014	19,746,227	6.3%	80,590	0.41%
2015	19,795,791	5.3%	88,250	0.45%
2016	19,745,289	4.8%	86,352	0.44%
2017	19,849,399	5.1%	89,503	0.45%

Texas Governors

Rick Perry (2000 - 2015) - Republican

Greg Abbott (2015 - Present) - Republican

Texas Senators

John Cornyn (2002 - Present) - Republican

Kay Bailey Hutchison (1993 - 2013) - Republican

Rafael Edward "Ted" Cruz (2013 - Present) - Republican

Texas	U.S. President	Governor	Senators (2 votes possible)	Total	Possible	Democraticness
2005	0	0	0	0	4	0
2006	0	0	0	0	4	0
2007	0	0	0	0	4	0

³ Peak of recession 12/01/2007, trough of recession 06/01/2009

2008	0	0	0	0	4	0
2009	0	0	0	0	4	0
2010	1	0	0	0	4	0
2011	1	0	0	0	4	0
2012	1	0	0	0	4	0
2013	1	0	0	0	4	0
2014	1	0	0	0	4	0
2015	1	0	0	0	4	0
2016	1	0	0	0	4	0
2017	0	0	0	0	4	0

Texas	Population (in millions)	Unemployment Rate	Homeless Population	Percent of homeless population of total population
2005	22,778,123	5.4%	42,188	0.19%
2006	23,359,580	4.9%	49,242	0.21%
2007	23,831,983	4.3%	39,788	0.17%
2008	24,309,039	4.8%	40,190	0.17%
2009	24,801,761	7.6%	36,761	0.15%
2010	25,241,648	8.2%	35,121	0.14%
2011	25,644,424	7.8%	36,911	0.14%
2012	26,078,327	6.7%	34,052	0.13%
2013	26,479,279	6.3%	29,615	0.11%
2014	26,954,436	5.1%	28,495	0.11%
2015	27,454,880	4.5%	23,678	0.09%
2016	27,904,862	4.6%	23,122	0.08%

2017	28,304,596	4.3%	23,548	0.08
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Texas	Democraticness	Percent of homeless population of total population
2005	0.0%	0.19%
2006	0.0%	0.21%
2007	0.0%	0.17%
2008	0.0%	0.17%
2009	0.0%	0.15%
2010	0.0%	0.14%
2011	0.0%	0.14%
2012	0.0%	0.13%
2013	0.0%	0.11%
2014	0.0%	0.11%
2015	0.0%	0.09%
2016	0.0%	0.08%
2017	0.0%	0.08%

California	Democraticness	Percent of homeless population of total population
2005	0.5	0.53%
2006	0.5	0.49%
2007	0.5	0.38%
2008	0.5	0.37%
2009	0.5	0.33%
2010	0.75	0.33%
2011	1	0.33%

2012	1	0.32%
2013	1	0.31%
2014	1	0.29%
2015	1	0.30%
2016	1	0.30%
2017	0.75	0.34%

Florida	Democraticness	Percent of homeless population of total population
2005	0.25	0.36%
2006	0.25	0.34%
2007	0.25	0.26%
2008	0.25	0.27%
2009	0.25	0.30%
2010	0.5	0.31%
2011	0.5	0.30%
2012	0.5	0.29%
2013	0.5	0.24%
2014	0.5	0.21%
2015	0.5	0.18%
2016	0.5	0.16%
2017	0.5	0.15%

New York	Democraticness	Percent of homeless population of total population
2005	0.5	0.33%
2006	0.5	0.36%
2007	0.75	0.32%
2008	0.75	0.31%
2009	0.75	0.31%
2010	1	0.34%
2011	1	0.33%
2012	1	0.36%
2013	1	0.39%
2014	1	0.41%
2015	1	0.45%
2016	1	0.44%
2017	0.75	0.45%

Correlation between homelessness and Democraticness

	Pearson
California	-0.71668
Florida	-0.57109
New York	0.376501
Texas	Error = 0

For the last calculation to compare democraticness among these five states I used excel to calculate the r. Better known as the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient of the datasets.

Conclusion

	Pearson
Total (For all 4 states combined)	0.69

This means that collectively the original hypothesis is not proven and there is in fact a positive correlation between Democraticness and the percent of homeless of total population. The data only reflects only a small part of homelessness and there maybe a inverse correlation in the relationship that is not reflected in the current methodology. Texas is an example of low variance in democraticness however there are still considerably high homeless population.

While researching homelessness it became more clear that it is local city governance which becomes a state problem and then a federal problem because of the financial, social and physical demands that are incurred in that chain of command. Local governments, state governments and the federal government have started to realize this problem is not going away and declaring a war will not solve this problem. Rather this must be treated as a human problem. People are at the end of the decision not some animal or trade agreement.

While my original hypothesis was that homelessness rose and fell with different political administrations it has become evident through research that this is a far more complex topic than

just two different political administrations. The common historic perception of lazy, deviant, parasitic and diseased is not the case(Del Casino Jr, *et al*, 2008, 192). Rather homelessness is a byproduct of an extremely robust capitalist system who can not meet the gap between income and amount spent on rent. Once people enter the system of homelessness they may turn to drugs or alcohol or it may expose mental health issues, but the primary reason is not easy to determine. It may rise and fall with various political parties as a result of a bull or a bear economy, but in the end, both political parties have worked to end homelessness far greater than I anticipated.

If society is not careful this group will become larger and larger as the price of housing rises and wages continue to stagnate. The cost to address the punishment will become a large factor that will force government to respond correctly and help people. A better or more specific paper would be to look at California as a whole and then very specific to towns, cities and counties. The impact politically at this level is much more representative of the policies put in place by mayors of cities or governors.

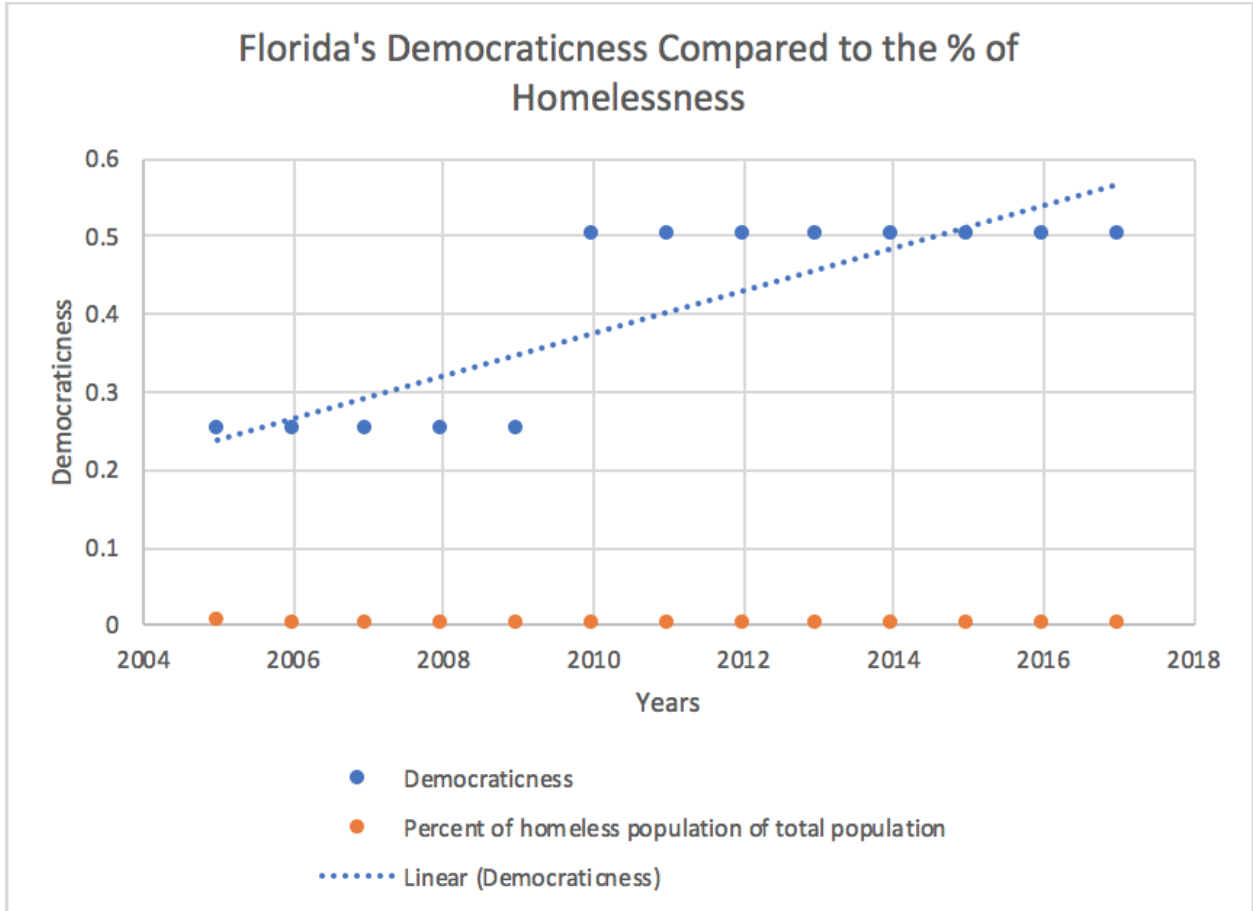
The data does verify my original hypothesis on a state by state basis ex: California and New York however Texas and Florida do not prove the primary hypothesis. Collectively the four states do not verify the original hypothesis either but rather demonstrates a positive correlation between democraticness and the percent of homeless population of total population. To be fair it only takes into account a very small portion of what all goes into the data behind homelessness.

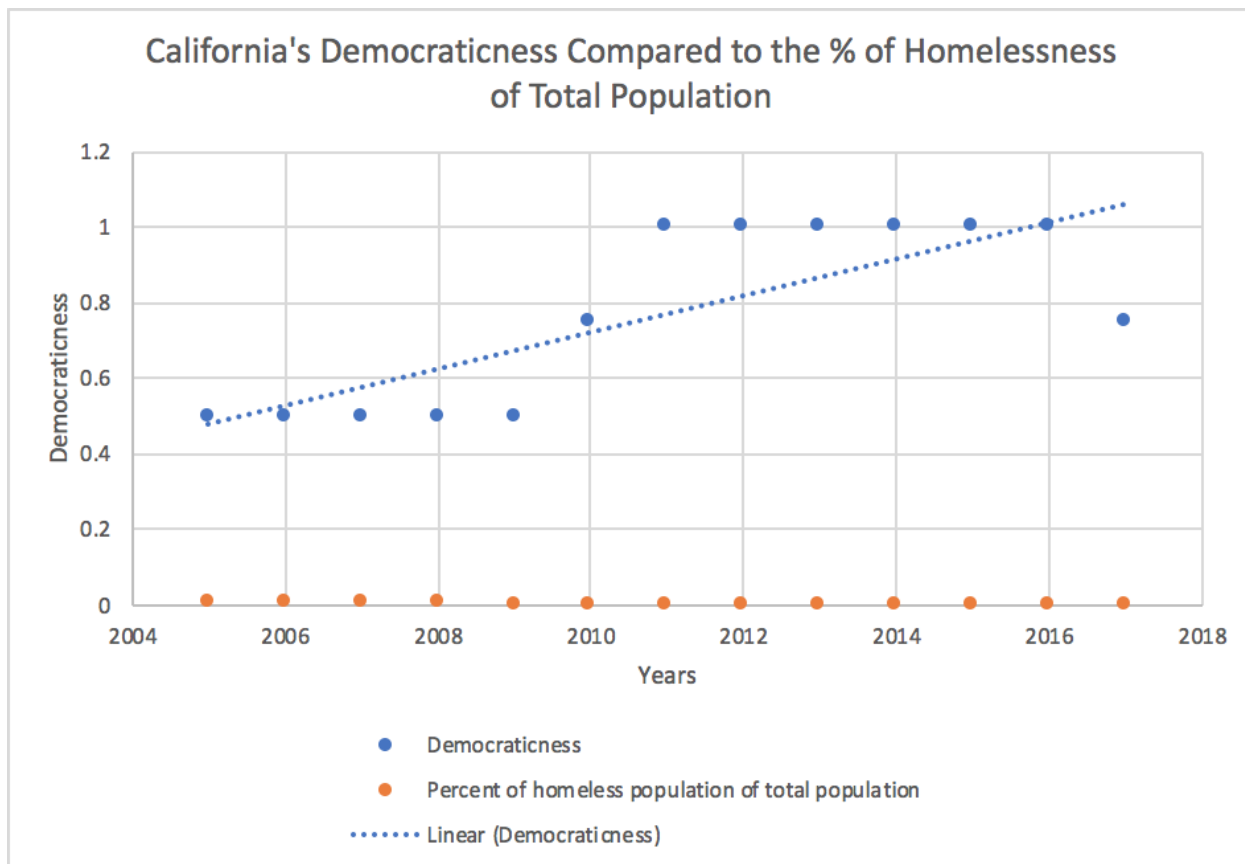
There is a multitude of factors that may lead or cause homelessness. This paper is reliant on data that is compiled by other researchers and not compiled myself. There are factors that are hard to place a value upon and how over the last few hundred years there are less and less people that are farming in the midwest and more people have moved either west or east out of what used

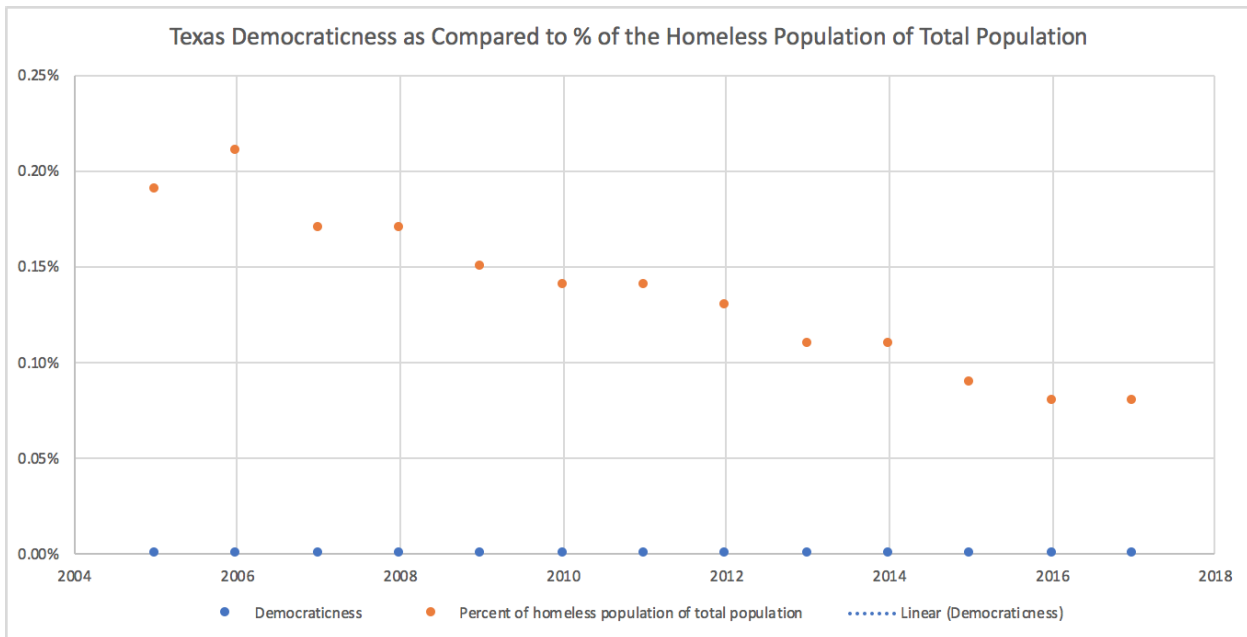
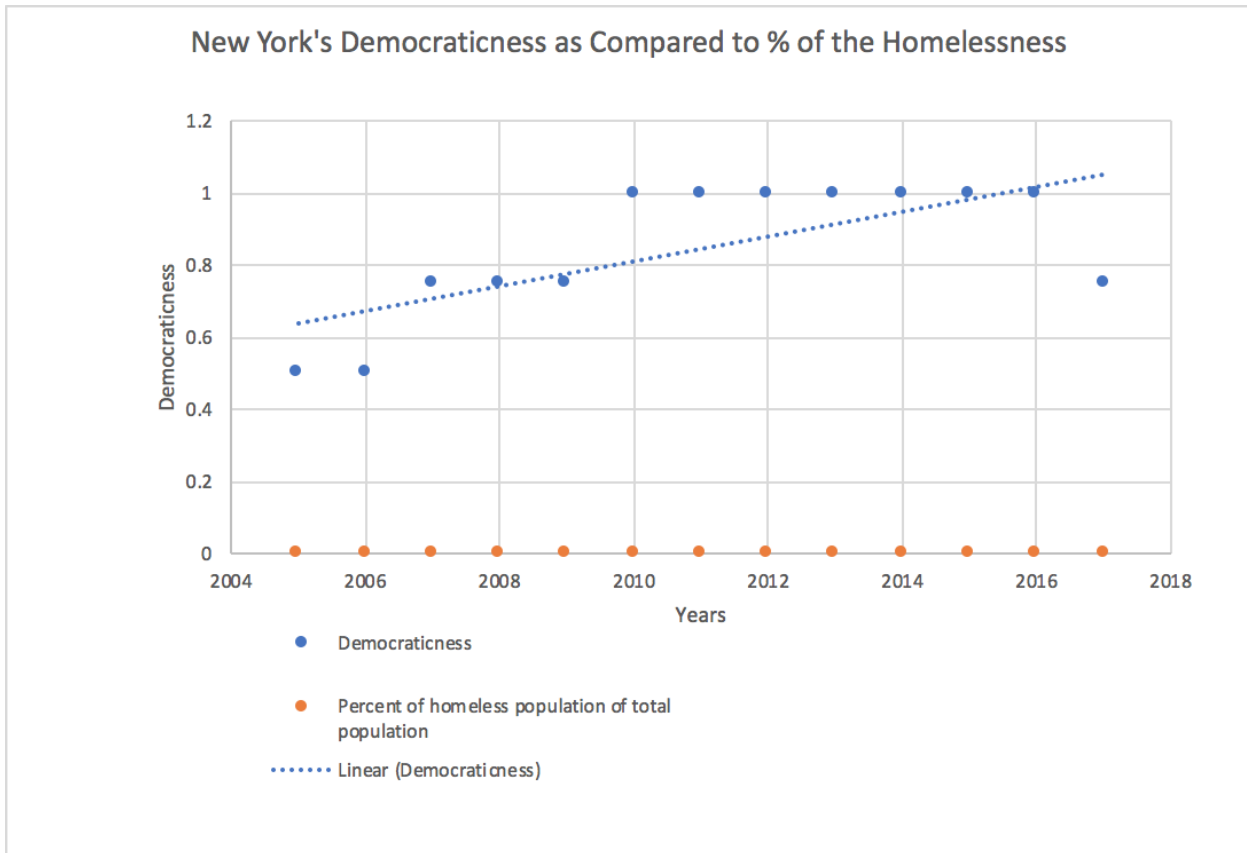
to be known as the farmland of America. Thus the populations has changed over the years and there has been a large urbanization of the of the United States driving states to have significantly different populations and demographics.

Additionally we have not made homelessness easy to climb out of but rather punished people from entering this phenomenon in life. Legislation has been enacted in order to further entrench this problem as individualistic rather than as a byproduct. Rather than give people a hand up out of the system it is often both hands are being used to push a person further into poverty and over the brink into homelessness.

Appendix A







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