THE RELATIONSHIP OF HOMELESSNESS-

DISENFRANCHISEMENT AND CRIMINALITY

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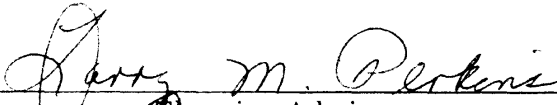
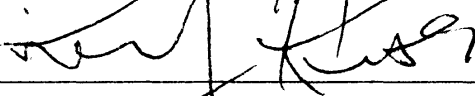Stillwater, Oklahoma

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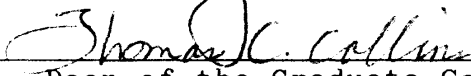the Degree of
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Being homeless in the "Land of Opportunity" is tantamount to having committed a crime. Homelessness offends the public conscience. It strikes at the very heart of the American value system of individualism and independence. To require welfare assistance for survival threatens the basic American ideology that all who <u>want</u> to succeed <u>can</u> succeed and all others must have done something wrong.

Homelessness is a very prominent social issue in society. It is a global problem, but the scope of this paper deals only with a national problem which effects from three to four million people directly and the rest of the population indirectly (Kozol, 1988). Personal observations while working with the homeless seemed to indicate that criminal behavior may be another social ill which somehow intertwines with the state of being homeless. In order to effectively research the possible link of these two social ills, it must be understood that not all criminals are homeless and, conversely, not all homeless are criminals.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Throughout history there have been people labeled as
"gypsies," "hobos," and "wanderers" (Woodroofe, 1974).
Today the labels have been changed to "street people" and
"homeless" (Hope & Young, 1986). As with most social
problems, there is a peak interest period during which
much research and emphasis is focused on the social
outcasts. This focus period on homelessness came in the
latter half of the 1980s. The field research endeavor of
living with the homeless and crusading for them was done
by such advocates as Mitch Snyder and Mary Ellen Hombs
(Hombs & Snyder, 1986). Such notable books as <u>Falling</u>
<u>From</u> <u>Grace</u> (Newman, 1988) and <u>Rachel</u> <u>and</u> <u>Her</u> <u>Children</u>
(Kozol, 1988) attempted to bring the plight of the
homeless to the conscious level of the American public.
It was hoped that heightened public awareness would bring
about solutions to the problem. Pictorial books, such as
<u>Homeless</u> <u>In</u> <u>America</u> (1988), which graphically portrayed
the despair, desperation, and degradation of the
homeless, were offered as testimony to the hopeless
plight of so many Americans. Many reports, such as the
<u>Report</u> <u>of</u> <u>the</u> <u>Governor's</u> <u>Task</u> <u>Force</u> <u>on</u> <u>the</u> <u>Homeless</u> in
1988 and <u>Homelessness</u> <u>in</u> <u>the</u> <u>States</u> (Walker, 1989), were

submitted to government bodies with recommendations to help alleviate a growing national concern.

Literature is very limited on the possible relationship between crime and homelessness. It is much easier to study one or the other. However, there are some indications that a link does exist. Hombs and Snyder (1986) point out that interaction with the law is inevitable, since it is nearly impossible to be destitute and to live within the confines of the law. Drinking, urinating, defecating or even changing clothes on the street are all illegal. If homelessness and criminal behavior often cross paths and unite, then it should be possible to identify the link through qualitative research. Because it is such a sensitive, intimate decision to reveal criminal involvement, trust and confidentiality are essential and can be accomplished only through the personal contact approach of qualitative field research (Schwartz & Jacobs, 1979). Introduction to Criminology (Fox, 1976) and Introduction to Criminology Theories and Methods, and Criminal Behavior (Hagan, 1986) were consulted for background understanding and possible theoretical insights.

CHAPTER III

HOMELESSNESS-DISENFRANCHISEMENT AND

CRIMINALITY AS SOCIAL ILLS

Homelessness-disenfranchisement and criminality are strange bedfellows, but appear to feed on one another in a frenzy which destroys human dignity and degrades people to virtual non-existence. It is the purpose of this research to focus on a possible connection between the two. Observations made by this author while working for the states of Oklahoma and Missouri as a social worker and as a volunteer assistant in several private organizations, brought about speculation as to a tie between these two human conditions. Although such an endeavor may not seem significant, what _is_ significant is the increasing numbers of persons who are being identified as homeless/criminal (perhaps erroneously).

The rapidly expanding number of persons identified as homeless, as well as those being labeled criminal, continually leads to one thing: ballooning expenditure of public monies (Rodgers, 1982; Walker, 1989). But beyond this, there tends to emerge from these two labels a strong statement that a dramatic social evolution is taking place with great force and creating by-product subcultural waste (Ropers, 1988). Unfortunately

"getting at" a possible linkage between these two groups
is not simple or obvious. Criminality is identified and
determined through the courts while homelessness is
vaguely interpreted to be one of many definitions
according to multiple authors (Hombs & Snyder, 1986;
Ropers, 1988; Kozol, 1988; Governor's Task Force Report,
1988; and Hope & Young, 1986). But none of these
definitions identifies or even indicates the true dilemma
of homelessness, that is, being disenfranchised.
Identifying subject material for research in each of
these categories for the purposes of finding some
possible links will clearly rely upon being able to
define each category suitably. A further complication
exists in that the homeless-disenfranchised issue is
primarily dealt with by those in the social sciences,
while criminality is regarded as one of the duties of the
judicial system.

The crossing of paths between the disciplines of
sociological/psychological/physiological interests and
jurisprudence concerns is rocky and sometimes
uncrossable, because of differences in goals as well as
mechanisms by which they deal with these two areas.

It is essential that the terminologies "crime" and
"homelessness" be brought from an opaque review to a
translucent one as seen by this author for the purposes
of making appropriate conclusions based upon interview
material.

If homelessness was truly indicative of its label, this social problem would be easily solved; it would merely be a housing problem (Hombs & Snyder, 1986). For the purpose of this study, homelessness is seen as a status of being virtually non-existent in society (i.e., disenfranchised). This means the individual does not have a mailing address or any place of residence for more than two to three weeks at a time. Furthermore, these individuals have neither the external nor internal resources to terminate their homeless state. Their homeless dilemma has greatly impaired any individual attempt to exercise inalienable rights in an effort to achieve even the simplest of civil rights. The criteria of necessary dependency must be evident. That is to say, that immediately and foremost in their existence is the need for outside intervention for their survival, specifically pertaining to shelter (chiefly in inclement weather), food, medicine and legal assistance. This definition is so contrived for the purposes of very bluntly getting at the basic question, "Is homelessness an individual or social problem regarding the individual?"

CHAPTER IV

HISTORICAL REVIEW OF HOMELESSNESS

Because historical records are vague concerning the
homeless and cultural attitudes vary about the
characteristics of homelessness in historical time and
place (Zeitgeist), one can only make assumptions about
this social phenomenon. One quickly jumps at the obvious
in ancient history to assumptions about hunting and
gathering tribes, as well as nomadic tribes. These
societies frequently relocated themselves, but were not
void of social dynamics and individual internal
dependencies. There is no mention of disenfranchised
individuals. The poor were seen as the focus of
benevolence and care for them was a part of religious and
cultural responsibilities (Woodroofe, 1974; Komisor,
1973).

It is reasonable to assume that there were those who
were either expelled or became separated from their clans
who experienced a type of homelessness. Their abilities
to survive without the group were severely hampered, if
for no other reason but to ward off predators and
possible assailants. Recorded history reveals, by way of
the Babylonian King Hammurabi (1792-1750 B.C.), that
Hammurabi's code (which is preceded by Sumerian Period

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records with similar codes) is the most complete and best preserved legal code from Mesopotamia (Kagan et. al., 1983). Additionally, it is the best indicator of its time that depicts the strict social fiber and characteristics of its people. As indicated in this document, which deals with the division of class including the disenfranchised, there did exist at the time those who could be labeled as homeless. The disenfranchised are clearly documented from this period on with respect to beggars, thieves, and despots (Kagan, et. al., 1983).

At different times from ancient history to the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the concept of being disenfranchised or homeless (with the exception of war induced disenfranchisement and homelessness) was most generally connected with one's social and economic status. The poor became disenfranchised, but very seldom did the rich. If the rich did become disenfranchised, it was for a short time and was an individual situation, not a group one (Hombs & Snyder, 1986). With the transition from a Gemeinshaft to a Gesellshaft society, dependency for one's subsistence transferred from the individual to the company. Regardless of class or status, any one person or group could be quickly disenfranchised by the failure of the company. The maturity of the fiber of society was such (due by and large to an increased media capability) that an

individual could lose his status and thereby become
disenfranchised and stigmatized much quicker than before.
From this period to the technological revolution of
today, disenfranchisement and homelessness have been only
exacerbated. From the time that social fiber was first
formed, it appeared that caring for those who were
disenfranchised and homeless was a duty. Whether this
was a self-appointed or self-manipulated duty, religious
concerns felt it was not only advantageous, but also
important to their religious cause. This attitude was
not all-pervasive or continuous throughout the course of
time being reviewed. But there is clear evidence that
the intent and the attitude of such a benevolent endeavor
did clearly exist (Woodroofe, 1974, Komisar, 1973).
Those who needed help received it from individual
almsgivers or from the Church. The Churches' right to
collect tithes made the Church itself a public
institution. Canon law required that the clergy be
hospitable and merciful to the poor, and one third of the
income of the parish church was earmarked for charity.
In addition, monasteries gave food and lodging to anyone
who asked for it. A request by a person for aid was
enough to make him eligible. Aid was a right to those
who needed it.

Additionally, many cultures, nations, states and
countries similarly demonstrated within their laws and
financial appropriations, the efforts to address the

needs of the disenfranchised and homeless (Hombs &

Snyder, 1986; Woodroofe, 1974). It is interesting to

note that the issues of disenfranchisement and

homelessness, mixed with the stench of poverty, led to

the overthrow of governments that refused to address such

social issues. The refuse of society desperately sought

refuge in the feelings and kindness of their fellow man

to thwart the pains of fear and being forgotten. Marx

paints this picture throughout his writings as well as

does Dickens in his novels. A good many paintings

throughout the aesthetic period vividly portray these

thoughts and suffering.

CHAPTER V

HISTORICAL REVIEW OF CRIMINALITY

Understanding the difficulty of achieving and
maintaining individual and social harmony makes it easy
to comprehend and accept that chaos and anomie were
initially pervasive at the beginning of the formation of
society (Rossides, 1978). Recorded history and present
day world events provide justification for such
statements. Maintaining individual discipline, while at
the same time cultivating social law and order, is not
only difficult but costly in time, money, and even lives.

As individuals began to group for the purposes of
protection, subsistence, and perpetuating their clans,
some structure was necessary to safeguard the
cohesiveness of that clan. According to Weber (Rossides,
1978), the major universal organizations were the
household, clan, and neighborhood. All were
"unequivocally endowed with an intense person-oriented,
or communal, aspect" (ed. Antonio & Glassman, 1985, pg.
52). In Weber's analysis, the most important universal
organization was the household. In the household
organization the intense bond of intimacy and perpetual
interaction between family members resulted in distinct
values. The sense of loyalty thus gained toward the in-

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group formed the basis for a strong household solidarity in dealing with the outside world.

The clan served as a protective organization when outsiders threatened the households. The organization of the clan with clear boundaries and a head operated only if necessary in order to protect social concerns.

Under normal situations, unlike the household, the clan stayed an amorphous collection of people without a clear hierarchy and required only intermittent and irregular social action (Ibid., 53). The clan, according to Weber, was the original locus for faithfulness.

The next level of universal organization was the neighborhood (Ibid., 53). The circle of participants of a neighborhood varied far more than either the household or clan. Due to residing in close proximity, the social interaction was much less intensive or continuous than in a household. Weber believed that, as a result of the dependence of neighbors upon one another in times of distress, the neighborhood was the original locus for an ethic of mutual assistance. Weber explained neighborliness as being exercised especially when mutual dependence was clear, such as between big landowners and their helpers (Ibid., 54). In understanding the importance of protecting the household, clan, neighborhood, or a highly sophisticated governmental society, one thing remains significant: there must be a means by which social order is maintained.

According to Weber (Rossides, 1978, p. 368-369),
"Law exists when there is a probability that an order
will be upheld by a specific staff of men who will use
physical or psychical compulsion with the intention of
obtaining conformity with the order, or of inflicting
sanction for infringement of it. The structure of every
legal order directly influences the distribution of
power, economic or otherwise, within its respective
community. This is true of all legal orders and not only
that of the state. In general, we understand by 'power'
the chance of a man or a number or men to realize their
own will in a communal action even against the resistance
of others who are participating in the action (Rossides,
1978, p. 368-369)."

But there must be a distinction made between the
type of society that existed when survival was the main
goal and one that exists where economics and politics are
the driving forces.

As long as there is a common sense approach to
collective social issues, harmony prevails. Thomas Reid
(Duncan, 1981) defines common sense as being a "sense"
about a particular issue that is commonly held by the
group or society. He further specifies the word "sense"
as dealing with those issues that are empirically
qualified. The issues are also self-evident and can be
readily accepted as fact. With little or no effort, a
common agreement, based upon these senses of perception,

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can prevail among a small or large group in any given

society as long as the preservation of life and property

are considered a rational way of existing. Common sense

maintains importance only as long as the goals of the

society are for the common good and are void of the need

for political gains. Laws should be established and

enacted dealing with the simplicities of survival and not

the whims of economical gain. Those who are willing to

work, or at least give support to the common efforts of

the group, cannot be disenfranchised or homeless. A

person who deviates from the worth of the common sense of

the group (depending upon each group and society's age of

responsibility) is not seen as ill or inept, but as an

enemy. Either the individual does not have the ability

to discern self-evident truths or he truly is intent on

the destruction of the group. Either way, he is a

liability and it becomes necessary to either destroy him

or banish him.

Locke (Bottomore & Nisbet, 1978) takes Reid's

thoughts one step further. Instead of discussing common

sense, he invokes the image of "commonwealth", thereby

introducing economic concerns and elevating the group to

a society which now must address political interest. The

commonwealth, according to Locke, is the whole of society

that can agree to, or at least submit to, rules and

regulations that are seen as maintaining the best

possible conditions for controlling external and internal

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concerns of that society. In dealing with the concept of the commonwealth, individual or sub-group interest is given birth. The ability of that individual or that group to either buy or subversively sway a majority to establish a law becomes problematic. This type of action creates a situation whereby empowerment, either economically or politically, allows the few to rule the many. Subsistence needs become a way of controlling the masses. Amenities of life are those things which now are used for lobbying and thereby distort the concept of the good for all. Eventually there are those who, through their political ambitions, gain vast wealth. The remainder of society loses its wealth rendering in an effort to escape the tyranny of those who have become politically strong. This situation remains until those attempting to escape austere political control have no more to render. At this point they become disenfranchised (i.e. either you pay your property tax or you lose your property). As Marx points out, this oftentimes can end up in a "haves and haves-nots" situation (Rossides, 1978). As long as the "haves" can control the "have-nots", those who are disenfranchised and homeless continue to be left unnoticed and suffering until their numbers grow substantially to the point by which they create a common sense and develop their own commonwealth. Locke (Bottomore & Nisbet, 1978) identified those who do not protect and guard the

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commonwealth as enemies of the state. And, although they

may be benevolently referred to as homeless-

disenfranchised, they are nevertheless harmful to the

commonwealth and enemies of the state. The homeless-

disenfranchised thus become identified as being

criminals.

Criminality is a status of being identified as

having committed a crime. One cannot be a criminal until

one has been duly processed and labeled as a criminal.

There are other ways by which such labeling takes place

other than in the courtroom. Society in its effort to

achieve the dreams of prosperity maintains within itself

a protective measure. By disassociating itself from the

less fortunate, it provides itself with an unobstructed

avenue toward self-actualization. It is this portion of

society that separates itself from the undesirable part

of society and not the undesirable part of society that

separates itself from the self-indulged achievers. The

homeless-disenfranchised are the responsibility of the

"haves" as much as the "have-nots". The affluent of

society (middle class and above) desensitize themselves

to the ills of the less fortunate by creating myths which

become labels. Their myths consist of such beliefs as

that the homeless-disenfranchised must be lazy,

drunkards, druggies or dummies. A kinder scenario is

that they are illiterate, illicit or illegitimate. When

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they break society's rules, they are categorized as
criminals.

CHAPTER VI

HOMELESSNESS-DISENFRANCHISEMENT

AND CRIMINALITY

A cursory review of the literature alludes to the
fact that many who are identified as homeless-
disenfranchised have had some involvement with the
judicial system. In their book Homelessness in America:
A Forced March to Nowhere, Hombs and Snyder (1986, p.
106) state that "Interaction with the court is
inevitable, since it is nearly impossible to be destitute
and live within the confines of the law. Drinking,
urinating, defecating, or changing clothes on the street:
all are illegal." Police take action against street
people for camping in public places, panhandling,
trespassing on private property, or violating other local
ordinances. And sometimes street people shoplift, break
into buildings, enter into fights, drink or do drugs in
order to survive, or ease the pain of survival-level
existence, according to Baxter and Hopper (1981) in their
book, Private Lives/Public Spaces: Homeless Adults on the
Streets of New York City.

There are further indications that either by choice
in an effort to survive, or by mistake because of laws
that prohibit homelessness, a good many of these

individuals have transgressed the law without
prosecution. Literature reveals that there are people,
who have been or are presently incarcerated in federal or
state institutions, who were at one time homeless-
disenfranchised (Gelberg, 1988; Fischer, 1988). Yet
there is no conclusive research to substantiate this
fact, and there is limited formalized theory to explain
why such a phenomenon would or could exist. What, if
any, criminal behavior comes about due to a homeless-
disenfranchised state is the scope of this research.
Does such possible criminal involvement create
propensities toward future criminality? Could "criminal"
merely be a label for misunderstood behavior by an
individual who is attempting to survive at a basic level?
It is imperative to distinguish between one's social
plight and one's legal status. Perhaps the legal system
is being used as a processing agent to deal with a
misunderstood and complicated social illness.

It seems many who are homeless-disenfranchised and
destitute are at best corralled and driven until they can
be charged with a notable crime and then incarcerated.
It would be interesting to be able to identify the number
that presently are in our penal institutions, who would
not be incarcerated if they would not have been homeless-
disenfranchised. Although it is established that to
officially classify an individual as criminal
necessitates that the individual be convicted of a crime,

this research foregoes the legality of conviction and identifies only actions that could be legally prosecuted.

CHAPTER VII

METHODS

In this research two major terms must be
operationalized: homelessness-disenfranchisement and
criminality. As there are no textbook definitions that
are unilaterally adhered to (in or out of sociology), for
the purposes of clarity and to meet the requirements of
research, it is necessary to formulate the following
definitions.

Homelessness-Disenfranchisement

It is initially easier to identify what
homelessness-disenfranchisement is <u>not</u>. Homelessness-
disenfranchisement is <u>not</u> appropriately addressed when
considering individuals who are merely without housing
arrangements. It <u>cannot</u> be assumed that because a person
or persons, male or female, are roaming the streets
foraging for food they are homeless-disenfranchised.
This term does <u>not</u> delineate sex, ethnicity, religiosity,
age, class, or economic status. <u>Nor</u> does it preclude an
understanding of a pre- or post-relationship to an
individual's state of homelessness. It is safe to
conclude only that homelessness-disenfranchisement is a

product of particular circumstances that lead to a desperate and difficult set of circumstances effecting an individual's immediate reality. Homelessness-disenfranchisement does not accentuate poverty. Although poverty is a part of this status, it is only a part. The individuals studied for this research were required to be experiencing all of the following criteria, without exception.

---The individual must be experiencing a state of anomie. The person is suffering from a lack of self-worth which is expressed by an inability to identify personal purpose and direction. He has become socially disconnected. He is undergoing personal unrest and verbalizes a feeling of expulsion from society expressed in words that would indicate alienation. In a number of personal encounters the individual uses such terms that would lead the observer to draw the conclusion there is much uncertainty in his expectations for the next 24 hours.

---The individual is devoid of any assistance from immediate or extended family or friends. All such assistance must have been exhausted. Whether the individual did or did not previously receive assistance is not important. What is important is that an attempt was made and there is no longer, or perhaps never has been, any assistance given. The individual must be totally unable to feed, clothe, and house himself and any

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dependents.

---<u>The</u> <u>individual</u> <u>must</u> <u>be</u> <u>in</u> <u>some</u> <u>shelter</u> <u>service,</u>
<u>regardless</u> <u>of</u> <u>whether</u> <u>it</u> <u>is</u> <u>provided</u> <u>by</u> <u>public or private</u>
<u>benevolent</u> <u>concerns.</u> If an individual is not receiving
shelter services, then there is still some state of mind
on his part of autonomy and self-reliance.

Criminality

In order to maintain the integrity of this research,
the meaning of criminality, as it pertains to this study,
has little to do with the judicial process. This is a
judgment call on the part of the researcher in
determining whether responses to particular questions
reveal possible prosecutable actions. It is not <u>criminal</u>
that a 21-year-old takes a record from a local store. It
is wrong, inappropriate and illegal, but, if this illegal
action is <u>not</u> identified and he is <u>not</u> prosecuted, it is
<u>not</u> a <u>criminal</u> action. The owners of the store from
which the record was stolen could press charges (if they
were aware of the fact) and, with appropriate legal
action, find this individual guilty of theft. Then he
would be identified as a <u>criminal.</u> The researcher, at
the time of the interview, determined whether or not
illegal actions had been taken by the respondent.
Furthermore, these illegal actions must have taken place
in direct response to being homeless-disenfranchised.
This research is not focused on illegal or criminal

actions that were responsible for the homelessness-disenfranchisement of the individuals interviewed. Certain questions in the interview were designed to determine whether criminal activity preceded homelessness-disenfranchisement or was a response to it. Illegal actions for the purposes of final conclusions in this study are concerned only with efforts to meet survival needs, i.e., by stealing food, breaking and entering for a place to spend the night, or committing fraud, etc.

A research attempt at this level can only produce initial observations. Of the two possible types of research, quantitative and qualitative, it appears that the qualitative direction is the best and the most effective one in this endeavor. There are many trust issues, along with confidentiality concerns, that are based upon the rapport that can or cannot be cultivated in an already sensitive situation. Once respondents were assured of confidentiality, they generally became relaxed and gave in-depth information. Additionally, the qualitative research method was adopted so that a narrow observation of a respondent's attitudinal adjustments could be observed. It was important to make very general conclusions concerning the appropriateness of questions that make reference to illegal actions (Babbie, 1983). For instance, Question 17 requires an explanation concerning an element of justification regarding the

respondent's action that is directly linked to a law or
set of laws. It would be difficult to ascertain validity
to these particular types of questions without spending a
longer period of time with the respondent in order to
observe his understanding of the present social reality.
It quickly became obvious that the reality of the
respondents was not society's reality or the
researcher's. Interviews made clear the fact that the
researcher was dealing with two realities: that of
society versus that of the homeless-disenfranchised. In
order to maintain the focus of the research a
comprehensive understanding of these two realities was
paramount. Positioning this survey in the reality of the
sample population had great importance on the validity.
The surveyed population apparently experiences an
altering of what is real and what is necessary as
compared to the norms set by society. Continuous efforts
had to be made to identify the sample population's
reality. This was done to ensure that the possible
connection between homelessness-disenfranchisement and
criminality was in fact identified. For example, those
surveyed typically did not see theft of food for
survivability as theft. Reality in this situation had so
greatly been altered, based upon survivability needs,
that a new reality emerged: Whatever is necessary to
survive is normal behavior. Furthermore, it is very
important to this research that reliability be

maintained. In order to assure this, the reality within which the respondents operated was accepted. In matters of validity and reliability, qualitative research seemed to offer a better approach.

In an effort to maintain the integrity of the relationship between the researcher and those being researched, confidentiality was paramount.

Data analysis was accomplished by way of inductive logic. Because this research pertains to an attempt to identify a possible link between homelessness-disenfranchisement and criminality, efforts were made to identify similarities and dissimilarities in attitudes and actions existing regarding why those surveyed do or do not involve themselves in illegal actions. The reality of the sample population dealt with such truths as the basic needs for food, shelter, love, happiness, and connectivity with the group. Criminality is measurable in this interview instrument based upon the following definition. Having already discussed the legal definition of criminality, it has been determined that not only a crime must be committed, but a judgment too must be rendered of guilt. It is not important to this research whether or not guilt is established or confirmed, but simply that an infraction against established laws has occurred. Although those who are being interviewed are acting as a filter inasmuch as they determine what actions are or are not criminal, it is

acceptable for the purpose of this research to assume
such a determination on the part of the respondents to be
credible by the mere fact that they are capable of
revealing such a legal discretion. Therefore,
criminality is simply that the respondent relays an
infraction to the established laws, whether they be
local, state, or federal, excluding any such illegal
activity prior to their homeless-disenfranchised status.

Snowball sampling was used for this research because
of its ability to find invisible populations (Babbie,
1989). Two additional purposes exist: for additional
interview opportunities and to identify those who are
system abusers. Whether or not the responses from the
interviewed population were truthful, directly relates to
the amount of trust the interviewer had with the one
being interviewed. If a reference for further interview
opportunities was given, the likelihood of maintaining
the trust already established was much greater.
Additionally pre-testing identified that within the
homeless-disenfranchised population there existed those
who were phonies. That is to say, they did not need to
be homeless if they chose on any given day not to be.
According to this researcher's definition of homeless-
disenfranchised, they were not part of the sample
population. Those who are of this population can best
identify those of their own subgroup. In any given
geographic location and, oftentimes from city to city

across three state lines, the homeless-disenfranchised
continually have contact with one another over periods of
months and sometimes years. This is so much so that the
true "workers of the system" (those who know how to get
the most out of the system) are identified with nicknames
that represent a certain amount of esteem or respect by
other homeless-disenfranchised persons. During pre-
testing in one Oklahoma community and again while doing
final interviewing in Missouri, an individual with the
nickname "Minnie-the-Moocher" was encountered. His name,
derived from an old blues/jazz artist, was given to him
by his peers because of his ability in knowing how to
survive off the system. In many cases he was sought for
advice. He knew by name many county and local
constables, down to particular social workers, and just
what you could expect from them. These individuals have
been researched and labeled as "professional homeless".
In Hope and Young (1986) these individuals are
highlighted. State and local agencies maintain lists,
and sometimes even photographs, to identify these "system
abusers". The locations of the sample population were
basically chosen because of accessibility. The number of
interviews done in each geographical location was equal.

Sample Population

The sample population was identified by a snowball
method based upon pre-established existing circumstances

as previously identified in this section. No attempt was made to control for gender, race, age or any other personal characteristic that would identify grouping. Individuals interviewed participated voluntarily. No rewards of any kind were given. Anonymity was guaranteed and it was explained why the survey was being done and for what the information would and would not be used. All courtesies of confidentiality were assured and a mailing address was provided in the event the sample population wanted information about the outcome of the research or desired to be removed from the study.

It was necessary to discard some interviews in the survey. If a person had obvious physical disabilities, they had access to federal and state programs of assistance. This would have violated the definition of having exhausted all possible avenues for assistance. Those who obviously demonstrated any psychotic behavior, overwhelming paranoia, etc., were also excluded. None of those sampled were related either by blood or by marriage as far as the researcher knew. None of those interviewed were children; that is, all were over legal age.

Place, Time, Posture

Place

Most interviews were filled out in a shelter-type environment in a private area.

Time

Every effort was made to conduct interviews after mealtime, when the individuals were less argumentative or preoccupied with hunger.

Posture

Necessary efforts were made to create a rapport with the targeted population that had the characteristics of the interviewer being sympathetic to their situation. This posture was taken for two reasons. First, it was the fastest means by which to establish trust and, secondly, it increased the possibility of a referral to other sample population members. It is quite possible that this in some way could have affected the responses given, but the alternative was the possibility of no responses at all, which did happen in pre-testing until a sympathetic posture was adopted. Confidentiality was discussed and the questionnaire was shown to the respondents in its entirety. Interview questions were read to the respondents and all responses were written down by the interviewer to alleviate possible intimidation due to poor reading and writing skills. The respondents were encouraged to ask questions for clarification and were allowed to change their answers at any time. Respondents received no compensation for participation in the interview. They were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and were given an address where they could make requests for information

concerning the questionnaire and its findings.

The interviewer was moderately dressed, wearing no jewelry other than a wedding ring and watch. No legitimating references were made other than that this was to be part of a study about homelessness. All interviews were conducted by the same individual, who was a middle-aged, white female.

Pre-testing

Originally, a few people were pre-tested. This data are not a part of the sample, because the questionnaire was later altered. The necessity for comparative before-and-after questions became apparent and the reality issue previously discussed had not yet been dealt with. Pre-testing consisted of the interview and the respondent's critiquing of the questions. It is during this time that the issue of how to be dressed in order not to be offensive, but at the same time effective, was discussed with those pre-tested. They relayed that those in their position were not at all offended by those who were neatly and moderately dressed, as long as they conveyed an attitude of concern. They especially pointed out a dislike for those with condescending attitudes regardless of how much help or assistance they gave. Pre-testing also identified the necessity for the interviewer to read and write down answers on the questionnaire for the respondents. The questionnaire (see Appendix) was

additionally given to two colleagues in an effort to ensure clarity and logic. As a result of this, questions which dealt with law-breaking and convictions were refined under the guidance of Dr. Harjit Sandhu, Oklahoma State University.

Instrument

When considering what importance the interview plays in the overall orchestration of the research, the words out of the classic musical, "Yankee Doodle Dandy," starring James Cagney, a story about George M. Cohan, are brought to mind. Being praised for his song, Yankee Doodle Dandy, he says, "It's not the song I wrote. It's all in the instrument, for without it my ditty would be nothing."

The achievement of a good research instrument can be determined only by the information it gathers. A primitive but effective triangulation (Emerson, 1983) was possible in determining truthfulness of responses in the survey. It was possible to legally check prior records of traffic tickets and warrants, and imprisonments arrests of shelter residents. The third check for congruency factored in with the brief but substantive shelter questionnaire. In addition to the external checks, there are several internal checks regarding tabulation of information given.

Certain questions were used as cross-checks, i.e. the

number of times the respondent was married versus the number of times he was divorced. In other instances he was asked to show a prescription or filled prescription when he indicated he was taking medication.

Gender issues were avoided with one exception. Previous studies on this issue indicate there is a feminization of homelessness taking place and a greater volume of females than males are shelter residents (Sawhill, 1988; Bassuk, 1987). This study finds no concern in gender populations regarding homelessness-disenfranchisement and criminality beyond simply attempting to identify that both genders are involved. There is a larger number of males surveyed because male respondents were less paranoid about divulging the critical information being studied. Age was tabulated along with dependent responsibility in an effort to try to identify possible links with like-respondents and socially-linked cohorts.

The remainder of the questions served to open a line of dialogue in an attempt to ascertain not only what those who met the sample population criteria were willing to say about their plight, but also to take a social look at what they thought ought to be done about the problem.

<center>Biases</center>

There are a few. Having grown up in a middle class, upwardly mobile family, and now being a middle class,

upwardly mobile parent, the author brings to this study
all the characteristics of a middle class, white female.
Every possible effort was made to guard against personal
biases entering in to the study. Personal comments and
statements were kept to a minimum. Only those attitudes
that were deemed necessary to create trust (i.e.,
empathy) were allowed to be a part of the study. No
matter how much effort and care was given, some personal
biases were transmitted to the study. Halfway through
the study, the demeanor of the interviewer seemed to
undergo a change. Moments before the survey, the author
would throw on this facade. And after the interview was
over, it was removed just as quickly and with the same
ease. Some months later the author met one of the sample
population while working as a social worker for the
state. By this time this particular individual had
successfully rid herself of the problem of being
homeless-disenfranchised. She was now seeking assistance
for one of her children, and the author had been assigned
to her case. She remarked that, based upon earlier
interaction she had felt that the author was a warm,
caring person who appeared to have suffered homelessness
too. And in fact this was the reason the author had been
trusted and provided with references. This client felt
as though, at the time of the interview, she was doing
the author a favor. In fact she admitted her feelings of
sorrow in the author's behalf, because the author

appeared so unhappy. For the period of time that the author was her case manager, this attitude prevailed. It is curious to this author that while in an effort to suppress any personal biases, and while at the same time trying to build trust, that this individual would formulate an emotion of sorrow. Whether biases or facades have effected this study, remains to be determined when and if this study is duplicated. If the same results are represented with other individuals doing the work, then and only then will it be known.

CHAPTER VIII

DISCUSSION

As the purpose of this survey focuses on identifying some link between homelessness-disenfranchisement and criminality, it would be easy to quickly review questions 15 through 20. But, there is much importance to the questions that precede and follow those questions. Some are for the purposes of testing the truthfulness and coherence of the sample population, while others act as a backdrop in order to give some possible leads as to why a link exists between homelessness-disenfranchisement and criminality.

The majority of the sample population were somewhere between 30 and 45 years of age. The few under the age of 20 or over 61 were by and large taken care of by family, state facilities, or programs, i.e., social security or medicare. This is not to say that they were not living in the shelters, but they did not meet the criteria of being homeless-disenfranchised. For example, children are not homeless-disenfranchised if they are in the care of their homeless-disenfranchised parents. It was in the 30 to 45 age group that homelessness appeared to coincide with what is called "mid-life crisis".

Published data suggest that the homeless have a low

eduational level (Sawhill, 1988; Ropers, 1988). But, surprisingly, this sample population ranged all the way from seventh grade to graduate school. Some had bachelor degrees, trade school certificates, and associate degrees. What was interesting was that those who had beyond 12th grade education did not distinguish themselves any differently in vocabulary or mannerisms from those who had lesser education.

The sample group was made up of 12 females and 18 males. The ethnicity of the group was made up of Afro-Americans, Hispanics, whites and one American Indian. Of interest here is not so much who were present, but who were not present. There were no Asians represented in this group, nor could any Asians be found. According to shelter managers, the Asian population very seldom requires such public assistance. Asians tend to take care of their own people who are down on their luck. In addition the shelters encompassed in this research were not geographically located in an area with a large Asian population. There were no family incomes reported above $40,000 per year, and the middle range of incomes was $20,000 to $25,000. It very well may be that low parental income eliminates the possibility of support from parents during crisis. It also may be that the parents are no better off than the children. The sample population's income prior to homelessness was found to have a slight downturn from the parent's incomes overall.

The average income takes a downturn closer to the range of $10,000 to $20,000.

When the question was asked about how many times married before being homeless, by and large the greater numbers fell on the side of single and only married once. Responses about how many times divorced prior to homelessness, indicate ten were divorced once and four had experienced divorce twice. Divorce causes downward mobility and often is more of an intense situation for females than males (Newman, 1988). This idea applies in Maria's case, a 24-year-old female with two children. Maria, who is Hispanic, was abandoned by her husband. She had no family support. Unable to find a job and with no one to help take care of the children, she eventually lost her housing. Although she had applied for assistance from the state, she was still without finances because of the delay in processing paperwork. When two jobs were available she was not able to take either one because of her children and the cost of child care. Maria found that shelter life provided her with immediate resolution to the dilemmas of food and shelter for her children. The shelter provided child care while she looked for a job and waited for state assistance. Maria said that the only reason this had happened to her, was that she didn't have a husband. When she had a husband, she could easily get a job, and people left her alone. Maria said that because she was divorced, everyone was

telling her what to do and even tried to take her kids from her. Marriage, at least for females and children, appears to be a very stabilizing situation in our society. The experience of a single female parent in trying to get assistance through any public or private business or organization is a terribly difficult and embarrassing situation of paranoid proportions. Maria was always afraid that someone was trying to take her children and did not trust men.

The interviews revealed that Maria's fear, along with the other mothers' fear of losing children, was very real. Prior to being homeless, 23 of the children were being cared for by their parents. After becoming homeless, only 10 had parental care. Thirteen children were taken away. This sends clear signals as to why Maria and the others had become paranoid about their children. During the interviews countless horror stories were divulged concerning children being taken away from parents. In some cases this created such desperation that it led to the homelessness-disenfranchisement situation. None of the respondents were willing to discuss why the children were taken, but that simply they had been removed from their care. In checking one individual's records, child abuse had been charged against this individual. It is quite possible that the removal of children took place under legitimate circumstances. One individual ("Jeffery") had his

children removed from his care simply because he was in a
shelter. This was done under the heading of neglect.
Such stories run rampant within shelters and this is by
and large one of the reasons why people only go to
shelters when their situation is desperate. Since child
neglect is a criminal offense, this supports the argument
that homeless-disenfranchised people are linked to
criminality.

The responses to question numbers 12, 13, and 14
concerning major reasons for becoming homeless, major
losses, and major difficulties, respectively, reveal the
following.

Major reasons for homelessness included: loss of or
inability to find work, divorce, lack of education or
training, drug use, or ill health.

Major losses suffered in becoming homeless included:
family, home, income, and material possessions (called
"stuff").

Major difficulties in being homeless included:
finding food, shelter, joblessness, and caring for the
children.

The inability to get and keep a job, drug and
alcohol use, divorce, sickness, and domestic problems
were typical pat answers, but some spoke of abandonment
as well. A safety net of aid or help was not available
to them. Several females spoke of the shame associated
with divorce. Neither ex-spouses nor their own families

were willing to help them.

Most of the responses to the question to identify the three major losses suffered because of homelessness identified materialistic things. Further conversations with the respondents led the author to understand that it was not the actual item or relationship that had been lost, but the meaning that is socially attached to those items. Home was the number one response. One lady said, "If you have a place to stay, you can get help; but once you lose your home, it is very difficult to get help." Having a home seems to be some social indicator of well-being. Those without a home are labeled "homeless" which also means disenfranchisement. When explaining "home", none of the respondents made references to a building, or property, and in fact many of them, when asked where they thought home was, had difficulty answering the question. One respondent, "Bill", said that his experience in living with the homeless had taught him that "home is not only where you hang your hat, it's a place with a legal address so that people will trust you." Those who are transitory, such as migrant workers and truck drivers are less trusted than those who are apartment dwellers. Yet those who are apartment dwellers are less trusted by those who are renting or leasing homes in a given community. And those who are renting and leasing are less trusted by those who own property and pay taxes in that community (Berger, 1978).

With respect to major difficulties in being homeless, the responses dealt with survival issues as opposed to materialistic answers (i.e., cars) given for losses incurred. Questions 15 and 16 are a major focus of this research:

15. Prior to being homeless did you ever break the law in an effort to provide yourself or your family with personal or general needs (i.e. food, clothing, rent, etc.)? Explain.

16. During or after being homeless did you ever break the law in an effort to provide yourself or your family with personal or general needs (i.e. food, shelter, clothing, rent, etc.)? Explain.

Ninety percent of those interviewed said they had never committed a crime prior to being homeless. Seventy percent said they committed a crime after becoming homeless in an effort to provide either themselves or their families with general needs.

Half of those who denied breaking the law after becoming homeless admitted to either thinking about it or stopping at the last minute before committing a crime. Most of the crimes were minor, such as stealing food, diapers or cigarettes. There were those who wrote hot checks and did extensive shoplifting, and even prostitution. This sample population was not totally void of legitimate survival means. Many of them spoke about selling blood and working odd jobs as best they

could.

Several females indicated prostitution was a quick way to make money. "Lilly" typifies the actions of those who negotiated sexual liaisons for money. She explained that prostitution was not an easy profession, whether it be full-time or part-time. She said, "If you have children and you're caught, you run the risk of having them taken away by the state. Without a place to take your clients and the money for a wardrobe and makeup, the amount of money you make is limited. Working outside of a prostitution organization leads to frequent arrest and more often than not, you don't get paid. And there are chances of being infected with VD or being beaten. Prostitution is not for everyone." Lilly boasted about making $25 to $50 each time she, as she puts it, "Went to bat." When she reported a beating to the local police, they told her that if they took action against the man she said beat her, they would also have to charge her with solicitation and prostitution. Lilly feared for her children and went to the shelter. Even more significant are the explanations given for committing crimes after becoming homeless (question 17).

Valerie, a young, single, white female with an illegitimate child and an off-and-on alcohol problem, entered the homeless world when her mobile home was repossessed after she lost her job. Her disenfranchisement was due to her illegitimate child.

Her parents begrudgingly paid for the delivery of her child with the insistence that she would give up the child. Valerie refused to give the child up once it was born and lost all support from her family and the surrounding community. She left the area because her mother threatened to call child welfare. Finding herself in a new location with no money or help from anyone, she was lonely and depressed. Feeling somewhat like a martyr for saving her child, Valerie's depression turned into rage. She had run out of diapers and she and her baby had not had a bath in three days. Sleeping where she could (park or under a bridge), she scraped the feces from her baby's diaper in order to reuse the diaper. Valerie walked past a convenience store and saw stacks of diapers. She claimed she had no intentions of stealing. Her only thought was for her baby and her ability to be a mother. She had been without food for two days and her baby for one day. She went into the store and, while the checker was busy, she grabbed a bag of diapers and two cans of formula, and quickly left the store. When she returned to where she was staying, she said that she began to sob and was unable to stop. She realized that she had no way to open the cans and that if she didn't feed her baby soon, she would have no need for the diapers. A patrolman was alerted to the theft and followed Valerie. After taking Valerie to the police station, and making sure that her story was legitimate,

the patrolman took her to his parent's house for the night, since the town they were in was too small to have a shelter. The following day she was taken to a Salvation Army shelter. The patrolman, fortunately, understood her dilemma and paid for those things she had taken from the store. After talking to the store owner, it was decided that no charges would be pressed.

The type of crime and consequences varied, but the motivation for criminal acts was the same. Valerie said the thought of theft never entered her mind. She had a need, saw what would solve the need, and capitalized on the situation. This means a crime was committed. Desperation to survive had changed Valerie's reality. Her action was not only realistic, but could be considered justifiable in the eyes of many.

In many cases during the interviews asking questions number 18, 19, and 20 served as a way to bring out many desperate and tearful stories. Once the respondents began revealing themselves, it was not easy to bring that part of the communication to an end. Knowing whether or not any given person had been convicted of a crime prior to homelessness (number 18) served only as verification. Having access through the shelter to check prior convictions and warrants revealed that, with the exception of one individual, truthful answers had been rendered. This is also true with questions 19 and 20. Interestingly enough, the one individual who lied

apparently did so out of shame. He had committed a sexually-oriented crime two years prior to this interview.

There is a marked difference between the amount of crime committed and the number of convictions, based upon questionnaire responses. How could so many crimes be committed and not detected? Hagan (1987, p. 58) states, "An analysis of available data indicates that we have only a limited idea of the proportion of crime that is committed by any category of individuals or groups in a particular society." Many of the respondents boasted of the ease in shoplifting. After the first incident, the enticement increases to use shoplifting as a solution to their survival needs. The final question concerning criminal action (number 21) deals specifically with the rationalization of such an act. It deals with the issue of homelessness causing a law-breaking action. The respondent was asked to explain his actions. Of the ninety percent who answered affirmatively to committing a crime while homeless, seventy -three percent felt that if they had not been homeless, they would not have had a need to break the law. The remainder of the sample population justified their positions either by blaming someone else or denying they had broken the law.

In answer to questions number 22, 23, and 24, which attempt to determine responsibility for homelessness, many of the respondents felt that homelessness was not

their fault and that they were forced into committing

crimes because of being homeless. Very few took personal

responsibility for their plight. Ninety-seven percent

felt that homelessness is society's responsibility. They

made statements such as, "We should help each other" and

"I'm part of society too" along with appeals for social

and political rights. Individual comments concerning the

responsibility of the government (question 24) took on a

more materialistic attitude in an effort to address the

homeless situation. Better laws, more jobs, and the

providing of housing and food were regarded as the

state's responsibility. Each person demands goods,

protection, and security from the government, while

seeking connectedness to society. Although they are not

seen as the same, theoretically they are the same.

All respondents regretted their homelessness

(question 25). In answering question number 26, which

requests an explanation of homelessness, respondents

identified an understanding of being "homeless", but did

not indicate an understanding of being "disenfranchised."

This is somewhat curious since their responses to other

questions are sophisticated in identifying the difference

between the two. This is evident in their responses as

to whom the responsibility belongs and their inability to

separate society from governmental concerns. The concept

of disenfranchisement is not a part of their mind set.

It is only understood in their day-to-day encounters with

survival needs. The majority of the respondents understood that homelessness reaches far beyond not having a home. As several of the sampled population put it, "It's having nothing but yourself."

There was a wide range of explanations in response to question number 27, Do you understand why are you homeless? There were a variety of situations, such as, being black or poor or jobless, which end up being blamed on society at large or on the government.

Most of the responses to question 28 regarding short-term solutions to the dilemma of homelessness were concerned about direct and immediate fulfillment of basic survival needs, i.e., employment, food, and money. More females than males indicated the need to have a job. This desire for a job may be tied into the concept of independence. Maria was adamant about being able to take care of herself and not having to depend upon any person or agency for her well-being. Such a direct and positive position was not displayed by any of the male respondents. Question 29 asked for long-term (at least one year) solutions to the respondents' homelessness problem. Overwhelmingly, employment was seen as the key solution. Beyond this, medical care and affordable housing were cited.

Blaming the victim became evident in the responses to question number 30, What does your family (i.e., father, mother, sister, brother) think about your

homelessness? This question precipitated strong
emotional outbursts. Dealing with the hardships of day-
to-day life was nothing compared to dealing with
rejection. "Bob", a 21-year-old, wept as he described
how his grandmother and grandfather threw him out because
he had an illegitimate child with his girlfriend. His
girlfriend's parents would have nothing to do with them
as they did not approve of Bob. Bob had only a seventh
grade education, and his girlfriend finished the tenth
grade. Being black, having no family support, and being
semi-illiterate made their plight difficult. To make
matters worse, Bob spoke of an earlier drug habit which
lead to an arrest and conviction for possession. They
came to the shelter for help. Bob said he probably
wouldn't stay long, but he would have to leave his
girlfriend and child there until he could make other
arrangements. He did say that if he could not find a
job, he knew how he could make a lot of money quickly.
He believed that, if his grandparents or his girlfriend's
parents would have allowed them to stay, none of this
would have happened. This feeling of rejection was a
very deep hurt. He said, "What's so wrong with me that
my own family doesn't want me?"

Interview question number 31 parallels question
number 23 in dealing with responsibility and society.
This, by and large, was a check for consistency. Most
answers were indicative of those in question number 23.

At this point of the survey there seemed to be a greater
need on the part of the respondents to make some claim to
society's responsibility for their individual problems.

When asked if they would return assistance to other
homeless people if they themselves became successful,
they said they would be more than willing to take a
responsible position (question 32).

A very adamant, almost unanimous "yes" was given to
the inquiry whether individuals felt bad about being
homeless (number 33). Feelings ranged from being mad to
sad; demoralized to ashamed. Failure as well as hatred
were mentioned numerous times. Individuals who did not
feel bad about being homeless were the one's with the
highest education levels. Could this be an indication of
the big-fish-in-the-little-pond syndrome or some sense of
satisfaction that this dilemma was only temporary? This
attitude may be a defense mechanism to hide shame. When
questioned about what the respondents felt was the number
one thing keeping them homeless (question 34), responses
were consistent with responses given in question number 8
which asked the sample population to identify what they
felt would be helpful as far as aid to recovery in a
short-term program. That, in fact, was the purpose of
question 34. The existence of consistency was
substantiated here.

The issue of taking prescribed medications was
addressed (questions 35 and 36) and checked through

shelter records to determine if there were any shelter occupants who were mentally ill. This was done to dispel or confirm a widely-held belief that the homeless-disenfranchised person is mentally disturbed. Ten percent of respondents were taking psychotropic medications: haldol for paranoid schizophrenia, mellaril for delusions, or lithium for manic-depression.

As to the use of alcohol and illegal drugs (question 37), 13% admitted occasional use of illegal drugs. Only one person admitted he used and abused different forms of ludes (downers). Sixty-seven percent of the individuals said they used alcohol, but only 25% of these considered themselves alcoholics. Responses to questions 38 and 39 revealed that 43% of the sample population had stayed in five or more shelters, and the majority of these were people with children. Shelter hopping is a way of life, according to "Teresa", a 36-year-old paranoid schizophrenic. She explained that shelters limit the length of time that individuals may stay and maintain records about who has stayed there and how long. Residents are allowed to stay the maximum length of time; then they are put back out on the street, and in most cases cannot return to that shelter for six months. In some cases, they are never allowed to return. Some shelters and general service providers exchange resident lists in an effort to keep homeless people from abusing the system. In order to stay out of the weather, during

the winter, some homeless are forced to go from shelter to shelter because there is no long term housing available. This creates instability and makes it difficult to find a job or to receive any kind of long-term assistance. Some of the larger shelters, like the Salvation Army, are better at trying to find enduring help, especially where children are involved. Shelter hopping is a way of life and at the same time retards efforts for rehabilitation.

Concerning question number 40, <u>What do you think is keeping you from finding a job?</u> the problems of instability and having to switch shelters were at the top of the list. Other items that were mentioned as possible deterrents to employment included child care, education, having a record, or having no address or phone number. Many of those interviewed commented that there were several jobs they knew they would have been able to get if they had not had to use the shelter as an address. If potential employees are transients with no permanent address, prospective employers shy away from them for fear of theft and other related problems.

CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Whether this research has successfully demonstrated that there _is_ a link between homelessness-disenfranchisement and criminality depends largely on whether or not actions of the sample population were indeed criminal. From a functionalist perspective regardless of the situation, a crime is a crime. From a conflict perspective, determination of a crime depends on who is making the determination. An interactionist perspective takes into account how and why the different actions were taken and what they mean. From a purely Weberian perspective, with emphasis on the subjective nature of social life, no judgment of right and wrong is made. This is heightened even more by Mead's perspective where coming to understand what particular encounters really mean is the essence of good sociology.

Beccarria (1963), in his dissertation on the interpretation of the law, identifies the law as an interpreter of action and intent. The importance of that intent is not to ascribe right or wrong, good or evil, but merely, whether or not it conforms to the law. He asserts that in order to do this one must look beyond the action and determine what the action symbolizes. It is

the _intent_ of the sender that should be important to the receiver.

In reviewing the results of the collected information from the sample population, it becomes clear that actions which are non-compliant to social codified law, are overwhelmingly symbolic of an inability to deal with homelessness-disenfranchisement. As previously mentioned, Locke (Bottomore & Nisbet, 1978) discusses creating a commonwealth that addresses political agendas that endorse economic concerns. When individuals fail to achieve a certain level of proficiency, social sanctions are imposed, causing disenfranchisement. These individuals are no longer a part of the commonwealth and are pushed to a more archaic commonwealth. Reid (Duncan, 1981) refers to this as the place where common sense is a collective understanding that anything one must do to survive is acceptable, not criminal. The homeless-disenfranchised individuals find themselves existing in one world with its own set of rules, while being held accountable to another world to which they have no access, but whose rules they must follow. (It is ludicrous to expect an individual to act and conduct himself in accordance with Russian law, when he is living in America.) On a more theoretically-based review, Hirschi (Hagan, 1987) perceives that interaction, or the lack thereof (disenfranchisement), provides the environment for criminality. While this theory,

originally put forth concerning juveniles, is not an
answer in itself, it does provide a possible avenue for
greater insight on the possible criminal link.
Hirschi's Social Bond Theory implies that when a person's
bonds to society are weakened or broken, his personal
investments in conformity are reduced. Hirschi asserts
that accepted standards of behavior are maintained
because individuals fear lack of conformity will disrupt
the relationships between themselves and society, family,
friends, neighbors, or jobs. It is not the fear of
punishment but the social sanctions for breaking mores
and the damage to personal image that deters them from
such actions. Hirschi compartmentalizes these bonds to
society into four components. The first is attachment,
which refers to bond among family, peers and important
institutions. Poor attachments to these institutions and
persons initiate the decline of the ability to interact.
The second is commitment, referring to the degree of
investment an individual has in the social and economic
system. When the individual has much to lose, and even
more to gain, he conforms. When there is little to lose
and even less to gain, conformity means nothing. The
third is involvement. Involvement reinforces the
aforementioned and keeps idle time at a minimum, with
less time to get into trouble. The final component is
belief. If an individual is attached, committed, and
involved, he will have faith in the conventional norms

and value system and will consider law as the thing that
bonds society. Without this belief, the law is
meaningless to him and there is no social bond for him.

W. C. Reckless's Containment Theory (Fox, 1976)
comes one step closer to understanding what lies behind
the symbols of symbolic interaction of those interviewed.
Unlike Hirschi, Reckless crosses over the boundary of
looking at just the interaction between person and
society and attempts to go behind the individual's action
and deals with his intent. He discusses the pushes and
the pulls that either create conformity or non-
conformity. The pulls are those things that are external
and take effect in their ability to cause conformity.
These pulls are like the bonds that Hirschi identified in
his four components. It is the pushes that are important
to this research. Reckless calls them the inner-control
systems. He identifies inner containment as involving
"good self-concept, self-control, ego strength, well-
developed superego, high frustration tolerance, high
resistance to diversion, high sense of responsibility,
goal orientation, ability to find substitute
satisfactions, and tension-reducing rationalizations"
(Fox, p. 141). Because of the reliance upon Freud's
work, it appears that Reckless has made a statement
beyond his theory. He is establishing that there are
psychological elements that formulate decisions that
dictate action on the part of an individual. It becomes

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even more obvious that Hirschi's and Reckless' theories
contain elements of determinism and free-will.
Individual choice still enters into the equation.
Reckless not only asserts the individual's involvement,
but he also takes into consideration external situations,
providing a more holistic view. Yes, there is a
connection between homelessness-disenfranchisement and
criminality, but only in a very superficial way. The
interview responses do establish that, at least for this
sample population, laws were broken by those identified
as homeless-disenfranchised, according to pre-established
definitions of this study. We can further establish the
link because 73% of the individuals interviewed had not
committed any crime prior to being homeless. The
discussions held with the respondents clearly established
that the purpose of these crimes were an attempt to
survive. Unlike any of the aforementioned theories, they
were totally out of the realm of mainstream society in
making their decisions which determined their actions.
There was no breaking of societal bonds, for the bonds
had already been broken. These individuals found
themselves way past considering the pushes of containment
theory. They were in situations of deep degradation.
They had left civil existence and come face to face with
reality: one must eat to survive. The elements are
harsh enough to kill, so one must have shelter. Their
reality substantiated their decision but, at the same

time, muddied the perceptions of the rest of society where survival is a secondhand thought.

It is at this point that the author would offer a concerned note of caution. In other social problems, especially those where addictive behavior is possible, much is said about activities that set an individual on a path to that addiction. With illegal drugs, the entry-level non-habit forming drugs are referred to as "gateway drugs". This is to say that, although entry-level drugs often are not illegal or harsh in their effect upon the individual, they serve as a stepping stone to harder and harder types of drugs. For instance, one might start with marijuana and end up using heroin. Some authorities would make the transcending steps more specific and insist that cigarette smoking is the gateway drug to marijuana and that marijuana leads to the use of heavy narcotics. The caution that the author addresses is that the situations which create homeless-disenfranchised people bring about a reality that justifies criminality. Who is to say that their criminal activity won't continue? Distress or vengeance or even the simple drive to survive could provoke a continued involvement in criminal behavior. Therefore, it is altogether fitting to adapt the gateway perspective to the homeless-disenfranchised plight. It very well may be that the criminal activities identified as a link in this study are also an indication of gateway crime. If this is

true, then additional research could reveal that a good

many incarcerated were previously homeless-

disenfranchised. More specifically that they were

homeless-disenfranchised and became a law unto

themselves. There had to be a first crime, but the

circumstances of that first crime and the attitude could

be identified as the gateway crime to a life of

lawlessness. Again, it would be interesting to identify

how many of the incarcerated were homeless-

disenfranchised when their first crime was committed.

It is for these reasons that the author has insisted

on using the terminology "homeless-disenfranchised".

Disenfranchisement means not being a part of the group

and, therefore, having no rights or privileges. If one

is not a part of the group and has no rights and

privileges, then one can establish a separate group with

its own rights, privileges and laws. This would justify

a new reality. In our society such realities are

referred to as "insanities" and this is why homeless

individuals are often characterized as being crazy. One

of the more sane individuals this author has met is a 55-

year-old white female interviewed for this study. She

explained that the reason she dug through the trash was

that many of the items she retrieved were sold at antique

stores for money. She would take the items to resale

shops in order to get money to survive. Yet, a day did

not go by that this recycler was not called "crazy" by

some passerby.

Other observations indicate that the homeless-disenfranchised were from lower middle class families. A good many of these individuals had incomes close to but slightly lower than their parents'. Economics play a vital part in producing safety nets in deterring disaster. Downward mobility creates an effect of self-blame and in many different ways bequeaths to the children of those who have suffered such ills, all different kinds of anxieties where their own competence to promote self-security is concerned (Newman, 1988).

There is definitely a case to be made for the lack of appropriate assistance on the part of social programs. It is a fallacious belief to contend that a couple of nights in a shelter will solve a homeless-disenfranchised person's problems. "Three hots and a cot" are just a bandage approach to a major social problem (Hombs & Snyder, 1986). As with many other social problems long-term extended involvement is necessary. But unlike other social problems, there is and should be hope for success in large percentages. The author did not find the sample population to be different from other individuals one deals with on a daily basis. For the most part there appeared to be an interest in learning and a desperate desire to be re-enfranchised. These people were interested in voting, but because they had no legal address, this inalienable right was cut off. The

American puritan heritage guides the social thinking that individuals have the ability to control the circumstances in their lives. It is easier to blame the victim than it is to question the systematic economic conditions that are out of the control of the individual (Newman, 1988).

There is a consistency from interview to interview of the ill-effects of alcohol, illegal drugs, job loss, wife abuse, child abuse, exhaustion of funds, unwanted pregnancies, etc. All of these dilemmas created the vicarious situations which lead to homelessness-disenfranchisement.

Spinoza (Bartlett, 1980 p. 309) has been quoted saying, "To give aid to every poor man is far beyond the reach and power of everyman... Care of the poor is incumbent on society as a whole." As true as this may be, there is a greater call to society, and that is to ensure that none of its members lose their inalienable rights because of refusal to remember inalienable responsibilities. Individuals appear to have given too much uncontrolled power to mechanisms and political groups who assure that the ills of society will be taken care of.

When one looks past the mask of the homeless-disenfranchised and makes an effort to listen to what their symbolic action means, one hears a desperate and sincere cry for HELP.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE

You are being requested to complete the following
questionnaire in an effort to provide this research with
possible answers to the questions of homelessness. This is a
voluntary act on your part. Your identity will be protected
and under no circumstances will you or your situation be made
public. You may answer some or all questions. Your
truthfulness will be greatly appreciated. As the survey will
be read to you, and responses will be noted on the
questionnaire by the interviewer, any questions on your part
will be answered to your satisfaction. Your may see the
questionnaire and notes at any time during or after the
survey. If you wish to change an answer, you may do so.
Under no circumstances are you to give your name, social
security number, or any identifying characteristic of
yourself. Any additional information provided by you to any
of the questions asked will be appreciated.

1. Age
   ____ Under 20
   ____ 21 - 30
   ____ 31 - 40
   ____ 41 - 50
   ____ 51 - 60
   ____ 61 and over

2. Highest educational level achieved?
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
   ____ Trade school
   ____ On the job training (military, corporation, etc.)
   ____ Associates degree
   ____ B.A. or B.S.
   ____ Graduate school

3. ____ Male
   ____ Female

4. What is your ethnic background?
   ____ Afro-American
   ____ Hispanic
   ____ White
   ____ Asian
   ____ Other

5. Approximate income of yoour parents' household while you
   were living at home?
   _____

6. How many times were you married before you became
   homeless?
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6+

7. How many times were you divorced prior to becoming homeless?
   0 1 2 3 4 5+

8. Your present marital status?
   ____ married
   ____ separated
   ____ divorced
   ____ single
   ____ widowed

9. How many children did you care for prior to becoming homeless?
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 10+

10. How many children are you caring for after becoming homeless?
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 10+

11. Your approximate annual income prior to homelessness?
    _____

12. What do you believe was the major reason you became homeless? Explain.

13. What were the three major losses you suffered in becoming homeless? Explain.

14. What do you consider the major difficult in being homeless? Explain.

15. Prior to being homeless did you ever break the law in an effort to provide yourself or your family with personal or general needs (i.e. food, clothing, rent, etc.)? Explain.

16. During or after being homeless did you ever break the law
    in an effort to provide yourself or your family with
    personal or general needs (i.e. food, shelter, clothing,
    rent, etc.)? Explain.

17. If your answer to Number 15 was "No," and your answer to
    Number 16 was "Yes," would you please explain why you
    think you were justified in doing so?

18. Have you ever been convicted of a crime prior to becoming
    homeless?

19. Do you think that any of your convictions prior to
    homelessness led to being homeless? Explain.

20. Have you been convicted of a crime since becoming
    homeless? Explain.

21. Do you think that being homeless led you to break the
    law? Explain.

22. Do you think that your homeless situation is your
    responsibility? Explain.

23. Do you think that your homeless situation is society's
    responsibility? Explain.

24. Do you think that your homeless situation is the government's responsibility? Explain.

25. Would you prefer not being homeless? Explain.

26. Do you understand what homelessness is? Explain.

27. Do you understand why you are homeless? Explain.

28. What do you think would be most helpful in providing short-term (3 months) aid to your recovery from being homeless? Explain.

29. What do you think would be the most helpful in providing long-term (one year) aid to your recovery from being homeless? Explain.

30. What does your family (i.e. father, mother, sister, brother) think about you being homeless? Explain.

31. Do you think society owes you or shoul help you? Explain.

32. If you succeeded in no longer being homeless, would you be willing to help other homeless people? Explain.

33. Do you personally feel bad about being homeless? Explain.

34. What do you think is the number one thing keeping you homeless? Explain.

35. Do you take any kind of prescribed medication? Explain.

36. If you are taking prescribed medication, what are you taking it for? Explain.

37. Do you use alcohol or any illegal drugs? Explain.

38. How many shelters for the homeless have you stayed in?
    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   7+

39. If you have stayed in more than three shelters, please explain why?

40. What do you think is keeping you from finding a job?

VITA

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