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PERMANENT HOMELESSNESS IN AMERICA?

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to determine the approximate number of homeless persons in the U.S., the rate of change in the number, and whether or not the problem is likely to be permanent or transitory. It makes particular use of a new 1985 survey of over 500 homeless people in New York City. It finds:

(1) that the much maligned 1984 Department of Housing and Urban Affairs study was roughly correct in its estimate of 250,000 - 350,000 homeless persons for 1983;

(2) the number of homeless has grown since 1983, despite economic recovery, with the number of homeless families growing especially rapidly;

(3) homelessness is a relatively long-term state for homeless individuals, who average 6-8 years of homelessness;

(4) much of the homeless problem can be attributed to increases in the number of the poor in the 1980s and declines or rough constancy in the number of low-rent rental units;

(5) relatively few homeless individuals receive welfare or general assistance money; a large proportion have spent time in jail.

Overall, the study suggests that economic recovery will not solve the problem of homelessness, and that in the absence of changes in the housing market or in the economic position of the very poor, the U.S. will continue to be plagued with a problem of homelessness for the forseeable future.

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Permanent Homelessness in America?

Men and women sleeping on park benches, on heating vents, in privately-run and public shelters. Large numbers of persons seemingly incapable of earning enough to pay for the very basics of shelter and food. Families filling welfare hotels that cost hundreds of dollars per week of public moneys. A temporary blemish on the American scene due to the severe 1982-83 recession? Or a permanent scar if social and economic developments do not change dramatically?

When the reports of homelessness first exploded in the media in the early 1980's the problem seemed at most to be a temporary phenomenon, likely to diminish rapidly as the economy improved.[1] The idea that a sizeable permanent homeless underclass was beginning to develop in the U.S. seemed hardly credible -- a nightmare from the Great Depression; a propaganda debating point by Gorbachev at the Summit -- not the reality of modern day America. While no one denied the sudden burst in homelessness, which generated the first Congressional Hearings on the subject since Depression days, even the most basic facts about the problem -- the numbers of persons, lengths of time spent homeless, the characteristics of the homeless--were shrouded in controversy, often of a partisan nature.[2] In 1980 advocates for the homeless claimed that "approximately one percent of the population, or 2.2 million people, lacked shelter," a figure that was widely accepted in the media and is still often cited as approximately correct, although even larger figures are occasionally mentioned.[3] By contrast, the report of the Department of Housing and Urban Affairs, released on April 23, 1984, estimated numbers 10 to 15% as large.[4]

What is the approximate size of the homeless population in the U.S. today? Did homelessness decrease with economic recovery, as expected, or is homelessness becoming an endemic part of the American scene? To answer some of these questions, we developed a set of questions specifically designed to

illuminate the nature of homelessness in the U.S. and in the summer of 1985 one of us (Brian) interviewed 516 homeless persons in New York City: 210 shelter dwellers; 101 heads of homeless families in welfare hotels; and 205 people living in the street. The interview procedures are described in Appendix A. When we began the survey many persons close to the homeless problem warned us that we would have little success in interviewing this hard-to-reach population. This did not turn out to be the case. Eighty-one percent of the homeless persons approached agreed to give interviews: most were eager to tell about their lives; and while we do not have a Census-Bureau-type random sample, we have one of the largest data set that includes street as well as shelter residents. Our findings -- together with those of numerous studies for various cities in the country -- go a long way toward answering some of the key questions regarding the nature of homelessness in the U.S. today.

Put broadly, our research demonstrates that the perception of homelessness as a temporary blemish on the American scene is seriously in error. Despite the substantial recovery from the 1982-83 recession, the number of homeless persons is increasing. For many homeless persons, spells of homelessness tend to be quite long, on the order of 6-8 years for individuals. And, while social programs move homeless families into housing relatively quickly, patterns of change in incomes, family structure, land prices and housing costs will produce a continuous stream of newly homeless families large enough to keep welfare hotels and family shelters filled for the forseeable future.

In the absence of major economic and social changes or a new housing policy for the extremely disadvantaged, the U.S. is likely to be plagued by a long-term problem of homelessness, of a sizeable magnitude.

How Many?

As noted, the issue of how many homeless persons there are in the U.S. has been at the center of bitter dispute for some time. At one extreme is the 2.2 million persons figure suggested by homeless activists; at the other extreme is the 250-350,000 person estimate by HUD in its 1984 report. When the House Subcommittee on Housing and Community Development held hearings on the HUD Report in May 1984, numerous witnesses, often involved in helping the homeless, castigated the study as seriously understating the problem. Many saw the report as an effort (conscious or unconscious) to reduce the magnitude of the problem by an Administration considered unfriendly to the plight of the poor. Given the complexity of counting the number of homeless on the streets (as opposed to those in shelters) and the subjectivity of some estimating procedures (of the four methods used by H.U.D., two involved obtaining "expert" opinions or newspaper reports, rather than "hard counts"), it seemed as if one could not choose between the two widely disparate estimates, and some observers have simply decided that reality must lie somewhere in the middle of the range.

Our survey data provide new information that can be used to evaluate the conflicting claims about the size of the homeless population. In particular, we asked homeless persons the amount of time they spent in shelters and the amount of time they spent in the street since becoming homeless. Assuming that future behavior mirrors past behavior, the proportion of homeless time persons spent in shelters in the past can be used to estimate the probability they will be in a shelter in the future. Given separate estimates of time spent in shelters for persons who are currently in shelters and for persons who are currently in the street, we can, in turn, estimate the proportion of the entire homeless population in shelters.

Formally, let $P(S_t)$= proportion of homeless in shelters at time t

$P[S_t/S_{t-1}]$= conditional probability that a homeless person is in a shelter in t, given that they were in a shelter in t-1

$P[S_t/\bar{S}_{t-1}]$=conditional probability that a homeless person is in a shelter in t, given that they were in the street in t-1

Then, by conditional probability:

$$(1)\ P(S_t)=P(S_t/S_{t-1})\ P(S_{t-1}) + P(S_t/\bar{S}_{t-1})\ [1-P(S_{t-1})]$$

where $P(\bar{S}_{t-1})= 1-P(S_{t-1})$

In equilibrium, $P(S_t) = P(S_{t-1})$, yielding an equation for the proportion in shelters in t as a function of the relevant conditional probabilities:

$$(2)\ P(S_t) = P(S_t/\bar{S}_{t-1})/[(1-P(S_t/S_{t-1}) + P(S_t/\bar{S}_{t-1})]$$

In our survey, individuals in shelters spent 55% of their homeless time in shelters whereas individuals in the street spent 20% of their time in shelters, yielding an estimate of $P(S_t/S_{t-1})$ of .55 and an estimate of $P(S_t/\bar{S}_{t-1})$ of .20. This in turn yields an estimated ratio of persons in shelters to the total homeless population of about .31. That is, based on the time homeless persons report they spend in shelters and in the street, there are 3.23 (=1/.31) homeless persons for every homeless person in a shelter, or put differently, 2.23 persons living in the streets for every person in a shelter.

Is our figure, based on the population of homeless people in New York in the summer of 1985, reasonably applicable to the overall country? We have performed two checks to see if it is. First, we compared it with street to population ratios from sources based on street counts: our figure was <u>higher</u> than the others, possibly because, as is widely recognized, even the best street count will miss some street dwellers.[5] If our estimate is "too high" we will be coming up with an overstatement of the total homeless population. Second, to see if there is a regional bias to our ratio (possibly because street dwellers

are more common in the Southern or Western states for reasons of weather or because they have built fewer shelters than in the East), we have compared the regional distribution of federal surplus food distributed under the Temporary Emergency Food Distribution Program to the regional distribution of homeless persons estimated by HUD. If we found proportionally more persons in the South and West obtaining food support than in shelters we would be suspicious that our ratio understates the street to shelter homeless population in those areas of the country. In fact, we find no such regional disparity; the South does get a greater share of food moneys than is its share of homelessness, but the West has a lower share of food moneys, suggesting no overall regional problem with our data.[6]

Finally, to turn our estimate of the ratio of the number of homeless persons to the number in shelters into an estimate of the total homeless population, we need one other number--the number of persons sheltered. On the basis of HUD's 1983 survey of shelters we estimate that there were about 76,500 homeless individuals in shelters in that year, which multiplied by 3.23 yields an estimated total number of homeless persons of 246,500. In addition, HUD reported about 14,500 members of families were sheltered in 1983. This number, however, appears to exclude most homeless families receiving vouchers to live in welfare hotels or motels rather than in shelters.[7] For New York, as many as 10,500 persons in homeless families lived in welfare hotels in 1983. In other cities, the exclusion seems to have a much smaller impact; on the basis of discussion with officials in various cities, we estimate that outside New York perhaps one-third of homeless families were in welfare hotels, and therefore unlikely to have been counted by HUD. Adjusting for the omission of 10,500 families in New York and of homeless families in hotels elsewhere we increase HUD's number of homeless family members to 32,000. Assuming, as seems reasonable, that all members of families were either in shelters or

Table 1: Estimated Number and Growth of Homelessness in the U.S., 1983-85
(average night estimates)

	1983	1985
1) Number of homeless persons		
a) in shelters	76,500	92,000-98,000
b) in street	170,500	205,000-219,000
2) Number of persons in homeless families	32,000	46,000
3) Total number of homeless		
Our estimate	279,000	343,000-363,000
HUD estimate	250-350,000	
Popular advocate claim	2,200,000	

line 1: For 1983, our 76,500 consists of HUD's 54,500 (equal to 69,000 x 79% reported as individual homeless persons) plus others not included as homeless in HUD's study: 1) Those homeless in detoxification centers, approximately 7,000 nationwide. This number was arrived at by taking the total numer of homeless in detox. centers in New York and Boston and comparing it to the number of individuals in shelters. This rate (detox/total individual) is then applied to the 54,500 to yield the 7000. For New York city, the total shelter population for individuals in 1983 was 6346 homeless, 5846 in city shelters (source: Human Resources Administration) and 500 in other private shelters (source: varous phone calls with local churches and knowledgeable sources). For Boston, there were approximately 939 sheltered (source: Emergency Shelter Commission). The homeless detoxification population was 518 in Boston (same source) and about 400 in New York City (source: various phone calls with local sources and detox. centers). This represents a detox./individual population of 918/7285. Applying this rate to the HUD figure yields about 7,000 homeless in detox. centers, nationwide. 2) Those homeless in runaway youth shelters and shelters for battered women; using HUD's homeless/bed rate of 77% (69,000/91,000), we estimate that roughly 9000 homeless are in runaway youth shelters (HUD reports 12,000 beds) and 6000 battered or abused women in shelters (8,000 beds) (HUD Report, pg.34). The total shelter population for individuals, therefore, is about 76,500.

line 2: For 1983, our estimate of 32,000 represents the 14,500 reported by HUD (.21 x 69,000) plus the 10,500 in New York City, very likely to have been omitted by HUD and a very rough estimate of 7,000 others likely missed by HUD because they were in long term facilities. See footnote 7 for a detailed account.

1985: Figures for individuals based on estimated 1983-85 growth rates, from New York and Boston shelters. For individuals, the growth rate in Boston was 20.2% between 1983-1985. The number moved from 1457 to 1752 (source: Emergency Shelter Commission.) In New York, the number grew from 6740 to 8642 (source: Human Resources Administration).

1985: Figures for families based on estimated 1983-85 growth rates obtained as weighted average from New York and Boston shelters. In New York City, it grew from 10,520 to 14970 (source: Human Resources Administration, Crisis Intervention Center.) In Boston, the number of individuals increased from 120 to 420 (source: Emergency Shelter Commission) or by 87% per annum. Here we took a weighted average to obtain a 44.6% growth between 1983 and 1985.

welfare hotels, we came up with a final estimate for 1983 of about 279,000. This, we note, falls at the lower end of the range suggested by HUD (250,000 to 350,000) in its controversial report. While our figures are to be viewed as rough orders of magnitude only, it is important to recognize that they are strongly inconsistent with the claim that 1% of Americans are homeless. For the number of homeless to be on the order of 2.2 million persons, the street to shelter population ratio would have to exceed our estimate by about ten-fold, which even given the crude nature of our procedures seems highly implausible. In short, we find that the much-maligned HUD study was roughly correct in its estimate of the number of homeless persons in 1983.

The pattern of response to the homeless problem -- in which activists raise an alarm with high, undocumented claims about the numbers involved, to which the government responds with a commissioned report that seemingly diminishes the severity of the problem--appears to be an unfortunate part of American public debate. It has also occurred in the area of the number of illegal immigrants and the extent of hunger in the country, among other issues. In the case at hand, it has had the unfortunate effect of making what should be seen as shockingly large numbers -- over a quarter of a million Americans homeless in 1983 -- seem moderate by contrast.

What about changes in the homeless population over time? After all, 1983 was a peak post World War II recession year. Since then, has the number of homeless persons declined with economic recovery?

According to estimates of the shelter populations from New York and Boston used to gauge the rate of increase in shelter populations nationwide in our table, the answer is no. Between 1983 and 1985 the numbers of persons living in shelters in New York increased by 28%, while in Boston the number increased by 20%. While in the absence of a new HUD survey, these figures should be taken

solely as "orders of magnitude," their direction is consistent with reports from other cities, as indicated by the January 1986 study by the Conference of Mayors which concluded that in 22 of 25 cities the homeless population increased while only in three cities had it remained constant.[8] Even more strikingly, the number of homeless families seems to have increased especially rapidly since 1983. In Boston, where some 120 homeless family members were reported in 1983, there were about 420 in 1985. Elsewhere in the state, family homelessness also grew sharply, so that a major theme of the Massachusetts 1985 Report on Homelessness was that "family homelessness is on the increase."[9] In New York, the 10,500 persons reported in homeless families in 1983 grew by about 4,000 through 1985. Our discussion with shelter providers in other cities confirm this increase elsewhere.[10]

Finally, we have examined data on the number of households obtaining food from food shelters on the hypothesis that if homelessness is increasing, one would also expect the number seeking food from pantries, kitchens, etc. would also be increasing. Indeed, that is precisely what the data show.[11]

Given our estimate of the street-to-shelter ratio, and the apparent 1983-85 growth in the number of homeless individuals and in shelters, we estimate that the homeless population was on the order of 343,000-363,000 by 1985, 23 to 30% larger than in 1983.

The weakest part of the estimated growth is the assumed constancy of the street-to-shelter population ratio. It is possible that, given increased shelter capacity, homeless people are spending more time in shelters, which would lead our figures to overstate the growth of the homeless population. On the other hand, however, our data show that the homeless tend to spend more time in the street as their spells of homelessness increase, suggesting that the ratio of street to shelter population could rise over time. To see whether these biases seriously mar our picture of increasing homelessness we have exa-

mined the number of persons in particular shelters in New York during "peak" times. In New York City, the "peak" number of individuals sheltered during winter 1985-6 was 47% greater than the "peak" number sheltered in winter 1983-4, whereas the "average" number sheltered per night increased by just 28%. This pattern is inconsistent with the notion that the street-to-shelter ratio declined on average. In addition, several cities have reported turning people away from shelters, further indicating that the observed growth of the shelter population is not simply a result of a movement of a fixed homeless population into shelters.

Who Are They?

What kind of persons end up homeless in America? Does the population of homeless individuals consist largely of "skid-row" types? The mentally ill? Or does the homeless population include a large number of persons who could reasonably be expected to function in the society?

By including street persons as well as shelter residents in our survey we are able to provide a more representative picture of the homeless than is afforded by standard government reports that are limited to persons in shelters.[12] As can be seen in Table 2, our data and those of other recent studies give a markedly different picture of homeless individuals than the typical stereotype of a skid-row alcoholic. We find that:

-The homeless consist largely of men over 30 and below 60 years of age, with an underrepresentation of both the very old and the very young. There are few homeless persons among the aged presumably because of high mortality rates for homeless persons. There are few young homeless persons because most young persons still live in their parental home. The average age of the homeless is approximately 40.

-With respect to ethnicity, blacks are overrepresented among the homeless,

Table 2: Proportion of Homeless Individuals and Relevant Total Population with Specified Characteristics

	Homeless (1)	Relevant Comparison Population (2)	Ratio (1/2)
Age			
20-29	.22	.26	.85
30-59	.68	.51	1.33
60+	.10	.23	.43
Ethnicity			
New York:			
Black	.48	.25	1.92
Hispanic	.16	.20	.8
Boston:			
Black	.32	.22	1.45
Hispanic	.05	.06	.83
Education			
% not graduated High School	.53	.27	1.9
Family Backround			
Without at least one parent	.46	.15	3.1
With neither real parent	.15	.03	5.0
Social Pathology			
percent that ever spent time in jail	.39		
mentally ill	33%	<.02	25
Substance Abuse			
alcohol abuse	.29	.13	2.23
hard drug abuse	.14	<.01	>14
Income			
some current income (any source)	.18	.98	.18
receiving either public assistance or SSI or government transfer payments	.12	.22	.55

Source:

Age, data for homeless are from our study.
Comparison data are from U.S. Statistical Abstract 1986, for U.S. total
Ethnicity, NY data from our study; Boston data from Emergency Shelter Commission, 1986. Comparison data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population.
Education, homeless data from our study; comparison data from Statistical Abstract 1985.
Family data for homeless our survey; The comparison groups for family backround is for 1968, since that is approximately when the homeless would have been being brought up in their parental home, from Statistical Abstract, 1969.
Social pathology, percent spending time in jail, our survey; mentally ill, stylistic figure based on diverse studies. Comparison, as described in text.
Alcohol and drug abuse, homeless from NY State Department of Social Services, Homelessness in New York State (October 1984), NY City Human Resources Administration, Homeless in New York City Shelters. Comparison data for alcoholism from Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1985, table 192, where 13% of the population is reported to consume at least 60 alcoholic drinks per month. Hard drugs (excluding marihuana) were currently used by less than .5% of the population with the exceptions of cocaine (1.2%) and stimulants (.6%), U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse, NICA Statistical Series.
Income, from New York City Human Resources Administration.
comparison, men 25-64, from U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Consumer Income Series P-60.

while Hispanics are underrepresented. As our data show lengths of spells of homelessness to be the same for blacks and whites, the higher rate of homelessness represents a greater risk of becoming homeless for blacks.

-The homeless are far less educated than the population as a whole, with over half having failed to graduate from high school compared to a little over a quarter of the comparison group.

-The homeless are more prone to substance abuse and mental illness than the population as a whole. A figure that emerges from a wide variety of studies is that approximately one in three homeless persons suffers from mental illness. In terms of the comparison group a rough estimate is that less than 2% of the U.S. population is mentally ill, which implies that the mentally ill are about 25 times more likely to become homeless than someone else.

-The homeless are much more likely to have been raised in a one-parent family than the population as a whole, and are especially likely to have been brought up with neither real parent.

-The homeless individual is unlikely to receive much if any "welfare" benefits such as disability insurance, unemployment insurance, etc.

One of the most striking characteristics of the homeless population, which has been neglected in much popular discussion, is the frequency of criminal activity. In our survey, 39% admitted to having spent time in jail, with an average time in jail of two years. Other studies show somewhat larger percentages spending time in jail, and report sizeable numbers (13-26%) having committed felonies or major crimes.

The obvious question that arises from these figures is whether crime is not only a "result of" homelessness, but is also a "cause" of homelessness. To answer this we asked the homeless about the timing of their periods in jail. Sixty-one percent of time spent in jail occurred prior to becoming homeless,

suggesting that (unsuccessful) crime leads to homelessness. Indicative of the presence of crime among the homeless, many of those we interviewed expressed concern that their meager goods might be stolen and that they might be mugged by other homeless persons. "It's dangerous on the streets" was how one homeless woman expressed the situation.

Finally, an important issue on which our survey provides new insight is whether or not the homeless in the street differ markedly from the homeless in shelters. In terms of age and ethnicity, there are notable differences. Persons living in the street in our survey were nearly a decade older and were much more likely to be white than those living in shelters. More importantly, we find that the street population tends to be generally "worse off." Homeless persons in the street are more prone to substance abuse, spend more time in jail, and appear to be less employable. Whereas 29% of shelter residents in our survey reported themselves unable to work, 44% of the street residents said they were unable to work. Consistent with this, spells of unemployment were longer for the street people.

It is not surprising to find street people to be functionally less competent than persons in shelters, as conditions on the streets are much worse than conditions in the shelters. The more rational homeless person will consequently choose a shelter. In terms of policy this implies that any social policy operating through shelters may miss the most vulnerable and helpless of the homeless.

The Homeless Family

As shown in Table 1, the group among whom homelessness has increased the most since the HUD report are families. Whereas in the 1984 report of HUD the problems of homeless families were given little separate attention, by 1986 the

situation had changed to such an extent that the problems of the homeless family have come to the fore of much policy discussion.

The homeless families differ significantly from homeless individuals. They consist largely of female-headed families. They tend to be predominantly black, with the black overrepresentation of families far exceeding black overrepresentation among homeless individuals. Even in a city like Boston where the majority of homeless individuals are white, the majority of homeless families are black. Moreover, in contrast to homeless individuals who receive little social welfare benefits, the bulk of homeless families obtain regular AFDC payments and food stamps.

By age, the heads of homeless families tend to be young, with half less than twenty-five years old. They also tend to have less education than otherwise comparable persons and are more likely to have come from female-headed homes themselves. Finally, just as the deterioration of the two-parent family is a major cause of poverty and welfare recipiency, the breakup of the family seems to be a major contributor to family homelessness. Forty percent of homeless families report that they lost their residence because of family conflict, often from a situation in which they doubled up with friends or relatives.

The characteristics that differentiate homeless persons and families from others could, we note, just as easily be a summary of characteristics differentiating those with any social problem from the average. While a certain proportion of the homeless have mental or other behavioral problems that distinguish them from the rest of the poor in America, it is important to recognize that homelessness is endemic among the same groups of people for whom urban poverty, unemployment, living-on-welfare, and crime is also endemic. In this sense homelessness is not a "bizarre" problem to be studied by itself but rather is part-and-parcel of the overall social problem of low incomes, income inequality,

and social pathology in the U.S. that has gained attention from activists and analysts of all political philosophies.

Permanent or Transitory?

A key issue in understanding homelessness, and developing policies to alleviate the problem, is whether it is a transitory or long-term phenomenon. If it is transitory, the homeless are likely to resume normal life in short order, making temporary shelters an appropriate social remedy for their problem. If, by contrast, it is largely a long-term problem for a sizeable number of persons, a very different set of policies may be needed to deal with the problem.

In its evaluation of lengths of homelessness, HUD concluded that "for most people who become homeless, their condition is recent and likely to be temporary".[13] Our analysis indicates that for individual homeless persons HUD's conclusion is, for reasons given below, incorrect. Far from being temporary, homelessness appears to be a long-term state for large numbers. Moreover, as with unemployment and welfare recipiency, the vast bulk of time spent homeless is contributed by persons who are homeless for long periods. While family homelessness is of much shorter duration, due in part to public policies to move families out of welfare hotels and shelters, even here lengths of spells are considerably longer than is recognized.

There are four reasons why homelessness is erroneously thought to be a short-run phenomenon. First, most shelters report the amount of time persons spend in that shelter rather than total time spent homeless, suggesting that periods of homelessness are short and episodic. Time spent in particular shelters or places may, in fact, be short, but much of the movement of the homeless is between the street, shelters, detoxication centers, hospitals, and

jail rather than from homelessness to normal residences. Second, surveys that report durations of homelessness give the amount of time persons have been homeless up to the survey date, not the amount of time until they leave homelessness. Assuming, as statisticians often do, that one catches persons midway in their spell, one must double the reported times to estimate the likely completed duration of homelessness for those in any survey. Third, most information on the homeless comes from shelter residents, who by our analysis, tend to be much better off and much less likely to be long-term homeless than persons living in the streets. Finally, because the homeless population is a growing one, tabulations of durations at a point in time will give a misleading picture of lengths of spells by showing a disproportionately high number of short beginning spells.

On the other side of the coin, however, is the fact that any survey at a moment in time tends to overrepresent persons with long spells. This is because the likelihood of catching persons homeless differs by the lengths of time they are homeless. For instance, given one homeless person with a spell of one year and one homeless person with a spell of one day, the chance of 'catching' the former in a survey is 365 times greater than the chance of catching the latter. While this is not a problem if one is interested in spells of homelessness weighted by their importance (i.e. by length) it does bias estimates of the distribution of <u>all</u> spells.

Our effort to deal with these problems takes two forms. First, in contrast to studies done by public welfare agencies, we asked the homeless people not how long they have been in their current state but rather,"how long ago was the first day that you ever were homeless?" We then asked them the proportion of time since that date spent on the street, in shelters, and in normal residence. As 96% of reported time since the first date was spent in the homeless state, we

believe our figures give a more accurate picture of the length of homelessness. Second, we calculate a diverse set of statistics to reflect the differing concepts of spell lengths.

Table 3 presents the results of our analysis. Line 1 gives the average duration of incomplete spells for persons in our sample, with street persons weighted more heavily to reflect their greater number in the population. The 4.1 years reflects past reported homelessness and is thus the "hardest" number of those in the table.[14] Line 2 adjusts the distribution of incomplete spells to take account of the large number of new beginning spells due to recent growth of homelessness. It represents our estimate of what the duration of homeless would be if the homeless population had been constant over the period and may thus be viewed as providing a more meaningful indicator of durations of homelessness for a given population. It is nearly 50% larger than the estimated duration which does not take account of this problem. Doubling the figures in line 2 yields an estimate of the "length-weighted" mean years of homelessness for our sample, that is, the "average" years homeless weighted so that longer spells count more heavily than shorter spells; this is also the expected mean years of homelessness for the homeless persons in our sample, adjusted for the beginning spells. Finally, we adjusted our data on the distribution of the homeless by length of time they were homeless to take account of the approximate growth rate of the population to estimate a "steady-state" distribution and approximate "escape" rates from homelessness to normal shelter dwellings. On the basis of these calculations, we estimate that the "typical" <u>spell</u> of homelessness (including spells of persons not in our survey because they are especially short) is 3.5 years. This number is far below the other estimates because our data suggest that there are many very short homeless spells: roughly one third of individuals who enter homelessness appear to exit within

Table 3: Alternative Measures of the Years Homeless Among Individuals

	Years Homeless
1. Incomplete Duration for Persons in Our Sample	4.1
2. Incomplete Duration for Persons, Corrected for Growth of Homeless Population	6.1
3. Estimated Completed Duration For Persons in Our Sample (also, the average length of homelessness weighted by its contributions to total time of homelessness)	12.2
4. Estimated Mean Length of All Spells of Homelessness Including Very Short Spells	3.5

Source:

line 1: based on our survey, with an average incomplete duration for street people of 4.7 years and an average incomplete duration for sheltered people of 2.9 years.

line 2: correction obtained by adjusting the frequency distribution in our survey to take account of growth from 1979 to 1985 when homelessnes spurted and of average population growth for earlier period. For the 1979-85 rate of growth, we took a weighted average of the annual growth rates for New York and Boston, as reported in table 1. Our specific adjustment was to multiply the frequency 1-2 years by 1.115, 2-3 years by $(1.115)^2$, etc. Starting at 7-8 years we apply the average population growth rate of 1.014. Therefore the 8-9 years percentage would be multiplied by $(1.115)^6$ $(1.014)^2$. The corrected frequency was multiplied by the midpoint of the duration (i.e. .5, 1.5, 2.5, etc.), the numbers summed, and divided by the sum of the percentages. The numbers were calculated separately for street and shelter populations with the results of 7.2 (street) and 3.7 (shelter), then averaged to yield the figure in the text.

line 3: multiplied by 2 on the hypothesis that "corrected" for growth we are catching people midway in their homelessness spell.

line 4: estimated by calculating transition probabilities from the adjusted frequency distribution of spells and then simply taking the mean duration. The calculation was performed separately for persons in shelters and those on the street, and then weighted. We experimented with various ways of smoothing the frequency distributions to obtain transition probabilites and obtained figures like those in the table, so that the particular method, while crude, does not critically determine the results.

half a year.

By contrast, for families, comparable calculations yield estimates of homelessness closer to the HUD description: incomplete spells of homelessness averaging about 1 year. The 'long-term' nature of the problem here is not one of relatively permanent homelessness of individuals, but rather of the continued influx of new families into the homeless state.

Why Homelessness in America Today?

What could possibly underlie the sudden growth of homelessness in America? The most commonly cited cause, deinstitutionalization of mental patients, cannot explain the 1980s growth of homelessness for the simple reason that deinstitutionalization occurred for the most part in the 1960s. Indeed, deinstitutionalization began in the late 1950s to early 1960s with the inception of tranquilizing drugs, and was given particular impetus by the Community Mental Health Center Act of 1963. From 1955 to 1982 the average number of persons in psychiatric hospitals on a given night fell from 558,922 to 125,200.[15] While some persons are, of course, let out of mental hospitals today, they do not constitute a large proportion of homeless. A New York study found that just 7% of the homeless came directly from mental hospitals.[16] Our survey found just 1% in that circumstance.

While deinstitutionalization cannot, therefore, be cited as a significant direct cause of homelessness, it did create a population of "non-institutionalized" persons whose psychological and economic position made them particularly prone to fall into homelessness, given adverse circumstances. To evaluate the contribution of non-institutionalization to the current homeless problem, we have estimated the number of persons who might have been institutionalized in the 1980s had we institutionalized persons with mental problems at 1955 rates. Our estimate shows that about 657,000 less patients were institu-

tionalized in 1982 than would have been at 1955 rates of institutionalization. Assuming that about one third of the homeless are mentally ill, we find that roughly 14% of those who would have been institutionalized have ended up homeless.[17] That failure to institutionalize has contributed to homelessness should not, however, be taken to imply that deinstitutionalization itself has failed. By our estimates, 86% of persons who might have been institutionalized are not homeless, and at least by that minimal criterion, are successfully integrated into society. Perhaps if Community Health Centers had been developed in the numbers envisaged in the 1963 Act, (2000 were planned, whereas there were only 717 built by 1980), the negative effects of the movement on homelessness would have been largely avoided.

If noninstitutionalization is not the primary cause of the rise in homelessness in the U.S., what is? Our analysis highlights two sets of factors: the growing incidence of social characteristics that may be causally related to homelessness, and changes in the housing market that make it increasingly difficult for the poor to rent space.

Changing Social Characteristics

By comparing the frequency of personal and social characteristics between the homeless and comparison populations, as in Table 2, we can make inferences about the impact of characteristics on the likelihood an individual will be homeless. Moreover, to the extent that a particular characteristic that raises the probability of homelessness has increased over time, we can infer that it has contributed to the rising problem.

The two main characteristics which, by this line of reasoning, have increased homelessness are the growing number of female-headed homes, both because the vast majority of homeless families are female-headed and because

homeless individuals tend to come from such backgrounds, and increased substance abuse. Our calculations suggest that these factors have outweighed the main factor working in the opposite direction -- rising education -- so that on net the changing characteristics of the population have made the homeless problem worse.

Since social characteristics change gradually, however, it is clear that such changes could not by themselves have caused the sudden increase in homelessness in the 1980s. They are best thought of as creating a "risk" population rather than increasing homelessness per se.

The one factor that did, of course, worsen in the early 1980s and undoubtedly contribute significantly to the burst of homelessness is, of course, the recession-related increase in the number of persons with exceptionally low incomes. In 1979 11.8% of men 18 and over in the Current Population Survey had incomes below $3000 or were without incomes. In 1983 16.2% had incomes that were below $4000 (aproximately $3000 in 1979 prices, given inflation) or were without incomes. As persons with low income are especially likely to end up homeless, this increase certainly contributed to the 1979-83 growth of homelessness. The recession cannot however, be the prime factor at work, for if it were, homelessness would have fallen rather than risen from 1983 to 1985. It is, in our view, the concordance of increased poverty and income inequality with housing market developments deleterious to the poor that best explains why the at-risk population suffered homelessness in the period.

Housing Market Developments

An obvious place to look for causes of homelessness is in the market for housing -- in particular, at potential short-run or long-run imbalances between the availability of low-rent units and the income of those at the bottom of the income distribution. Did rents rise and the stock of low-rent housing decline

relative to the number of persons and families in poverty in the early 1980s?

The available evidence suggests that it did. Consider first the pattern of rent increases during the 1979-83 period. According to the Federal Government's housing survey, median rents in the U.S increased from $217 to $315 from 1979 to 1983 -- a 45% increase over 4 years, or 6% with an adjustment for inflation.[18] By comparison, from 1970 to 1979 median rents did not increase at all in real terms. In part, higher median rents represent increased rents for units of a given quality; in part, they represent changes in the distribution of the stock of rental units toward higher quality units. Both changes create great problems for the poor to obtain housing when the number of the poor increases, as it did in the period.

To get a better fix on the potential imbalance in the housing market between low-income persons and the supply of low-rent units, we compare in Table 4 the changing numbers of persons and families below the poverty line with the supply of rental units below $200 per month (in 1979 dollars). The figures show clearly that at the same time the number of persons and families below poverty increased, the number of low-rent housing units in central cities fell sharply, while the number of low-rent units in the country as a whole held roughly stable. By contrast, in the previous decade, the number in poverty fell at about the same rate as did the number of low-rent units (defined in constant dollars).

Underlying the decline in low rent units are several important social developments, mostly in central cities: the movement of higher-income and middle-class people back to some cities, "gentrification" (which is important in Boston and some other booming Northeastern cities); the growth of condominiums (encouraged by mortgage interest deduction on the tax code and, in several cities, by rent control); and increasing land prices, which makes it less pro-

Table 4: Numbers of Poor Families and Low Rent Units in the Housing Market, 1979-83

Families (in millions)	1979	1983	%Δ
Families below poverty	5.3	7.7	45%
Persons in families below poverty	20.0	28.0	40%
Unattached adults below poverty	5.7	6.9	21%
Rental Units (in millions)			
number of rental units< $200 (constant U.S. dollars)			
U.S. Total	10.7	10.7	.1%
Central City	5.3	5.0	-5.4%
Single room rental units	.98	.97	-0.9%

Source: Tabulated from U.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Statistical Abstract, 1986; Annual Housing Survey, Current Housing Reports, Part A, 1979, 1983.

fitable to develop low-income housing. While one could imagine a housing market where developers would respond to these changes and to the increased number of poor persons by producing lower-quality low-rent units, building codes and other regulations put a minimum cost beneath construction of low-rent dwellings. In New York, the city has offered a bonus of some $6,000 to landlords for renting to homeless families for two years, but found that relatively few landlords have taken advantage of the bonus. One reason is that the cost of bringing apartments up to City building-code standards may exceed that amount. In 1986 the city raised the bonus to $9,700 to see if that would encourage landlords to accomodate the homeless. If it requires nearly $10,000 extra to make it worthwhile for landlords of existing buildings to house homeless families, it is no wonder that builders do not find it profitable to construct low-rent units in sufficient numbers to alleviate the imbalance.

The nature of the housing problem faced by currently homeless people does, of course, differ among different types of persons. For the most dysfunctional of the homeless, the problem is not so much one of housing costs as inability to earn even a modicum of pay. Aside from small sums obtained by panhandling, most homeless persons in the street have essentially no income; many have not worked for years and are, on the face of it, incapable of working without extended help; in addition, they claim few of the welfare benefits that might enable them to rent space in single room only places, were such rooms available. Those who are mentally ill, chronic substance abusers and generally in poor physical and mental health are in many cases functionally incapable of demanding and competing for housing in the free market.

For the bulk of the homeless, who have greater potential for finding housing themselves, and for homeless families who receive welfare payments, the declining availability of low-rent units and increases in rent relative to

incomes appears to be a major cause of their problem. In Boston, where the housing market is particularly tight, the newspapers report the existence of shelter residents who are employed but cannot find nor afford housing, at least in the short run.

While we are loathe to generalize from a single area, the pattern of rapidly rising land values, rents, and housing market problems for the poor in Massachussetts raises the possibility that future economic progress, including full employment of the type enjoyed in Massachussetts, may exacerbate rather than alleviate the housing problems of the poor. One can easily devise a scenario in which economic growth raises demand for land, inducing landlords to develop higher-quality properties, pricing out of the market those whose incomes do not rise with the rate of growth.

In addition to the broad supply and demand patterns in the housing market, however, other factors are likely to make it difficult for the private market to resolve the homelessness problem. For one, once a person is homeless, landlords are likely to view him or her as a higher risk tenant than other persons. The probability that someone who has been homeless will pay rent regularly may reasonably be viewed as lower than for others. Moreover, while only a minority of the homeless may suffer from serious behavioral problems that may lead them to damage units or engage in behavior that would upset other tenants, the behavior of even a small number can raise the "expected" costs of renting to any member of the group.

Efforts to Deal with Homelessness

Homelessness is an issue that arouses considerable public concern, with the result that a wide variety of programs have developed in both the public and private sectors to help the homeless, often of a rather innovative nature.

The first and foremost need has been, of course, to develop shelters so that the homeless have an alternative to the street. The federal government's Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP), initiated by Congress in 1983, disbursed 210 million dollars in three phases to deal with the problem. Part of the money went to the states and part was distributed through a National Board made up largely of charitable organizations. Assessing the operation of the Program, the Urban Institute concluded that "the EFSP met a great need for emergency food and shelter services" with the private charitable part disbursing funds to the needy more quickly than the states.[19] At the state and local level, many areas have developed extensive shelter systems where none had previously existed. In Massachusetts, for example, the number of publicly funded shelters increased from 2 in 1982 to 29 in 1986. Private organizations have also made significant efforts to raise money to aid the homeless, ranging from local church and community efforts to shelter persons to the massive "Hands Across America" fund-raising effort on May 25, 1986. Our observation is that the smaller privately-run shelters tend to be better accomodations for the homeless than the larger impersonal publicly-run shelters.

While provision of beds for the homeless is a necessary step in dealing with the problem, it is not adequate. As our analysis indicates, the bulk of homelessness is contributed by a relatively long-term homeless population, which, by definition, is unlikely to return quickly to normal living conditions. Additional services are needed to help these people attain self-sufficiency, as some shelters have begun to provide. In addition, for the most dysfunctional and helpless of the homeless, who live in the streets, outreach programs are necessary.

Even with effective programs, however, one should not expect a sudden, sharp decline in homelessness. While, on the one hand, evidence that the number of

homeless persons is smaller than the 1% bandied in the press makes the problem seem more manageable, our finding that homelessness is a long-term state with causes going far beyond the economic recession suggests that a quick solution is unlikely in the near future. Indeed, if ongoing changes in the distribution of income, in various social problems and pathologies, and in the housing market continue into the future, the 'at-risk' population is likely to grow rather than to decline. And one unhappy lesson we have learned from past efforts to resolve social problems is that while problems can arise quickly, cures often take longer to find and implement.

Footnotes

1. Media articles on the homeless increased at an extraordinary rate in the early 1980s. In 1980 there were 13 articles listed in the indexes of The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, and Washington Post; in 1985, there were 428 articles listed in the three indexes.

2. The 1984 Hearings on the Homeless and on the HUD Report on Homelessness show the extent of controversy over the issue. See Subcommittee on Housing and Community Development of the Committee on Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs, House of Representatives, 98th Congress Second Session; Homeless in America II- (January 25, 1984) and HUD Report on Homelessness (May 24, 1984).

3. The source of the 1% or 2.2 million persons number is the Community for Creative Non-Violence. See, for example, Hombs, Mary Ellen and Mitch Snyder, Homelessness in America, a Forced March to Community for Creative Non-Violence, 1982.

4. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development A Report to the Secretary on the Homeless and Emergency Shelters, Washington, D.C., Office of Policy Development and Research, 1984.

5. The HUD figures show an average street to shelter ratio of 1.78:1 (pg. 17 of their report). Because their ratio came from actual street counts, where "counters" are bound to miss at least some street dwellers, one should expect the actual ratio to be slightly higher, as our 2.23 is. A more recent Nashville study found a street/shelter ratio of less than 1, also suggesting that our 2.23 isn't missing a large number of those in the West who never use the shelters. R. Bruce Wiegand "Counting the Homeless"

American Demographics, December 1985, Vol. 7, No. 12, pp. 34-37.

While it is possible that our survey also missed an especially hard to get population, which potentially spends even less time in shelters than the "street" people we surveyed, our street to shelter ratio would not increase greatly unless these persons were exceptionally numerous and spent virtually no time in shelters, thereby greatly altering our estimate of $P(S_t/S_{t-1})$. For example, if persons missed in our street count were as numerous as those in our survey, and they spent half as much time in shelters as those in the survey, $P(S_t/\bar{S}_{t-1})$ would be .15 instead of .20. This would yield a homeless population to shelter population of 4 rather than 3.23, raising the estimated size of the population by 24%.

6. The HUD distribution of homeless (p. 20) is: South, 24%; North Central, 22%; North East, 24%; West, 31%.

The 1982-86 distribution of surplus foods under the Temporary Emergency Food Distribution Program is: South, 30%; North Central, 22%; North East, 24%; West, 24%. (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Survey, Title 2 Commodities 6-4-86.)

While the distribution of surplus foods shows a higher proportion of federal dollars in the South than does the distribution of the homeless, it shows a compensatory lower proportion of federal food spending in the West.

7. HUD's description of families not included in their 1983 study is sufficiently vague that we contacted the survey organization, who reported that families in "welfare hotels" may not have been included because these facilities are not regarded as part of the regular shelter system. It seems, however, that in most cities in the US (except N.Y.); very few families were in long term facilities or hotels in 1983. The types of shelters for families also vary greatly from city to city. Some examples:

New York- opened their first homeless shelter in 1983. Therefore, at this time, virtually all families were in long term facilities that very likely were not counted by HUD. Because of this seeming omission, we have added all 10,500 individuals in homeless families to HUD's figure.

Boston- In 1983, virtually no homeless families stayed in homeless hotels as the laws did not permit it. By 1986, 78 of the homeless families have been moved to long-term facilites or homeless motels.

Philadelphia- The Department of Human Resources reports than in 1983, all homeless families were in shelters; therefore, they were likely to have been included by HUD.

Houston- Most families, according to the United Way, stayed in shelters or missions and were likely to have been counted by HUD.

Washington- The Department of Human Services claims that almost all of the families in 1983 stayed in long term facilites and were likely to have been missed by HUD. A small percentage in the private sector may have been counted.

Note that omission of persons in welfare hotels is not a problem in the more subjective "extrapolation" methods used by HUD.

8. Conference of Mayors, Report on the Homeless, p.15.

9. Massachusetts Report on Homelessness, 1985, Executive Office of Human Services, pg. 19.

10. Other cities doe not have the exact figures for family growth; however, sources we contacted in Washington, D.C., Chicago, and Los Angeles and Houston agree that the number of homeless families has grown more rapidly than the number of homeless individuals.

11. Food Research and Action Center, Bitter Harvest II.

12. The statistics for our survey are based on a weighted average for persons in shelters and in the street. We have weighted the figures in order to get a picture of the typical homeless individual. The weights (.39, shelter: .61, street) were chosen on the basis of our estimate of the distribution of the population between the two places.

13. HUD, Report on Homelessness, p. 29. We note that the HUD figures on homelessness for New York show longer spells for New York and Boston than for other cities. Our disagreement with HUD is based not on the spells reported for cities but on the conceptual grounds that incomplete spells in a growing population are not the proper measure of lengths of time spent homeless.

14. To check on the plausibility of our estimates we have compared the incomplete durations in our survey with those reported elsewhere and find no reason to believe ours are overstated. As durations reported elsewhere are limited to shelter populations, we limit comparisons to that subset of our sample. A calculated mean duration of sheltered residents in a recent Boston Survey show an incomplete spell of 2.1 years compared with 2.9 for the similar group in our survey. Source for Boston: a study of 785 sheltered, Emergency Shelter Commission, 1985 (Sept. 17, table 1). In contrast, HUD's study reports shorter spells of homelessness for sheltered residents. We believe that two reasons account for this discrepancy. First, their study was conducted in 1983- a time closer to the period usually considered to be the beginning of the rise of homelessness. In using durations shortly after the "homeless increase," HUD is likely to catch a shorter term homeless population. Second, we calculated duration

beginning with the "first time that a person was homeless." For instance, if a person had been homeless for 5 years, then found a home for 2 months,and then became homeless for another 4 months, we did not count only the recent spell of homelessness of 4 months but rather the entire 5½ years. We believe that only counting the most recent spell seriously underestimates the duration of homelessness as people tend to bounce in and out of homelessness, and according to our survey, only spend 4% of their total time since becoming homeless in a home of any sort.

15. Alter, Jonathan et.al, Newsweek, "Homeless in America," January 2, 1984, p. 25.

16. New York State, Homelessness in New York State, Report to the Governor,1984.

17. Assuming that the number of patients in institutions in 1955 was 558,922, this number would have increased with population growth (40% between 1955 & 1982), this number would be at 782,491. However only 125,200 patients were institutionalized in 1982, leaving a "gap" of 657,291- the number that would have been institutionalized at 1955 rates.
Assuming that approximately one-third of the 279,000 (or 93,000) homeless are mentally ill (and would be in institutions), we find a failure rate of deinstitutionalization of 93,000/657,291 or 14%. This number represents the number not institutionalized that ended up homeless.

18. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Housing Reports, Annual Housing Survey.

19. Urban Institute, "Evaluation of the Emergency Food and Shelter Program," Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations, January 1985.

Appendix A: The Survey Methodology

While our survey was not a Census Bureau-style random design, an effort was made to cover a variety of places and homeless people in different circumstances. We divided New York City in to five regions: terminal area (Penn Station, Grand Central Station and Times Square); the lower west side; the lower east side; the upper west and east side; and the Central Park area. In these areas, we divided the interviews evenly into two categories 1) persons found in the streets and parks, 2)persons found in soup kitchens, food lines and other places of service. In the streets and parks, Brian approached anyone who had at least one of the following tell-tale signs of homelessness: 1) poor atire, such as an old ripped jacket, unmatching shoes, etc., 2) ragged appearance such as scrappy beard, obvious poor hygiene, etc., 3) anyone pushing a supermarket cart, 4) anyone carrying a bag for belongings, 5) anyone collecting cans, 6) anyone with mental illness. In order to conduct interviews in service places where the homeless congregate, Brian visited the following soup kitchens, food lines and service places: St. Francis (Breadline)-West 31st Street; Holy Apostles (Soup kitchen)-East 28th Street; Lambs Church of the Nazarene (Soup Kitchen)-West 44th Street; Bowery Mission (services)-Bowery; Soul Saving Station(Food)-West 124th Street; Broadway Presbyterian Church (Soup Kitchen)-West 114th Street; Franciscan Missionaries-East 45th Street; Calvary St. George (Sandwich line)-East 16th Street; Yorkville Soup Kitchen-91 Street and 1st Avenue; St. John the Divine Episcopal (Soup Kitchen)-West 112th Street; Coalition for the Homeless (Food line)-Grand Central Station. Soup kitchens or other places that allowed only certain groups were not visited. Interviews were divided evenly among areas and between street or soup kitchen.

In order to interview those in the shelters, we divided the sheltered group into 3 categories: 1) family shelters, 2) women's shelters and 3) men's

shelters. In the family shelters, Brian evenly conducted 104 interviews in four of the main family shelters: 1)Alberta Hotel, 2)Martinique Hotel; 3)Carter Hotel; 4)Holland Hotel. These hotels are used by the city government as shelters in NYC. In the men's shelters, Brian conducted interviews evenly in the following shelters: 1)Bronx Men's Shelter; 2)Harlem Men's Shelter; 3)Fort Washington Armory; 4)Third Street. Third Street is the center where men are transported to other shelters. He interviewed men here so that all of the smaller shelters would be represented as well as the larger ones such as Fort Armory (about 600 men.) In all, 155 were interviewed.

Women were interviewed in two of the larger (100 plus) shelters in Manhattan: 1) Shelter Care Center for Women, Annex 2) Lexington Avenue Armory. In all, 52 women were interviewed. Men and women were interviewed in approximately this ratio because past studies in NYC showed that 3:1 was the approximate male/female ratio in the shelter system. In all, 516 homeless were interviewed in the streets and shelters of the city with an 81% response rate.

Bias

Because some homeless people are unwilling to be interviewed, a problem arises concerning the randomness in the study. If certain individuals refuse to be interviewed, the results will be biased. Compared to other studies that attempted to interview the homeless, the response rate in our survey was very high. A reason for this was that Brian spent many hours working in soup kitchens and food lines so that he knew many of the homeless as friends and they were, therefore, very receptive to being interviewed. Many of the homeless urged their friends to agree to be interviewed, and offered their services as interpreters for Hispanic homeless. Occassionally, Brian invited a homeless person to talk over lunch or coffee. With those who were incoherent, rather than formally interview, Brian let them tell him about themselves and filled in

the information. Often, it would take several conversations with a homeless person before he was able to record all of the information. Homeless persons of this type generally stay in the same area and can be found again easily. In order to record all of the information, interviews often lasted several hours. During these interviews, Brian usually took notes in order to gain a better understanding of the problem in general. As can be seen in the accompanying instrument, the interview dealt with only the briefest and simplest questions.

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The Survey Instrument

Age: Race: white black hispanic asian male-female

Single married divorced children:

How long ago was the first day that you ever were homeless:

Sinced that day how much time have you spent on the:
streets: shelters: home: other:
percentage of total: st sh ho other
percentage of last year: st sh ho other

Do you have any plans to get off of the streets in the next two weeks: yes no

Where are you going: next year or so: yes no

What factor(s) caused you to become homeless?
eviction lost job rent up benefits cut building condemned other

How many years of schooling have you completed?
__ 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 __

Have you been employed since then: yes no

How many years did your longest job last?

Years worked since school: Percentage:

Time spent working in last 4 years: Percentage:

Time spent working in last year: Percentage:

Length of time since last employed:

Have you ever received any benefits: yes no number of years:

Have you ever lived in public housing: yes no number of years:

Did you grow up with: both parents mother father foster home relatives
institution other

Was your family on welfare: yes no

Have you ever been in a: jail institution hospital(physical) Years:

are you able to work: yes no why not:

comments made:

interviewers perceptions: