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now in their childbearing years will remain childless, the highest proportion in U.S. history.

The recent changes in the family seem particularly radical because they followed an era when Americans married earlier and had more children than at any time during this century. But the Baby Boom of the 1950s was an aberration. Today's developments actually climax long-term trends: The birthrate has been dropping since the 1820s; divorce has been slowly rising since the Civil War.

Despite the travails of the past two decades, there is no evidence that Americans today are turning their backs on marriage per se. Of the children under age 18 today, the authors estimate, 90 percent will eventually marry; 50 percent will marry and divorce; and 33 percent will marry, divorce, and remarry.

Yet, as in the past, marital instability will impose social and family costs. For one thing, kinship responsibilities will be murkier. Who will have the first claim to Dad's paycheck: the child from the first marriage, the stepchild, or the offspring of the second marriage? And which of these dependents will eventually care for the aged parents?

Counting the Homeless

"The Homeless of New York" by Thomas J. Main, in *The Public Interest* (Summer 1983), 20th & Northampton Sts., Easton, Pa. 18042.

In most major American cities, it seems, homeless "bag people" are everywhere. The phenomenon is probably most acute in New York City. There, writes Main, managing editor of the *Public Interest*, the "street people" are a surprisingly diverse lot.

New York's homeless number up to 36,000, according to the Community Service Society of New York, but nightly attendance at the 19 city shelters averages 4,235 (and some clients remain for months at a time). City Hall now spends \$38 million annually to house, feed, clothe, and provide medical services to the homeless, up from only \$6.8 million in 1978. That, Main argues, is too much.

He believes that the "homeless" actually belong to at least three different groups. A 1982 survey of 173 long-term, male shelter residents by the city's Human Resources Administration (HRA), for example, classified 34 percent as psychiatric cases, eight percent as drug addicts or alcoholics, and 19 percent as "discouraged" workers—employable but jobless. (The remaining 39 percent fit in no single category.)

Main contends that few of these people actually belong in the shelters. Alcoholics and addicts, unless absolutely incorrigible, should be given treatment to enable them to live independently. The mentally ill, released from New York's mental hospitals during the "deinstitutionalization" movement of the 1970s, should be provided with the "half-way house" treatment that the state promised but never delivered.

The "discouraged" workers in the survey were young (median age: 32) and able-bodied. What draws them to the shelters, Main argues, is the relatively attractive conditions the city offers. On the street, all are

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eligible for Home Relief grants of up to \$152 per month to cover rent, but life in the shelters—with free food and medical services—is easier.

In fact, few of the “homeless” actually live day after day on the street. A second 1982 HRA survey of 681 new arrivals at the shelters revealed that, while 38 percent had spent the previous night outdoors, only five percent said that was their “usual” residence. Forty percent had been in their own apartments or with family or friends the night before.

Main warns that recognizing a “right to shelter” for all comers and spending more on the shelter system will encourage more of the jobless to seek aid. Needed, he says, is a work requirement, along with an emphasis on rehabilitation for the able-bodied, and better facilities for the mentally ill. Otherwise, the truly homeless may get lost in the shuffle.

Second Thoughts On School Reform

“Great Hopes May Go Unfulfilled” by Robert J. Samuelson, in *National Journal* (July 9, 1983), Government Research Corporation, 1730 M St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Behind today’s grassroots push for reform of the public schools is “the faith that strong schools represent a fundamental source of the nation’s prosperity and international competitiveness,” notes Samuelson, a *National Journal* contributing editor. He suggests that such faith may be a prescription for dashed hopes.