

Rise of Awareness to Homelessness



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History of Homelessness

- The Great Depression
- World War II
- Era of Skid Row (1950s)
- Urbanization and downtown revitalization
- The “new” homeless

Hypotheses

- I hypothesized that lack of affordable housing → rise of homeless population → ← diversity of homeless population
- I then hypothesized that media attention → foundings of SMOs → congressional attention

Methods

- To measure SMO organizations, I used the Associations Unlimited online.
- Searched under the subheading of “homeless” that I found in the database
- Found 33 organizations, and 3 that had no founding date

Methods

- For Congressional Attention, I used the Policy Agendas Project
- Searched under the topic Housing and Community Development, and then under the subheading Housing Assistance for Homeless and Homeless Issues

Methods

- For media attention, I used the New York Times Historical and searched under the keyword of “homeless”
- List of other keywords tried:
 - Vagrancy
 - Hobo
 - Tramp
 - Bum
 - Skid Row
 - Disaffiliation
 - Transience
 - Street People

Methods

- To measure amount of low income housing, I used graphs from Department of Housing and Urban Development and from Congressional Budget Office
- To measure size and diversity of homeless population, I used information from the Census Bureau measuring poverty
 - Hard to find studies that were an accurate representation of the actual homeless population so I felt that poverty was a good measure

List of Key Events and Time Periods

- 1949- Federal Housing Act passed that was the catalyst for urban renewal
- 1980- Period of economic recession begins
- 1983- Mitch Snyder's 60 day fast
- 1983- New York Times Index replaces the classification of "vagrancy" with "homeless"
- 1984- HUD releases highly controversial study on the number of homeless people, downplaying the severity
- 1987- McKinney Homeless Assistance Act is passed
- 1989- 250,000 homeless and supporters assemble in DC under the banner "Housing Now"
- 1994- Revisions to the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act

Lack of Affordable Housing Graphs

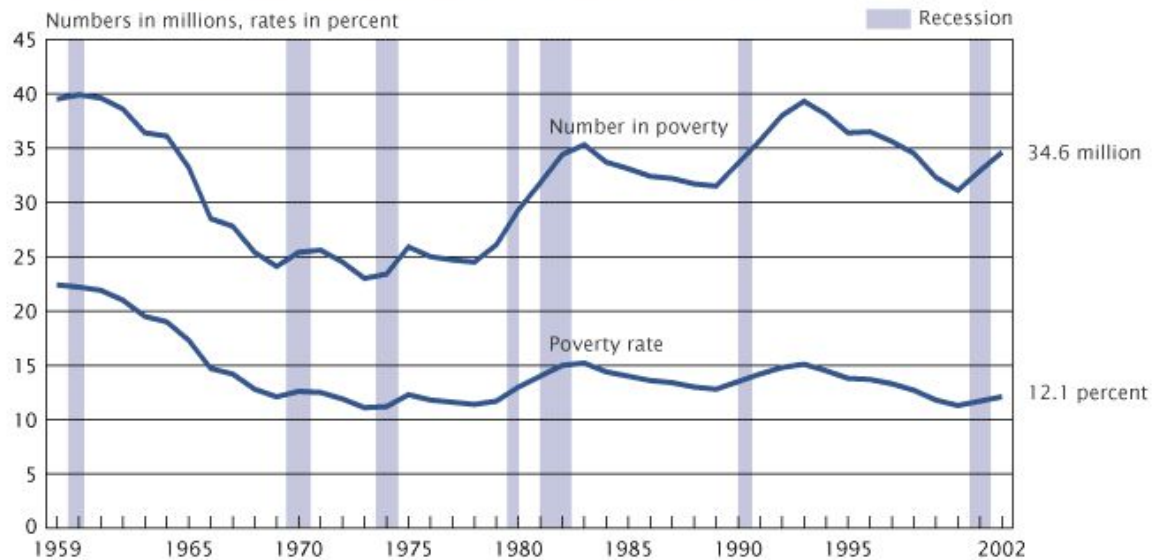


Housing Shortage Graph

Housing Assistance Graph

Poverty Rate and Number in Poverty

Figure 1.
Number in Poverty and Poverty Rate: 1959 to 2002

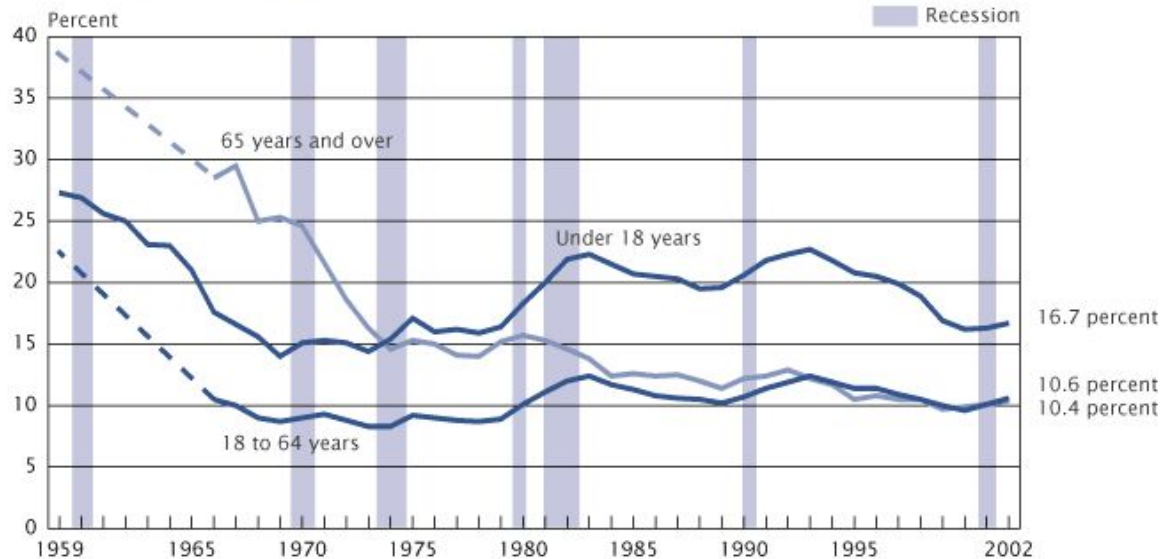


Note: The data points represent the midpoints of the respective years.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1960-2003 Annual Social and Economic Supplements.

Poverty Rates by Age

Figure 2.
Poverty Rates by Age: 1959 to 2002

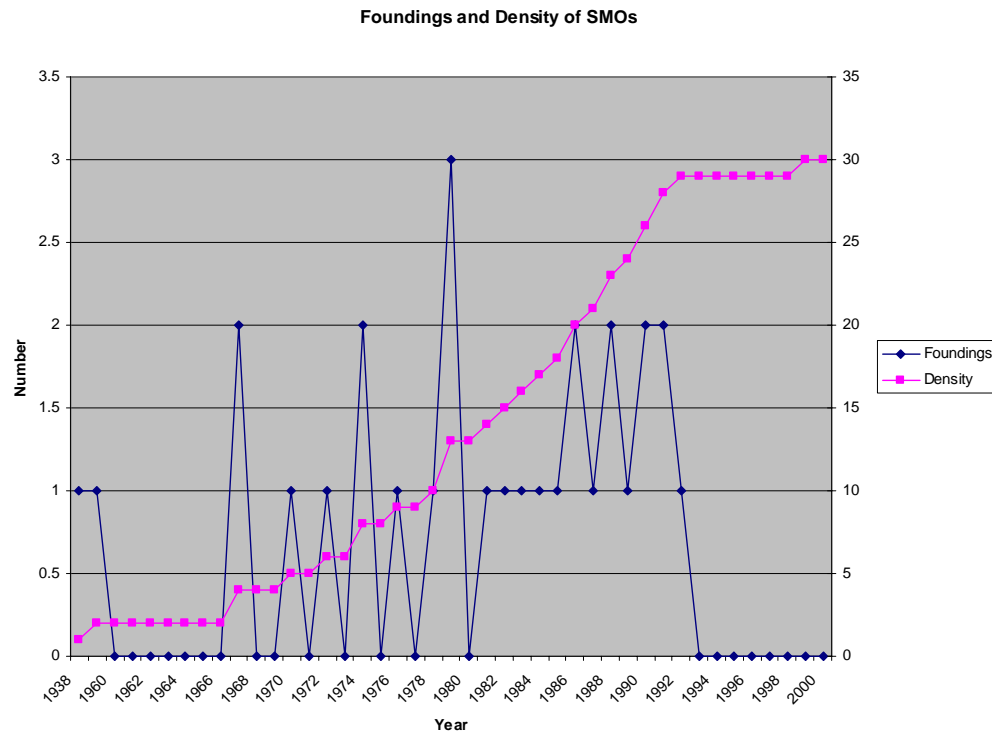


Note: The data points represent the midpoints of the respective years.

Data for people 18 to 64 and 65 and older are not available from 1960 to 1965.

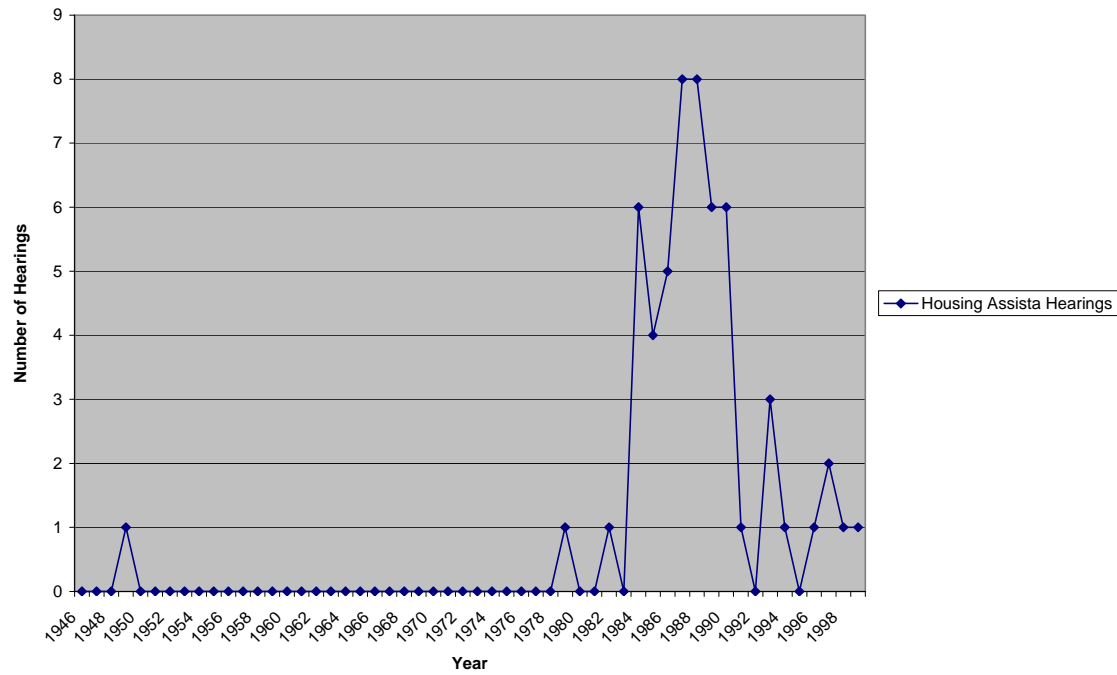
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1960-2003 Annual Social and Economic Supplements.

Foundings and Density of SMOs

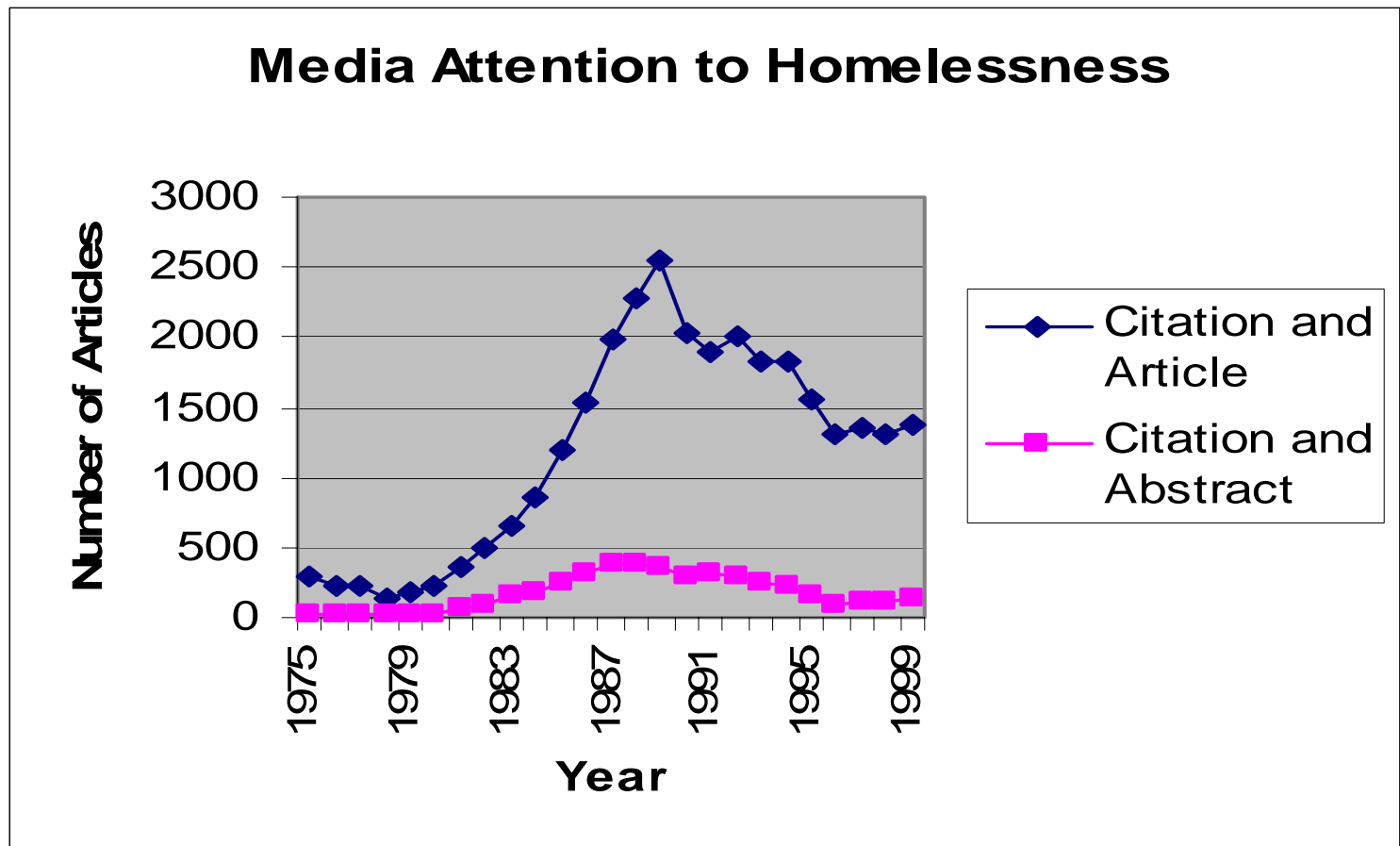


Congressional Hearings

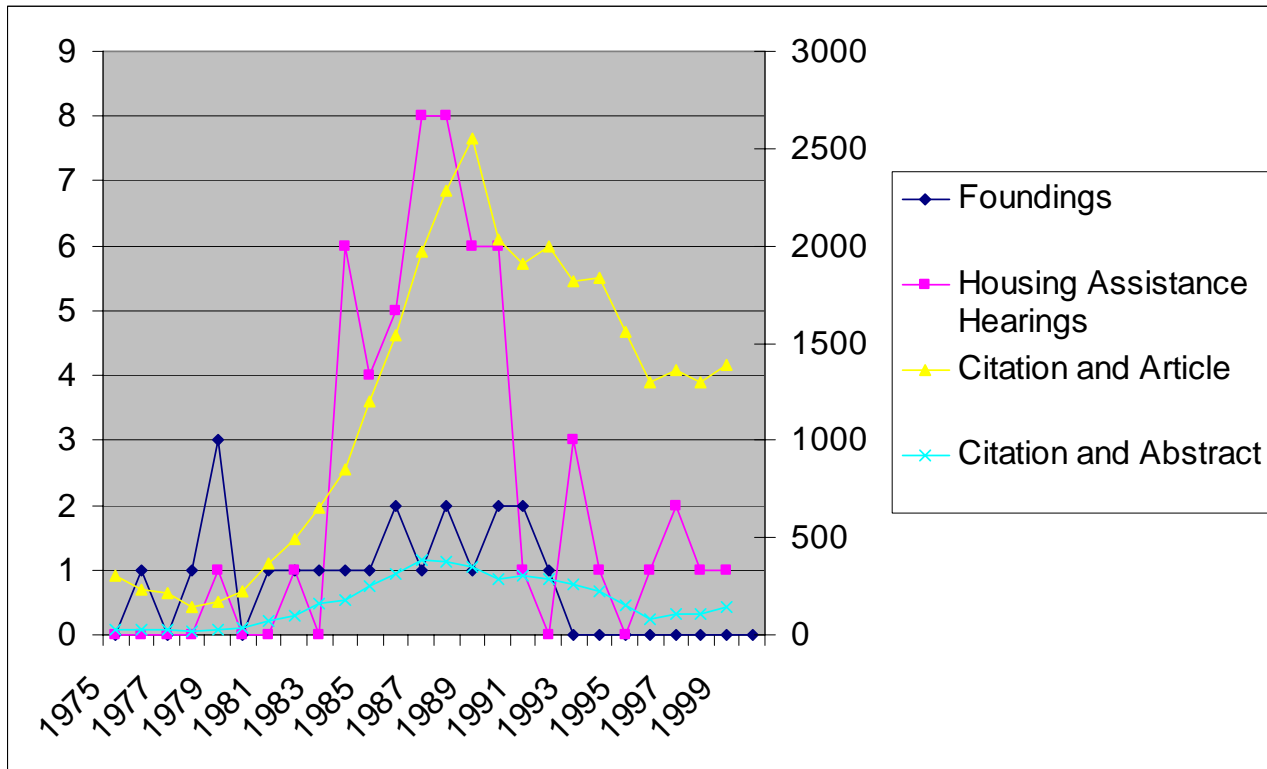
Housing Assistance Hearings



Media Attention



Combination of Foundings, Congressional Attention, and Media Attention



Analysis of Graphs

- From the graphs, it looks as though:
- Rise of poverty and homeless population
→ ← Diversity of homeless and poverty population → ← Lack of affordable Housing
- Foundings of SMOs → Congressional Attention → Media Attention

Other Research

- Cress and Snow (2000)
- “Homeless SMOs rarely attempted to pass legislation. They work to achieve more proximate goals. Social Movements may sometimes have larger impact than often presumed.”

Other Research

- Wright, James D. (1998)
- “First responses to homelessness were local”
- This can help explain why Congressional attention came after SMO foundings

Other Research

- Singh and Lumsden 1990
- Density Dependence Theory: at first foundings create niches for other SMOs, but then competition for resources discourages more foundings
- Helps explain why foundings drop off during the late 1990s

Conclusion

- Homelessness is a problem that still exists today and may even be rising.
- However, the foundings of organizations has dropped as well as Congressional attention and media attention.
- More research on local homeless organizations and local government may produce different results.

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