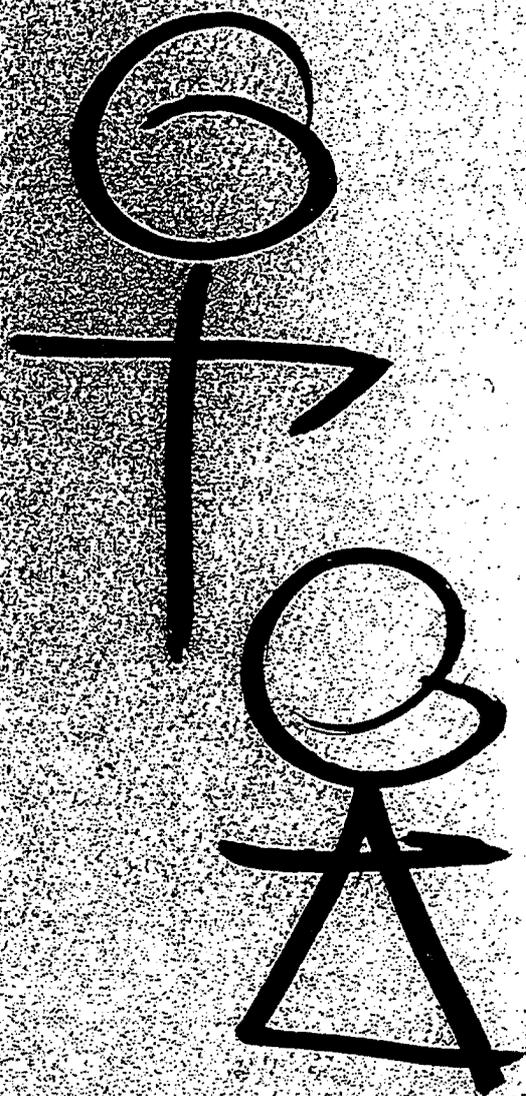


BUREAU OF SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO

REPORTS



REPORT 24:
THE UNATTACHED SOCIETY

The Unattached Society
An account of the life on Larimer Street among homeless men.

Professor Edward Rose, University of Colorado

With:

Anthony Gorman
California Youth Authority

Frank Leuthold
University of Colorado

I J Singer
University of Colorado

Assisted by:

Gary Barnett
Volunteers in Service to America

Egon Bittner
Langley Porter Clinic, University of California Medical Centre

John C O'Leary
The Gold Mine

A study, prepared for the Denver Urban Renewal Authority, concentrating on single men found in the Skyline Area in the City of Denver.

Bureau of Sociological Research
Report No 24
Institute of Behavioral Science
University of Colorado

September 1965

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The following report and appendix materials we prepared with the help, advice and interest of a number of people.

Dr. Egon Bittner of the Langley Porter Clinic of the University of California Medical Centre in San Francisco worked with the police of the skid row area in order to get their reactions to the street and also to observe their treatment of the individuals in the area.

Officer Schalbrack of the Denver Police Department, a man who personally knows and cares about the people on Larimer Street, gave us a description of the people and events in the area that he has observed in his thirteen years as a beat man for this area.

John O'Leary gave us his own story of how he has lived on the street. John O'Leary also assisted in the recruitment of approximately one hundred men, who willingly and sometimes poetically gave their stories of Larimer Street and skid row all over the country.

Reverend Ernest Barber, the Director of the Citizens Mission, William Barnett, the Presiding Judge of the County Court of Denver, Colonel Jack Dignum of the Volunteers of America, Brigadier Charles Rosnick of the Salvation Army, John Buchanan and Mark Bearwald of the Denver Post, and Chief Harold A Dill of the Denver Police Department all provided sympathetic and knowledgeable accounts of Denver's skid row. All these men, although approaching the unattached society from different points of view, share a deep concern for the problems and conditions of the men on Larimer Street.

Dr. Lester Bellwood, Dr. Paul Binner and Mrs. Jo Urquhart of the Fort Logan Mental Health Center and also Dr. Daniel J Levinson, Director of the Centre for Sociopsychological Research at the Harvard Medical School, joined us in discussions of the problems, treatment and recovery of alcoholics, and of many issues on skid row drinking and drunkenness.

Mr. William Shaw, Director of Rehabilitation Services, Colorado State Hospital, has served as our principal professional informant. We appreciate also the interest that Dr. Charles E Meredith, Superintendent of the Colorado State Hospital, has shown in this study.

Helen Wilson, Anne Forester and Ann Kochenberger receive our thanks for their excellent transcribing and editing of a vast amount of material.

Certainly we thank Mrs. Blanche McCoy of the Oxford Hotel and her staff for their service to us.

We appreciate the fine working relationship we have had with all of the professional staff of the Denver Urban Renewal Authority. William Johnston, Dennis Johnston, Paul Cormier, and J Robert Cameron have been particularly helpful with suggestions and information contributed to our study.

We wish to express special acknowledgment to our colleagues, Howard Higman, Robert Hunter and W Tom Adams who were involved in preparations for these studies.

Intellectually we are indebted particularly to Harold Garfinkel and Harvey Sacks for their notions on counting and to Robert Potter and David Riesman for their thinking on middle-class sociability. We have had in mind the interests of Erving Goffman in much of our work, particularly his thoughts about encountering.

A grant through the Denver Urban Renewal Authority under Skyline Project No Colo. R-15: Social Study, supports this investigation.

Certain appendix materials, in particular Bureau of Sociological Research Report No's 20 and 32, were made possible in part by a United States Air Force Grant AF-AFOSR-479-64: Methods of Validations of Judgments in Decision Making.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments		xvi
The Unattached Society		
I	Introductory Comment	2
	i Aims and Procedures	2
	ii Skid Row Surveys	3
	iii Changing the Street	4
	iv Sociological Credulity	5
II	The Scene	6
	Map of Skid Row	7
III	Making out the Scene	8
	i Encountering:	
	What's needed to get and stay on the street	9
	The Way the Person Looks	9
	The Way the Person Is	11
	The Way the Society Is	14
	Community Relations	15
	Practicalities	16
	ii Counting:	
	Who's on the scene and who belongs there	16
	Working Man	17
	Drunk	17
	Old-Timer	19
	iii Accounting:	
	How and why persons come to the scene and how and why they stay	20
	The Emasculated Life	21
	The Emasculated Life	21
	Diagram	22
	Forecast	23
	iv Counting Out:	
	Who's leaving, who's staying and why	23
	v Recounting:	
	The myths of the street	24
IV	Making the Scene	26
	i The Balance of Resources	26
	ii The Daily Round, the Week and the Year	26
	iii Where is the Action?	29
	iv Making a Difference: Sanctioned and Unsanctioned Conduct	29
V	Making out on the Scene	31
	Table 1	32
	i The Importance of Different Areas	33
	ii Adequacy	34
	Photograph	35
VI	Interpretations	37
	i Problems	37
	ii Prevailing Attitudes	39
	iii Skid Row Costs	39
	iv Desires and Expectations of Larimer Street	40
	v Moving the Street: Capabilities of the People	41
	vi Some Suggestions	42

I

Introductory Comment

i

Aims and Procedures

During the summer of 1965 we undertook intensive field investigations of the people found on Larimer Street and throughout a district described by the Urban Renewal Authority as the Skyline Area. Larimer Street is known as the skid row of Denver. Centered here, largely along two blocks between Sixteenth and Eighteenth Street, are most of the institutions and services that are used by unattached older men trying to get by economically and socially in a large city. Within or close to these two blocks are found the missions, bars, employment offices, pawn shops, cafes, hotels, dormitories and barber colleges catering to most of the needs of large numbers of single men. Older single men are the principal residents of the area. We have done our best, over the course of three months, to secure information from these men and other people in the area on the following matters:

- The social, economic and physical characteristics prerequisite to living in the area.
- The psycho-socio-economic characteristics of people in the area.
- How and why persons come to the area and how and why persons remain in the area.
- What persons are leaving the area, why they are leaving the area, where they think they are going.
- The belief system of people in the area, their philosophy, morals and beliefs governing their standards and conduct.
- The patterns of social behavior in the area.
- The resources provided by the area to the people in the area.
- Where people in the area would like to go and where they think they will go in the event of displacement.

We have been concerned further with possible procedures and techniques for the relocation of people in the Skyline Area that might be displaced by execution of an urban renewal project in the area. And so we have done what we could to secure information and judgments on these matters:

- The desires of people in the area.
- The capabilities of people in the area.
- The costs to the larger community.
- The public consensus or the majority or prevailing attitude of the community.
- The social problems of people in the area.
- Deceleration of social decay in the community.

The intensive interview was our basic instrument for securing information on the above topics. Essentially two sorts of interviews were undertaken:

1. The questioning of men and women on the street who are making use of the resources of the street.
2. Discussions with persons providing services and otherwise concerned with this particular population. Thus we have talked with many persons who hold very definite and, we trust, expert opinions on Larimer Street and its problems.

Generally, the following investigation procedures were followed:

In the first week of June four investigators lived on the street, going through the daily round that they encountered there, shifting residence frequently so as to discover various perspectives that go with residence, visiting as many missions, bars and restaurants as could be covered in this brief period of time, and generally seeking first-hand experience with the men and with the resources of Larimer Street and its environs. One of our investigators, Mr. Anthony Gorman, remained on Larimer Street through June and into the first three weeks of July.

Starting in the second week of June four investigators, Edward Rose, Frank Leuthold, I J Singer, Gary Barnett, devoted a month to extensive interviews with the men on

the street. Ninety-seven men were questioned on the points listed above. The persons interviewed were brought to the interviewers by Anthony Gorman, who at the time was playing the role of a bum, and by two men on the street, Mr. Harry Burgess and Mr. John O'Leary.

Over the course of three months Mr. Gorman continued observations and interviews on the street, particularly with old-age pensioners, the heads of families, hotel clerks and other informed persons living on Larimer and throughout the Skyline Area. I J Singer, during the same period, interviewed a number of pawnbrokers and other businessmen on the street.

During the summer various members of our staff got into discussions with a number of persons who have to deal with the people of Larimer Street professionally and thus in various ways know the men of Larimer Street and their problems.

Dr. Egon Bittner, sociologist in the Langley Porter Clinic of the Department of Psychiatry in the University of California Medical Centre at San Francisco, visited Denver during June in order to ride with the police patrolling the Skyline Area, and to secure an account of how the police view the locality that includes Larimer Street. *Bureau of Sociological Research Report No 32* contains Dr. Bittner's report on this experience. Other appendices report on discussions held with other persons informed about Larimer Street and its environs.

In April of 1965 the Urban Renewal Authority itself undertook a careful survey of the population of the Skyline Area. That population is not easy to survey since it includes so many transients and a number of persons moving frequently into and out of the area from other parts of Denver. In view of the difficulties that go with an investigation of this fluid population we are impressed with the general thoroughness of the Urban Renewal Authority's survey of the Skyline Area. We trust that the information we have secured through intensive interview will add meaning to summary accounts drawn from the Urban Renewal Survey.

Generally, it is clear from the Urban Renewal Survey that there are *sizable* numbers

of persons living within the Skyline Area who would be faced by serious problems should that area be changed in such a way as to force their relocation. Accordingly, we have sought to find out what the people of Larimer Street are like through their own intimate descriptions and through descriptions of persons who know them best. We trust that we have secured now critical interpretations of the life in a poor part of town that is scheduled to be changed, interpretations in support both of the men on the street and of the general community as they may face up to the problems of Larimer Street and of its impending alterations.

ii

Skid Row Surveys

There is hardly a more intensively investigated part of America than skid row. For many years in almost every large city in America surveys have been repeated on the single, unattached men whose congregations in these cities have marked certain poor parts of town as skid rows. During the last decade in particular, excellent investigations of poor old men have been undertaken in connection with urban renewal programs for renovating and changing blighted sections of cities. An amazing general fact has been well established: making allowances for regional and geographical differences, the description of skid row in one city fits almost perfectly what might be known about the skid row of almost any other city. Essential differences between skid rows in the various urban localities of the country are not notably greater than differences between skid row areas within a single large city. Moreover, the characteristics of skid rows are astoundingly stable. The wonderfully detailed report prepared by Donald J Bogue and his associates on the skid row of Chicago in a survey undertaken in 1958¹⁴ could well be a clear account of Denver's street for homeless men today.

Over the years certain great changes may have taken place. A great deal of history has gone into the building of each skid row. It

¹⁴ Skid Row In American Cities (Chicago: Community and Family Study Centre, University of Chicago, 1963), xvi + 521 pp.

is probable, for instance, that the basic character of skid rows has changed from concentrations of itinerant workers more to congregations of retired or partially retired poor men. Even with such a basic change, the quality of life on any skid row may not have changed over the course of many years. Throughout America today, in every large city of America, large populations of single older men, long dissociated from their families have been drawn to well-defined streets and neighborhoods catering to and marked by a distinctively separate life in society.

Throughout the years the homeless men of Denver have been investigated many times. Journalists have lived among them from time to time and have written about their experiences¹⁵. Social agencies have surveyed them every few years¹⁶ and further have acquired large bodies of particulars about the men as the men have made use of the agencies' services.

The most recent survey was conducted by the Urban Renewal Authority in April of 1965 in which critical information on the permanent residents of the Skyline Area was accumulated. This information clearly establishes two general facts: 1. The people of Larimer Street and its environs are very much like the people in downtown depressed areas in

other cities.¹⁷ 2. Larimer Street has not changed drastically in its basic social features over a long period of time. It would not be particularly valuable at this time to conduct a social survey more intensive than that which the Urban Renewal Authority completed in April. Another survey would simply verify for Denver the excellent observations obtained elsewhere, as, for instance, in Bogue's study of the five 1958 skid row districts in Chicago: West Madison Street, South State Street, South Clark and Van Buren, North Clark Street, Wilson and Broadway.

Two sorts of efforts are needed at this time: 1. The humanistic interpretation of the survey materials: the translation of these materials into human terms that make sense for the men on the street and for the general community. 2. The examination of the life on the street that may help us to understand how such stable statistics can accumulate about homeless men. If we can understand the stability's we may be better prepared to deal with them.

iii

Changing The Street

In Denver, as in other large cities, serious effort is being directed to the deliberate renovation of the heart of the city. These questions necessarily arise: should the skid row on Larimer Street be erased? How should any changes on Larimer Street be undertaken? What would be the effects of these changes?

Here are some initial responses to these questions - very careful responses, rather painfully generated out of our study and offered with the qualification that they could be changed if certain community efforts are made and are successful.

The destruction of Larimer Street as a skid row can, over the course of time, prove very troublesome for the people of Denver, if no attention is paid to the men when they are forced to leave the street. Large numbers of

¹⁵ Cf. John W Buchanan and Bill Wood, "Skid Road", *Denver Post*, a seven-part series starting August 28, 1949

¹⁶ "Transients in Denver", Denver Area Welfare Council, 1947-48.

"A Study of the Citizens Mission Program", A sub-committee of the Transiency Committee of the Denver Council of Social Agencies, prepared at the request of the Budget Committee of the Community Chest, April, 1948.

"Supplementary Citizens Mission Report", Denver Area Welfare Council, August, 1950.

"Labor Market Survey of the Citizens Mission", Colorado State Employment Service, January, 1951.

"Supplementary Citizens Mission Report", Denver Area Welfare Council, May, 1951.

"The Spanish-American Population in Denver", Denver Area Welfare Council, 1950-52.

"A study of the Citizens Mission", William Ketska & Associates, Inc., November, 1953.

"Report - Citizens Mission", Special Community Chest Committee on the Citizens Mission, February, 1954.

"Study on Denver Citizens Mission", Denver Department of Welfare, January, 1955.

"The Homeless Man", An Institute co-sponsored by Denver Area Welfare Council and Citizens Mission, December, 1955.

"A Study of Transiency in the Denver Area", The Technical Committee on Community Needs & Resources, Family and Child Welfare Division, Denver Area Welfare Council, April, 1957.

Preliminary Reports: A Survey of the Residents of the Skyline Area, Denver Urban Renewal Authority, April, 1965.

¹⁷ I J Singer, Skid Row on Larimer and Elsewhere, Bureau of Sociological Research Report No 33, University of Colorado, September 1965.

them will remain in Denver and bring their difficulties with them to other parts of the city. There are strong possibilities that several skid rows will be generated out of the one and that the cost of multiple derelict neighborhoods within rather short periods of time will greatly exceed the costs of Larimer Street. In our country we have not yet learned how to stop the natural proliferation of skid rows, nor how to devise socially and physically sanitary neighborhoods for homeless men. Careful thought and work is needed to do away with the troubles of Larimer Street. It is not clear that the general community is prepared to deal with these troubles for what they are. It seems, at this time, that our best advice has to be this: *keep Larimer Street*. Improve it, correct it, without destroying it. We feel we are speaking here, not only in the interest of the men, but also in the interest of the general community. We know also that it may prove to be very difficult to heed this advice: there is strong likelihood that, out of concern for the regeneration of the core of the city, the facilities on Larimer Street for homeless men may have to be abandoned. Our second bit of advice then is to commence *now* to develop the best possible programs for the humane and reasonable relocation of the men on the street.

iv Sociological Credulity

As sociologists we are prepared to believe certain things about skid row.

The literature on Skid Row¹⁸, like the literature on race relations, is boundless. No one person has been able to assimilate the vast, complex and ever-increasing body of information accumulated on the poor men of America. The interpretations of what is known about these men are also very much like interpretations on races and minorities: here largely is practical wisdom, practical and not clearly scientific, even among social scientists. To call this wisdom practical is not to deride it. These are understandings that come out of living problems. The demand is for even more

of this practical wisdom, with increasing emphasis on practicality.

In race relations the most startling insights arose generally as real life observations of the people in trouble as members of minority groups. There is a clear history of the dispersion of these insights to social scientists and to other persons professionally concerned with the plight of bothered groups. There is now considerable dispersion of these same insights to the general population. One interpretation of the relationship between a large population, sometimes called the majority, and other groups, sometimes called minorities, is especially critical: difficulties in majority-minority relations, more often than not, originate in the majority. Without arguing this proposition for race relations we propose that it be given careful consideration in our attempts to understand the homeless men: skid row populations are not self-generating; individuals come to Larimer Street from the larger community. If any of them are to be called failures, the failings started in the larger community, and perhaps corrections must start there. If Larimer Street as a whole is bothersome, again we may find much of the bother originating off the street. And certainly if difficulties are encountered in abandoning or changing Larimer Street many of these difficulties will arise in the city at large, as persons, organizations, and neighborhoods may deliberately seek to avoid connection with large numbers of unattached men.

The homeless men make up a peculiar minority group: like the Shakers, this group is unable to reproduce itself. Furthermore, though separation and detachment are put into real operations in the lives of individual men and in each skid row as a whole, detachment can never be complete. Skid rows are viable only as functional sections of urban communities: trouble arises *in connection with* the rest of the city.

Since the life of each man may so often display his own private severance from society, it may be argued that a population of these men does not constitute a society and cannot properly be called a minority group. This is a critical argument to which we wish to pay attention in this study. Essentially our view is that the severed men make up a severed society

¹⁸ See the selected bibliography pp. 8-9 in I J Singer, *Skid Row on Larimer and Elsewhere*.

that necessarily stands apart and yet connected with the rest of the community: single men separated from one another but living within the general community do not erect that distinctive social formation called skid row. And so, what they bring about together in this formation calls for attention.

There is a shadow of practicality attached to this whole argument: in breaking up a skid row practical decisions have to be reached as to whether a social group as a whole and social segments are to be altered and perhaps moved, or whether atomized individuals are to be dealt with. Our study will address itself to this problem and to its practicalities.

II

The Scene

Anyone who counts himself a resident of Denver's skid row may say that it extends on Larimer Street to Eighteenth or perhaps a half block beyond. He may immediately qualify this statement by noting the several skid-row hotels, missions and other facilities located for his use, not right on the street, but within a block or two. Many guests at the Inter-Ocean Hotel at Seventeenth and Blake, for instance, generally place themselves on Larimer, though they may retire for the night two blocks away.

Skid row in Denver, thus is to be thought of as a strip, stretching largely for only two blocks. It follows the spatial pattern of the Bowery in Manhattan, as do the strips of Buffalo, Chattanooga, Cleveland, Jacksonville, and Indianapolis, differing in dispersion from the skid rows of Los Angeles, Portland, Philadelphia, Boston, and a considerable number of other cities whose derelict areas include rows of streets forming wide spatial blotches.

The skid rows in certain cities, such as Pittsburgh, San Francisco and Chicago, present mixed distributions of strips and blotches distributed in several parts of each city.

Two blocks on Larimer Street clearly represent in physical terms a small part of the City of Denver. In social terms they fully and strongly represent all that any skid row in any city of America constitutes: a permanent settlement of homeless men plainly set apart from the rest of the city.

Some of the oldest buildings of Denver are located on the street. The upper stories of many of these have been boarded off for many years. From the street they display both the majesty and the decrepidness of their age. Denver's skid row, like all the other rows throughout the nation, shows in its buildings the past and the wear of time. The people too show the wear: the members of what we have called here the unattached society are for the most part casually or badly dressed old men, where old age can start at forty or forty-five or fifty.

Our report is an account of the Larimer Street scene reflecting, as much as possible, observations made by the men who fit into the scene. We now and then use terms and interpretations such as they could use to say what Larimer Street is like. Terminology of social science is, accordingly, linked with working vocabularies, much of which could be picked up on the street. A translation such as the following can be made:

Things to know about Larimer Street

The language of Social Science
A Working language

Making out the Scene

Social, economic and physical characteristics prerequisite to living in the area.

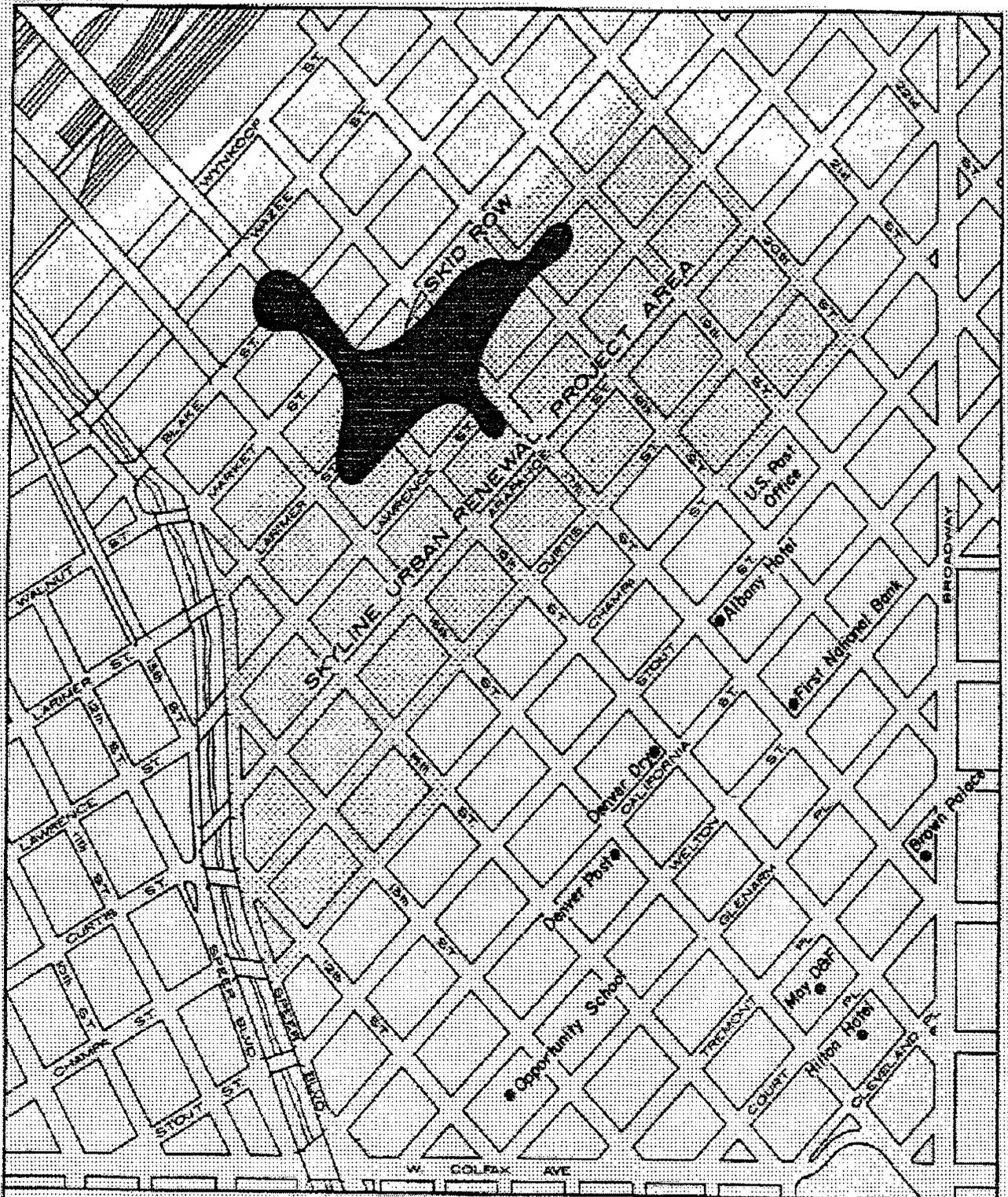
Encountering: what's needed to get and stay on the scene: clothes, money, conduct, history and talk.

The psycho-socio-economic characteristics of the people in the area.

Counting: who's on the scene and who belongs there.

How and why persons come to the area and how and why persons remain in the area.

Accounting: how and why persons come on the scene and how and why they stay.



"SKID ROW" - DENVER, COLORADO

Bureau of Sociological Research

UNIVERSITY of COLORADO, BOULDER, COLORADO

SEPTEMBER, 1965

What persons are leaving the area, why they are leaving the area, where they think they are going.

Counting out: who's leaving, who's staying and why.

The belief system of people in the area - their philosophy, mores, and beliefs governing their standards and conduct.

Recounting: the myths of the street.

Making the Scene

The resources provided by the area to people in the area.

Resources.

The uses of the street.

Specific pay-off features.

Interpretations

The social problems of people in the area.

Problems on Larimer and in Denver.

The public consensus or the majority or prevailing attitude of the community.

Uptown people.

The costs to the larger community.

Possibilities in the human costs of moving.

The desires of the people in the area.

Desires and expectations on and off Larimer Street.

The capabilities of the people in the area.

Moving the street: capabilities of the people in the area.

Deceleration of social decay in the community.

Some specific suggestions.

Our report consists then generally of three descriptive sections and a section of interpretations of and judgments on what we have found out.

The first descriptive section, making out the scene, belabors variations of a certain term, counting. The men on the street and people who deal with them as a matter of course engage in their own natural sociologies: they are constantly counting, taking into account, accounting for and recounting the details of life that led to, make up and lead from experience on the street. Their society and their life is well measured and interpreted

without social science coaching. It has happened then that we have come across sociologies at work, not simply for passing the time, but for making the involvements with Larimer Street manageable. Consciously or unconsciously, sober or not so sober, each man conducts throughout the day necessary natural experiments and observations testing himself and others on what is taking place, on persons involved, and on what is being and can be accomplished to bring forth the experiences on the street.

Our exploration of Larimer Street proceeds from some of these experiments and observations and from the natural sociologies of the men on the street.

The Larimer Vignettes in the appendix materials are arranged to fit the order of discussion of this report. Thus, the discussion of encountering in this report is supplied with illustrations of encountering in the vignettes, and the other topics are similarly documented.

III

Making Out The Scene

The basic description of Larimer Street is undertaken in this section. Here the street is viewed from the first as something already produced, something standing as the result of a long-lasting complexity of social processes. This is the Larimer Street that any person can go to see or have described for him. Essentially it is the street open to observation and comment.

We report here various ways of taking note, measuring and appraising this complicated community. And so the term counting in its various aspects is stressed.

Encountering.

Encountering has several meanings:

1. Simply the way the men look as they are first met on the street.

2. The way men have to be or are likely to be as they come on the street.
3. An encountered Society as distinguished from encountered individuals.
4. Most important, encounters between the men on the street and the good citizens.

Counting.

The types of persons in the unattached society are noted here. The men on Larimer Street engage in sensitive counting operations, deciding not only who belongs among them, but what are the critical differences between them. Big fact; diversity rather than The Larimer Street Man.

Accounting.

Here we point to processes and mechanisms that bring persons to Larimer Street and that help them to remain there. We have watched both the economic and the social processes.

Counting Out.

There are a number of ways in which a person can leave the street: they can die; they can go to jail or to the Rodeo in Casper; they can get a job uptown; they can go to another skid row. We have tried to be extensive in our review of these terminal processes. As they relate to the major issues of our report, these processes are, of course, important.

Recounting.

This could be a tremendous section: what is so and what is not so? We include here simply some of the standard stories. Standard stories exist, of course, both on and off the street. We have to worry about standard stories among experts and about whether our own study is contributing to the fables of Larimer. Certain stories may perhaps be dignified as hypotheses to be tested in exact inquiry. Other stories are simply there on the street - and in the bars - there to be accounted for as much as anything else. At this time the best we can do is show that stories are provided and blended with

observations on the street. These natural accounts can help to becloud any professional view of the street as well as make that view possible.

i

Encountering:

What's needed to get and stay on the street

The Way the Person Looks.

Both practically and theoretically, how a person looks is important. How a person on Larimer looks has much to do with the term, skid row. Most of the following characterizations could be made by almost anyone after a few moments reflection. Nonetheless, the list here matters. These are diacritical features, *social traits at work*¹⁹ or reflecting processes at work that have brought persons to skid row.

1. The persons counted as on Larimer are first of all *males*.²⁰ On Larimer you expect to find a man and you do find one, standing there on the street. With maleness and with the society of males the question of masculinity²¹ arises. And masculinity on skid row also is a matter of great practical and theoretical consequence.
2. On Larimer you can expect to see an *old man*.²² And age does prove clearly to be a salient feature, well defined on Larimer: the critical distinction between the pensioners and the other men is recognized and well worked out.²³ Age, thus, is an operative category within the society. *But the man who is not a pensioner, who is not yet sixty-five, is still old*,²⁴ inasmuch as, whether he realizes it or not, he quite likely has started in on a process of retirement.²⁵ Thus, any man -

¹⁹ Most often *work* literally carries the sense of *effort* that human beings have to exert for making social happenings take place.

²⁰ Bureau of Sociological Research Report No. 33: p. 5. Hereafter, references to Bureau of Sociological Research Reports will be abbreviated. The reference will have the following form: BSR 00: pp. 00-00. Bureau of Sociological Research Report No. 28, *Larimer Vignettes*, will be cited as *Vignettes*. *Vignettes* have been numbered, and we will refer to these numbers.

²¹ BSR 25: pp. 83-88. BSR: pp. 20-21, 87. *Vignettes*: 24, 27, 43.

²² BSR 33: p. 5. *Vignettes*: 25, 32, 40, 42, 43, 44, 59, 71, 88.

²³ BSR 31: p. 13. *Vignettes*: 28, 32, 43, 44, 48, 59.

²⁴ BSR 25: pp. 104-105, 117. *Vignettes*: 12, 40.

²⁵ *Vignettes*: 12, 57, 58, 72, 96, 97, 104, 110, 135, 146, 152, 178, 189, 192, 216, 308, 311.

the forty-year-old - can be old and may even say so when he talks about the labor market²⁶ or his health.

3. More than likely the old man will look *clean*.²⁷ This somewhat surprising observation can seem reasonable enough when it is learned that clean clothes,²⁸ shoes of good quality,²⁹ free shaves and haircuts³⁰ are rather easily available on Larimer Street. The public and private agencies and services make it possible for any man to look presentable. The dirty, unshaven man is likely to have just hit the street off a freight or after work. He may, on account of drinking, also be disheveled.
4. The clean old man is likely to look *sober*.³¹ Most men on view in the street, whether or not they have had a few beers, deport themselves soberly or as though they were sober.³² When they don't, they will not last long on public view because of police surveillance. A question always goes with the man: is he really sober and likely to remain so?
5. An observation that could have been made from the start is now noted. With this observation one doesn't say, 'He looks that way.' One says, 'He is that way.' The man is *white*.³³ In Denver, in certain comparative contexts, he might be called Anglo. The Spanish-American or the Negro is able to move freely enough on Larimer. But he is not generally expected to be there,³⁴ unless he is passing through as an itinerant or

simply going through Larimer to get to work or to the Spanish-American or Negro neighborhoods, particularly to the north and east of the street. Larimer shows distinctive segregation patterns.

6. The next observation is easily enough made, though it follows a great deal of preparatory work. The man looks like a *worker*.³⁵ It may be said of almost any man on the street that he has the look of a laboring man somehow written all over his face, in his gait or perhaps in the clothes he is wearing. This judgment is likely to prove correct: get the man's history and you will hear probably an account of and an identification with unskilled or semi-skilled labor³⁶ including, at an earlier time in life, heavy labor.³⁷ The man very rarely looks like or is one of the fallen from on high, an individual departed from the grace of middle-class life.³⁸
7. Then, obviously, though not so obviously upon reflection, it may be said that the man will look like a *worker not working*.³⁹ He may or may not make the sounds or give the show of a person ready to work, of one just off the job, or of one not able to work nor willing. Deference to labor will be part of his demeanor and verbal presentation, though he may be professional bum,⁴⁰ not at all ready to have any part of work. Recent involvement with work may or may not become apparent as a story is told. The fact remains, however, that on Larimer Street he simply is not working, unless he is a clerk in a hotel, a dishwasher in a bar or the like.⁴¹ The tenor of the place is *off-work*.
8. The next judgment is enfolded in further speculative complexities. The man is not working on Larimer Street. But he does not look like he is playing nor very often that he is on his way either to work or to a good

²⁶ BSR 34: p. 12. *Vignettes*: 12, 72, 76, 77, 79, 83, 104.

²⁷ BSR 25: p. 12. *Vignettes*: 3, 6, 18, 37, 43, 73, 88, 108, 135, 167.

²⁸ BSR 25: pp. 63-64. BSR 35: pp. 2, 4. *Vignettes*: 3, 18, 75, 177.

²⁹ BSR 25: p. 133.

³⁰ BSR 26: p. 66. BSR 35: p. 2. *Vignettes*: 6, 149, 177.

³¹ BSR 25: pp. 38, 39, 57, 58, 60. *Vignettes*: 25, 29, 35, 39, 44.

³² BSR 32: p. 2. BSR 26: pp. 49-50, 89. *Vignettes*: 286.

³³ BSR 26: pp. 49-50, 89. BSR 33: p. 6. BSR 25: p. 10. *Vignettes*: 1, 2. At one time we believed that our contact men were discriminating. We insisted on speaking with members of minority groups. The discrimination wasn't performed by the contact men, for we learned that minority group members are not part of the street. They don't have the same sort of stories. O'Abbington, O'Wesley, O'Fresquez, O'Huitron, O'Lawrence, O'Vasquez, O'Vijil are among those that we interviewed who are Spanish or Negro.

³⁴ Negroes and Spanish-Americans live in the upper end of the Skyline area close to 20th Street, particularly in a locality long identified as the Japanese community. There have not, however, been movements by ethnic groups into the skid row in Denver, as has sometimes occurred elsewhere.

³⁵ *Vignettes*: 13, 36, 58, 76, 102.

³⁶ BSR 25: pp. 5, 7-9, 19-26, 31, 33, 55, 56. *Vignettes*: 11, 15, 31, 36, 81, 112, 132, 137.

³⁷ BSR 25: pp. 42-43. *Vignettes*: 47, 72, 134, 155, 216.

³⁸ BSR 25: pp. 82-83. *Vignettes*: 38, 43, 48, 105, 179.

³⁹ BSR 25: pp. 63-68. BSR 35: pp. 2-3 *et passim*. *Vignettes*: 71-76.

⁴⁰ BSR 25: pp. 63-68. *Vignettes*: 276-277.

⁴¹ BSR 25: pp. 19, 21, 73, 121-122. *Vignettes*: 16, 21, 36, 97, 102, 111, 201-205.

time.⁴² There he is, just standing there, perhaps talking as usual to an acquaintance. He may be sauntering very slowly along the sidewalk on the west side of the street. He seems to be *waiting*,⁴³ waiting for something to happen or for what Bittner calls the untoward.

9. At five o'clock in the day and at other times something is happening, something perhaps not as interesting as the occasional good fight, but at least some presence and movement of people: there are times when heavy traffic moves by or may be stalled by the lights. The people in the cars can look out and see a clean, old, white male, dressed like a worker or with the look of a laboring man somehow displayed in his appearance and manner, obviously at the moment not working, looking as though he were waiting for something to happen, standing there and *looking back*: he is taking in the men around him and the others, watching especially the people from uptown who happen to be on the street.

Given the heavy traffic, the shopping in the sporting goods stores and the hock shops, and some slumming⁴⁴ in the bars, a confrontation can happen between any man on the street and a person who does not belong there. The person from uptown can look at the man and the man can look back and the two might just take note that there is a difference between them. A final diacritical feature then may not actually reach the level of awareness in the encounters with the man on the street: looking *different*.⁴⁵

There are other diacritical characteristics not included in this picture of the man as encountered: illness,⁴⁶ a drinking problem,⁴⁷ timidity,⁴⁸ confusion, pride⁴⁹ and other hidden aspects of the body, the psyche and the person.

These may not show at first glance and yet be the controlling personal features in the life of any single man. It will not be clear, simply from seeing him standing there that he is likely to be unattached, badly connected or perhaps completely dissociated⁵⁰ from persons in the greater society away from the street.

The Way the Person Is

The person in skid row on Larimer quite likely *does have* all of the characteristics noted above: he can be expected to be a *white, clean, old pensioner or working man not working* at all or as much or as effectively as he once did, showing on occasion that he is different and quite able to recognize his difference from others uptown. A good deal of the time he will be *sober*, at least not staggering drunk in public, though he may have a drinking problem. There will be characteristics perhaps not immediately apparent: he can be seriously ill, disturbed mentally, confused, ignorant and beat. The occasional man is seemingly quite in control of himself. On this street in particular the question goes with him: what's his problem?

A man will not be a member of skid row without a history. The history will have these parts: 1. The experience of severance to various degrees from the larger society,⁵¹ economically, socially and psychically; 2. The experience of integration to various degrees into the life and culture of skid row.⁵²

The story of severance is taken up in our section on accounting where we seek to report how and why persons come into a street such as Larimer. In this section we point to the adjustment of the homeless man to Larimer Street, to its facilities and its associations. Many of the vignettes listed under the section of encountering describe this adjustment.⁵³

Note first the *economic requirements*. Coming on the street and staying there requires for some men no money at all,⁵⁴ for others, very small amounts used up each day and

⁴² Standard Exceptions: Hustling the corner for a spot job early in the morning and dawdling in the alleys any time of the day to share a bottle. *Vignettes*: 23, 66, 71-73, 110, 185.

⁴³ BSR 25: pp. 54, 61. BSR 31: p 13. *Vignettes*: 12, 49, 122, 130.

⁴⁴ BSR 34: p 7. *Vignettes*: 53, 54, 226.

⁴⁵ BSR 26: pp. 24-25, 62. BSR 29: p 62. *Vignettes*: 3, 17, 35, 43, 52.

⁴⁶ BSR 25: pp. 16-17, 27-28, 43, 55. *Vignettes*: 42, 72, 74, 76, 77.

⁴⁷ BSR 25: 125-129, 135-136. *Vignettes*: 41, 44, 46, 50, 62, 103.

⁴⁸ BSR 25: p 124. BSR 26: p 29. *Vignette* 135.

⁴⁹ BSR 25: pp. 96, 111, 117. *Vignettes*: 64, 75, 95.

⁵⁰ BSR 25: pp. 45-47, 82, 105. BSR 26: pp. 25-26.

⁵¹ BSR 25: pp. 1-18. BSR 31: pp. 10, 13-14. BSR 34: pp. 9-10.

⁵² BSR 26: pp. 61, 67-70.

⁵³ *Vignettes*: 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 17, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 32, 37, 38, 42, 43, 46, 49.

⁵⁴ BRS 25: p 14. *Vignettes*: 35, 60, 63, 108, 122, 128, 130 relate to men who come to town without money.

replenished by small amounts. Holding a time-consuming, low-paying job such as dishwashing,⁵⁵ bill peddling⁵⁶ or hotel-clerking⁵⁷ seems to contribute particularly well to a steady integration with Larimer life, by providing just enough money and using up just enough time to allow a man to make a go of it over relatively long periods.⁵⁸ Thus, the marginal working man can match or surpass modestly a similarly frugal integration with the life and services of the street that the old pensioner establishes.⁵⁹ Very few can manage to stay on Larimer as total bums.⁶⁰ And very few will stay there with large or even modest amounts of money,⁶¹ since either the money will disappear rapidly⁶² or they may have the chance to go up-town or just to disappear.⁶³

Read particularly Vignettes 55, 67, 118, 239, 289, 296, 320 for examples of other economic processes and supports that bear upon coming and staying on the street.⁶⁴

Clearly there must be *social resources*⁶⁵ over and beyond economic supports. A man must get used to Larimer Street or to other skid rows. Throughout the general community there may be thousands of persons who once tried Larimer Street and couldn't take it, or didn't want it.⁶⁶ The men who stay will say that they *prefer* the street to other parts of the city.⁶⁷ This requirement of familiarity and identification with Larimer or with other skid rows is not yet well understood, though many

examples of this skid row socialization are easy to find.⁶⁸

A prime example of the building up of experience and identification with Larimer Street is supplied by the presence of able-bodied itinerant workers using Larimer Street as headquarters for living,⁶⁹ work placement⁷⁰ and fun.⁷¹ These include particularly cowboys, ranch workers and the dwindling number of employed gandy dancers who use Denver to locate jobs in the region surrounding Denver and who return for good times. *Many of these men are preparing themselves socially as well as economically for eventual retirement or semi-retirement on Larimer Street* or in another skid row: they are acquiring bit by bit familiarity, competence and preference for life on the skids.

The Indians who live in the Capitol Hill district and who come to Larimer Street to drink may represent a new type of recruitment for skid row, combining ethnic invasion with training for the skid row life. Some of the male Indians come to skid row in fairly large groups. It might happen that members of these groups will change from slumming to residence in the area. Homosexuals occasionally visit one or two of the bars. It seems a good guess that their slumming will continue without changing to residence on Larimer. The solitary white working man who leaves a residence, a job and perhaps a family elsewhere in Denver for a binge of a day, a week or a month, is the more likely candidate for skid row. He may represent the principal recruit of the future, as the economy becomes more urbanized.

In addition to social and economic resources there are personality factors that have to be treated as *psychic resources* as well as frailties.⁷² Again we are talking about matters not well understood. But again it is clear that a man must have within himself certain capacities to stand, identify with, or even enjoy the life on Larimer.

Many people would find this life absolutely intolerable and would not stay there long. Perhaps - and this is not clearly established - a good many of the men find the

⁵⁵ BSR 25: pp. 19, 23. *Vignettes*: 216, 232, 261.

⁵⁶ BSR 25: p 73. *Vignettes*: 201, 202, 218-220 and others by O'Gain, our best informer on bill peddling.

⁵⁷ BSR 25: p 31. O'Leary, O'Murray and O'Schutter are among those who have had this sort of experience.

⁵⁸ BSR 25: pp. 132-135. See footnote 51 for further comment.

⁵⁹ BSR 31: p 16. See also BSR 29 for first person account of this integration. *Vignettes*: 19, 20, 28, 194-195, 207-213.

⁶⁰ BSR 25: pp. 63-68. BSR 26: p 83.

⁶¹ *Vignettes*: 92, 106, 152.

⁶² BSR 34: p 6.

⁶³ BSR 36: p 98.

⁶⁴ An important economic feature is the system of mutual aid, for it blocks the accumulation of capital and supports the needy. It is the great equalizer. We take this opportunity to present the earnings of O'Burgess, professional stemmer. These are daily records over a two week period, taken from a notebook that O'Burgess had with him when he was interviewed: May 25th, Tuesday, \$4.75; Wednesday, \$3.35; Thursday, \$5.20; Friday, \$2.25; Saturday, \$5.50; Sunday, \$2.25; Monday, \$2.15; Tuesday, \$8.01; Wednesday, \$4.30; Thursday, \$4.00; Friday, \$3.80; Saturday, \$8.25; Sunday, \$3.60; Monday, \$4.35. Total, \$61.76. Daily average, \$4.41. Some of the money comes from spot jobs. Most of it is obtained uptown from begging. O'Burgess works every day. He has money for about ten wines after food and room on the average day. Cf. BSR 26: p 62.

⁶⁵ BSR 26: p 61.

⁶⁶ BSR 27: p 6.

⁶⁷ BSR 34: p 7. *Vignettes*: 9, 37, 38, 40, 52-53, 73, 98, 109.

⁶⁸ BSR 31: pp. 9, 14. BSR 34: pp. 3-4. BSR 27: p 24. BSR 32: p 44.

⁶⁹ BSR 25: p 41. BSR 31: p 3. *Vignettes*: 102, 103, 121, 122.

⁷⁰ BSR 34: pp. 11-12. *Vignettes*: 112-114, 121, 150, 163, 214-216.

⁷¹ BSR 25: pp. 69-70. BSR 26: p 61. *Vignette* 116.

⁷² BSR 31: p 5. BSR 26: pp. 58-60, 83-84. *Vignettes*: 38, 291.

life throughout the whole day uncomfortable, boring, empty, confusing, dangerous, troublesome. It could be that the psychic resource is simply a capacity of a man to put up with trying conditions and experiences, particularly when he is fortified by the wine and other beverages.⁷³ Drinking, getting drunk, being a drunkard may enter here as functioning *resources*, going with and making for the toleration of skid row life, given the severance from another society.

The whole problem of resources - economic, social and psychic - *within or going with the individual*,⁷⁴ making it possible for him to accept, enter into and continue in the life on Larimer Street, is a Gordian knot, yet to be cut by study and practical action. Middle class people and perhaps the men themselves can't understand what there is *within the man that fits him for skid row*.⁷⁵ Something is acquired that puts and keeps him apart, that is not found in other poor, lonely, old working men living in other parts of the city.

Consider now whatever it is the man has, not as resources, but simply as possessions he brings to or finds on the street. Generally, the man on Larimer is at once culturally deprived and culture-free. He can arrive on the street with virtually nothing of value,⁷⁶ perhaps, as Johnny O'Leary said, wearing his wardrobe or carrying a California suitcase. It is not unusual, especially when he is broke, for him to divest himself of all possessions that can be pawned or sold. He has basically only four material wants: drink, cigarettes, food, and clothing, all procurable, often without money, from day to day right on the street.⁷⁷ He may further want books, none of which he accumulates except to trade for other books.⁷⁸ If he stays on the street he has no car, no keepsakes beyond a few photographs, no tools, and no weapons other than possibly a knife. The knife may send him off the street abruptly.⁷⁹ He may possess a radio during prosperous times, but not a TV, unless he is the exceptional provisioner that a few old

pensioners are. If he is not a pensioner with a monthly income, his needs for sleep and for sleeping one off are not often met through the long-term acquirement of a place, but more often through day to day or week to week renting when he is fortunate, otherwise through *ad hoc* appropriations of old cars, trucks or box cars.⁸⁰ Many of the men go through long stretches of the day or even the night or the week without an address.

Essentially his possessed culture is reduced largely to conduct, particularly to the conducting of conversations.

We have noticed above the quality of waiting that characterizes much of the conduct. Much of the waiting in turn can be waiting for nothing or for what might just turn up, such as a friend with a little money, a good fight on the street or some person from uptown worth watching or perhaps worth hitting for a dime. Nothing to do describes the moments more than the things to do. And so much of the conduct is literally pass-time. A basic possession is then patience for the passage of time.

Watching the action more times than not is no more than watching traffic on the street and the people walking by. Talking and drinking are the best pastimes.⁸¹ The most enjoyable cultural activity on Larimer is simply sitting in a bar over a drink talking about past and possibly glorious actions, about ancient feats and experiences on the road, on the job or in the Army.⁸² Talk, especially talk in the bars or up in the room over a jug, like the rest of conduct wanders and dallies, seemingly starting anywhere and leading anywhere or nowhere. Correction: the talk and the thinking behind the talk does reach a blurred focus: most often when it wanders from the idlings and peeves of the day, that talk points backwards, back to meaningful, sometimes amusing, sometimes sad, experiences that are finished.⁸³ The view into the future is amazingly short and empty of the architecture of good expectations that can go with youth. The talk among habitués of all ages is for the most part precisely re-collections of old men.

⁷³ BSR 25: pp. 80-82. *Vignette* 223.

⁷⁴ BSR 34: pp.9-10.

⁷⁵ BSR 31: p 4.

⁷⁶ *Vignettes*: 62, 122. Exception: the live one. See BSR 26: p 61.

⁷⁷ BSR 35: pp. 2-6. *Vignette* 185.

⁷⁸ BSR 25: pp.35-37. BSR 35: p 2, 9.

⁷⁹ BSR 26: pp. 52-53. BSR 32: p 20.

⁸⁰ *Vignettes*: 196, 284, 285, 286.

⁸¹ BSR 26: pp. 77-78. BSR 35: pp. 2-3. *Vignettes*: 185-188, 212.

⁸² BSR 25: p 51.

⁸³ BSR 34: p 10. *Vignettes*: 40, 42, 335.

Thus, it is silly to ask the man on Larimer what he will do in the event that the street will be destroyed.⁸⁴ He will wave his hand at plans while he and you know that he will do what he has to when he comes to it. He can, as we have hinted, give a detailed report on his past. One gains the impression that he may have thought more about his past than most people do, since his life has so few attractive prospects - and presences.

It is easy to say in the words of Harry Stack Sullivan that he is a pathetic caricature of what he might have been,⁸⁵ since every adult is a pathetic caricature of what he might have been. The big difference perhaps between a man on Larimer and some others is that he is relentlessly living out the caricature. If the man is really on the skids he is reduced to the *caricature of what he once was*. All this has great practical consequences, for it can be that if, either in actions or hopes, he is still living out something that he cannot carry into the future, he may indeed go through the days celebrating failure and finding consolation in drink.⁸⁶ Most of the men will not leave the street or such a street if this requires restoration to former glories and comforts.

The Way the Society Is

None of the standard definitions of society fit Larimer Street. It is not self-supporting, self-reproducing, self-controlling, self-moving. Economically the Larimer population stands generally in a state of pathetic dependency upon the rest of the community.⁸⁷

Generally, the social functions expected to be served or carried out by society are not indeed managed by the men on Larimer. Functional analysis would place these men simply as subservient or disjoined figures in the greater society.⁸⁸ To describe *a society between them* in functional terms would produce a picture of an empty or withered social organization with most of the parts missing.

Still it is important both practically and theoretically to see the society on Larimer Street for what it is. There is more than a

conjumble of social isolates. *More than in other parts of the city*, persons on Larimer have found and become involved in society in the original meaning of that term. This is the society that literally is *conviviality*: more clearly here than elsewhere a man can see himself *living the life together* with others like him.⁸⁹ Even if the men of Larimer were all loners, which they are not, they would be and they themselves would see that they are loners living together.⁹⁰ sixty of them at a time stretched on cots at night in the dormitories, sixty lined up at the bar in the Gold Mine, sixty on the sidewalk and another sixty up the street with still another sixty across the street taking the ear-beating. Whether very much goes on between these men or not, each one who stays on the street any length of time becomes a *convive*,⁹¹ one who not only leads a life much like that of others, but who is *there to see the others leading this same life*.⁹² Thus Larimer is an essential society in this particular respect: in this place any otherwise dissociated man, whether he realized it or not, finds himself in a *hall of mirrors*. Surrounding every man are distorted images of himself.⁹³

It may seem a private affair how each man cut or was forced out from the larger society,⁹⁴ how he may have reduced his responsibilities to looking after himself or less than that, how he makes a go of it, and the rest. If he has come to Larimer Street, he will have chosen exactly the place where his own life is an old story. His reflections beat him to the fun-house. As a general-life-role, for his past, for his existence on the street and for a future has been tried by others before him.⁹⁵

Whether a man abandoned a rich culture or never had one, he arrives on Larimer with a few possessions⁹⁶ or resources that he will keep or use for very long. Thus *public*⁹⁷ provisions - the cot in the flop-house, the cooked meal in the café, the second-hand clothes, the drink in the bar - constitute most

⁸⁴ *Vignettes*: 329-368.

⁸⁵ *Vignette* 111.

⁸⁶ BSR 27: p 35.

⁸⁷ BSR 34: pp. 10-11. *Vignettes*: 3, 22, 23, 28, 59, 56, 66, 61.

⁸⁸ BSR 31: p 3.

⁸⁹ *Vignette* 368. BSR 26: p 62.

⁹⁰ BSR 25: p 66. *Vignette* 40.

⁹¹ *Vignettes*: 67, 80.

⁹² BSR 26: p 61.

⁹³ Note again the evidence in BSR 33: exp. P 4. *Vignette* 38.

⁹⁴ *Vignettes*: 133, 134, 124, 127. BSR 34: p 10.

⁹⁵ BSR 31: p 10.

⁹⁶ BSR 25: pp. 10-11. *Vignette* 63.

⁹⁷ BSR 26: pp. 93-94.

of the culture of Larimer society.⁹⁸ A standardized catering culture, undirected by the men, has developed to meet the elementary needs of the *standardized man on the skids*.⁹⁹ Larimer is in full actuality, through its missions, dormitories, bars and beaneries, a well-greased skid, quite prepared to handle any man who tries to make it there. The control culture of the police keeps that skid running smoothly.¹⁰⁰ A general operating culture, most of which is supplied and applied to the men, rather than by them, has ordered the life. And each man sees the many around him fitting in just as he does. This is conviviality in the literal sense.

Larimer is a basic society in another respect: on the street there is *sociability*,¹⁰¹ again something not so easy to find in other parts of Denver. On skid row sociability is relatively private in only three locations, in the hotel room, in the alley and under the bridge, all of them scenes for jug parties.¹⁰² Most sociability is carried on in such very public places¹⁰³ as the missions, the cafes, the hotel lobbies, the sidewalks and the bars. The inner action, thus, whatever it is that the men themselves get into together, is largely on display. Even a loner can be in the bar or sauntering along the street, watching the rest, taking in their conversations, seeing the occasional fight and the disturbances leading to arrest. The society of human exchange and interchange is very much on the street, there to see or to get into, as it is in the squares and market places in most parts of the world outside to the United States. Most of the outright expression of sociability is, as we have noted, just talk.¹⁰⁴ If there is a jug or sixty-nine cents for a jug something more than talk may go into the sociability.¹⁰⁵

Characterize the sociability further as follows: naturally enough in this locality it is *masculine*: with luck, every night is a night out with the boys; and it is *juvenile*, fettered by the police and the bartenders, subdued by age, but generally unrestrained from within or between the men, all of it making up a good time when

this is possible but none of it good for anything. Most notably there is nothing established between the men to restrain especially the flow of that which heightens the sociability: *social drinking* is the prized Larimer engagement. Drinking is real engagement, the main social fact for many of these men.¹⁰⁶ Call all of this a *peer society*, with stress on casual associations and short-lived involvements standing in for and sometimes constituting or leading up to companionship of some duration.¹⁰⁷ The basic human relationships are such as would be struck up between boys. Larimer is a society of tired old boys ready to have a good time when this can be managed.

Community Relations

We saw the conviviality and the sociability and not much else that could be called society between the men on Larimer. They rarely enter into durable relationships with one another that can be recognized as implementary or complementary. Hardly ever do the men do anything or complete anything for or with one another except through the play and concern of friendly sociability, particularly through the heightened sociability of social drinking and conversation: when you really have it, buy a round of drinks; when you have a little, buy a friend a drink or flop; let a friend cadge you for a few bucks; let a stranger cadge you for a dime - one time; put fifteen cents in on a jug; if a man wants to talk and especially if he will buy you a drink, let him talk. There are these camaraderies and decencies, many of them sensitive expressions of respect, support and good feeling for others that texture a skid-row society.¹⁰⁸

Well, help a buddy out, and when you're down, he'll help you out. There's a lot of that. But still, most of the well-structured implementary and complementary involvements are not provided *within* their society. The men have generally abandoned or never knew or never took seriously being husbands, fathers, bureaucrats, union members,

⁹⁸ BSR 25: pp. 51-54, BSR 34: p 7. *Vignettes*: See the Daily Round, vol. II, pp. 6-27, esp. 85-86, 272.

⁹⁹ BSR 33: p 7. *Vignette* 103.

¹⁰⁰ BSR 32: pp. 22, 35-36, 46. BSR 26: p 32 *et passim*.

¹⁰¹ *Vignettes*: 37, 44, 55, 56, 88, 109, 320. BSR 34: p 7.

¹⁰² BSR 26: p 93. BSR 32: pp. 37, 43.

¹⁰³ BSR 32: pp. 3, 28. *Vignette* 215.

¹⁰⁴ *Vignettes*: 188, 212. BSR 35: pp. 2, 10.

¹⁰⁵ BSR 34: p 4. *Vignettes*: 194, 239, 289.

¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, friendship has abrupt limits. Cf. BSR 26: p 44.

¹⁰⁷ *Vignettes*: 313-322. O'Sylvester has been with this set of chance acquaintances for two or three months and from the east coast to Denver.

¹⁰⁸ BSR 25: pp. 62-63. BSR 34: p 13. BSR 32: p 44. *Vignettes*: 46, 55, 288, 289.

steady workers and the rest.¹⁰⁹ Most of them never had to be bosses, teachers, civil servants or active citizens. The greater society with its complex web of responsible positions and activities contrasts with the street where friendly spur-of-the-moment handouts and commiserations fulfill responsibilities between the men. In most instances it is more than enough for each man to look after himself. It is either too much or has not been necessary for the men to set up between themselves any social organization or even scattered institutionalized roles for keeping things going or for getting things started or done. All this is done by people and organizations from off the street, by the police, the mission workers, social workers, the bartenders and the employers.¹¹⁰ The men are fitted, both individually and in the way that the whole lot of them are serviced, controlled and contained, to a social order that is not of their making.¹¹¹ On Larimer Street they stand to the side of that order, apart from it in a complementary sense for the whole lot of them.¹¹² When they move out to work, to sell their blood or their services, they function in the general society, again in a minor complementary fashion by fulfilling or providing some meager thing others want or want done.

It is easy for a man on Larimer to notice the great distinction between the peer society in which with good fortune and fair health he can *play* a part simply as a person and the social and economic order of the greater society in which as a menial to a highly limited extent he is allowed to *fulfill* a part that is not of his doing or the doing of anyone like him.¹¹³ Everyone notices such a difference in his own life between parts to be played and parts to be fulfilled. But each man on the street can note the distinction, not only in his individual experience, but *in the two societies* that envelop him. He can see himself very plainly as dissociated from the general community. It's just as easy for that convivial lot of men among

whom he is thrown to be seen by him as an unattached society. Play with the idea here of a greater community making anomie possible for a whole lesser society, not simply for its members.

Practicalities

A dormitory, an eating place where anyone can enter, and a bar serving fortified wine, beer and whiskey are facilities enough for skid row.¹¹⁴ A slave market, a reading room, a liquor store, a barber college, free access to the sidewalk and the opportunity to work for and pawn clothes, or course add to its comforts and utilities. Large numbers of men have a way of attracting these facilities and they can provide the rest. Spontaneously they can present themselves in various stages of disengagement and disenchantment. And it is no trouble at all for them to develop, even within a day, without organization or plans their resilient peer society that can keep going without end. Many a man starts on skid row because of a drinking problem or some other personal twitch and *stays there because he prefers the company or does not dare leave it*. Skid row society lasts, because *it*, with the places it occupies, is a haven. A man will stay away from skid row only should he find that the larger society holds better havens. Practical question: where are the havens - other than Larimer Street?

In this section we have taken up the social, economic and physical characteristics prerequisite to living in the area and some critical psycho-socio-economic characteristics of the people there. The next section will take note of distinctions drawn or differences observed on the street.

ii

Counting

Who's on the Scene and who belongs there

In this brief section on counting we emphasize difficulties that are set for social surveys by actual counting processes on the street. The men aren't waiting around for social scientists to tell them who they are and what they are

¹⁰⁹ *Vignettes*: 130, 131, 155.

¹¹⁰ BSR 31: pp. 5, 14-15. BSR 32: pp. 20, 42. BSR 26: pp. 21, 57, 63, 66, 82, 91.

¹¹¹ BSR 27: p 47.

¹¹² There are certain signs that the men realize they are playing complementary roles, albeit without their consent. See *Vignettes*: 178, 250, 261.

¹¹³ BSR 27: p 50. *Vignettes*: 146, 167, 168, 345, 367.

¹¹⁴ BSR 31: p 3.

like. The counting never ceases on the street. Categories and identities of social types are forever being formed, confirmed, displayed and then confounded, violated and changed.¹¹⁵

The scene confuses. The men describe social types with some clarity and then qualify their classification, in consideration of the confusion that they are well aware of.¹¹⁶ A good report contains some of that confusion if it is to include the realities that are vague and mixed.

The vignettes in the section on counting¹¹⁷ display just a few of the social types perceived on the street. In this report several of the more noteworthy types are considered. Here we wish to emphasize confusions of classification. In the next section on accounting a general attempt is made to see how types, however confounded, seem to fit into a general skid row process.

Classificatory decisions about the men made by persons and organizations off the street are the clearest.¹¹⁸ And these decisions are of greatest importance since they bear on means and ways of survival. The old pensioner for the rest of his life has got it modestly made. And the gandy dancer with unemployment compensation or rocking chair money has it made for a while. The latter can come on the street for a short while as a live one,¹¹⁹ as one who can be hit for a drink or a flop. Even the old pensioner with a little extra money at the first of the month will play his role and be played a little differently, all because of official decisions made off the street.¹²⁰ Off the street decisions produce stable, operative social categories that make for critical distinctions in skid row society. *Working man* or *pensioner* are two chief off-street categorizations that the men will try to fit their lives to.¹²¹

Working Man

Every man plays subtly or as well as he can with the classificatory system. Consider the old drink cadger, the man devoting most of his

time to bumming off the other men for the daily necessities. Such a man will present himself to the other men as a worker though he knows that they know that he may not have found even a one-day spot job within recent memory. At mission services this same man, though completely irreligious, may devoutly take the nose-dive, should this bring some short-term economic advantage. And the story can be extended. A single individual can, without leaving a booth in the bar, fall into half dozen categories of social types on the street: ranch worker or gandy dancer down on his luck, spot jobber, mission stiff, bum or drink cadger. He is all of these historic figures.¹²² And it is never absolutely clear, especially to himself when he has slipped from one role to the next: our vignettes necessarily display life complexities.¹²³

A good many of the men are by no means so complex. Many seem to have established well-ordered lives, for instance as bill peddlers, dishwashers and the like. During the working hours they are indeed working. And during the evening they may be in the bars drinking moderately and otherwise carrying on in uncomplicated ways.¹²⁴ It is impossible to describe what a man is in a glance or following a simple conversation. And fortunes change. The individual who has held a steady job in a warehouse or in a restaurant for a number of months and who may even have kept off the bottle during that time may appear on the scene, for seemingly unaccountable reasons, in as bad a state as the long-term drink cadger. Just as unpredictably he may get hold of himself and get back into fairly steady employment. Some social categories appear to be fairly stable. But an individual's involvement with these categories can be astoundingly complicated.

Drunk

Drinking and drunkenness confound further. Essentially a man does not exist on Larimer outside of a classificatory system of drinking behavior where the drinking behavior is totally confusing. There are many considerations: 1.

¹¹⁵ BSR 32: pp. 13-14.

¹¹⁶ *Vignettes*: 108-109, 168, 267-268.

¹¹⁷ *Vignettes*: 28-58.

¹¹⁸ BSR 31: pp. 3-5, 10-11, 13. BSR 27: p55.

¹¹⁹ BSR 26: p 62.

¹²⁰ BSR 25: p 59.

¹²¹ *Vignettes*. *Working man*: 29, 31, 32, 36, 39, 42, 43, 46, 57, 58. *Pensioner*: 28, 32, 42, 44, 45, 48, 59.

¹²² BSR 25: pp. 64-66.

¹²³ *Vignettes*: 32, 41, 55, 56.

¹²⁴ *Vignettes*: 36, 39, 46, 49.

Everyone on the street drinks.¹²⁵ This point seems to be confirmed over and over again. And yet over and over again it is said that there are many who never take a drink. 2. The men not reputed to drink are all simply exercising extreme restraint over an old compulsion: the rare instance of the man who does not drink turns out to be one who was once the worst drunkard on the street. Still it is said that there are many who never drank or never drank excessively.¹²⁶ 3. The moderate drinker is pointed out. It turns out very often that he is an old pensioner who cannot afford to drink excessively or is just not inclined to drink *any longer*. Among the younger men the sober or the more moderate drinkers could well be persons who are at the moment economically restrained.¹²⁷ 4. Take a sober younger man, one encountered every day on Larimer Street and never seen drinking more than a beer or two. Here is a man who obviously can hold his liquor. Get his story and it will not be strange to find in it the several arrests for drunkenness. 5. Consider the police reports. There is no doubt that most instances of reported drunkenness are judged to be actual drunkenness by bystanders viewing the scene. Still, it is known that drunkenness is a standard charge against anyone on Larimer Street picked up in any disturbance.¹²⁸ It is not apparent how drunkenness is proved. Indeed it is very doubtful that any charge of drunkenness is proved or could stand up in court if it were challenged by a competent lawyer: the police use reasonable humanistic judgment in recognizing drunkenness, not objective tests.¹²⁹ 6. What is there to do about the confusion between displays of drunkenness perhaps leading to arrests, displays of friendly and most often subdued social drinking, displays of physical and psychic deterioration perhaps connected with drinking and sometimes requiring a call for the ambulance, and

demeanor interpreted as general personality deterioration making a man out to be a drunk or as an alcoholic for the course of his life?

On any particular occasion, say on a Saturday night, the amount of drinking and drunkenness can be strongly characterized, perhaps fairly objectively in terms of numbers of drunk arrests and the like. The judgment may be further made that drinking is much more of a problem on Larimer Street than elsewhere, allowing even for the many persons who come from other parts of Denver to Larimer Street to drink. However, the particular individuals involved in all this are not so easily typed. At any moment it is by no means clear whether a man is starting a binge or finishing up, whether he is excessively drunk just for the night or over a long span.¹³⁰ Drink is a great leveler.¹³¹ And no one is indeed making the reliable count of how each man is caught by the thirst. A man's judgments about himself are especially unreliable, since so many men, depending upon the occasion, present themselves as greater drunks than they really are while others are trying to hide the weakness. Men who have well established reputations as rumdums will appear often enough as surprisingly sober. And the sober ones show up drunk. We would not rust any classificatory system of drunkenness made by outsiders simply on the basis of behavior displayed on a few occasions or of declarations in a single interview.

The classification of alcoholic is particularly suspect. Here is a middle class categorization carrying with it rather mysterious personality assessments and imputations that are sometimes clumsily attempted on Larimer Street. The men are familiar with the term¹³² and some of them have even tried it out in their own lives:¹³³ a number have attended discussion sessions for alcoholics or have even visited hospitals briefly in the search of treatment for their drinking problems. Most of them, however, have received no training that helps them to make alcoholic a viable term, particularly to look upon compulsive drinking

¹²⁵ BSR 26: pp. 78-80. *Vignettes*: 35, 41, 44, 45.

¹²⁶ *Vignettes*: 46, 147. Minority report: O'Desevich, etc.

¹²⁷ BSR 25: p 54. BSR 27: p 17. Pensioners: *Vignettes*: 25, 43, 44.

¹²⁸ BSR 31: p 9. BSR 20 illustrates in detail an arrest for drunkenness automatically connected with other charges.

¹²⁹ Question: Are there objective tests? For actual tests see *Vignettes*: 34, 39. The remarks here are by no means intended to be critical of the police. They are charged with maintaining law and order and they have no choice but to make strong assessments as to whether a man is violating law and order: a drunk on the street is an invitation to a roll job. He is marked as a victim for crime. The police have to get him off the street.

¹³⁰ *Vignettes*: 53-54, 230.

¹³¹ *Vignette* 52. BSR 26: p 62.

¹³² *Vignettes*: 41, 47, 159.

¹³³ *Vignettes*: 109, 145-147. BSR 31: p 4.

as an illness.¹³⁴ Even if they wanted to describe the difficulty as an illness they have no help on or off the street in dealing with this illness.¹³⁵ On Larimer Street they have yet to learn to *be* alcoholics beset by an illness as so many in the middle class do. In actuality they have learned various ways to be drunks. And they have found further that drunkenness is a crime calling for repeated incarceration in the City Jail.

On the street there are stereotyped stories of deterioration, of hitting bottom and of the move, for example, from a preference for whiskey and beer to wine and of the shift from social drinking to the sodden, sullen, solitary drinking in the room. No doubt these patterns exist in actuality but our study did not enable us to sift the realities from the stereotyped myths.

On the street realities are not separated from stereotypes. No doubt the men are deciding about themselves and others that they are playing out certain inevitable drinking roles. They receive very little training or encouragement to try roles other than those linked with deterioration. An so the classificatory system, however befuddling, serves not only to describe what comes of drinking but also provides instructions on how to carry out destructive work. The rules for becoming derelict among derelicts on Larimer are well worked out, whereas the rules for breaking or controlling the habit are pathetically missing or confused.

Old-Timer

One distinction is important, not only on the street but for the interests of our study. The classification of old-timer is not idle. An old-timer is objectively defined on the street as one who has been there a vague length of time called a while. Upon inquiry this while may extend for less than a year or for an astounding long time of two or three or four decades. A man defines himself as an old-timer essentially if he has decided to settle down on Larimer

Street. Here he has made the combined choice of Denver as his residence and skid row as his culture and way of life.¹³⁶

Classificatory confusions again show: 1. A man may be a long-time resident of Denver and frequent visitor to Larimer Street and yet not identified either in his own mind or in the outlook of others as a permanent inhabitant of the street. This man has an address, a job and perhaps a family and children elsewhere in the city. At the same time hotel records may place him in residence on Larimer as much as at home.¹³⁷ 2. A man may take Denver and Larimer Street as his base of operations and yet be away from the street a good deal of time, working or looking for work in the region surrounding the city. Physically he may be away a good deal. Psychically he identifies with Denver, returns to it from time to time, eventually may settle down there on or near Larimer.¹³⁸ 3. Another man, say a cowboy, can hang around Larimer Street for quite a while, not looking too hard for a job, and yet not identified with Larimer Street as his home or as a permanent base of operations. Without bothering he could be satisfying official rules of residence that he might have reason to exploit later. He is the actual habitué, not admitting to membership in skid row society.¹³⁹ 4. The experienced drifter can bring about an exquisite classificatory confusion. He knows what Larimer Street is like without having visited it, for he has seen other skid rows all his life. If he chooses, he can fit into Larimer Street in a day as a bum, a spot jobber, a drink cadger, or as a mission stiff. The chances are actually very good that this man will have been on Larimer Street many times in his life and might even provide a fairly good formal record of residence if his intentions are not questioned closely.¹⁴⁰

What does it actually take to be an old-timer? At the most five days are required to get the resources to move from the Citizens Mission into the Clay or the Inter-Ocean. It seems to be the case, this summer at least, that there is work in Denver for the man who seeks

¹³⁴ According to Dr. Paul Binner, Director of the Research Department of the Fort Logan mental Health Center, one hundred seventy individuals from the Larimer Street area have received some treatment in the Alcoholics Division of that institution during the past three years. In that three-year period, a total of two thousand three hundred thirty individuals were admitted to the Alcoholics Division.

¹³⁵ BSR 27: p 16.

¹³⁶ BSR 33: p 6. BSR 25: p 62. BSR 31: p 14.

¹³⁷ *Vignettes*: 53, 54. See also *Vignettes*: 37, 38.

¹³⁸ *Vignettes*: 138, 151, 153. BSR 31: p 7.

¹³⁹ *Vignettes*: 81, 112, 150, 234, 235.

¹⁴⁰ *Vignettes*: 60, 102, 103, 108, 121, 131. BSR 27: pp. 63, 64.

it. Within five days a man can find either temporary or fairly permanent menial employment through the mission, on the corner, battling the dogs, or even in some instances at the employment agencies.¹⁴¹ If a man has enough for a week's stay at the Clay and especially if he has some acquaintance with skid rows in other parts of the country, he can place himself about on the same footing both economically and socially as any man who has been on the street for many years.¹⁴²

Now we think it is the case on Larimer as it seems to be on other skid rows throughout the country that *the men generally are settling down*. There are strong inducements for settlement. Aging and ill health and perhaps a drinking problem may necessitate changes of employment or the abandonment of employment.¹⁴³ Pensions are linked to residence and the men know this very well, so that as they approach or pass the age of fifty, they think about their record of residence.¹⁴⁴ Jobs away from the city - construction work, railway work, mining, ranch work, essentially the occupations of primary industry - are viewed by the men as shrinking in number and becoming more demanding in skill so that they see themselves pushed off the working scene in the region.¹⁴⁵ Bit by bit then Larimer is turning into a community of old-timers, of men who actually stay on the scene over long periods of time and *think they belong there*. The big change for Larimer Street is probably its conversion into a settlement: *the men are quietly getting in on the count of permanent residents*.¹⁴⁶

In this section we have continued our discussion of the psycho-socio-economic characteristics of the people in the area. We have sought to bring emphasis to several of the more critical characteristics, particularly those connected with drinking and with residence. Social types are discussed further in the next section on accounting in which we present a general picture of what is happening to different sorts of persons as they come into Larimer and as some of them remain there.

¹⁴¹ The employment agency seems to be a poor aid for job-finding. *Vignettes*: 188, 189, 260, 278, 308.

¹⁴² BSR 27: pp. 30-33.

¹⁴³ *Vignettes*: 136, 140, 158, 172. BSR 31: p 11. BSR 35: p 4.

¹⁴⁴ *Vignettes*: 309, 310, 346. BSR 27: pp. 7-8. BSR 32: p 44.

¹⁴⁵ BSR 31: p 8. *Vignettes*: 12, 72, 144, 155, 190-192, 216.

¹⁴⁶ *Vignettes*: 28, 32, 42-43, 59, 79, 115.

iii

Accounting

How and why persons come to the scene and how and why they stay

Details of coming and staying on the street are illustrated particularly in the vignettes on accounting.¹⁴⁷ Every man can not only describe in rather amazing detail what he has done before coming to Denver and how he managed since, but also can provide explanations with reasonable excuses and with justifications, lamentations and critiques.

We deliberately allowed the men to tell their stories *as they wished to present them*. Most of the stories were *tales of woe*. Almost always a man would establish between himself and his interviewer the presumption that he was giving an account of mis-fortunes leading to Larimer and of further tribulations keeping him there. It was not as though we were talking to sweepstake winners, elected politicians or TV personalities celebrating success. We were talking to losers, to men who went to some trouble to present themselves as losers and who took it as a matter of course that various events in their lives were to be interpreted as regrettable. Along with the tale of woe were occasional prideful reports on competence, some good luck, some success, and even petty triumphs over trying circumstances and people, all of which did not keep them off the street. And with this they showed cavalierly or dolefully how, with some competence, they were facing up to the special life on the street.¹⁴⁸

The standard woeful account points then to past glories and luck or at least to tolerable survival, giving way through increasing trials and troubles to the eventual skid row submersion where a man can manage. By and large this seems to be the true story: much better times, then leaner and troublesome times and now barely tolerable times. This is an old man's story, holding, as we have noted, for many chronologically youngish men.

¹⁴⁷ *Vignettes*: 59-135.

¹⁴⁸ BSR 35: These reports, written by men on the street, illustrate "facing up to the special life on the street".

Most of the men encountered on Larimer, particularly those over forty, had severed strong connections with the general society long before they hit the street. Critical test: they have failed either to establish families or to stay with them.¹⁴⁹ The fact that they are now on Larimer is simply conclusive evidence of their severance from families and from the full society. In many instances separation from the general society may not have been a particularly tragic affair. Many of the men will simply tell how they left home and hit the road to look for work. Having found employment in one of the primary industries of ranching, mining or the like, they simply fell into a way of life keeping them apart from the regular society.

These men have not lived in a social vacuum. Though separated from the full society, principally by the nature of their work, nonetheless they were well integrated into a masculine society with its masculine culture. Many of the men on Larimer thus had known two great phases in their adult life: enmasculation in their younger years and emasculation in their years of retirement and semi retirement. In the accompanying chart we have construed a general model of the great phases of their lives.

The Enmasculated Life

As the title indicates, this is the life dominated and characterized principally by the manly arts, particularly by heavy labor requiring the strong back. As shown in our diagram the miner, the cowboy, and the gandy dancer are good representatives of the sorts of person belonging there. The way the soldier has to live also brings him into this group. Very often the manly tasks force physical isolation on the men: the barracks and the bunkhouse are substitutes for the home or are the home. Other characteristics: seasonal employment away from town and erratic employment at fairly high wages in town; spendthrift economy or saving only to get through the winter; extensive travel in and out of town either to work locations or back and forth from work to town for celebrations.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ BSR 32: p 42. BSR 34: p 10. *Vignettes*: 69, 79, 83, 89, 94, 100, 117, 119, 124, 127, 129, 133.

¹⁵⁰ *Vignettes*: 26, 47, 52, 67, 81, 116. BSR 26: pp. 60-61.

Millions of men can point to the periods in their life when they were enmasculated either by a hitch in the Army or by some sort of work experience. The men caught up on Larimer are simply those still entangled in disentanglement from the full community.

How this came to be *for so many men together* is not yet explained.

The Emasculated Life

We refer here to men on skid row forced to abandon the manly arts but still severed from the general society. The emasculated life is made up then of activities that by comparison might be called the unmanly arts, types of work that can be carried on in spite of a weak back. The dormitory is substituted for the barracks and the bunkhouse. As we have noted above, steady employment at low wages is possible and even preferred here. The spendthrift economy is converted into penny-pinching: the objective is not only to get through the winter but perhaps simply through any week or day of the year.¹⁵¹ Camaraderie is retained, though toned down by age, ill health, and poverty.¹⁵² The dishwasher doing woman's work and the bill peddler doing boy's work are representative of this emasculated life.

Our diagram could have included many special linkages between particular social types. We wish to emphasize however the great shift between the more virile life stage that represents essentially a move to retirement. The weak back, so very often mentioned by the men on Larimer, symbolizes the shift to the emasculated life.¹⁵³

Larimer Street is involved in all the life-time phases of employment, unemployment and retirement of dissociated men. It still serves as a location for hiring¹⁵⁴ and for celebration, as winter quarters, and as a place to stay without a job. Larimer is important as the actual location of the shift from the enmasculated occupations, a change sometimes brought on gradually, as when a gandy dancer

¹⁵¹ *Vignettes*: 13-18, 25, 27. BSR 25: p 132. BSR 32: p 27.

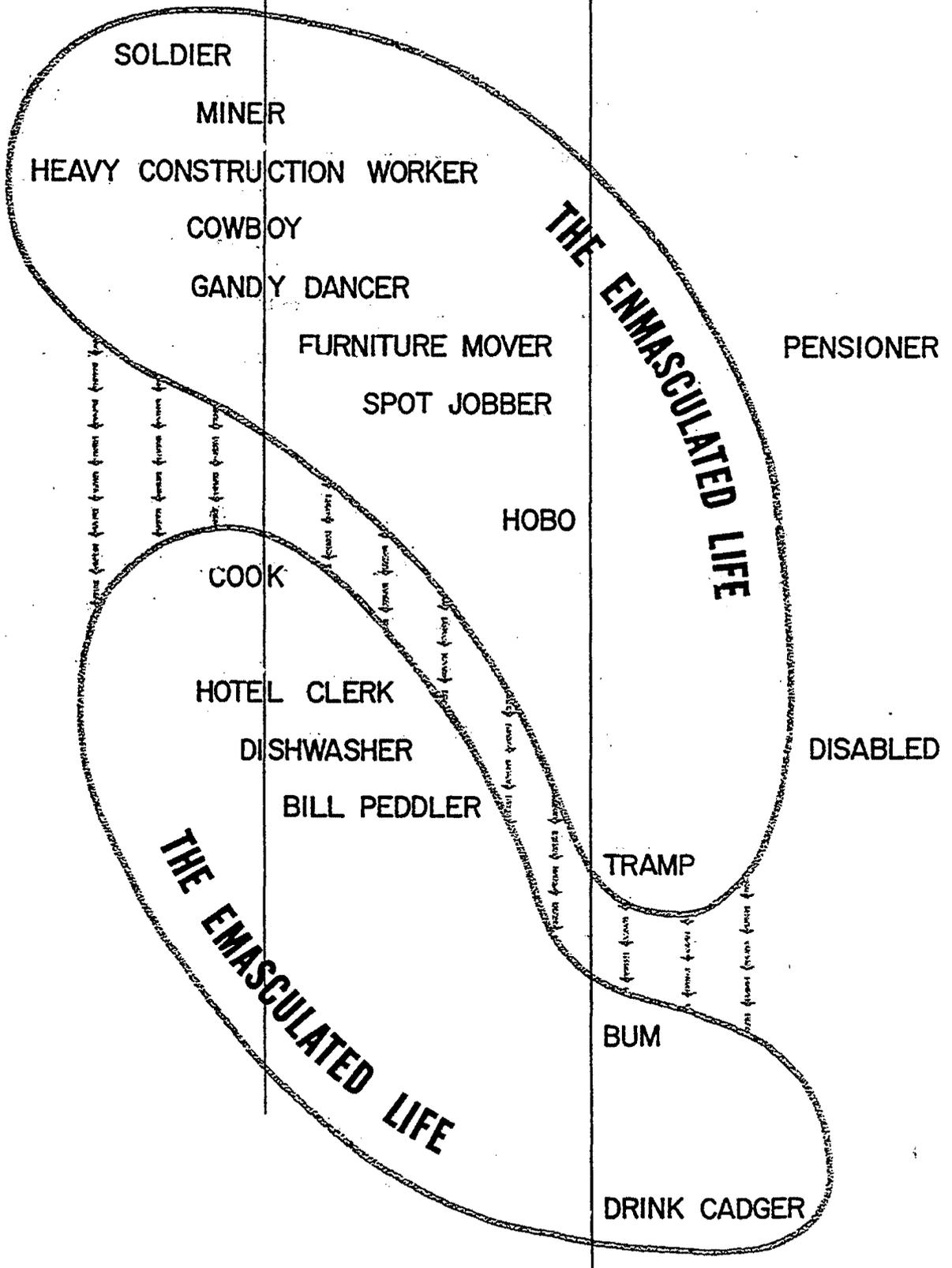
¹⁵² *Vignettes*: 35, 67, 194, 212, 230, 239, 284, 319.

¹⁵³ In the survey conducted by the Housing Section of Health and Hospitals, in April, 1965, the most prevalent complaint of persons interviewed was back trouble.

¹⁵⁴ *Vignettes*: 112, 150, 235.

HALF-EMPLOYED ||||| HALF RETIRED ||||| RETIRED

THE LESS WORTHY ||||| THE WORTHY



THE UNATTACHED SOCIETY

may temporarily take up bill peddling,¹⁵⁵ and sometimes induced drastically and dramatically as for those who fall sick or are hurt.¹⁵⁶

Drinking pervades both phases of the life.

Forecast

On the street the prediction is sometimes made that skid row will be kept going by men coming out of the Armed Services who will not be able to stand the life in the general community.¹⁵⁷ This prediction should be taken seriously. Perhaps it points to a change in the recruitment processes for skid row in the future. It could well be that the prime skid row candidates today are men who will move directly to the street out of urban life, particularly if they have had some preparation through enmasculating experiences such as the Armed Services still provide.

Impressive changes are taking place in the whole economy of the west. The primary industries dominate the scene less and less. And they are making use of fewer and better trained men,¹⁵⁸ particularly of men who can bring their families to the locations of their work. Urbanization and urban industries amalgamate society, present fewer opportunities and fewer reasons for men to live in massive groups away from women and children. Perhaps the disintegration of skid rows is setting in. At all events opportunities for the intelligent abandonment of these rows are available now, as they were not, even a decade ago.

The strong forecast then is at least that the human sources of skid rows will change distinctly as secondary industries and the services develop in the economy, that skid rows may be gradually disappearing and even that they may be gradually done away with through intelligent action.

¹⁵⁵ *Vignettes*. 8-11, 190-193.

¹⁵⁶ *Vignette* 134.

¹⁵⁷ BSR 31: pp. 7-8.

¹⁵⁸ O'Desevich, one of the men interviewed, is one example of a man automated out of a job. In six years with an auto manufacturer, he moved from running one machine to running seven. In the seventh year, he no longer had a job. Since then he has picked fruit in California, worked as a dishwasher in Los Angeles, and then came to Denver, where we picked him up. See also *Vignettes*. 178, 189, 200, 250, 260.

iv

Counting Out

Who's leaving, who's staying and why

Tramps and hoboes and other experienced drifters and possibly some of the younger men may find it easy enough to move in and out of Larimer.¹⁵⁹ In contrast, large numbers of men, quite used to Larimer Street, would find even a shift to a skid row in another city distressing, though they might have very little packing to do.¹⁶⁰

Departures from the street are indeed made all the time, for seasonal employment, on the insistence of the police, on account of illness and the rest. Some men may try other parts of Denver. On very rare occasions some will try a mental institution to get rid of the drinking habit.¹⁶¹ A Larimer population stays on and gets old: death is the main exit from the street.¹⁶² *Departures of the living from the street are almost all turns of the revolving door*: in and out of jail, uptown for a while and back, work on a construction gang and return in the winter. Except under highly unusual circumstances at the present time this rule holds: no living person departs permanently from skid row, once he has become well integrated with its society and its culture. The unusual circumstances must include skillful assistance helping the man to tie in with at least one other person in the larger society. This whole matter is discussed at length in *Bureau of Sociological Research Report No. 27, Larimer Street: professional Interpretations*.

At the present time most of the assistance offered the men on Larimer Street barely enables them to stay there in meager comfort. No consequential effort is being exerted at the present time to move large numbers of men out of skid row life. Some of the private agencies, notably the Salvation Army,¹⁶³ the Volunteers of America¹⁶⁴ and a number of the missions,¹⁶⁵ are able to help small numbers of men off the street into their quarters and facilities and perhaps permanently

¹⁵⁹ *Vignettes*. 63, 87, 90, 101, 102, 108, 121. BSR 27: p 35.

¹⁶⁰ *Vignettes*. 42, 88, 95, 106, 140, 180, 310. BSR 32: pp. 44-45.

¹⁶¹ *Vignettes*. 109, 145-148, 251, 255, 257.

¹⁶² *Vignette*. 142. BSR 34: p 11.

¹⁶³ BSR 31: pp. 9-12. *Vignette* 46.

¹⁶⁴ BSR: 31: pp. 13-17.

¹⁶⁵ BSR 31: pp. 7-8. *Vignette* 156.

out of skid row life. Certain men, with the help of these agencies in particular, are able to shift roles from recipient of aid to provisioner of aid. This shift in every individual instance is impressive. However, it is not characteristic of what is happening for the large mass of men.

During this brief summer there was not time to investigate thoroughly the spread of skid row. There are many reports of this spread to such places as the Capitol Hill District, First and Broadway, Twentieth and Broadway, Eleventh and Larimer, and Santa Fe Avenue. Skid row is a virulent society and culture. Though there are instances in other cities of minority groups moving into skid row areas, there are further instances of skid row moving into and taking over parts of the city pre-empted by ethnic populations.. It appears, for instance, that the single men are challenging ethnic groups for space at various locations on or close to Broadway and between Broadway and the Larimer Street skid row. In this fashion some men may be leaving Larimer Street but bringing skid row to other parts of Denver.¹⁶⁶

Vignettes 136 through 156 provide a few of the impressions of the men on leaving Larimer Street or on staying. Generally the men display understandable anxiety and yet a very reasonable readiness for facing up to eventualities of moving, whatever these might prove to be. Most of them intend to stay on Larimer or in a similar place as long as this is permitted. Many express wishes but few have definite plans for drastic changes in the life that they have come to lead. Such competence as they have is established under the terms of that life and it is only reasonable that they should want continue it with the least bother. If they can, a good number of them will stay in Denver searching for and carrying with them the culture of skid row.

v

Recounting

The myths of the street

We asked a hundred men what Larimer was like. Their views are recorded in some detail in the vignettes. Our study exploits these views. What then is a summary or recount for this section?

How would the men themselves summarize their knowledge of the street? The summary by no means would constitute a coherent statement, even as told by a single individual. The scene is complex. The men ramble on, pointing to its complexities. There is nothing like total agreement on what is happening. A summary account, *meaningful on the street*, would necessarily express the confusion of interpretations that is found there.

The conclusions are hackneyed. No man can count the number of times he has heard the life that he and others are going through explained and excused, and generally made plausible, even with contradictions. The Larimer episodes are played out over and over again. Accounts and explanations of these episodes, repeated even more often, are on the street banal. Thus almost any of our vignettes can be treated as a standard story. In the section on accounting we have simply set a few of them aside to emphasize the mythical qualities the stories acquire from the repetition.

The summary of experience that is expressed on the street essentially gets nowhere. Some of the comments can be treated as good advice and may be acted upon by the men as they have to find ways to get by. But generally the conclusions don't make a difference: they help men to put up with skid row, but not to get out of it, or otherwise control it. The logic of experience, like the experience, is circular. It carries little hope for leaving skid row. Read the few declarations on how to leave as plaintive wishes, not as pragmatic rules.

Here now is a summary such as any man may have set forth countless times:

1. The missions are trying to take you.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ For professional opinions (police), see BSR 26: pp. 90-94, BSR 32: p 26. For the opinions of the men on the street, see *Vignettes*: 329-368, for example 357, 358. See also BSR 25: pp. 112-113.

¹⁶⁷ *Vignettes*: 157, 178.

2. On the other hand, it's the missions that help you when you are down and out.¹⁶⁸
3. It's tough to be down and out.¹⁶⁹
4. Skid row is a vicious circle.¹⁷⁰
5. On the other hand, you can get out of it. There is a man who can help.¹⁷¹ If you make a little money you can stay away from the street.¹⁷²
6. It's a man's own fault if he is on Larimer.¹⁷³
7. On the other hand, I don't loaf.¹⁷⁴
8. I can't work. I'm sick.¹⁷⁵
9. I can't get a good job because I don't have decent clothes.¹⁷⁶
10. It's getting harder to get a job.¹⁷⁷
11. A man has to hang around. There is no place to go.¹⁷⁸
12. There is nothing to do but drink.¹⁷⁹
13. A man can't help drinking. You are a born alcoholic.¹⁸⁰
14. Some men just drink until that government check is gone each month.¹⁸¹
15. On the other hand, a lot of men don't drink.¹⁸²
16. They have a hard time getting by on the street. The cost of living is rising.¹⁸³
17. You have to know which hotels are clean and which are dirty.¹⁸⁴
18. You have to know which are the good bars and which are bad.¹⁸⁵
19. The street is dangerous. You can get mugged.¹⁸⁶ There are a lot of kids down here who can hurt you.¹⁸⁷
20. There are all sorts of persons on Larimer Street: doctors, lawyers, as well as ordinary working men.¹⁸⁸

¹⁶⁸ Vignette 164.

¹⁶⁹ Vignette 182

¹⁷⁰ Vignette 176.

¹⁷¹ Vignette 161.

¹⁷² Vignette 163.

¹⁷³ Vignette 160.

¹⁷⁴ Vignette 168.

¹⁷⁵ Vignettes: 172, 173.

¹⁷⁶ Vignette 177.

¹⁷⁷ Vignette 162.

¹⁷⁸ Vignette 175.

¹⁷⁹ Vignette 162.

¹⁸⁰ Vignette. 159, 174.

¹⁸¹ Vignette 170.

¹⁸² Vignette 169.

¹⁸³ Vignette 165.

¹⁸⁴ Vignette 167.

¹⁸⁵ Vignette 171.

¹⁸⁶ Vignette 166.

¹⁸⁷ Vignette 181.

¹⁸⁸ Vignette 179.

21. A lot of men are here because they were wrecked by the war.¹⁸⁹
22. The marriage didn't work out for most of them. Ask any man and he will tell how he really wanted a good marriage and a nice family.¹⁹⁰

There is little that is surprising in such a summary. We should have expected to hear all this recounted a decade ago and before. It is just a bit strange to discover that very old stories are still credible on the street today as explanations for the presence in a life together of all those old men.

From all of the recounting what do we take seriously? It has to have been the case that every man on the skids, whether or not by choice and whether or not in anguish, has passed through *processes of detachment* from a society considerably more complete, complex, functional and substantial than that on Larimer. Most of the men have been trained to avoid engagement in the larger society in any intense self-compromising way. And most of them have been long training for skid row life, acquiring a special competence that by its very comprehensiveness renders them unfit to return to the other community, if they are not retrained.

In time skid row can become a trap for any man, certainly for any solitary working man with a weak back and perhaps with a drinking habit. It may be a trap perhaps because it is indeed a sanctuary: for so many there is no better place to be. The manageable skid row culture and the convivial society are simply what is left.

The next general section on making the scene is intended to emphasize the trouble and effort that the men have to go to if they are to survive even in the cut-down culture and society on Larimer.

¹⁸⁹ Vignette 158.

¹⁹⁰ Vignette 183.

IV

Making the Scene

i

The Balance of Resources

The discussion in this section on making the scene depends very much on frequent reference to the vignettes on the daily round, the week and the year, on the action and on making a difference. In these vignettes we give instance after instance of the patterns of social behavior in the area. We suggest that a certain attitude be assumed in going over these materials, an empathic, humanistic attitude where the question is raised as to how much effort, insight and skill is required of the men to get through the day and the year, to make dull times more pleasant or interesting and to stay within the bounds of sanctioned conduct. In reading each of the vignettes this question should then constantly be raised: what are the resources within each man for managing well enough on Larimer Street?

It must already have been noticed that there is a wonderful exchangeability about our vignettes. Almost any of the stories meant to illustrate how any man makes the scene could just as well be included in the previous section on making out the scene: viewing the scene and managing there are intertwined activities. Certain vignettes are included in the section on making the scene simply because the effort and the skill and the understanding are a little more clearly portrayed in these stories.

It will be noted that many of the vignettes in the subsequent section on making out on the scene are very similar to the stories connected with the section. Thus, *Vignette 272, From Bar to Bar*, included in the section under resources, depicts in fine detail how a man who is broke can get a cup of coffee free simply by pitching in and cleaning up a place. At the same time this vignette reciprocally illustrates some of the resources provided by the bars and restaurants on the street.

Read this whole section on making the scene as an account of the resources within the man. Relate this information to the resources

of the street, to objects, places, services, food and drink provided to the men. Essentially, the internal capabilities and efforts of the men are in constant critical balance with the Larimer facilities.

ii

The Daily Round, the Week and the Year

Start with the year. See Larimer as passing through two great seasons, the winter and the rest of the year. This arrangement holds particularly for the men spending the whole year on the street. Others who work out of Denver may experience a more complicated set of seasons.

For all the men the big annual problem is getting through the winter. It can get cold and wet and uncomfortable. Spot jobs, mainly clearing walks and streets, are brought by the winter, but generally it is period of seasonal unemployment.¹⁹¹ In Denver, as in most other cities, the winter is the worst season.

We have no exact information on how many men leave Denver for the winter.¹⁹² Reports are frequent enough that they move south and west, principally to New Mexico, Arizona or California. This migration may indeed be followed by the drifters. But for thousands of men it must be an inaccurate statement. They simply try to get through the winter in Denver.¹⁹³ During the winter, especially without a job, there are special problems of staying alive, of facing the cold nights and generally of coping until spring comes.¹⁹⁴ Fortunately, the weather lets up sometimes for long periods in the Denver area. Most of the men simply make an uncomfortable go of it. Read *Vignettes 196, 197, 227, 284, 285* for accounts of the skill required to manage in the winter.

Jobs of all sorts, of course, pick up in the spring. And the population of Larimer Street is expanded as thousands of cowboys, sheep herders and ranch hands come to

¹⁹¹ *Vignettes* 190-193, 227.

¹⁹² *Vignette* 188.

¹⁹³ *Vignette* 206. BSR 25: pp. 20, 27, 120.

¹⁹⁴ *Vignette* 198. BSR 34: pp. 11. BSR 25: p 81.

Denver in search of work.¹⁹⁵ The several employment agencies close to Larimer find jobs throughout the vast region for ranch hands and farm hands in the spring and in the summer.¹⁹⁶ Men losing or leaving jobs in the region may return to Denver several times in search for further employment. And so Larimer Street continues as a service area for itinerant workers. Big change: the railroads are not hiring out of Denver as much as they did in the past. There are still, however, a few railroad crews that take gandy dancers off the street in the spring.¹⁹⁷ Heavy construction work, of course, builds up in the summer, taking some men from the street.¹⁹⁸ This last summer in particular is said to have been good for day laborers helping to clean up after the flood.

Essentially we got the picture of one extended period of hiring and employment continuing through the spring and the summer and expected to terminate in the fall with some of the men returning to the street with money.¹⁹⁹ Larimer Street is reported to be more empty than usual this summer with so many of the younger men in particular finding employment elsewhere in the region. The hotel managers are complaining about empty cots and cubicles. And the bar owners have talked about quiet Saturday nights.²⁰⁰

For the spot jobber, the bill peddler or the bum for whom Larimer is a permanent place of residence, don't place too much emphasis on the year. Throughout the year a permanent resident is likely to reckon time in accordance with the particulars of his own life: a few months of steady employment that may or may not fortunately fall during the winter,²⁰¹ interspersed with long periods of erratic employment. Especially given a drinking problem, the long spans in a man's life may be reckoned less by the seasons than by the flow of wine, by the periods of excessive drinking punctuated by the times he is off the bottle and able to work.²⁰²

The critical long period for the pensioner is not the year, but the month, the span of time between the delivery of his pension checks.²⁰³ The critical period for most men generally is not long. It may be only a week or the length of time that a spot job lasts. And for many men the span of greatest importance can be the day.²⁰⁴

The week sets a rhythm for everyone on the street. The action and the increase in people are supposed to pick up toward the end of the week. But Sundays are empty.²⁰⁵ Sundays and holidays are bad days for the spot jobber, for the bum and for the drunk, all of whom may not have resources to carry them comfortably through such a long span as two days.²⁰⁶

From all accounts the day seems to be the most critical span of time. For thousands of men, including the pensioner, the men that work, the men looking for work and the men not looking for work, each day can be hard to get through. Many of our vignettes illustrate the details of difficulties in the daily round.²⁰⁷

Now a generalized account of the daily round will be made here with the expectation that it will be immediately amended by the numerous qualifications, exceptions and downright contradictions that appear in the vignettes.

For many of the men this is a standard picture: everything depends upon whether or not it is a non-drinking day.²⁰⁸ If a man is drinking heavily, the day will be just a loose part of a longer span of solitary drinking in the room or of sociable drinking in the alleys, under the bridge or in the bars.²⁰⁹ Anything can happen up to the time that the man is run into jail by the police.²¹⁰

A non-drinking day starts early, extremely early in the morning for some of the men, especially for the bill peddlers and men hustling the corner for a spot job. On a non-drinking day, if a man is working, it is, of course, the job that paces the time, that keeps

¹⁹⁵ *Vignettes*: 81, 112, 150, 235.

¹⁹⁶ *Vignettes*: 113, 236. BSR 27: p 8.

¹⁹⁷ *Vignettes*: 9, 10, 116, 190-193.

¹⁹⁸ *Vignettes*: 57, 58.

¹⁹⁹ *Vignettes*: 65, 110, 112, 114, 116, 137, 151, 163, 188, 189, 206, 363. BSR 26: p 62.

²⁰⁰ BSR 32: p 13.

²⁰¹ *Vignette* 189.

²⁰² *Vignettes*: 186, 187, 294.

²⁰³ *Vignettes*: 59, 88, 89, 309. BSR 25: p 59. BSR 26: p 14.

²⁰⁴ *Vignette* 294.

²⁰⁵ *Vignettes*: 177, 217, 232, 279. BSR 25: p 102.

²⁰⁶ *Vignette* 5.

²⁰⁷ *Vignettes*: 14, 16, 25, 60, 102, 121, 122, 185, 186.

²⁰⁸ *Vignette* 186.

²⁰⁹ *Vignettes*: 35, 50, 116, 124, 200.

²¹⁰ BSR 32: pp. 20, 28, 35, 39, 41, 43.

the man occupied and then sets him free with change in his pocket for a meal and a flop and for the sociability.

The work can make the day hard to get through. See for example the fine account entitled *He Runs a Long Day*.²¹¹ And see also *Vignettes* 202 and 203. Sometimes, of course, the work doesn't bother. Some of the men have learned to balance a long day of easy work for a small wage.²¹²

Consider now the man not working. It takes work to wait for work, to get up early enough in the morning, to stand, not sit, at the employment office,²¹³ to stand at the corner and to make the rounds from one hiring spot to another. A man looking for work and not finding it typically puts in three or four hours in the morning and then gives up.²¹⁴ Late in the morning he may as well hit the bars.

If he is really broke he has to get on the mission circuit. Late in the morning he may join a bologna line for a sandwich at a church close to Larimer Street. At two-thirty in the afternoon he can get more of a meal at a mission and at seven in the evening he can attend services for an hour or more to get the standard bowl of chicken-neck-soup or a bowl of beans. A man can keep alive on the mission circuit by devoting full time to it.²¹⁵ It's easier and even more efficient to cut into that circuit for the evening service and a meal and to spend the rest of the time on the street or in the bars.²¹⁶ In the bars you can hit a friend or even a stranger for a drink or two and possibly for a flop.²¹⁷

There are, of course, all sorts of arrangements of not working. Every day hundreds of men are really looking for jobs, are not getting them and are ending up back in the hotel or in the bar.²¹⁸ Others are really not looking for jobs, are not getting them often and instead are putting tremendous effort into working the street and casing the bars for a soft touch. Along with these workers not working and these not-workers working and

indistinguishable from them there are a few professional bums or stemmers,²¹⁹ men who not only cadge drinks from friends but actually may take pride in talents for bumming off the public.²²⁰

As the day wears on the specializations of the day end or mix. Most of the men, regardless of how they spent the day, hit the street and bars in the early evening hours. These will include those who have worked during the day and others who haven't, but who are going to share the workers' wages, if this can be managed. People from out of Larimer join the street. And so the time from four o'clock on to nine-thirty or ten is the span of heightened and mingled activity. There does appear to be displacement of personality. A number of the daytime habitués leave the street before evening or early in the evening. These include especially men who have to find a place to stay that night, men who simply don't like the night crowd and men who may have started early on the wine and simply never reached the end of the day. As the evening wears on there appears to be continuing displacement. Most pensioners, of course, will have departed. On most of the days spot jobbers who may have to get up early the next morning may leave the street early. The late hours are filled more by cowboys, gay types occasionally, working class slummers, drifters and other newcomers or by men who simply haven't worked out sleeping arrangements. The police are there.²²¹

The daily round for pensioners is special.²²² Pensioners have nothing to do. But they find quite different ways to do nothing. Some are really quite vegetable. They rise for breakfast, return to their rooms to sleep until noon, eat again and return to their rooms, eat again, perhaps at the Lifeline Mission, and retire early in the evening. Literally they have nothing to do. Others take a daily walk, eat out in restaurants, read the newspaper, follow the

²¹¹ *Vignette* 186.

²¹² *Vignette* 218.

²¹³ *Vignettes*: 188, 223, 346.

²¹⁴ BSR 35: p 7.

²¹⁵ *Vignettes*: 185, 186.

²¹⁶ *Vignettes*: 62, 64.

²¹⁷ *Vignettes*: 55, 60, 289.

²¹⁸ *Vignettes*: 57, 135, 155.

²¹⁹ The professional bum is a relatively rare figure in Denver. Almost any man down on his luck long enough may bum the public sporadically. Large numbers are afraid to work as bums or stemmers. Most men are simply not stemmers out of pride, fear or failure. See *Vignette* 277. It takes gall, skill and stamina to be a bum.

²²⁰ See BSR 35 for instances of bumming off the public.

²²¹ Cf. BSR 32: pp. 28 *et passim* for description of the police on the street and characters they encounter. Be sure to read pp. 37-38 for account of scenes off the street at night.

²²² *Vignettes*: 194, 195, 309.

ball games, even get into the life in the bars with a beer or two during the day and perhaps with several days of splurging after the check has come. Some seem to lead extremely private lives where they are oblivious to most of the activity going on around them. Others are very much involved in watching that activity as they walk along the street or as they stand at a window²²³ or in a lobby facing the street. See in particular *Vignettes* 207 through 213 for the day of the pensioner and also BSR 29: *Mr. Bridey's Rooming House*.

Generally the days and the minutes in the days for all the men on the street are devoted to *routines* of working and routines of not working, and to the waiting. The heightened activity and the excitement of the Larimer Street of the past are not much there.²²⁴ The next section comments on such activity as we found.

iii

Where is the Action?

Take the action to be any activity supposed to attract people for its interest or excitement. This action can be public, even strictly private, as with gambling or prostitution. On Larimer Street there is now not much action. Quite properly we have listed only eleven vignettes showing what action typically takes place. Most of these vignettes do point to unusual or attractive events. Larimer Street has become a dull place.²²⁵ As we have noted above, much of the public action is reduced to the flow of traffic, the occasional fight or exchange of words and to the very rare occasion when a woman or a child or some other interesting person passes along the street. The police are there always, of course, and what they are doing is worth watching.²²⁶ Frequently all that the police are doing is watching, so that a lot of action consists of watching watching. There is not much else. Private action is now pretty much reduced to the jug party and to the time when a man with money in his pockets comes

²²³ BSR 26: p 100.

²²⁴ See BSR 34.

²²⁵ See BSR 34, in which the action of sixteen years ago, 1949, is reported.

²²⁶ BSR 32: p 3. BSR 26: pp. 12-13.

on the street. Then there can be a little celebration.²²⁷

Within the Skyline area Curtis is the street of action with its girlesque theaters, nature shows, some prostitution, the sale of pornographic photographs and literature and several bars where the races and the sexes mix and get mixed up.²²⁸ Most of the skid row inhabitants, particularly the older men, pass by but do not enter the Curtis Street bars, bookstores and theaters. On occasion they may go to Curtis Street to look around and to eat in one of the restaurants. They have a lot of stories about the vice of Curtis Street but little direct experience.²²⁹

The men on Larimer are well aware of its change as the street of action.²³⁰ The usual explanations for the change are these: 1. There simply is very little free money coming on the street any more.²³¹ And 2. The police have been more or less successful in getting organized vice and crime off Larimer.²³²

If left undisturbed but with the police surveillance not provided, we would expect Larimer to become more and more a fairly quiet strip where old and aging men get by.

iv

Making a Difference: Sanctioned and Unsanctioned Conduct

There are many stories told on the street of the weird characters found there. There are these characters and their presence is often cited in the argument that Larimer sanctions and perhaps even encourages the expression of every human demeanor.²³³ Some people thus try to make Larimer out to be a community of freaks. It is easy, therefore, to regard skid row as a permissive society.

We have not reached conclusions on this matter. If anything, Larimer Street is a sanctuary on public display, not a private retreat. Its bars, dormitories and hotels are

²²⁷ *Vignettes*: 235, 288.

²²⁸ *Vignettes*: 26, 267. BSR 32: p 26 *et passim*.

²²⁹ *Vignette* 44.

²³⁰ *Vignettes*: 29, 32, 45, 59, 260.

²³¹ BSR 26: p 55.

²³² BSR 26: pp. 63-64. BSR 32: p 25.

²³³ BSR 26: pp. 58-60. BSR 25: p 53.

poor places to hide. It could well be that there are stranger persons in the general community not put up so much on public view. Where, for instance, are all the strange women in the world corresponding to the odd balls of Larimer Street? Essentially, the Larimer permissiveness itself is on view. It is possible to see on the street all of the sorts of persons and of the sorts of conduct that are tolerated, to observe thus the whole sanctioning system in operation: there are no closeted skeletons.

Within bounds much toleration is on exhibition, enhanced no doubt by considerable acceptance of distracting drinking behavior.²³⁴ On exhibit too are the restraints of the street. The police representing the general public as well as the residents of the Larimer area are, as we have noted, constantly on the scene on twenty-four hour vigils.²³⁵ In certain respects they are permissive. They will, for instance, allow a man, known not to be dangerous, to skip backwards on the street. But they are quick to decide what behaviors and consequently what persons are not permitted. Essentially, throughout the day and night they are concerned with maintaining a quiet scene. Systematically then the police clear the street of troubling or trouble-bringing characters.²³⁶

A man can stay on the Larimer scene with these qualifications: 1. He must be clothed, of course. There are rare occasions, when a man has been rolled of his clothes as well as his money and has to be hurried from the street.²³⁷ 2. The man must be prepared to give evidence of a proper history. Preferably he must possess at least a piece of paper called a Social Security card and be able to make that card fit a worthy past, however humble. Any man can be expected to be stopped on the street at any time to show a policeman his pieces of paper and to give testimony on his past. Younger men and those not clearly in control of their senses are bound to be stopped.²³⁸ 3. Sober conduct is preferred. If a man has had something to drink, then particularly out on the sidewalk, he must deport himself, as best he can, as though he

were sober. Depending upon the distance from Larimer Street, the time of the day and a general reputation as a proper resident of the area, sobriety varies in importance. There are occasions when any peculiarity of gait may bring a man to jail.²³⁹ 4. Sobriety is not everything in deportment. Again, depending upon location, time of day and reputation, the requirement may exist that a man show that he has reason to be where he is, standing there or walking in a particular direction. It is best for a man to seem to be headed somewhere for some plausible purpose, to be on his way, for instance, to a restaurant or back to his hotel.²⁴⁰ Loitering at certain locations, particularly in front of the Citizens Mission, is not permitted, so that the police from time to time in passing such a location will stir the men to produce among them a show of having some place to go.²⁴¹ 5. Lawful conduct is, of course, required. Unlawful conduct includes creating a disturbance²⁴² which in turn can be identified as any display whatsoever that slows up traffic. Any unusual behavior can accordingly be interpreted by the police as creating a disturbance. Sometimes this interpretation is necessary to quiet down the street. Drunkenness in particular is unlawful conduct. Actual police practice is to send a drunken man home, when he is first accosted, and to jail if he continues to loiter on the street. The drinking people in the middle class probably do not realize what a difference there is between them and Larimer Street residents, except in the particular situation when the police check on them as they ride in automobiles. On Larimer the police enter into the drinking scene wherever it is encountered and even investigate a boisterous group in a hotel room.²⁴³ Again, we emphasize that no quick criticism of the police is intended here: drunks are the chief victims of felonious crimes in the Larimer area. Whether a drunk is likely or not to commit a crime himself is not to be argued. It can be

²³⁴ *Vignettes* 241, 258.

²³⁵ See BSR 32 for in-depth analyses of the police surveillance of Larimer Street.

²³⁶ See BSR 26 for examples of police control of the Larimer Street area.

²³⁷ *Vignette* 166.

²³⁸ BSR 32: p 23. *Vignette* 254.

²³⁹ BSR 32: p 2.

²⁴⁰ BSR 32: pp. 26, 34-36. *Vignette* 34.

²⁴¹ BSR 32: pp. 31-33. *Vignettes*: 217, 285, 286.

²⁴² *Vignette* 258.

²⁴³ In BSR 32 Egon Bittner describes his tours with the police into these particular drinking situations: in bars, pp. 2-3, 6-7, and 19; on the street, pp. 28-36; in hotels, pages 37 and 42.

expected that his mere presence provokes crimes.²⁴⁴

There are conflicting values for sanctions. Often it is too much for a particular man to tend to himself. Still, persons on Larimer Street are expected to concern themselves with their own safety,²⁴⁵ or suffer penalties including arrest. An uptown slummer throwing his money around or any drunk showing that he has a little money is a source of danger. They have to be restrained politely or yet as forcefully as the case may seem to require.²⁴⁶

The men on Larimer Street are not expected to look after other persons.²⁴⁷ They do help each other out a little, cooling a fight down, sobering a drunk up or otherwise taking temporary measures to maintain the quiet scene before the police get into the act.²⁴⁸ Generally, final responsibilities for maintenance of the properties are left to the police. Larimer is the land of the free, of the irresponsible, nonetheless herded and restrained for their own safety by the police - very much like a boys' school or any institution.

The next general section provides an account of the resources provided by skid row on Larimer to the people in the area.

V

Making out on the Scene

We try here to deal with Larimer resources in terms of what the men say they get out of them. The evaluations that the men themselves make are taken into account and their estimates of benefits actually received are noted. We are not simply listing resources. The men judge them and we judge them.

We have already noted a balance between the resources that the men themselves bring into their lives and those that might be called catering services, resources provided to the men on the street. We now, in the same vein, balance resources provided to the men by what we can gather of their estimates of pay-off features.

The vignettes on resources, numbers 272 through 328, illustrate not only what is provided but how the men at times are able to make the best of what is provided. Thus, each vignette can be read as an account of some resource, of the use of that resource and the value received.²⁴⁹

We present in the accompanying table (Table 1) a general summary of the main facilities provided to the men on Larimer Street and elsewhere in Denver. In our summary table we indicate by a rough numerical scale the relative importance of three locations in the provision of facilities. The three locations are Larimer Street in general, the missions on the street, and the rest of Denver that we call uptown. Following as well as we can the judgments of the men themselves, we indicate in the summary which of these three locations is most important in providing any particular facility. Thus, *space* is a facility, the most basic of all human requirements: everybody has got to be somewhere. Space is, of course, provided during certain hours in the missions. And this is welcome, particularly on cold winter evenings.²⁵⁰ And space can be found uptown, can on the same evenings perhaps be equally welcome. There is no doubt, however, that the most important space is made available literally right on the street. This is the sidewalk on which the men may stand or saunter with relatively little interference.²⁵¹ With the sidewalk there is the important space in the bars, in the tiny hotel lobbies, in the alleys and under bridges.²⁵²

Numbers in the table then form a scale of importance for the areas at the extent to

²⁴⁴ BSR 32: pp. 44-45. *Vignette* 265.

²⁴⁵ *Vignette* 270.

²⁴⁶ BSR 26: pp. 71-72.

²⁴⁷ *Vignette* 166.

²⁴⁸ *Vignette* 252. BSR 25: p 53.

²⁴⁹ *Vignettes* 329 through 368, due to the rush in the compilation of our materials, have been mislabeled. It has been our intention to describe interpretations of the street made by the men, particularly judgments on problems existing now and problems that might arise should the street be moved. A number of vignettes therefore are arranged to go with the next general section on interpretations.

²⁵⁰ BSR 25: p 81. *Vignettes*: 217, 284-286.

²⁵¹ BSR 32: p 24. *Vignette* 38.

²⁵² *Vignettes*: 188, 238, 272. See also *Vignettes*: 320 (auto),

Table 1

The Provision of Facilities in Different Areas of the City*

<u>Facility</u>	On Larimer		Uptown	Adequacy Rating
	<u>On the Street</u>	<u>In the Missions & other Services</u>		
1. Space	1	2	3	C
2. Society	1	2	3	B
3. Body Requirements				
a. Sleeping	1	2	(3)	C
b. Food	1	2		C
c. Liquor	1			A
d. Tabacco	1		2	A
e. Clothing	2	1		B
f. Toilets	1	2		C
4. Employment				
a. Hiring	1	2		C
b. Employment	3	2	1	B
5. Protection	1			B
6. Medical Services			1	B
7. Amenities				
a. Banking Service	2		1	D
b. Barber college	1			B
c. Sex	?			F
8. Religious Services		1		D
9. Library			1	F
10. Counselling Service		1		F

*The three locations, on the street, in the missions and uptown are rated on the numerical scale for relative importance in provision of each facility.

which they yield services and facilities to Larimer people. Blanks indicate either that a facility is not much put to use or not made available in an area. Liquor, for example, is not served in the missions.

With the rating scale of importance we have also provided a letter scale ranging from A to F, or relative adequacy, measured again as well as could be by the complaints and praises of the men themselves. Nothing could be more important to the men than space on the street. Any yet then men themselves may or may not be satisfied with this space. On this particular item opinions, as one may expect, vary tremendously. One would hardly expect the dingy hotel lobbies to be regarded favorably. But some men like them, like to sit there much of the day or evening to read, watch TV, or see out onto the street. Incidentally, some lobbies are locked off from the public throughout the day and night. Other lobbies are closed to loiterers for long periods of the night.²⁵³

We trust that some of the items listed in the general table do not need detailed descriptions. A few explanations are, however, indicated.

i

The Importance of Different Areas

As our earlier comments are intended to show, by far the most important *society* is made up *on the street* by the men themselves. In being very much a part of that society no man is, however, completely isolated from other populations and social formations.²⁵⁴ If a man happens to work in the missions, the Salvation Army, and other services he finds there elaborately developed organizations that can, in individual instances, mean a great deal.²⁵⁵ Moreover, as brought out in Johnny O'Leary's story, the men do have friends and acquaintances uptown. And even if the rest of Denver were all strangers to any man, the strangers help to fill out his society with an ever-passing parade that he can take an interest

in. Society uptown is thus a skid row facility, remotely located.²⁵⁶

For most of the men on Larimer all the *body requirements*, with the exception of clothing, are secured most of the time on the street outside the missions. The Citizens Mission does provide five days of shelter and food to transients. But the regular residents of the street can use this service only every two months in accordance with the rules of the mission. For the denizens the provisions of the missions and of the charities are not generally accessible unless they are willing to join the rather demanding programs of the charities. The streets rather than the missions are listed first in importance for *food* only because the men say that when they can, they stay off the mission food circuit.²⁵⁷ An exact survey might well prove that the missions are the chief sources of food. We present a contrary story for *clothing*.²⁵⁸ We secured very few instances of men purchasing clothing, since they seem to take such great pride in noting that clothes are so readily available through the missions.

The usual story of employment depicts a man finding his job literally on the street or in one of the *hiring halls* close by. The most important hiring halls are for bill peddling.²⁵⁹ The long-term residents make little use and seem to get little out of the State Employment Service²⁶⁰ and the private agencies that recruit healthy, young, sober, skilled people. The rest of Larimer may only have reason to visit one or two of the private halls for a free cup of coffee in the morning.

Most *employment* appears to be away from the street in bill peddling and spot jobs, although a sizable number of men are kept busy by the hotels, cafes, missions and the private charities.

There are no clinics on the street. The Denver General Hospital is all-important. We found surprising agreement among the men on adequacies of *medical services* provided for physical troubles by the Denver General. A man who is seriously hurt or sick can get

²⁵³ BSR 32: p 38. See BSR 29 for descriptions of locked lobbies close to, but not on, Larimer. See also *Vignettes*: 208, 212, and BSR 25: pp. 38-39.

²⁵⁴ *Vignettes*: 64, 99, 128, 141, 154, 155, 211, 227, 267.

²⁵⁵ *Vignettes*: 22, 156. BSR 31: pp. 10-11.

²⁵⁶ *Vignettes*: 2, 52, 81, 88, 230, 235, 237. BSR 25: pp. 45-47, 102.

²⁵⁷ *Vignettes*: 2, 52, 81, 88, 230, 235, 237. BSR 25: pp. 45-47, 102.

²⁵⁸ *Vignettes*: 6, 22, 66, 129, 130, 164, 185, 215, 243.

²⁵⁹ *Vignette* 201.

²⁶⁰ *Vignettes*: 87, 97, 103, 188, 189, 308, 311.

ambulance transportation from the Citizens Mission to the hospital. The men are impressed by this and by the attention they receive at the hospital when it is decided that they are physically ailing.²⁶¹

Two quite different *banking services* are used by the men, blood banks and pawn shops. Virtually the only saving that the men do is of their own blood that can be exchanged for cash at the various hospitals.²⁶² The pawn shops also are credit institutions where the men expect to convert anything of value to money.²⁶³ Given the availability of both these services, blood is sold as often as the hospitals permit and valuable objects owned or liberated by the men are converted with little waiting. It is through the hock shops that objects of higher culture such as guns, radios and tools are neatly cleared from the street. A special culture of poverty is systematically produced.

ii Adequacy

Only the provision of *liquor* and *tobacco*²⁶⁴ would approach middle class standards of adequacy, adequacy in amount though not in kind. None of the other facilities match liquor in abundance or in meeting the demands of the

²⁶¹ See BSR 32: p 43 for an instance where an expert, Egon Bittner, is also impressed by the medical facilities supplied for the men on Larimer by the Denver General Hospital and the police. See also BSR 25: pp. 27-28, 57, 134. *Vignettes*: 123, 140, 145, 241, 270.

²⁶² BSE 25: p 114. BSR 35: pp. 9-10. See *Vignettes*: 296-307 for accounts of the blood bank and other credit facilities. See *Vignettes*: 313-318 for various resources exploited on a skid row odyssey.

²⁶³ BSR 25: p 122-124. BSR 26: p 18.

²⁶⁴ The availability of tobacco was increased measurably during the month of interview carried on by our research staff. During each day of interviews six packages of cigarettes were consumed by the informants and the interviewers. Why smoke so much? Read this:

Old man. You know, I have talked to you more than I have talked to anybody. I ain't jawing. It seems like you're getting a load off your - I don't know. Just to talk - How do you put up with this listening to these winoes talking?

Young man. Listening is not so bad.

Old man. I can't. You get up on the street. Somebody comes up and starts. - Man, I get just like this.

Young man. Start shaking?

Old man. Yes. I have to get up and move. And you sit there and not drinking a drop. How can you listen? I don't - I just don't understand that.

Young man. I smoke cigarettes.

men. *Space* is given only a middling rating of C, because there is disagreement among the men about the adequacy of the area. From the point of view of the uptowner it is miserable space, dirty, limited, with nothing to recommend it. *Society* is given the high rating of a B because of the emphasis on Larimer on sociability and conviviality. Thousands of people in other parts of Denver are more isolated and more miserable because of social isolation than most of the men on Larimer.

Most of the facilities for *body requirements* are fair to good. Clothing of fair quality and in odd assortments, as we have noted, is surprisingly accessible. You will find more complaints among the men about four bare walls than about the dormitories.²⁶⁵ And so we have rated *sleeping facilities* as fair, though most people off the street are shocked by these facilities. Public health and safety agencies have closed down some of the worst sleeping areas. We understand that skid-row shelter in Denver is vastly superior to that in a number of other major cities.²⁶⁶ *Toilet facilities* in the dormitories and hotels are generally clean.²⁶⁷ The alleys and toilets in the bars are much used by the men. Essentially these facilities are adequate from the point of view of the men, though in need of much improvement as judged by the general community.

For the sort of work that the men are able to do on spot jobs or in bill peddling *hiring facilities* are convenient and otherwise satisfactory to the men. A rating of C is given here inasmuch as there are many complaints against both public and private agencies for hiring for the better jobs. Both the men and professionals working with the men say that jobs are available, that any man can get a job if he is sober and searching in the right places, that *employment* generally, this year at least, has been excellent.

Protection should be rated a high B. I it is not perfect by any means, but much improved over what was provided even a few years ago.

Medical Services in the hospital are extolled. Because they are simply not there on the street, though quite accessible by

²⁶⁵ *Vignettes*: 80, 88, 215, 291.

²⁶⁶ BSR 32: pp. 37-38.

²⁶⁷ BSR 26: p 77. *Vignettes*: 185, 343.



ambulance, the rating for medical services is cut down to a B.

Banking Services are rated low because the blood banks and the hock shops, though helpful, simply are not enough to provide the credit and savings that the men both want and could make use of.

The *barber shop* rates high for convenience, low for the quality of the shave.

Sex, which is assigned a question mark as to location, is rated F for satisfaction.²⁶⁸

One of the most impressive aspects of Larimer society is the de-emphasis on sex except for commercial purposes, where the stories go round that the men can make money off the homosexuals.²⁶⁹ It is our strong impression that sex is an empty word for the vast majority of these men, particularly those married to the bottle.²⁷⁰ We would guess also that throughout most of the lives of these particular men the word has been empty.

Religious services are rated poor for the very plain reason that so many of the men claim that they get nothing out of the services, indeed endure them in order to be admitted to the soup lines.²⁷¹

We have added two other facilities. We were impressed by reports of a number of men on how much they read, principally through the exchange of paper-backs. Several men, without prompting, have indicated how from time to time they visit the public library that is a great distance away from Larimer.²⁷² The Larimer *library* facilities are rated extremely low since the library is so far away. This is a standard service on skid rows of other cities. The reading room in Chicago, for instance, is an important skid row institution in that city.

Counselling services are almost completely unavailable to most of the men. And those services that are provided could in our estimation be much improved upon. We do not wish to detract from the few individuals connected with courts and the charities who are making fine efforts to assist these men. It must be stated, however, that counselling is

virtually untried for the majority of the Larimer residents.²⁷³

We propose that the summary table on resources in this chapter be read to gain a sense of the general uses of the facilities and of their pay-off features. Essentially we would say that the men on Larimer Street gain no notable pay-offs from counselling services, from the library located several miles away and from sex. What is obtained from religious services and from what we have called banking services is negligible.

Generally all other services are, from their point of view, fair and superior. One service in Particular, namely the provision of liquor, is particularly pleasing.

A man in fair health and with drinking habits not overwhelming can last a long while on Larimer, supported by such menial jobs as dishwashing and bill peddling, with occasional exploitation of the missions.²⁷⁴ Whether he likes it or hates it, the street is the place where he gets to be. The street is dull, uncomfortable, and depressing most of the time, but it is adequate in fulfilling the requirements of one man and of thousands. No one among the men or among others has figured out how it can be changed basically, given the conventional skid row habits, including the need for liquor.²⁷⁵

With so many of the men it is ridiculous to speak of pay-offs in their life. Here is a *verbatim* conversation between an old man and a young man, the old man being forty-two and the young man twenty-five years old. Their talk went like this:

Old man: Look up on Larimer Street, out at the people just like me:²⁷⁶ no purpose in life whatsoever. And what's going to become of them?

Young man: I don't know. What do you think?

Old man: Well, I don't know. There they are. I get to looking and lots of times, setting - And I'm in the same shape. Don't get me wrong.

²⁶⁸ *Vignette* 24.

²⁶⁹ *Vignettes*: 301, 302 *et passim*.

²⁷⁰ *Vignettes*: 24, 223.

²⁷¹ *Vignettes*: 6, 23, 60, 66, 131, 164, 185.

²⁷² BSR 35: pp. 2, 4, 5, 9. BSR 25: pp. 34-36. *Vignettes*: 185, 208.

²⁷³ See BSR 27 in which William Shaw describes counselling facilities that are presently available on Larimer Street, as well as future plans. A proposal now being presented to the Office of Economic Opportunity by the Citizens Mission and the Volunteers of America should, if approved, greatly increase the counselling facilities for residents of Larimer Street. See also *Vignette* 352.

²⁷⁴ *Vignettes*: 60, 70.

²⁷⁵ *Vignettes*: 38, 341, 348, 354, 360, 361, 368.

²⁷⁶ Note the old man's recognition of the convivial society.

Just look: people, manpower! And there they are. Their life is meaningless. I don't know how to explain it.

Young man: You are doing a good job.

Old man: They haven't got any meaning in their lives whatsoever. Just one more night and one more drink and they got it made. Don't worry about tomorrow. What's going to happen to all those people? It's going to have to be something!

There are men on Larimer Street whose pay-offs in life are reduced to survival and the drink. On Larimer they at least get these pay-offs.

The following general section takes up interpretations and judgments that we ourselves made of Larimer Street. We shall finish the next section with some specific bits of advice.

VI

Interpretations

In the previous sections we have tried to speak for the men, to reflect as well as we could their own views on skid row and its difficulties. In this section, though we continue to show their interpretations, we lay open our own judgments and opinions. Starting out here with the problems on Larimer we extend our review to the problems in Denver generally as they relate to skid row.

i

Problems

The most critical skid-row problems are in the lives of individuals. There are the difficulties confronting each man as he reviews his past, his present situation and his future and as he seeks to get by from day to day. Essentially we are speaking here to matters of obsolescence and of poverty.

Every man who sees himself as caught on skid row can describe in detail the troubles that keep him there. He can provide especially the details of how he is *obsolete economically*.²⁷⁷ Either the skills he once had are lost or there is no longer any call for them. He is likely to complain of aging and of illness or serious disability that keep him from a former occupation and confine him at best to a menial job. And he has cultivated a special difficulty - the drinking problem that interferes with the work.

He can point further to his *social obsolescence*.²⁷⁸ His story will be not only that he is no longer seriously connected with his family or needed by anyone outside of skid row, but that there is little chance of his ever again becoming involved with anyone off skid row. Again we see that he has cultivated a special difficulty in society - a preference or at least a tolerance for the society on skid row, so that he is reinforced in holding himself apart from the more complete community.

Worst of all is the *psychic obsolescence*, the sense that a man may have that he is a loser and that he lacks the resources within himself to do much about getting off skid row.²⁷⁹ Sometimes this sense is grinding despair. So many of the men simply don't know what to do, don't, as they say, have it within themselves to manage better in the life. Some are filled with condemnation: "I'm no good to anybody. I'm no good to myself." Many of the men have indeed remarkable resources for survival from day to day on the street. Not any of those that we interviewed displayed convincingly the power within themselves to make drastic changes that would move them permanently out of skid row.²⁸⁰ Our study

²⁷⁷ *Vignettes:* 31, 57, 58, 190, 192, 193.

²⁷⁸ *Vignettes:* 84, 89, 94, 95, 99, 100, 117, 119, 124, 127, 128, 130, 133, 134, 139.

²⁷⁹ *Young man:* You mean there is no hope for you getting off the street?

Old man: A certain percent could, yeah, but man, you've got to have it in your heart.

²⁸⁰ *Old man:* I was talking to a guy the other day. He said you have to - Willpower, but we haven't got it. I haven't. I'm going to tell you the truth.

Young man: You haven't got willpower.

Old man: None whatsoever.

Young man: How come?

Old man: I don't know why. I would like for you to tell me. Now why? I have took my last lots of times and be just as hungry as I am right now and take my last fifty cents and buy myself a drink without something to eat. Now look, sure you are crazy.

Young man: Who is crazy?

brings out strongly the need for professional support and advice,²⁸¹ if these men are to do more than live from day to day on such a street as Larimer.

Thousands of single men in Denver have been reduced to poverty. A man may not like to admit it, but the case can actually be that he is poor and very possibly will have to remain poor if he is to survive. Survival on skid row in particular may best be accomplished by deliberately living meagerly, by the avoidance of opulence, especially if there is a drinking problem. As measured by standards anywhere off the street including standards among other poor people in town the life on Larimer is miserable, regardless of whatever the men pay for it. The men have abandoned responsibility for the support of others and seemingly have only to tend to themselves. Actually many of them have complicated their misery by the ever-present need to support the drinking habit: the liquor drives the rest of culture off the street so that many of the men live in a special poverty. There is not a drinking man on the street who does not recognize how he in this special way is poverty-stricken.

The records of our whole study are testimony that the standard problems are faced today just about as they were a decade ago and a decade before that by the men on the street.²⁸² If it is the case that Larimer Street has changed from a staging area for employment more to a rest area or area for retirement, the standard problems have been accentuated or multiplied. The problems of obsolescence and poverty have not changed. Perhaps there has been an increase in the proportion of men confronted by them.

What are the other burdens on the street? The men are burdened, whether they are aware of it or not, by the outlooks of persons away from Larimer Street. Now and then the men themselves share these outlooks. And so it will happen that a man will describe himself and others like him as useless, unpleasant, good for nothing, slothful,

disgusting, crazy, profligate, prodigal, detestable, and generally as rather unattractive.²⁸³ He may be willing to *blame* himself for coming to skid row and for staying there. Essentially he himself astoundingly will reflect this basic attitude of many people: he is one of the unworthy poor. The man on Larimer Street is generally judged as lost and unworthy. It is quite a burden to share this sentiment.

Actually the attitudes in the general community regarding skid row are characterized more by neglect than concern. It is *taken for granted* that the men there are losers, are unworthy and there is nothing to do about it. Therefore it happens that the help that these men get from the general community amounts in large measure to holding operations. Just enough charitable work is supported by the general public to avoid utter deterioration that might bring troubles to other parts of town. No concerted effort has been directed towards getting large numbers of men off skid row.

If the single men in the community were widely scattered it is possible that they and their difficulties would not be recognized as problems. The big problem for the community is that so many men have collected together on skid row. It is the mass of men that is seen as the basic problem.

The general view of persons away from Larimer Street is that this is an unattractive mass with nothing to recommend it. It is easy, therefore, to propose that Larimer Street be abolished and to attribute to it the sources of degeneracy and decay that the men do go through. There are minority opinions, however, of those who cater to the needs of the men, of the bartenders, the hotel owners and others who, whether they like this mass of men or not, certainly find it convenient for the men to be congregated. Those who cater to the men will say that they are performing useful services for a large block of humanity. Others who have to control the men or otherwise maintain the order and proprieties of the general society will also point to the convenience of having them grouped together.

Old man. Well, a man - I am. To do that you're bound to be. Don't you know if you're hungry and you spend your last penny for a drink -

Young man. Well, if you know all this, why don't you do something about it?

Old man. That's what I'm asking. I don't know.

²⁸¹ *Vignette* 352.

²⁸² *CF.* BSR 34.

²⁸³ *Vignettes:* 85, 107, 111, 120, 135, 160.

It is easier to patrol the small skid row on Larimer Street than to deal with its dispersion.

Many of the men on Larimer Street view the large mass of its inhabitants as unattractive. At the same time these same men recognize its resources. The large mass draws facilities that each man finds manageable. For some it provides companionship and other amenities that may be difficult to secure elsewhere. To people in the general society Larimer Street is a bothersome and embarrassing blotch. To the men on the street it is at least a convenience and for some a preferred segment of humanity.

Our judgment: Larimer Society may be looked upon as a resource simply because it is all that is definitely remaining to the men. Nonetheless, it is a poor resource. It contains in particular no leadership or organization *within* itself that can be put to any advantage by the men. The whole society on the street is an over-statement or reiteration of each single man in difficulty. As an incomplete society in comparison with the general community it is a poor substitute for that community. The society and the facilities on Larimer give opportunity for quite a few men to reach a slowly sagging equilibrium that keeps them out of state institutions for long periods of time. Essentially, however, this is an equilibrium of lost hope. Most men can't and most men do not dare to break far from the street. *But most of the men would take something better if they knew how.* If the men can be moved to better social, cultural and economic situations successfully, break the street up as rapidly as possible. If better situations are not found or established, why destroy the street? Problem: find something better *within the faltering grasp of a man on the skids.*

ii

Prevailing Attitudes

Obviously the attitudes that will prevail in decisions on changing Larimer Street do not arise from the street. There are no leaders to speak for the men. If the general community wishes to abandon Larimer Street as a skid row this can easily be accomplished, provided

arrangements are made that satisfy the bar owners and other people catering to the needs of the men.

The prevailing attitudes of the people in the general community present problems. It has been the experience in other cities that no other part of town will willingly accept the deliberate establishment of a facility for large numbers of homeless men. Will the general community of Denver be able to set aside any part of the city for facilities to take the place of those provided on Larimer Street?

The men themselves would be no trouble to move to a new urban location provided that all of the old facilities are there, including the bars. The most serious problem appears to be the strong suggestion that Larimer Street be abandoned at the same time that it is unlikely that its planned relocation will be permitted by the people in other parts of the city.

iii

Skid Row Costs

Most of the costs relating to skid row have to do with *maintaining* there large numbers of men. Think of these costs as standard maintenance expenditures. Certain costs, of course, are on the public record. These are largely welfare expenditures of all sorts, including old age assistance and aid to disabled persons, charges for medical services and the like. Other expenditures pertain to safety and surveillance, for police work, health and safety inspections and the like. Private charitable expenditures on skid row have to be charged to maintenance. Include also the personal charity responding to panhandling. Against these costs there is only this balance: the men work for low wages and thus make modest charitable contributions to some of the people in the community away from skid row.

We do not at this time have an estimate of the total costs of skid row on Larimer. In the Bogue Study of Chicago it was estimated a decade ago that the cost of skid row there came to \$5,562,600 per year.²⁸⁴ In the same

²⁸⁴ *Op. cit.* p. 409.

study it was noted that there were about 20,000 inhabitants in the Chicago skid rows, yielding a per capita cost less than \$300 per year. Adding another ten years it is possible that each permanent or temporary resident on Larimer today could cost the general community as much as \$400 a year.

There can be several reactions to such a figure as we have just provided. Each segment of the population is expensive when measured in terms of actual expenditures on that segment. Other parts of Denver have to be policed and serviced. People elsewhere use public facilities such as roads and schools that most of the men on Larimer do not exploit. Our judgment is that the cost of maintaining skid row is low compared with expenditures on other parts of the city.

Whatever the costs may be it is important to bear in mind that real expenditures will follow the men wherever they go. More than likely the service costs will increase as considerable numbers of men may find it difficult to fit into the culture of the larger community. If they are severed from skid row society the cost of surveillance very likely will increase.

It is our strong impression that relatively small amounts of money are spent on the homeless men. The charities that cater especially to their needs are very low on the pecking order in fund raising. Clearly the men are by no means as attractive as children and other persons needing help. The general view is that there is little that can be done for these men. Therefore, little is done beyond containing them and barely maintaining them.

A good deal of money, time, effort and intelligence is expended on helping the men to *survive* in the skid row culture. Hardly any expenditures of any sort are made to prevent men from settling on skid row or to get them off the row once they are there.

iv

Desires and Expectations of Larimer Street

Reference should be made here especially to *Vignettes* 329 through 368. Among some of the

men we encountered a delightful civic pride. They were willing to show the interviewers an endorsement of urban renewal improvements on Larimer.²⁸⁵ Others voiced a fatalism: they grant that if the downtown area is to be improved, "There's a lot of people they would have to condemn."²⁸⁶ The most general expectation is simply that the street cannot be moved. In a sense the men are laying a bet against the other people in town that skid row cannot be destroyed, for it is so necessary. If skid row is forced off Larimer the usual expectation is simply that the men will move to another street close by.²⁸⁷ A few would expect the men simply to find a skid row in another town if this had to be.²⁸⁸

Very definitely the men want a skid row, whether it is on Larimer Street or not. They generally prefer a skid row serviced by dormitory hotels rather than rooming houses: they don't want to look at those four walls.²⁸⁹ Essentially there is the distaste for living alone, however nice the four walls may be. If the men are forced off Larimer there will be the prying and the search for its features of conviviality and sociability wherever these spring up in the city. Generally the men will seek the largest congregations of single men that are to be found. We should expect then skid row elsewhere to increase as rapidly as facilities on any street allow.

Shelter is the chief facility determining the location of skid rows. If Larimer is abandoned the next skid row will start at the largest hotel providing dormitory and cubicle facilities. The attraction of such a hotel is not simply the low rent. The men prefer the dormitory atmosphere. They will take over the bars nearest to such a facility and if necessary will establish their own hiring spots on the streets. We should expect the rest of skid-row public culture to follow the dormitories.

If dormitory hotels are not made available, the men might invade rooming house areas such as Capitol Hill, for example. We think they would succeed somehow in

²⁸⁵ *Vignettes*: 329, 336, 362.

²⁸⁶ *Vignette* 359.

²⁸⁷ *Vignettes*: 336, 339, 343, 345, 355, 358, 359, 363.

²⁸⁸ *Vignettes*: 356, 361.

²⁸⁹ *Vignette* 351.

developing the convivial atmosphere there if their invasion is in large numbers.

If there is no control over the dispersion of the men our strongest expectation is that they will do their best to crowd into the area next to Larimer Street. They have good reason to make this particular shift. The employment agencies might still be kept in that area. Itinerant workers will then still have reason to come there in large numbers. All that Market and Blake Streets need to become the next skid row is the establishment of one or two or more dormitory or cubicle hotels.

The homeless men generally desire and expect to stay on Larimer Street. If Larimer is taken from them they desire and expect to move the shortest possible distance to another street that they can convert to skid row. If it is the desire of other people in the community to demolish the skid row culture and society, special professional effort will need to be exerted seeking out ways whereby each individual man can be shown how to abandon the street to his own advantage.

V

Moving the Street: Capabilities of the People

Given good preparation and sensitive concern for human needs, several sorts of people in the Skyline Area can be moved without too much disturbance. These are the small number of families and most of the pensioners. Consult particularly *Bureau of Sociological Research Reports No. 29: Mr. Bridey's Rooming House*, and *No. 30: A Disappearing Community*.

A Disappearing Community reveals the situation of the Japanese at the upper end of the Skyline Area and provides a brief report on all of the families found in the Urban Renewal Authority's survey undertaken last spring. In that survey only thirteen families made up of two parents and children were found in the whole area. We would guess that most of these families are prepared to move from the Skyline District when they are forced to. The Japanese community in particular is already dispersed widely throughout the city. We should expect

that the few remaining families could in fact find it advantageous to depart from the Skyline Area

The pensioners present a more serious problem. Many of them are fearful of a move outside of the Skyline Area. A good number have lived in downtown Denver for several decades. Much care must be exerted in helping these people to find new homes. Still there are resources for moving, simply because most of the aged have the steady monthly income of a pension and somehow might be helped to find a home out of the Skyline Area as do the many thousands of other old people. It will be a challenge to find places as good as Mr. Bridey's rooming house.

We have noted here that most of the single homeless men have only the resources of poverty bolstered by menial employment and some support from the charities. Physically they would be the easiest persons to move since they have so few possessions. They may as well be poor on one street as another. They do, of course, need the street. We think that if nothing is done for them they will find it.

Practicalities: 1. If left largely to themselves, the men on Larimer have the capabilities of continuing skid row anywhere in the downtown area or close to downtown where they can command the meanest facilities - the cheap dormitory, the bar, the sidewalk and the alley. 2. No man *alone* has much of a chance of abandoning skid row. 3. *With professional assistance* every man has a fair chance of moving a *very short distance* into the general community *if he can keep the company of other men off the street*. Don't expect too much from those who have devoted their lives to separation from the society with a home. *Small groups of men* can with professional support enter just a bit more into the larger community than any one of them does on Larimer Street. The men can, over the course of time, thus leave the street or can be kept from the street if *convivial places* are deliberately made for them to go to in that larger community.²⁹⁰

²⁹⁰ William Shaw offers the soundest advice we have found anywhere on ways to move men off the street. See BSR 27: pp. 52-57 *et passim*.

Some Suggestions

We were asked to comment on the deceleration of social decay in the community. Our comment is offered as suggestions on what to do about the homeless men on Larimer Street.

The primary issue is not simply whether the street should be moved. Rather the issue is whether there shall be action in the interest of the men and not against them. The Urban Renewal Authority can perform a great service for the men on the skids if it can help the general community recognize their difficulties and support programs of assistance that would not simply make for survival on skid row but would prevent and correct the skid row life.

1. Don't move the skid-row facilities off Larimer Street. From the point of view of the men, skid row is ideally located exactly where it is, with good access to the railroads, uptown, and the employment services. The facilities on Larimer have long been adapted to their skid-row habits. There are no better facilities in town. Keep the row on Larimer until a program especially arranged to separate men from skid-row culture is well under way.
 2. If our first bit of advice can't be followed, don't move skid row off Larimer until two or three relatively small hotels with dormitory and cubicle sleeping quarters are made available in one other part of the city, preferably close to Larimer. BE careful about a mass relocation of skid row. It's not likely to be accepted by any other neighborhood in the city. It's not likely to work as a state of city project without highly enlightened supervision. Be very careful about scattering the men: their capabilities for continuing skid row wherever they land are greater than their capacities for assimilation into encountered cultures. Destruction of the Larimer Street skid row could through thoughtlessness spread it to several parts of the city.
 3. If our second word of advice can't be followed so that the men are left to their
- resources on leaving Larimer, at least maintain a tracing program to keep track of their settlement elsewhere. The men will do almost anything for easy money. Send by registered mail any man a dollar or so who mails his address or change of address to a skid-row tracing agency. Find out at least where the next skid rows are going to be located exactly. Find out if a man ever really gets off the skids.
4. Give full support to general program of assistance working in the interest particularly of homeless men. Such a program should involve all of the public and private agencies, organizations and persons who are at all concerned with the plight of persons caught up on skid row. The program cannot amount to much unless government at all levels - city, state and national - participates and supports whatever there is to be done in the interest of the men. The program will fail, if private organizations and persons are not encouraged to contribute by planning, action and advice to a coordinated effort.
 5. A general program coordinating the talents, knowledge and other resources of many persons and organizations throughout the whole community is absolutely essential for working on the serious problems that skid row presents. Such a program is not likely to accomplish much more than has been offered in the past, however, if it is not strengthened by the establishment of a special agency dedicated to the prevention, abatement and correction of skid row culture as that culture engulfs persons. A public agency, adequately supported by the federal and state governments to deal with the "nation-wide condition" of skid row, is needed to act deliberately and effectively in the interest of homeless men to keep them off skid row and to get them started away from skid row once they are caught there.
 6. Whatever happens here is what the men on Larimer Street need right now:
 - a. Medical services provided closer to where they live.
 - b. *Professional* consultation on employment.
 - c. Continued protection of all sorts for health and safety.

- d. A special program of assistance to men overwhelmed by drinking problems. This program would require the careful cooperation of the police, the courts, the hospitals and of all other public and private agencies that can assist at least in breaking up the rhythm of destructive drinking. There is serious need for a drying-out sanitarium and for mental health services especially set up for working-class drunks.
- e. If skid row is likely to remain in one locality over a long span of time, an amenities center would be appreciated providing *a place to be that is not a bar*. Such a center would do well to provide the following:
 - 1) A free checking service for personal property.
 - 2) Public facilities for washing.
 - 3) A reading and recreation room.
 - 4) Counselling services that can be adapted ultimately to a program intended to steer the men off the street.
- 7. If none of the above recommendations are followed, let us see what can be done at least about this: *let there be space somewhere in the city accessible twenty-four hours a day every day of the year*. Let there be a place where any man can sit down any time without explanations to anyone without fear of being kicked out or arrested.

**Extracts from Reports
No.s 25 & 26**

AN OFFICE ON THE STREET
A Poignant Story of Survival
As Told By Johnny O'Leary to
Edward Rose and Anthony Gorman

Bureau of Sociological Research

Report No. 25

University of Colorado
Boulder, Colorado

September 1965

AN OFFICE ON THE STREET
A Poignant Story of Survival
As Told by Johnny O'Leary to
Edward Rose and Anthony Gorman *

Johnny The Reader

Johnny O'Leary is a man on the Street. For five years he has had an office there, the second booth up from the rear of the Gold Mine Bar. When he is not working and when he is not ill he sits in that booth and reads or works crossword puzzles, and some of the other men in the bar sit with him and they talk. He knows what it is like to get by on the Street, what it has been like for him and for the many men that he has met there. And so he is a good informant.

In this report he displays a good command of the language and of his own observations of the scene. AN OFFICE ON THE STREET is one of three principal documents that we have prepared from taped conversations with persons who know Larimer Street well. Another document is Officer Schalbrack's account of A QUIET STRIP, and William Shaw's LARIMER STREET: PROFESSIONAL INTERPRETATIONS.

These three day-long conversations are supplemented in our studies by hundreds of other conversations carried on in our investigation of Larimer Street. The investigation was conducted for the City of Denver Urban Renewal Authority. This document is offered as Appendix material

*Helen Wilson and Anne Forester worked with us in transcribing Johnny's story. We want to thank them for this work and for editorial assistance.

to accompany our Report to that Authority: THE UNATTACHED SOCIETY, Bureau of Sociological Research Report No. 24, University of Colorado, September, 1965.

Proper names of persons and places in Johnny's story have been changed to protect the innocent and the guilty. We think, however, that those who are well acquainted with Larimer Street may recognize some of the places. It is hardly likely that they will recognize most of the persons.

Johnny O'Leary is a fine human being. Whoever reads this account must know that he suffers seriously and miserably from asthma. He is not a bitter man, and therefore if we are to follow Johnny's story, it is not to be taken as an acrimonious response to the life that he has followed. Although Johnny is not bitter, it is not easy to hear his story without wondering whether all of this has to be. Johnny has revealed how he made mistakes and we can think then of mistakes that we -- all of us -- may be making, largely through lack of concern for the thousands of men like Johnny on Larimer Street and on the other skid rows. AN OFFICE ON THE STREET necessarily, then, carries a message and raises serious questions about American values as they work out.

Skid row problems are revealed in detail in Johnny's story. Unfortunately, solutions to these problems are not so clearly indicated. As we review AN OFFICE ON THE STREET we should worry about the solutions.

Edward Rose

August 21, 1965

AN OFFICE ON THE STREET

Rose: Well, Johnny, I'm going to pick your brains, as long as you can stand it. O.K.?

O'Leary: What few there are.

R: Well, first of all, let's get some of the mechanical information down. What's your name?

O: John Collins O'Leary.

R: How do you spell O'Leary?

O: O apostrophe capital L E A R Y.

R: O.K.

Tony Gorman: What's the date today?

R: This is the 14th of July, 1965. And I'm Edward Rose, and who are you?

G: I'm Tony Gorman.

R: O.K. I didn't listen to the -- I haven't yet listened to the other tape where you talked to someone. So when I ask you questions it's largely because I'm ignorant. I hadn't heard these other questions. So don't concern yourself with whether we have you on another tape or not. I still have to ask you the questions.

O: I understand.

A Briefing

R? Well, I'm partly interested in your life, and also in what you know about Larimer Street -- as an expert. And I'll probably ask a lot of other questions that will seem, you know, trivial, but some of them are filling out on stuff where we figure that I'm not well informed. I have to trust that you're being, you know, as expert as possible on what you tell me, and that you tell me, as well as you can, the truth as you see it. Right?

O: I understand.

R: And on a lot of these items this is a pretty big argument about what the truth is, I should imagine. But still -- And you've worked with us long enough to know that the truth doesn't hurt. We're interested in this truth, in the simplest and most real sorts of things. I have an outline here of the sorts of topics that we're interested in. I made this outline up before we got to studying Larimer Street, and I'm surprised to discover that it doesn't have to be changed too much. Now, that's what I think, and as I go through these topics maybe you'll suggest some other topics that I just failed to put on here.

How Did You Come Onto Larimer Street?

R: First of all, I think I'll talk with you about how you happened to come on Larimer Street, what you know about it, what are your personal experiences **there**. And then I'll go along this list of topics. Maybe I should start by asking you to, well, tell the story of your life as you see it, the highlights in it, where you were born and things like this. Then we can go on from there.

Childhood

O: Well, I was born in Odanah, Wisconsin.

R: How do you spell that?

O: O D A N A H. It's on the Chippewa Indian Reservation. My father was a foreman in a green lumber mill, and when that lumber mill shut down our family moved to Ironwood, Michigan. At that time I was six years old. So I was raised in Ironwood, Michigan, in the upper peninsula of Michigan.

R: Yes. How old are you?

O: Forty-seven.

R: You were born in what year?

(One-hour break for lunch)

R: July 14, in the afternoon. We are still talking to Johnny O'Leary. Let me ask you just a few general things.

Danger

R: Do you think the Street's a very dangerous place?

O: No. Not as dangerous as it is uptown.

R: Well, talk about it, would you mind?

O: No. As Big Swede says, these men will get drunk, stagger around, but you very seldom find -- Oh, there might be a fight, a knife fight or something once in awhile, but not very often. There will be a fist fight or so, but you won't have any muggings like you have uptown, any stick-ups like they have up around Curtis and -- I mean, not -- I mean, not like up there around Clarkson and along there on East Colfax. Up there as many as four guys will gang up on one man and beat him up just for kicks. You know, there are muggings up there, and stick-ups, and shootings, and so forth and so on. Actually, Larimer isn't dangerous, because all the men do there is just get drunk and pass out, or else they get drunk and take a jug up to their room and get drunk in their room. The biggest trouble that you have down on Larimer Street is just plain, common ordinary drunks.

Jack Rollers

R: How about young guys that come down here and beat up the drunks? Does that ever happen?

O: Yes it does, but very seldom, very seldom.

R: Do they ever use the term, jack roller?

O: Oh yes.

R: What's a jack roller?

O: Well, it's just a person that rolls drunks.

R: Some people draw a distinction between guys who are making it by rolling drunks -- This is the main way that they make it -- and other guys that just happen to do it casually.

O: Well, I see what you mean. Well, you won't find that. At least I've never known of anyone who makes a practice of it, who makes a living that way. Once in awhile you will find somebody rolling a drunk, especially -- Oh, I've seen it myself where some guy will pass out and two men will pretend that they're helping him up on his feet. The first thing you know one has got his hand in his pocket, you know, and they are making believe that they're helping him up. I've seen it, but something like that you just won't pay attention to.

R: It's apt to be the guys the drunk is drinking with.

O: Undoubtedly, undoubtedly. But they'll have their hand in his hip pocket. And he --

R: You personally haven't had any sense of fear on the street, right?

O: No. No, I never have.

Women

R: I'm still not concerned with how it is generally, but with how you personally respond. How is the Street from the point of view of -- Well, call it the action. What's going on.

O: Well, usually we got the girls going up and down the street, and most of them are usually drunk. They argue with their boy friends or their pimps, or whatever it is, you know, and they'll get in a fight with them, and then there are some foul-mouthed women, that's for sure. But -- But I -- You just see some wo -- Well, of course, it's quite an experience to see a couple of drunken women get in a fight over a man, or something like that.

Fights

And it's nothing -- If a person behaves himself, he'll see a fight going on, and stay away from it. Don't try to break it up or anything, and they'll just go on their way. You won't have any trouble at all. But usually a fight will be a couple of -- Oh, one is scared and, if it's broken up, the other is glad of it. That's about the size of it. They'll call each other outside and take maybe one or two swings at each other, and that's the end of it. One of them will run and the other one is glad that he ran. It's usually a little excitement that draws the people out of the bars, to see a fight on the street, and you -- I've never seen any mob fights. It's usually two people, two men, sometimes two women, a man and a woman, but I've never seen any mob action like six or seven men, never anything like that on Larimer Street, in all the time I been down there.

They Fall Into It.

R: How do you spot a newcomer?

O: It's hard to say, because there are so many transients coming through. Sometimes you see them two or three days and then they're gone. But for a person staying there, it's hard to say, because they fall into it. They fall into it, and then they get buried. So you don't know how long they've been there. And the funniest part of it, too, is that a newcomer on the street has undoubtedly been on a Skid Row someplace, and he knows the ropes. He knows how to get along. He's been in Kansas City or Chicago, or Cleveland, or someplace like that where they have a skid row. And he -- He knows the ropes. I'll tell you one way to spot a newcomer. You see two or three men drawing a Frisco Circle, and that's something that they just don't do on Larimer Street. You know what a Frisco Circle is, don't you? Well, when you see them drawing a Frisco Circle, you know that they're new in town. I mean, that's something that they just don't do on Larimer Street.

Short On a Jug

R: How do they get guys to chip in on a bottle?

O: Well, just --

R: Ask them?

O: Ask them if they want it. Promise to hold it. If you only ask them -- 'We're short so much on a jug. We're short ten cents on a jug.' Well, then, the next guy who comes along, anybody: 'We're short ten cents on a jug.' And then here comes somebody: 'We're short ten cents on a jug. Well, the first thing you know they've got the price of a jug. But, when a person says 'We're short three cents on a jug,' or something like that, why you know that they're building up to the price. They haven't -- They're not that much short. They're just starting to build up. But they just ack each other.

There's an Old-Timer on the Street

O: And the way to spot a newcomer -- The way I spot a newcomer is when somebody starts putting the rigging on me. And I've been on the Street for five years, and the oldtimers know, for goodness sake, better than to put the rigging on me. And -- Well, I mean, among friends it's different, with people that I know. They say, 'Johnny, two-bits short.' If I got two-bits I'll give it to them. But if a stranger comes up and puts the rigging on me, I know that he hasn't been on the street very long. Otherwise he would have seen me -- 'There's an oldtimer on the Street,' you might say.

Bumming

Gorman: Pardon me for laughing, but remember when you gave the guy the money for the flop down there on 16th Street?

O: Yes.

Gorman: Ivan?

O: Ivan, yes.

Gorman: You loaned Ivan some money? Then the other guy came up and you said -- He came up to us and he said, 'I need --' How much did he need?

O: I've forgotten.

Gorman: He said, 'I need fifteen cents,' or something like that. 'Because I'm doing this or that.' And Johnny says, 'For goodness sake, I just gave you fifteen cents about three minutes ago, For Christ's sake, leave me alone, will you?' And the guy didn't recognize that it was Johnny had just given him some, and he was hitting him again with some goddamn sad story. Remember that? And you told the guy to get lost. It was comic, honest to God.

O: It's like -- That's like, you know, I've been hit three times by the same fellow, and I said 'Look, I'm in Tap City,' and then, well, I -- A little while later, he'll come up and say, 'Can I have so much?' and 'Help a buddy out?' and I say, 'Look, you just hit me ten minutes ago,' and about ten minutes later he'll hit me again and I'll say, 'Look, this is the third time you've hit me, for goodness sake,' and he'll say, 'Well, you can't blame a guy for trying, can you?'

Clothes

R: Well, I wonder if you could give me a description of the clothes that the men wear, what they look like.

O: You mean newcomers, or -- ?

R: Anybody. Well, let's draw the difference between a newcomer and others, if you could. You say so many of them have been on other Skid Rows before. Would that make a difference in the clothes they'd wear?

O: Not necessarily. Usually a man drops off a freight. The first thing he'll try to do is get cleaned up, even if he is a tramp. He'll try to get cleaned up. One young fellow -- This one time he came in when I was working at the Mission. He said 'Are they still --' He was about 25 years old. He says, 'Can you still work off clothes at St. Paul?'

I said 'Sure.' And he said, 'Well, I've been here before and if I can work off some clothes, get a clean pair of bluejeans and a clean sweat shirt, then I can get up on the stem and make twelve or fifteen dollars a day, just by bumming.' And he was only about twenty-five years old. Well, twelve or fifteen a day just by bumming -- that isn't bad wages, you know. All they want to do is -- Well --

A Line That Won't Quit

You take Henry. He's nothing but a professional bum, but he says they can't go up and bum unless they're halfway clean -- have a clean shave and so forth -- so people will at least look at them, you know. Of course the first thing they ask for is 'something to eat,' you know, and then they will say -- Someone will take them in and feed them. Then they'll say, 'Well, I haven't got anyplace to sleep. I just dropped off a freight.' He's been using that now for -- How long has he been here? About two months? And he hasn't done a lick of work since. And he says, 'Well, as soon as my nerves have settled down and I get cleaned up I'll go and speak to some of these good citizens.'

R: Did he tell you this?

O: Yes, he told me this. Yes. And I've seen him -- He'll ask me how much I'll loan him. Well, if I've got the price of a drink, I'll buy him a drink, and the first thing you know he'll be gone for three or four hours and then he'll come back with a handful of change. I don't know how he does it. I've never seen him in action. But you don't want to spoil a guy's act. You know that when someone's putting the rigging on somebody, even if you know them you don't pay any attention to them, see. You act as if you never saw them before. You just walk right by and let him make his pitch. Yeah, I've seen Henry come back with three or four dollars, you know, and I don't know how he does it. He's got a way about it. He's got a line that won't quit. He's been everywhere and done everything. He's been out, all over the states and when somebody names a place 'Why I know that place. I was there in such and such a time, and so forth and so on,' and the first thing you know he gets the guy to talking. Then he needs something to eat, and he's fifty cents short for a flop for the night, and the guy gives him a half a buck, and then he'll hit the next guy.

Tell Me, Young Lady

O: Now what he does is -- He told me that these old women, ladies, you know -- He'll go up to them and tip his hat and, 'Tell me, young lady --' He uses the 'young lady' technique, see. Well, the flattery right there kinda gets them, you know, and -- So that's the technique he uses.

Gorman: He was telling me this, one day.

O: Not that I know of. Not that I can think of.

R: Well, tell me. According to your recollection he just hit town about two months ago. He's been in Denver many times, though.

O: Oh yes, I remember him when he was here before. And --

R: Do you think he actually does ranch work, or did?

O: I think he did, from the way he talks. He knows quite a bit about it.

R: He talked that way to you?

O: Right.

R: He can really cite -- He can really peel off the names of these ranches.

O: Oh yes. But of course he may very well have gotten them from somebody else, too.

R: Yes. Does he stand drinks for other guys?

O: Oh yes.

A Loner

R: Well, how come he gets off the street so early at night, usually?

O: Well, usually by that time he's got himself enough for a doggone jug and got somebody to pay his room rent -- somebody to pay his room rent -- he's off the streets with his jug. And sometimes he'll have to sleep out, you know. He says he's got a certain car when he can't make room rent, a certain car he sleeps in. I don't know where it is, somewhere around 11th Street, if I'm not mistaken. But he says, 'Well, if I can't make it tonight,' he says, 'I'll go and get in my car.'

R: Is he a loner?

O: Yes. As a matter of fact he said he'd rather travel alone than have somebody with him. Why this is I don't know, because usually men that travel would rather have somebody with them all the time. With two there's one to take care of the other, but he says he'd rather ride alone, when he goes from place to place. When he rides the boxcars, he said he's rather travel by himself. You see -- For instance, he was telling me -- Well, this was about a week ago -- I hadn't seen him around for a couple of days and I said, 'Where the devil you been?'

He says, 'I was up in Cheyenne.' They had the Frontier Days up there or something, rodeo. So there was a crowd up there, you know, and he was gone up there for a couple of days. Better pickings up there, I guess. So he rode a boxcar up there and --

R: Suppose when he got up there he was a cowboy?

O: Yes. Sure, he must be.

Gorman: I suppose we should award him a money belt, you know, the champion, record beggar of the West?

O: Oh yes, best in the West and even in the East, in time, I guess.

Gorman: There's something likable about him.

O: Yes, there is.

R: How many guys would you say are as professional as he is, in begging? And bumming?

O: In Denver?

R: Yes.

O: He hasn't got an equal.

R: Well, there are guys who try it?

O: Yes.

Tramp vs. Bum

R: Do you draw a distinction between a tramp and a bum?

O: Oh sure.

R: What would you call a bum?

O: Well, a bum is a person that makes his living by bumming. A tramp is a person that goes from place to place but will work once in a while.

R: -- and will bum once in awhile.

O: Yes.

R: How about this young fellow, who said he could make twelve or fifteen dollars? What would you call him?

O: I'd call him a bum. He lives -- He gets cleaned up and, like he says, he makes twelve or fifteen dollars. Well, why should he work? He's probably got a different pitch than Henry's got. Being young and good looking, he probably has got some sob story. And like Henry says, these old ladies are the easiest mark, instead of a man. Well, you never know when you might run into a cop when you're putting the rigging on somebody. Henry says he likes to get these old ladies around about fifty-five to sixty years old, and 'Good Afternoon, young lady.' Yes, he's good.

Amateur

R: Well, how about a person like Brier. Does he do any bumming?

O: Oh, he's an amateur. He just bums drinks.

R: He's probably scared to go out there.

O: Probably, yes. He just -- Well, just bums drinks, he doesn't -- doesn't bum money or anything. He just goes around cadging drinks. That's all he does.

R: Well, now, it's my impression that there aren't very many professional bums in Denver.

O: No. No, I mean, just amateurs, that's all.

R: You can't walk down -- I was in St. Louis this spring, and I wasn't out on the street ten minutes before I was hit. But I've never been hit in Denver.

O: Well, it's the same thing, like with me. If I were to put on a doggone suit and dress up like Tony here, and walk on the street I'd bet I'd be hit three times in every block. If you're well dressed, clean and so forth, they figure you got money. So they start putting the rigging on you. But if you go along dressed as Tony was before, nobody'll bother you too much. And it's an old -- an old expression, 'Never bum a bum.'

R: Yes, but they do a lot of bumming from bums.

O: Oh yes, but -- Well, mostly for peanuts. You know, ten cents, fifteen cents --

Broke

R: How many of these guys do you think hit town without any money? I mean, really broke?

O: Oh --

R: Well, usually these guys aren't able to save much money, are they?

O: Now, you take the gandies -- When the gandy crew comes in they've all got money. They go and work on the gandy gang. And like you take your ranchers. The guys that work on a ranch -- Well, of course a lot of them -- Say they work in Cheyenne or in that vicinity -- Well, they might go to some other city between Cheyenne and here and blow it all before they get to Denver, blow two or three hundred dollars, and when they get to Denver they're broke. I've seen that happen many times.

R: Now these are different from the guys who are traveling around.

O: Well, a lot of men come into Denver looking for work. And they aren't actually looking for work, but they're broke when they get here.

Hicks

R: These are ranchers, sheep herders, cattle -- some cowboys, really looking for work, right? A lot of them come in just to have a good time, right?

O: Yes, that's true. Well, a lot of them will -- Well, what they'll do is -- They'll work maybe two, three months, save some money, and then they'll go to the nearest town and they'll have a few drinks. Then they'll start talking about the foreman and what a dirty deal they got from the foreman. And then they'll say 'To hell with it. We'll go to Denver,' and they will quit the job right there.

Clip Joints'

Well, inside of three days in Denver they'll be broke, because of all the places they'll hit, they go to the Nevada, Denver's Greatest, and the Silver Door and the Trombone Bar, where they got B Girls. And they'll take every doggone thing they got. I mean, that's the places they go, looking for women, like that -- that -- And boy, I'm telling you, some of those clip joints! Like this Doubt -- this friend of mine -- He won't go into the Nevada. He spent \$175 in about four hours in that place,

R: He did?

O: Uh hum. And he says he'll never go in there. But it's -- Well, Jiggs in the Nevada -- You'll put a twenty dollar bill on the bar, buy four or five drinks and he'll give you change for a ten. Then if you get hostile about it he'll throw you out or else he'll call the cops.

And the cops'll back him up and say, 'Well, pick him up. Throw him out.' But in the meantime, Jiggs has still got that other ten bucks. And I've seen Doubt buy a glass of wine, a double shot, and a beer and drink. It cost him two twenty-five, and Doubt was so drunk he didn't know. He wasn't paying any attention to what change he was getting back or anything else. But he's -- He's part Indian, and there are a lot of Indians who hang around there. He gets lonesome for his Indian friends. So he buys drinks for them and in the meantime Jiggs and Suds are just cutting it just like that (snaps his fingers), just doubling the price on every drink.

Cowboys

R: Well, let's start talking about the different sorts of guys that come to Larimer Street. There are the cowboys, right?

O: Yes.

R: These are the guys that go over to Market Street and might get themselves a job over there.

O: Yes.

R: You're drawing a distinction between those who come in broke and those who come in for a good time, and have some money and may be broke within a couple of days.

O: Surely. Yes.

Binge

R: What about guys that come down here for a binge?

O: There are quite a few of them. Like Ed Nielson -- Ed Nielson is a married man. He's one of the better painters you can find. And he's a married man. Only about once a month he'll come down here for two or three days and just stay drunker than a hoot owl. Then he'll go back home to his wife and all is forgiven, I guess. I don't know. And the same thing -- Bo Peterson. When we were leaving yesterday he was sitting at the bar and I slapped him and said, 'Peterson,' you know? And he said 'Mr. O'Leary.'

Gorman: Yes.

O: Well, one time he had his own business. He had four painters working for him. He's also a darn good painter. Now he's a dish washer. That's the way it goes, you know.

R: When I was down here on the Street one evening I saw a guy dressed up in painter's clothes.

O: Yes. There are a couple of them down here. They work at it, but -- Those are the type that come down and have three or four beers and are on their way. They don't hang around. Just -- They may spend an evening or so, and they're on their way. They don't ever hang around. I know a couple of them I've seen, who actually are painters, and they don't -- They aren't steady hangers-on.

Homosexuals

R: Tell me about the sex deviants, if there are any.

O: O.K.

R: Tell me what kinds of sex deviants there are.

O: I -- As far as I know, there's just about any kind you want to find.

R: Well, name them.

O: Well, there's the blow-job artists and there's the --

R: Well, what sort of guy is he? Who's he? How old is he? What's he look like?

O: Well --

R: Does he live on the Street?

O: No.

R: He's a guy who comes down here, just looking -- for getting his sexual thrills?

O: Yes. You just saw --

R: Is he preying the Street?

O: You just saw one down in the restaurant there.

R: He's a guy -- Take a guy. He works somewhere maybe, and he comes up to the Street and tries to get a little -- ?

O: Yes. That's right.

R: Does he get his money? Does he get paid for that?

O: He pays for it.

R: He pays for it.

O: Sure.

R: And who does he accost?

O: Well, they -- usually they play up to him, see. Because they know they're going to get paid for it.

R: Oh, I see.

O: But --

R: So it could be any guy.

O: -- anyone. Yes. But ordinarily they have -- They have their own wives. They have their own group.

R: On Larimer?

O: Oh yes. But they don't live on Larimer Street.

R: No, but they meet there.

O: Yes.

R: Where?

O: Usually in the Wine Cellar. That's why they call it the Fruit Bowl.

R: A lot of them would be in there?

O: Yes, sure. I mean, for a lot of them in that group you wouldn't believe it to look at them, but they are. Of course you can spot those -- When a man comes in there dressed in women's clothes and rouge and lipstick --

R: Well, there wouldn't be any doubt about that, but who else could you spot? How would you spot them?

O: Well, their actions.

R: How old are they?

Wilbur

O: Oh, usually around, well, let's see -- Wilbur is -- is about forty-five, I'd say. He's a hairdresser. He has his certain customers. They pay him.

R: They pay him?

O: They pay him, yes. They're usually older fellows. And Wilbur told me about that.

R: He's forty-five and they pay him?

O: Yes.

R: Is he a handsome guy?

O: Well, he's Italian, and he's --

R: What did he tell you?

O: He told me that he has certain -- He says -- Well, he said, 'You know I'm gay.' I said, 'Yes, I know that.' But he's never approached anyone in the bar.

R: In the Mine?

O: He hangs around the Circus once in awhile, but -- A lot of people try to approach him, see, and he says 'No.' He's got his favorite customers. So he just --

R: Where are they?

O: He didn't say.

R: They aren't on Larimer Street?

O: No, I -- I mean, they're certain people in various residential homes. He goes around and -- He makes the rounds, yes.

Gorman: Could you describe him a little more, John? Is he a tall, thin type of guy?

O: Yes.

Gorman: He dresses effeminately, too?

O: No, he dresses real neat. He's got wavy hair, black wavy hair, thin face, and he doesn't act too much like a queer, unless he's been drinking too much.

G: Is he slender, real slender?

R: Is he really gay -- or --

O: Yes, he is. Sure he is.

R: -- is he just exploiting the situation?

O: Yes, he is. He told me. He says, 'Well, I'm gay.' He said, 'I know there's no sense in approaching you. You're square.'

R: Do the police spot him? Do they know him?

O: Sure.

R: Do they give him any trouble?

O: As long as -- As long as he doesn't bother anybody, it's all right.

R: Yes, but the police get awfully worried by these homosexuals, don't they?

O: No. They are just a certain group that -- They stick to themselves, mostly. So as long as they stick to themselves and let everybody else alone --

R: I want to hear a little more about this. These are not -- These are younger men, aren't they?

O: Well, mostly.

A Gay Old Man

R: What good does it do to be a homosexual if you're sixty years of age? Are there any sixty-year old homosexuals?

O: I know of one. And to look at him you'd never think it. But a couple of guys told me that he's approached them.

R: For what? He wanted to pay them? Or he wanted --

O: He wanted to pay them. Or just for the kicks. It made no difference, no money involved.

R: What did they do? Tell me about these two guys. How old were they?

O: Oh. Well, Dick the Hick was one, and Dick is forty. And this man is about sixty. Who's the other one? I think it was Jerry who told me that he'd approached him. But he only does it when he's drinking, and he doesn't hang around very much. He's got grey hair and he's tall.

R: He livess on Larimer Street? Or he comes down and exploits it?

O: He comes on Larimer Street, yes. And I was sitting in a booth drinking a beer and there was an empty booth on the other side. Daisy said, 'Come on --' She named him. I forget what his name is, ' -- you can sit here with John.' I said, 'There's an empty booth over there.' So I picked up my beer and I went over there. I didn't want to be seen with the guy, you know. So Daisy said, 'What's the matter with you?' Because I was so friendly, usually, and everything. 'Not with that guy, I'm not, that's for sure.' I said, 'He's queer.' She said, 'Oh, he's not.' I said, 'The heck he isn't. I know. He's never approached me but I know two guys -- They wouldn't lie to me.' So I said, 'I wouldn't want to be seen with that guy.' She said, 'I didn't know that.' I said, 'Well, you know it now.' So I just moved away.

R: Is it true that there are guys that come cruising in cars, homosexuals, trying to pick up men?

O: I'm just trying to think. Not that I've seen down there.

R: You've never seen it? You've never heard of it?

O: No. I've heard of it, but not on Larimer Street.

R: I mean on Larimer Street.

O: No.

R: You never heard of a guy coming into a bar saying, 'Hey, there's a guy just came by in a car and made a proposition.' You've never heard of this?

O: No, never heard of it. Not on Larimer Street.

R: Well, now, over on Curtis and in other parts of town there are some gay bars, right?

O: Yes, I've heard of them but I've never been there.

R: With the gay bars over there, why would they be bothering to come on Larimer Street?

O: I don't know. Don't know why. I don't understand the homosexual mind.

R: Well, now tell me about any other sexual deviants you may know about.

O: That's all I know about.

R: How about exhibitionists?

O: No. Never seen it. The only -- The only exhibition I've seen, or anything of that sort, is a guy so drunk that he just has to urinate, see, and he doesn't care where. But that -- But he's not --

Subjects

R: Well, there are hardly any women on Larimer Street. What do these guys get for sex? They don't get it?

O: Oh, there's lots of women on Larimer Street. Lots of them.

R: There's about one woman to fifty men.

O: Well, the thing is this: a wino doesn't think about women as much as he would if he was sober. All he's thinking about is where he's going to get his next drink. He doesn't care about sex. It's just -- He just doesn't even think of it.

R: Then why would there be any women at all?

O: Well, there's some that -- I mean, all the men down there aren't winos. These ranchers, these sheepherders, these gandy dancers, and --

R: Where do they take them?

O: Hotels.

R: The women take the men or the men take the women?

O: All depends. If a man doesn't know, the woman will take him.

R: What hotels?

O: Oh, the City's Best, the Gruff Hotel, Dandelion, Dixie Hotel, Ball Hotel. There are enough hotels to go to. These women seem to operate out of a certain hotel. They'll take a man up to their room.

R: What would they charge?

O: Oh, anywhere from -- Well, I know of one: Crystal. All she charges is a bottle of vodka and buy her a pair of panties and bra. Something like that, and that's all. That's for all night. And --

R: How old is she?

O: About thirty.

R: White?

O: Yes. Buy her a few drinks and make a few suggestions and so forth, and she sees you've got a little bit of money and she knows that -- She'll say, 'Well, let's get a bottle and go up to the room.' That's all it costs: a bottle and a six-pack of beer. She drinks vodka all the time. Buy a six-pack of beer and then buy her something, like a new skirt, or something like that. That's all. She doesn't charge cash.

R: How long has she been there?

O: She's been staying there, oh -- About three years that I know of. She operates out of Sullivan's.

R: How about the Negro girls?

O: They don't hang around down in that neck of the woods too much. Mostly they're up around Five Points.

R: Well, there are some on Curtis too.

O: On Curtis, but not on Larimer. Down on Curtis. And usually you'll find that the ones that work the streets are these Mexican girls and the Indian girls. They're the ones that work the streets.

R: There's one named Bessie.

O: Bessie?

R: I know Bessie.

Gorman: She's the heavy-set gal that's always going down the street drunk. She'll have some younger Indian guy with her once in awhile. She goes up and down past the Sanitarium there and hangs around the Nevada.

O: Yes.

Gorman: You probably know who I mean. Kind of a heavy-set gal?

O: Yes. I didn't know what her name was, was all. I know her by the description.

The Essentials

R: Well, let me ask you this. Suppose you were going to set up a Larimer Street down in, say, a place like Pueblo or in a bigger town. What would you put into it? What facilities?

O: First of all, flophouses.

R: That's first of all?

O: Yes.

R: What sort of flophouses?

O: I mean a cheap -- something like the Mudd, you know. That's fifty cents or sixty cents, you know; dormitory. And then of course your gin mills would come after that. And a cheaper eating place, a beanery you might call it. Of course you'd have you -- Your taverns would be there, but the main thing would be the flophouse. The rest would follow. The rest would follow, that's for sure.

R: Cheap dormitories: cheap living. Then you're bound to get the rest following.

O: Yes.

R: What is the rest?

O: Following? Well, someone is naturally going to want to put in a tavern down there, where you can get inexpensive drinks, and nothing fancy. Something like the Mine. Then like I say, a beanery, a cheap place to eat, something like Tim's or the Sanitarium or something like that. But that'd be -- Then the next thing would be that they'd just flock to it, that's all.

A Flop and Eats

R: Well, if a guy didn't drink and wanted to stay from week to week on the street, how much would it cost a day?

O: Oh, a dollar.

R: Then, how --

O: Well, wait a minute. About -- I'll say a dollar and a half. Well, say fifty cents for -- fifty cents for a flop, and a dollar for eats.

R: Yes, but they charge something like forty-four cents for breakfast up at the Sanitarium.

O: You can get it for thirty-five cents at the Circus. But I know -- well, Hard Rock: he only eats two meals a day. A man can get, by on two meals a day.

R: He can get those from the missions. Can a guy last on that food from the missions if he works at it?

O: Oh yes. If he doesn't work. If he doesn't do hard labor. It's just something to sustain you, that's all. It just holds you up a little bit.

A QUIET STRIP:
Officer Schalbrack's Story

Told to
Edward Rose and Anthony Gorman

Bureau of Sociological Research

Report No. 26

University of Colorado
Boulder, Colorado.

September 1965

BIG SWEDE

The beat men in every skid row in America are known by name, to the men on the street. Officer Harold Schalbrack has served on Larimer Street and other downtown areas in Denver for thirteen years. The men call him Big Swede. He is a person of consequence not only to the men in Denver but to thousands of men throughout the country: the gossip on skid rows about the police is not idle.

Officer Schalbrack is called a good cop. The men know that he understands their difficulties and that he is there to help them, though he does hinder them in their sorts of infractions against society. Ordinarily, when he makes an arrest it is understood that this action is required of him and carried out more often than not in their own best interest: the usual arrest is for drunkenness or minor disturbances where those who are involved very often are endangering themselves as much or more than others.

Officer Schalbrack is representative of the other policemen we have watched or heard discussed on the street. Generally they are doing a good job of making the skid row of Denver one of the less lethal areas of the city, far less dangerous than many other parts. As Chief Harold A. Dill of the Denver Police Department has informed us, crime in the downtown area in Denver has decreased

markedly, particularly in the last seven or eight years. Serious crime and serious automobile accidents, especially, have decreased so much that the Police Department has had to add territory to be patrolled by the police of the downtown area.

We hope this document will serve to bring credit to Officer Schalbrack and the other men who work with him and to his superiors, by indicating both the difficulty of their work and the skill with which this work can sometimes be conducted.

We are especially pleased to secure Officer Schalbrack's statements to go with those provided by John O'Leary in *AN OFFICE ON THE STREET*, and William Shaw's *LARIMER STREET: PROFESSIONAL INTERPRETATIONS*. Officer Schalbrack's account depicts the problems on Larimer Street as viewed by a person who has to cope with these problems from day to day. John O'Leary's story tells of some of the problems but finds very few solutions. Officer Schalbrack reports not only on the problems but also on some solutions that are reached each day because he is not allowed to wait. The accounts of O'Leary, Schalbrack and Shaw constitute what we have called *THE LARIMER TRILOGY*, our basic set of documents that accompanies a report to the Denver Urban Renewal Authority on "The Unattached Society," Bureau of Sociological Research Report No. 24.

In A QUIET STRIP the proper names of persons and places have been changed, with the exception of the names of the police who, we think, should not be anonymous in view of the favorable reports on them that are collected here.

We can say unequivocally that we have a great story here -- exciting, informative, and expressive in displaying the feelings of the police and about the police as they go about their work. Officer Schalbrack is, of course, an expert observer and a fine informant. His report, thus, is a principal document in our study.

Edward Rose

August 23, 1965

4

A QUIET STRIP

Rose: In talking with the men on Larimer Street and with still other people your name kept coming up. I don't want to embarrass you, but there are two things I'd like to say: I was very much impressed hearing about a very good relationship that you and the other policemen generally have with most of the men on the street. This is the news that we get from sources when you are not around. People have volunteered this information. We didn't have to extract it from them. And also, various people have told us that we ought to speak to you on certain points, because they look on you essentially as sometimes more expert than they on various aspects of the street.

I'd like to carry on a conversation that you will find to be natural and comfortable. We might start out generally hearing just a little personal information about you. How long have you worked in your position? How much of this time has been spent on or near or in connection with Larimer Street? And then I'd like to hear what Larimer Street seems to be like from the point of view of a policeman who has to survive there. O.K.?

Schalbrack: That sounds quite reasonable. All right. I'll hold it along the lines that you want. If I start diverging into information that isn't necessary, I hope that you'll stop me, Mr. Rose.

R: Yes. Would you give us your name first, please, for the tape? And please spell it for the secretary.

S: All right. My name is Harold L. Schalbrack, S C H A L B R A C K.

R: And this is August 5, 1965.

S: I will be very happy to give you any information that may be of any assistance to you.

Thirteen Years

S: I have been on the police force thirteen years. Of the thirteen years all except three years have been spent on Larimer Street. And the three years themselves have been in areas adjacent to Larimer Street and in areas which have had men who drift from Larimer Street to these areas and back again. I take a vacation from Larimer Street about every year for about a few months. I work a car or different assignments, primarily because I find that I get out of touch with the paperwork in the Police Department, with technological changes. Police

work here on Larimer Street is quite stable. The demands there are quite routine and I find that I get out of touch with many questions on traffic, questions on new ordinances and this -- You become a little bit stale if you work too long in any one job. And my superiors have been very good about letting me off and letting me back on again when I get ready. They leave it up to me as to when the time comes to leave and when the time comes to go back.

Small Town

And I always find it quite comfortable to come back because, in a sense, Larimer Street is like a small town to me, where I can walk down the street and become acquainted with everybody, regardless of their occupation. Businessmen, thieves, prostitutes, any category you want to know, I am acquainted with all of them in a peculiarly business and social sense at the same time. I have jailed many of these people for different offenses. Two-thirds of them seem to hold no animosity for it. It is a professional risk of the trade as far as they are concerned.

Personal History

I am forty-five years old. I have a high school education and two years at the Milwaukee School of Engineering. And I came on the police force when I was thirty-two years old, just underneath the age limit. I decided on the police force late in life. I have a background of union work and electrical work in back of me. And I primarily chose this occupation because I wish to work outside. And I didn't particularly want to transfer from state to state as I did in the other job that I had which demanded that. Will that be sufficient background?

R: Yes. Well, while we are on it, I'd just like to know whether you were living in Denver before you decided to try to get a job with the police? How did you happen to --

S: I had been a resident of Denver for five years prior to joining the force. Denver was used as my headquarters when I was working for Western Electric. And as an outgrowth of that I found myself as business manager of their Western Electric Union and as such I covered a six-state area, ranging from Arizona to Montana.

R: You were working as a salesman?

S: No. I was working as a union organizer and still at the same time as an electrical technician for the company installing switchboards. And that demanded quite a bit of traveling, some social work and entertaining. And I found myself with very little time off. I became fed up with the routine and decided to settle down in one place. This was the only job I found where I can work outside and still be --

Early Years on the Force

R: We are going to have to rush ahead, because I really want to concentrate on your Larimer Street experience. But I should like to hear a little about your reactions to your very earliest years on the force when you were being trained, when you counted yourself as a rookie. Could you just tell us a little bit about that?

S: Yes. Well, quite frankly, it was a mixed reaction. I found myself placed with competent policemen, with dedicated men and with men who were not quite so interested.

Police Morale

R: The morale on the police force is pretty good right now, isn't it?

S: I have never seen it better since I came on the job there. There is a stability in administration where we, in spite of all of the social changes and many of the laws that make our jobs -- such as the law on search and seizure -- that make our work incredibly difficult. But with the stability in our present administration, the fact that we feel that we have backing from our superiors as long as we are doing a job, compensates to a great degree. And I think that it shows up in our receding crime, which, although it is a small drop, is quite a bit different from the average city. You are familiar with that.

A Strain of Wolf

R: I wonder if you wouldn't mind talking about the mistakes you did make, as a rookie or at other times.

S: Well, it's a wonderful thing about mistakes: you only remember your triumphs and you quite fortunately forget about your mistakes. Otherwise most of us would have trouble sleeping at night. But, off hand, I would say that as a rookie you operate under constant tension. You are expecting somebody to take you at one time or another. You know that it is going to happen. And when you operate for a week or a month or a period of time underneath that tension it builds up to the point where somebody finally will perform some act that will trigger that tension and when that happens, you react, and usually react violently. It takes a period of years to learn to live with that. Now, I am not saying that Larimer Street is more violent than any other area, because there are more officers killed out in the good area than down on Larimer Street, but the difference is that those officers up there are used to handling good people. And, if you'll forgive the overdramatic phrase, down here we've developed a strain of wolf in us. And it's the sort of thing that I believe comes from subconsciously evaluating the situation without being actually aware of it. A man can walk up in back of me. I won't be looking at him, but I'll be conscious of the fact that there is a man in back of me. It's something that I have developed quite normally and take for granted. Well, this is a minor episode: I'm walking down the street on a normal sunny day. I heard a sudden rush of footsteps in back of me and somebody grabbed me by the shoulder. I turned around, swung, and knocked a woman to the sidewalk. She wanted information. Fortunately, I knew the woman. At another time, about a year ago, I was leaning down beside a cab, talking to the cab driver. And I heard the same thing, a noise in back of me. I reached up and grabbed an arm, pulled it over my head and this woman lit on her head there in front of me. It turned out to be one of the prostitutes down there that I know. She was going down the street and she saw me with my back to here. And she said to her girlfriend, 'Let's see if we can steal Swede's hat.' Now, that's what I mean by 'a strain of wolf' in you. It's developed over a period of years.

Signals: People are like Bird Dogs

R: It would seem to me you couldn't be on your toes all the time. It would be pretty hard to get through the day that way. So you probably look or listen for signs and are not too casual about what you are seeing and hearing.

S: That's right.

R: I do want to get some of the details of what you look for as danger signals. What do you look for?

S: Well, there is one signal that is completely commonplace and completely efficient. Whenever I walk down the street and there are a group of people in front of me, if they are not looking in different directions, that means they are looking in one direction. And if they are looking in one direction that means that there is something occurring over there worthy of attention. People are like bird dogs. They point out situations a block away.

R: Could you tell me a little more about that or give me some instance of it?

S: Why yes. If there are two men fighting on the street and they are around the corner from the street, the cars on the street on which it is occurring will slow down. The drivers look out of the window. The people on the corner will look towards them. Everybody is pointed in one direction. There may not be any noise or disturbance, but they are good sign indicators as far as spotting trouble on the street is concerned.

Walking the Beat

R: Do you generally walk or ride on your patrols lately?

S: I walk. Primarily because a car-man is completely insulated from the street and from the people themselves. As you may know, when you are in a car, going along, you may see some minor thing on the street that, if you were walking, would warrant attention. It does not warrant slowing up traffic, stopping a line of traffic and hunting for a parking place or coming back to the thing. So, as a result, the man on foot in a congested area is very valuable, first, for prevention and second, for being able to get to and handle a situation. This effectiveness is lost in the less congested area, but traffic-wise the car-man is at a disadvantage in handling the street. And he never makes the contacts there on the street that the man on foot does.

The Three Shifts

R: Well, let's go into the police routine, if you don't mind. I understand there are three shifts, right?

S: There are three eight-hour shifts. We have roll call fifteen minutes prior to the beginning of each shift. The shift that I am on starts at eleven A.M. and it goes until seven. We have roll call at quarter to eleven and final roll call at five minutes to seven. And the following shift is already on the street at the time that we have final roll call. We find that there tends to be a great deal of crime that seems to be spotted right at our change of shifts. So we try to maintain overlapping coverage as much as possible. The next shift is from three in the morning until eleven in the morning, which is the time that I come to work again. We change shifts monthly and we drop back a shift. For instance, next month I will be working from three A. M. until eleven in the morning.

Busy Days: A Wave of Drunks

R: Could you talk about the shift that you are on? You call it the afternoon shift?

S: That's right.

R: What is it like compared with the morning shift and the evening shift?

S: All right, sir. My afternoon shift has primarily one thing in common with other shifts. I can depend on a wave of drunks for the first five, six days of every month. The men are paid on a monthly basis or they receive checks at the end of the month and with many of them it's a twenty-four hour drinking spree. So until they have their money wasted or shot, I can figure on being busy just collecting drunks.

Handling a Drunk

Each drunk is handled in this manner: if he has a local address, I attempt to send him home first. In most cases he is incapable of taking this advice and if I find him on the street later, I arrest him and put him in jail to sover up or for any other disposition that the judge might make on the thing. That's one of the problems of the afternoon shift. The next thing that I notice is that each particular shift will have a somewhat different group of people on it. I won't run into those people on the night shift that I do on the afternoon shift.

R: The afternoon shift is a busy one, is that right?

S: No. The night shift will be the busiest one of the two. And towards the end of the month of the afternoon shift our logged actions will drop down considerably from the beginning.

Complaints

S: I also use it for contact with the businessmen on the street, to find out what the current conditions of business are. I find that in periods of poor business they are inclined to complain a great deal more than they do during periods of prosperity.

R: What are they complaining about?

S: Well, for instance right now, the hotel owners are complaining about having only half of their normal registration for this time of year. The bartenders are not complaining down there. They are going through a period of comparative prosperity, due to the fact that this flood-work has hired a group of men, and the hay-hands are being sent out. But the employment picture on the street is worthy of some time itself. We can bypass that for now, if you wish.

R: Yes. Let's wait on that a little while. In other words, you are tuned in to how things are going economically for the establishments as well as for the men.

S: That's right. The businessmen on the street pay taxes. They are quite interested in the number of drunks on the street, because they want their trade to be able to come in the doors of their establishments without being mooched or frightened by some rather harmless drunk, who is dirty and unprepossessing. And I can't blame them for that.

Starting a Shift

R: No. Could you tell me about what a typical shift would be, after you have had roll call? Just how do you spend the eight hours?

S: Yes.

R: Let's start with the afternoon shift and then perhaps go to the morning and then to the evening shifts.

S: The afternoon shift -- The first thing when I come to work there I have the roll call and then I wait for the beat officer of the shift preceding.

The Preliminary Tour

R: When you get on Larimer Street, what do you do? Just wait, or just walk?

S: No. We make a fast preliminary tour of the beat. In other words, we don't walk every foot of the beat on the preliminary tour. We just glance over it to make certain there are no drunks down, that there are no fights going on the outside. And then, after that, we start on the different business places. We start at one end. For instance, I may start at Eighteenth and Larimer. I wander in there and talk to the bartender about who has been down on the Street the night before. Or has he -- I may have a pick-up or a picture to show him.

Checking the Register

S: I go on into the Mudd Hotel next, and look over their registration, find out who's been staying there the night before, and talk with the clerk.

R: When you are looking at the hotel register, you are looking for persons with known records?

S: Primarily I am looking to see where people that I know are staying. Eventually a large percentage of them are going to come up on a police bulletin. The Treasury Agents, the FBI or one of the local detectives are going to need them. And even though there is no current want on them at the time, the odds are that eventually they'll throw a bad check, prowl a car, or end up being wanted eventually.

R: Then you keep this information in your head? Do you make notes?

S: No. I keep this information in my head. Through the years you develop a facility for doing this, and when you look at a man's name somehow or other the name of the hotel seems to more or less pop into your mind where you saw the register. And if not the name, then the grade of the hotel will pop up. In other words, you remember whether it is a cheap, middle-class, or better rooming house or so forth, where you saw it. And so you look over the two or three placed in that grade. And you usually find the name. Of course, by that time the man has moved and you have to do it all over again, in many cases.

A Fence

R: A man was pointed out to me as a small-time fence, just moving little goods.

S: He might have been a small-time fence, but he could have ambitions of being a big-time fence. And it is my job to see to it he doesn't.

R: Time could be running out on him, don't you think? The man I saw has been there for a long time.

S: Right.

Where Thieves Congregate

S: Well, now on my beat, I'll go into a bar. Let's call it The Bear Trap. The Bear Trap may be the one bar on the Street where nearly all of the thieves congregate.

R: Is that so? I have had a bar pointed out to me where the thieves are supposed to hang out. The thing that interested me is that along about five or six o'clock in the evening when you'd expect a booming business, it is usually quiet. Why?

S: Well, six o'clock in the evening is the time for a man that comes off work to go in and have a glass of beer.

R: But compared to the other bars the one I saw is not so crowded.

S: That's right. Probably the thieves are where the working men or the man who comes off a spot job will go in to have a beer. There wouldn't be any working men going into the bar you saw. Therefore, there are no wallets for them to lift. So the thieves will go to the other bars where the bait is. Well, anyway the routine is simple: I'll go down the bars and visit the stores. I know all the salesmen and the people down there. Usually it's just conversation that's made there: find out who the new baby is and who's had a new bar mitzvah for their kid.

Homosexuals

R: On this first walk down the Street you stop in at the Wine Cellar, I trust?

S: That's right.

R: That's a special sort of bar, it seems to me.

S: Well, you are quite right. There is a large proportion there of homosexuals who hang out in that particular bar.

R: Do they hang out there or just visit?

S: There is a portion that hangs out in there and then there is an even larger portion that come to and from that bar. They have, oh say, half a dozen bars through the downtown areas, like that particular thing there.

R: But there are some homosexuals that use that particular one as a base? My impression was that the Wine Cellar was one of the places the homosexuals sometimes visit but wouldn't operate out of, as they do out of some other bars.

S: No. As far as operating out of the bar, no. They keep the action exclusively to themselves. But I would say they try to make pick-ups there, if something of the right sort came along. But it is not quite as vicious there as in a few of the other bars that I could name in the downtown area. We don't have a lot of trouble out of the homosexuals there. As a matter of fact, once in a while we will have a fight between two of them there that we go in and break up.

The Mourners' Bench

S: But the average call in the Wine Cellar is for some drunk that has staggered on in, sat down on what they call the mourners' bench, which is the lunch counter at the end of the room. He doesn't have a dime to buy a glass of beer. But he's been a good customer there for a long time and despite my encouragement to the contrary the bartender is reluctant to put them out until I arrive, when he becomes very efficient and very busy in suddenly cleaning out his bar.

R: You drop in the Mine then, don't you?

A Good Bartender

S: Yes. Ned Lews runs the Mine. And he is one bartender on the street that I have grown to respect immensely over a number of years. We have had very few calls in that Mine. He makes no special effort to get along with the police department or anybody else. He says, 'As long as a man --' I am going to put this just as he put it, irregardless of the language. He says, 'As long as a man runs an honest business and minds his own business, he doesn't have to kiss anybody's ass.' And he is right. Well now, if a man goes in there and tries to, what they call, 'timber the bar,' which involves buying a round of drinks for the entire bar, Ned will throw the man out. He says --

R: That's quite a job: there are quite a lot of men in there.

S: He throws the man out, tries to do it. We'll get an expansive type that has a bankroll, has just been paid off. He says, 'You son of a gun, you'll spend your entire poke and then you'll come on back and try to mooch me for the next six months. The hell with you. Get out!' He permits no solicitation in there. He prefers that women not come in there at all. But he says he can't keep them out. He is a rugged individualist from the word go. He also acts as a banker for a few of the pensioners who drop on in there. And I have never heard of any of the pensioners missing a dollar when the reckoning came, which is very unusual, because a drunk will forget that he drew out the money and will accuse the bartender

of stealing it. And in a few cases he may be right. But in Ned's case I have never heard it happen. He and I have a common respect for each other. I wouldn't say that we are particular friends. There is too much of a divergence between backgrounds and experience there for us to have a great deal in common. But I have an immense respect for the man and for the way he runs that bar.

Waving the Flag

R: By the time you've hit Sixteenth you are at the end of the beat. Isn't that correct?

S: That's correct.

R: About how much time does this take?

S: It is not exact. It can take anywhere from an hour to an hour and a half, depending on what I run into. Or I might cover it in fifteen minutes. It is more or less on a non-scheduled stop basis, depending on how much there is to do or what I run across in my rambles there. It's primarily getting the information and, as one officer calls it, 'waving or showing the flag.' In other words, we let them know that there is an officer on the street. And ordinarily the presence itself does a great deal just to slow down whatever they are planning. As a matter of fact, I'll take you to two or three bars there and they'll all tell you the same thing, that these thieves call up from up above and they want to know if there is a beat man working that night before they will come on down. They don't ask about a car man. They ask if there is a beat man working that night. And ordinarily the bartender will say that there is one, whether there is or not, just to keep them out of the place. But the --

Jug Party

R: Do you look over the alleys?

S: On about the second round. In the afternoons we will occasionally find a party there, what we call a jug party, a cocktail party. The boys have coined an expression called 'throwing the change.' You may have heard it there in your interviews.

R: Yes. It corresponds with or does the work of the San Francisco circle.

S: Well anyway, they will throw the change there until they come up with enough for the jug. Ordinarily we can't prevent them from drinking that jug and we don't expect to prevent them from drinking that jug. But we like to have them take it to a quiet, inconspicuous spot and consume it and get on over it without becoming a nuisance. We don't expect them to stop buying it. That seems to be beyond our power, no matter what we desire. We would like to minimize the effects of it. So when we go into the alley, if a man is passed out there, we determine, to the best of our ability, whether he is sick or drunk and we will order an ambulance or the waggon. We see if he can be revived, if he is not that far gone. And if he is capable of handling himself without endangering himself or somebody else, we ask him to go on to his room. And usually, although he doesn't have a room to himself, he will know somebody who has got a room. And he will go there and sleep it off.

Punishment for Alcoholism

S: This is perhaps aside from the main problem, but the punishment for alcoholism seems to have very little effect as a deterrent. We were fighting a more or less losing battle in trying to keep that man from hurting himself or somebody else, or in battling against the effects of this alcoholism. And it is temporary. It is unsatisfactory, but we don't really know what else we can do with them. Many better men than I have studied this problem extensively and have come up with an answer that in effect said, 'I don't know.'

Help

R: Has it been your experience that a man will sometimes deliberately get himself arrested, just to get sent up to dry out?

S: I don't know whether that man wants to go up there to dry out, or whether he is going on up there for, as they put it, three squares and a flop. Ordinarily, until a man hits the bottom of his drunk he does not particularly care to go up there and dry out. Or he does not even particularly care about drying out. And it is difficult to determine the point where the bottom of his drunk is -- in other words, where he is down so low that he can't go any farther.

R: Does he decide? Do his friends decide?

S: Occasionally his friends decide. They will say, 'Blackie has been on a week's drunk.'

R: They'll tell you that?

S: Yes. A friend says, 'He is up in his room there and he is in real sad shape.' He'll say, 'See what you can do.' So I will go on up to the man's room, if he is in his room, and if he is rational I will talk to him to see whether or not he wishes to go into the hospital. Now, you are perhaps familiar with the symptoms of withdrawal from alcohol and that narrow borderline there between a hang-over and the D. T.'s. Most of these men are familiar enough with it so that they can determine when they are about to go into D. T.'s. In many cases I can get a man to take a minor amount of liquid nourishment, milk or soup, in the hopes that putting that food in there will hold back the D. T.'s a little bit more. And if he seems to be incapable of taking this nourishment and he is sure that they are going to come, I'll send him to the hospital. Ambulance drivers are a long suffering lot and they will take him on in and they give him some vitamin shots and watch over him in case he does go into it. It is a very, very disagreeable process to watch. I am sure that you have seen it. I have too. And we try to forstall it as much as possible. But, as I say, the man or his friends will normally come and get me, or even a hotel clerk will come and get me. The clerks are primarily interested because by that time the man has fouled the room considerably.

People Outside

R: When a man is in trouble this way, do his friends usually turn to you or would they call the hospital directly?

S: No. The people on the street have a deep distrust of outside agencies.

Gorman: That's a very delicate way of putting it.

S: You two have run across it already. But they are familiar with me. They have watched me over a period of years here and they have formed their own opinion of me. The opinions are varied and many. But, at any rate, it is consistent there. They firmly believe whatever they decide. Any way they have decided here that it is better to go for somebody they know. And as an interpreter between them and the people outside -- You may have heard this talk of 'people outside.'

R: Right.

People on the Street

S: All right. Could I go into that for a minute?

R: I'd like to hear that.

S: All right. Larimer Street, as I have said before, is a condition rather than a physical district. The people that are down here are not simply Larimer Street. If they had their way, they'd have their own police force, their own mayor, their own laws and they would completely secede from the City of Denver. They group --

R: Now, does this include, say, the bar owners?

S: That includes the businessmen, except, of course, for the sporting goods stores and clothing stores. But your hock shops, bars --

R: Hotels?

S: Hotels, yes. They run up against a lack of understanding. They are on the outside of what they -- They term it a lack of understanding. And they withdraw.

R: Did somebody actually express this sentiment to you?

S: Yes.

R: Is this your feeling about it?

S: No.

R: Has more than one person found this sentiment?

S: Yes. As a matter of fact among the drunks on the street this is quite common.

R: I should expect, yes, but --

S: Yes. But the people themselves, the bar owners and the hock shop people, they are tired of hearing -- As a matter of fact, they resent the fact that Larimer Street is supposed to be a dangerous area. You have probably run across this in your interviews, where they point out that a person is safer down here than on Capitol Hill.

R: Yes. We've heard this a number of times.

S: Yes. It's a common saying. And they don't believe that the remainder of the city, or the people outside, are capable of understanding the street. Now, in many cases they are completely wrong. But that is the impression there that they receive.

Beating the Pawn Broker

S: For instance, there is a faction that comes to the hock-shop man. A good citizen up here --

R: A good citizen, is that a term --

S: The average citizen -- The average citizen, including myself off duty, or somebody else, sees an ad in the paper about a sale in a pawn shop on Larimer Street. And he believes, you know, 'Pawn shop on Larimer Street? Those boys are rather ignorant and uneducated and I could go down there and get a tremendous buy.' Well, that's a substantial source of income for these pawn shop men on the street, the man who comes down to beat them out of an article that they know to be worth much more. And if they fail to do it they wind up by calling the owner of the pawn shop a jew son of a bitch, which most of the pawn brokers profess not to resent. But you can determine that they do resent it, and quite properly resent the thing. And that drives them that much further into their own little community.

R: Yes. So there is a sentiment shared by the businessmen as well as the men on the street of separateness from the rest of the community.

The Up-Town Law

S: Right. For instance, consider our laws against letting drunks loiter in a bar. Now, the city ordinance prohibits drunks from loitering in a bar. And we enforce it every time we see it regardless of whose bar it is. We tell the man to go home, or we tell the bartender to get that man a cab. All right. Supposing now that this drunk in the bar is a long-time customer or fast friend of the bartender: he's been drinking in there for a matter of years. The fact that we won't let this bartender take the man into the backroom and let him sleep it off is a matter of resentment to him. And in this particular case he may be right. But in the next case you end up with a drunk sleeping on him and it's an open invitation for any thief that might come along. He'll wind up less his

shoes, his wallet and the other things. Next, they say, a man comes down here and he's been in an alley drinking a jug. He walks in that bar drunk. The bartender says he doesn't see him come in the door. At any rate, he sits down and looks sober and he orders a drink. And then we come on in there and we speak quite positively to the bartender about serving a drunk. All right, as far as he is concerned, that's an up-town law, that's made for the people up-town, but it's almost unenforcable. To a degree he is right, but not to as great a degree as he states. I do know bartenders who have been honestly fooled by the same thing.

Jackrollers

R: Now, let me just cut in a minute. Are the thieves called jackrollers? Do you use that term?

S: Yes. To a certain extent we call them jackrollers but --

R: What would the term jackroller mean? What does the term jack-roller mean to you?

S: Jackroller is -- comes from rolling and robbing a man who passed out. They roll them on over to get at their hip pocket and pick out their jack. Jack is their slang term for money. I think that's how it was derived.

Creeps

S: I think it's something like the word, creep. A creep joint, you know the derivation of that?

R: No. I don't know it.

S: Oh, when you hear a person being called a creep it comes from this original expression there where they used to have the whore houses. And the girl would take the man on up there and her boyfriend would creep out of a bureau or closet and pull the man's wallet out of the man's pants while he was engaged. So when the chippies got mad at their boyfriend, they'd call him a creep. And the place where this happened was known as a creep joint. Or at any rate, it's something like that where the term jackroller come from. But pure slang argot is 'thief.'

What is a Thief?

R: Thief? What is a thief?

S: A man is a good thief. Now, you'll hear this expression many times on the Street. A man that -- 'A man is a good thief' means that after he does a job he doesn't hold out on his friends down there, or that his word is supposed to be good.

R: What are the usual jobs? Just rolling a man? Or is there stealing in stores?

S: The boosters, or people who make a habit of handling a store do not work Larimer Street a great deal. It has been done and it is occasionally done. But they find easier marks there with the people in the uptown stores and who are not quite as accustomed to it. Down here they have been victimized quite frequently and they are quite alert for it. But the term 'thief' is used to mean somebody who makes a living by stealing or any activity outside the law, whether it involves check writing or anything else.

Thieves on the Street

R: Let's go back to the bar I visited, where the thieves are supposed to be. What are most of the men like in there? What's their appearance, their manner, their mode of operation?

S: They would have several things in common. They would be between, I would say, twenty-five and thirty-five.

R: They are younger men.

S: They are younger men. They have all got a stretch of what they call 'big-time' or state penitentiary time in back of them. They are unemployed. They -- Some of them will work. All other methods of getting an income failing, they will work. But they are against it in principle. They believe that anybody who does work for a living is a sucker, that is, somebody who can be plucked.

R: About how many of them would be in such a bar waiting around?

S: I'd say that I could walk in any time of the day and find anywhere from five to six there, men that I'd know to do it occasionally. Now the hard-core gangs, they no longer hang out in there. You see --

R: Do they hang out on Larimer Street at all?

S: The hard core gangs?

R: No. That was my impression.

S: That they don't?

R: That they do not hang out around Larimer.

S: Right. If you care to go into it, we can get to that a little bit later. But the hard core gangs do not hang out in there and the ones that are down there now are the ones who are on the fringes of the gangs. In short, they will join with them for a job and then disassociate themselves from them and come on back to the Street. And they do not do it on the Street.

R: Right.

A Timid Thief

S: They -- Oh, let me take a man by the name of, say, Ray Robb. All right. Ray Robb is a man of about thirty-five. He is not a brave man. As a matter of fact, he abhors any kind of physical violence unless he is on the upper end of the thing and has the other man plainly over-matched, and unless he is quite sure that he won't get caught. He picks his times and his places very carefully. He was married or lived with a barmaid for a period of time. He has done a half a dozen stretches for drunkenness, assault and disturbance up in our County Jail, including one for a bad check. He's -- His barmaid girl friend had to leave for Kansas suddenly as a result of a rubber check and left him stranded there without any visible means of support, because he could no longer steer customers to his barmaid friend. As I said, he is not a violent man, unless the opportunity is exactly right for him. He associates himself with, say, the Crest gang or any other gang that happens to be operating on up above. And he attempts to do a little steering for bootleggers. He has a certain amount of knowledge of what goes on on the Street at any time.

Bootleggers

R: You mentioned bootleggers. On Larimer Street?

S: Yes. On Larimer Street and on Curtis Street and up-town. However, most of that has been moved off Larimer Street. Now, what I call a bootlegger, and the current slang for bootlegger, is a man who'll go into a liquor store and will buy a couple of cases of wine legally before closing time. And then, after the store has closed he will take that same wine and sell it for a dollar and a half to two dollars per bottle. This, of course, is illegal. And after a period of time we find out who they are. The Morals Bureau may make a buy from him, or we may be able to convict him, or in many cases we just make it so difficult for him to operate that he gives up. And, in a few cases, he drinks up his own stock and finds himself without anything to sell. Now, this man puts out two or three runners, as they call them. It may be a waiter in a cafe or just some drunk who wants to earn a bottle. He waits for somebody with some money and steers them on up to the hotel room of this man. This is not a permanent installation, this room. As a matter of fact, in most cases he is not a permanent bootlegger. But he is a man who has accumulated a little bit of capital and has gone into business there. And then when we can convict him of it, fine. And if we can't convict him, we go to the hotelkeeper with it. You know, of course, the laws of evidence on something like that, which involve marked money and making a buy. And these men know more policemen than I do, which makes it rather difficult. And we'll go to the hotelkeeper and tell him that that's going on in his hotel. And in most cases he'll cooperate with us by making it impossible for the man to operate there. The main thing about that bootlegging that we are against is this: it also leads to a wave of car prowls. In other words, a man wants a jug and the bootlegger may branch into receiving stolen goods for that jug. So, the actual offense of bootlegging, although serious, and is prosecuted, is of less importance than the secondary crime that it induces.

Wild Information

R: Let's take a break. We have been talking for quite a while.

Gorman: This has really been most interesting.

S: Well I am very grateful for any way I can help you men boil down this mountain of information and misinformation that you have received, because I know how these guys talk. And they will tell you what they think you want to hear.